

# Written evidence submitted by the British Horseracing Authority

## Executive Summary

- British racing is proud to be a major sport where males and females compete on equal terms.
- However, we are still not at a point where equality has been achieved in many roles within the industry.
- Women, especially in equine care facing roles, are absolutely key to the day to day running of the sport.
- Female jockeys are now receiving more opportunities and finding increased success but there is scope to further improve.
- Racing, especially for its larger meetings, attracts a significant number of female TV viewers and attendees but data points to the sport's core fanbase skewing towards a male audience.
- All of British racing's major organisations are signed up to the industry's Diversity and Inclusion commitment.
- A key pillar of the Diversity and Inclusion strategy is to broaden racing's appeal and take the sport to a wider audience.
- Through the newly created People Board, initiatives are underway to improve working conditions for female employees within racing.
- Examples of action so far include the creation of a Code of Conduct for the British racing industry and a programme of upgrades to weighing room facilities to improve the working environment for female jockeys.

## Introduction

British racing welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Commons Digital Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Select Committee's inquiry into Women's Sport in the United Kingdom.

British racing is the UK's second largest sport, in respect of attendances, employment and revenues generated annually. This translates into a significant economic benefit for the UK, with our industry generating **£4.1 billion** in direct, indirect and associated expenditure annually for the British economy. Much of this is focused in rural areas with over **20,000** people directly employed across our **59** licensed racecourses, **over 500** training yards and **660** breeding operations – all of which play a key role in the lives of the many hundreds of rural communities they operate in.

Equestrian sports, including racing, are sports where women play leading roles and are represented across all sectors of the industry. This includes in the saddle, as racehorse trainers and stable staff, racecourse managers and also in the boardrooms of British racing.

Nonetheless, like many British sports, racing was a traditionally male dominated pursuit since its creation almost 300 years ago. We are still not at a point where equality has been achieved and therefore it is important for the sport to continue to make progress where possible.

In order to make the sport more inclusive, in 2017 British racing formed the Diversity in Racing Steering group. The group's vision for racing to be a diverse and inclusive sport in which everyone has the opportunity to achieve their potential and where fans from all communities feel welcome. The group provides annual updates on its progress.<sup>1</sup>

Over thirty organisations across British racing have signed up to British racing's Industry Commitment on Diversity and Inclusion, to ensure racing truly is a sport for everyone and to help the sport grow and thrive in the future.<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately, through a number of trailblazing individuals, a select group of women have been able to forge highly successful riding and training careers, that have helped change attitudes within racing and make the sport more inclusive. These include women like:

- Norah Wilmot, who became the first woman to train a winner in Britain in 1966

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<sup>1</sup> Diversity in racing Annual Update 2022, [https://media.britishhorseracing.com/bha/diversity/Annual\\_Update\\_2022.pdf](https://media.britishhorseracing.com/bha/diversity/Annual_Update_2022.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Diversity and Inclusion Industry Commitment: British racing's commitment to improving diversity and inclusion, May 2021, [https://media.britishhorseracing.com/bha/diversity/Diversity\\_Inclusion\\_Industry\\_Commitment.pdf](https://media.britishhorseracing.com/bha/diversity/Diversity_Inclusion_Industry_Commitment.pdf)

- Meriel Tufnell, who became the first female jockey to ride a winner in Britain in 1972
- Jenny Pitman who became the first woman to train a winner of the Grand National in 1983 and later the Cheltenham Gold Cup in 1995
- Hayley Turner became the first female jockey to ride a Group 1 (highest-level) winner on the Flat in 2011
- Lizzie Kelly who became the first female jockey to ride a Grade 1 (highest-level) winner over Jumps in 2015
- Rachael Blackmore became the first female jockey to ride the winner of the Grand National in 2021 and – having been leading jockey at The Festival in 2021 – then the first woman to ride the winner of the Cheltenham Gold Cup in 2022

One of the aims of the Diversity in Racing Steering Group is to address gender inequality in the sport, ensuring that women are provided with the support and structures to succeed whether in the boardroom or on the track. Other organisations also exist to support the specific issue of gender inequality, such as Women in Racing<sup>3</sup>, which focuses on career development and Racing Home<sup>4</sup> which launched in 2022 and has as its core objective the improvement of the working lives of parents and carers in the horseracing industry.

## **Statistical Analysis of Female Representation in Racing**

### **Jockeys**

There are currently 63 professional female jockeys split across jump and flat and including both apprentice and conditionals. This compares to 363 professional male jockeys, so even though men and women can compete equally in our sport females make up only **16%** of our professional athlete population. This disparity has not improved over recent years, despite the likes of Hollie Doyle and Rachel Blackmore who are winning at the very top level.

This has been recognised by the Diversity in Racing Steering Group as an issue. The newly formed People Board 5, chaired by Neil Hayward, is formulating a strategy for recruitment and retention in British racing, will be considering this as part of its work going forward.

**Figure 1** below contains statistical analysis of the performance of Female riders over a time period of twelve years between 2010 and 2022. Some of the headline points from this data are as follows:

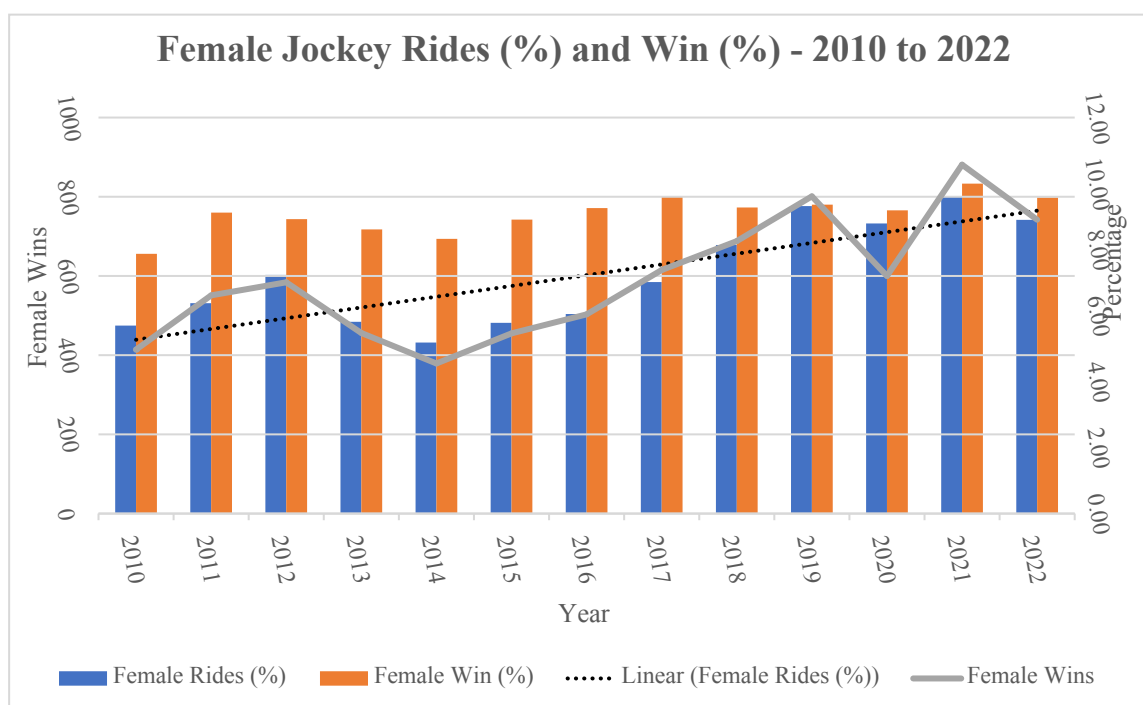
- The overall trend points to female jockeys now receiving more rides than they did in the early 2010s, from a low of just **5.7%** of rides in 2010 to **9.62%** of rides in 2021 even though the racing calendar was larger in size by 2021 and therefore more rides were available.
- However, despite female jockeys constituting **16%** of the jockey population, they are yet to receive **10%** of the overall rides.
- An increase in opportunities has seemingly contributed to female riders collectively winning more races from a win percentage of **7.87%** in 2010 to a peak of **10%** in 2021.
- The table demonstrates that 2021 was statistically the most successful year female jockeys have had within British horseracing, with a total **881** victories for female jockeys, up from a low of across this data set of **379** victories in 2014. This included **9** Grade 1 or Group 1 winners, the most ever.
- There were also **12** female jockeys in the top 100 of the Jockeys championship on the Flat and **7** in the top 100 of the Jockeys Championship over Jumps, listed in **Figure 2** below.

<sup>3</sup> Women in Racing, <https://www.womeninracing.co.uk/about-us/>

<sup>4</sup> Racing Home, <https://racinghome.org.uk/>

<sup>5</sup> British Horseracing Authority, *Neil Hayward appointed as Chair of newly created People Board*, 29 November 2022, [https://www.britisshorseracing.com/press\\_releases/neil-hayward-appointed-as-chair-of-newly-created-industry-people-board/](https://www.britisshorseracing.com/press_releases/neil-hayward-appointed-as-chair-of-newly-created-industry-people-board/)

**Figure 1 – Female Jockey Rides and Win Percentage, 2010 to 2022**



**Figure 2 – Female jockey finishing positions in 2021 Flat and Jumps jockey championships**

Jockeys Championship 2021 - Female Jockeys in Top 100			
Jockeys (Flat)	Finishing Position	Jockeys (Jumps)	Finishing Position
Hollie Doyle	3	Bryony Frost	17
Hayley Turner	44	Page Fuller	61
Joanna Mason	48	Lilly Pinchin	62
Laura Pearson	51	Millie Wonnacott	66
Saffie Osborne	54	Bridget Andrews	69
Nicola Currie	76	Charlotte Jones	92
Mollie Phillips	78	Rachael Blackmore	100
Josephine Gordon	81		
Ella McCain	85		
Jane Elliott	88		
Faye McManonman	90		
Grace McEntee	93		

### Trainers

Female racehorse trainers have managed to forge successful careers in the training ranks, nonetheless, further progress is required. Out of **570** currently active racehorse trainers in Britain,

**136** are female, with a further **four** training as part of a partnership – that works out as just under **25%** of yards having a female licence holder or joint licence holder.

As it stands, **19** of the top 100 trainers in the 2022/23 Jumps season are female, although notably, there is no female trainer in the current top 10 suggesting that male trainers still tend to dominate the top echelons of the sport. This picture is reflected by statistics from the Flat in 2022, where only **10** of the top 100 trainers were female and the highest placed female trainer, Eve Johnson Houghton, came 38<sup>th</sup> in the Championship.<sup>6</sup>

### **Stable/Stud Staff**

The BHA holds accurate figures on the total number of staff currently employed on a full or part-time basis within British racing yards through our Stable Employees Register.

At the time of writing in January 2023, there are **7,508** individual members of staff. Of these, **3,594** male employees in racing yards and **3,914** female employees. Therefore, our stable staff population is **47.9%** male and **52.1%** female.

There are currently no accurate figures on the total number of stud staff in Britain although the estimated number is thought to be around 2,500. A 2022 survey (sample size roughly 500) of stud staff conducted by The Racing Foundation and Thoroughbred Breeders Association revealed approximately **60%** of stud staff were female.

More encouragingly, at a grassroots level there is a large amount of interest in working in the sport of racing, as shown by the student population of our two major training centres, The British Racing School and National Racing College. Collectively, over the last year, their graduates have been **78%** female. However, we do not see these figures reflected on the track in terms of the number of female jockeys.

We know that there is a huge drop off of young women who leave the industry due to factors such as struggling to balance work and family life, culture and perceived lack of opportunities. Therefore, employers must do more to recognise and address these barriers if we are to keep more women in the sport. There is work now in progress to address this. Racing Home, launched last year, engages with both employers and employees for example, signposting and highlighting good working practices around motherhood, for example. The Respect in Racing working group formed in 2021 and has implemented a Code of Conduct for the sport, aiming to make racing a great place to work based on a culture of respect. Both these initiatives are new, and it will take some time to see if they do translate into greater retention of females in racing.

### **Boardroom**

Whilst it is easy to focus on the athletes who often gain profile, they are only a small fraction of the female workforce in the sport. British racing is clear that representation at all levels, and across a breadth of roles, is important. Racing's governing body is led by Chief Executive Julie Harrington, and there are several female Chairs across the sport. However, board composition across racing's eight major employers shows only **28%** female representation. One of the key pillars of British racing's Diversity and Inclusion Commitment is for industry boards to achieve the UK Sport target of a minimum of **30%** of each gender within two years.

We now answer the Committee's questions, as relevant to British racing, from the Call for Evidence.

### **Questions**

#### **2. What should other sports be learning from the growth of women's football leagues in the UK?**

The unique structure of the British racing industry means that there is not a league system in place for men or women, and therefore, for racing to implement a competition similar to the WSL, a radical overhaul of the fixture list would need to be undertaken.

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<sup>6</sup> Racing Post, Leading Trainer Statistics, <https://www.racingpost.com/statistics/trainers>

Instead of a 22-game season held over a seven-month window, our competition is year-round with jockeys being (in the vast majority of cases) self-employed individuals who are competing for available rides each day. This competition can be affected by a number of different factors such as geographical location, whether a jockey is retained by an owner or trainer and also the weight a horse is due to carry in a race can also determine who takes an individual ride.

The British racing calendar in 2022 contained just under 10,000 races between both Flat and Jumps, across around 1,400 fixtures spread between the 59 British racecourses. Following changes made during the Covid-19 pandemic, jockeys are now restricted to riding at just one meeting per day. This was bought about initially to stop the spread of illness but has been retained as a measure designed to reduce jockeys stress levels and prevent them rushing between meetings.

There are examples of specific events that have been created which specifically aim to highlight the skills of female jockeys. These include the Shergar Cup, which is an international team event run every August at Ascot racecourse and features a team of female jockeys. Since its introduction in 2012, The Ladies Team has won the competition four times, and in some cases, success on that day has led to female jockeys securing improved riding opportunities with individual racing yards – for example, Nicola Currie received a significant uplift in her number of rides for leading-trainer Mark Johnston after winning the Silver Saddle (the Leading Jockey Award) in 2021.

Racing is committed to increasing levels of female participation at all levels of the sport through its Diversity and Inclusion strategy, so the creation of further female-only initiatives or competitions may be something that can be further explored in future.

### **3. What is needed for women’s sporting organisations to grow audiences and revenues?**

Figures from ITV Racing – British racing’s Free To Air television broadcaster – demonstrate that horseracing’s larger weekend meetings tend to draw a diverse viewership, with females making up a significant part of the audience. Figures from ITV Racing’s coverage of the 2022 Grand National at Aintree show an exactly **50/50** audience split, whilst the Saturday coverage of York’s Ebor Festival meeting in August had a **39%** female audience. This compares well against a 2020 YouGov poll <sup>7</sup>on Britain’s sports viewing habits, which found just **25%** of females are regularly watching sport on TV. Figures for racing’s digital subscription-based TV channels in 2021, RacingTV and Sky Sports Racing, that broadcast racing on a daily basis found that **18%** of their viewers were female, demonstrating that racing’s core midweek fanbase tends to be heavily male skewed.

In racing, there are currently two principal commercial funding streams – racecourse attendances and revenues related to betting activity including media rights, payment of the Horserace Betting Levy and sponsorship. Looking at whether the growth of Women’s sport in the UK can contribute to increasing revenues through any of these funding streams is something for the sport to consider going forward.

It is vital for any sport looking to grow audiences and revenues to have successful role models for youngsters to look up to. Racing has been extremely fortunate in recent years to have trailblazing women such as Rachael Blackmore, Hollie Doyle and Bryony Frost all making massively positive impacts on our sport.

However, sponsors, promoters and venues must play their part. In a Great British Racing sponsored survey of 3,083 nationally represented respondents conducted in October 2022, **40%** of women said they had been to the races in the last year.<sup>8</sup> However, the main motivation for women to attend was not the sport itself but “a great day out with friends”. The Racecourse Association, who are the trade body for Britain’s 59 racecourses, state **36%** of pre-sale tickets go to females.

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<sup>7</sup> Who are Britain’s Sport addicts? YouGov, September 2020, [www.yougov.co.uk/topics/sport/articles-reports/2020/09/15/who-are-britains-sport-addicts](https://www.yougov.co.uk/topics/sport/articles-reports/2020/09/15/who-are-britains-sport-addicts)

<sup>8</sup> Please note – this data is yet to be released but can be shared with the committee in due course

PHD student Vanessa Cashmore has proven bias against female jockeys in her research, stating “the betting public favour male riders”.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, “analysis suggests gender bias persists in British horse racing” with the public choosing to avoid backing female jockeys. This shows that greater education should be provided to the betting public and that whilst coverage of female jockeys’ success is currently being promoted by the sport, and more work can be done in this area.

#### 4. What action is needed to tackle sexism and misogyny in sport?

Horseracing is proud to be a sport in which all genders compete on equal terms. Unfortunately, however, female participants are often targeted with hateful messages because of their gender. In June 2021, a Facebook message sent to apprentice female jockey Saffie Osborne was shared by her father Jamie, who is a racehorse trainer.<sup>10</sup> The message read “U stupid f\*\*\*ing w\*\*\*e... u need rapping and beating to death u s\*\*t... daddy won't help u... U s\*\*t... keep your t\*\*s in you w\*\*\*e... die u little b\*\*\*h”. In a message sent to flat jockey Gemma Tutty, a Facebook user said, “you are exactly why people criticise women jockeys, as just don't think”.

British racing actively encourages participants to report this abuse so we can tackle this activity. Moreover, alongside a range of Sports Governing Bodies, we called for specific action to be taken through the Online Safety Bill to tackle misogyny directed towards our female athletes online. British racing’s submission, and the abuse received by jockeys highlighted within it, was referenced by the *Joint Committee for the Draft Online Safety Bill* in their December 2021 report.<sup>11</sup>

We welcome the Government’s commitment that misogynistic comments will now be recognised as legal but harmful content under the terms of the Online Safety Bill. We will continue to monitor the progress of the legislation, and will work with Government on its application to British racing.

British racing has also recently introduced a Code of Conduct for participants of the sport to abide by.<sup>12</sup> The Code establishes a set of standards aimed at protecting the values of the sport of horseracing and making racing a great place to work based on a culture of respect. Everyone involved in the sport of horse racing is expected to uphold these values and standards.

The Code has two specific points relevant to this subject:

- No one shall engage in any form of sexual misconduct.
- Everyone who uses social media and the online space must act responsibly and not engage in any form of online bullying, harassment or abuse.

In recognition that Rules alone will not change behaviour the BHA has carried out face to face training, and introduced an e-training module, to teach participants of the potential harmful effects of any kind of abuse or bullying.

The BHA has, in recent years, also scaled up its capabilities to deal with safeguarding cases within the sport. A number of sexual harassment cases from within yards and studs have been dealt with by this team, with perpetrators facing disciplinary action and, in some cases, been barred from working within the sport of horseracing and reported to the National Safeguarding Panel.

Following her PHD study, completed in 2021, into Gender, Education and Work in the Horseracing Industry, Dr Eleanor Boden, has set out recommendations to the racing world to carry out further research and come up with evidence-based solutions to create a better

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<sup>9</sup> Vanessa Cashmore, *Female Jockeys: What are the Odds?*, Journal of Economic Behaviour & Organization (Vol.202, Oct 2022, pp.703-13),

<https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0167268122002864?token=217B6CE606B4FA31C79B838CC8AE818CDFE799E1A3B3BFD0F505A02248324D14EE0CBADA577AEB772B36435E64ED8E26&originRegion=eu-west-1&originCreation=20230202125529>

<sup>10</sup> <https://twitter.com/osbornejamie/status/1407807194779750400?lang=en>

<sup>11</sup> Joint Committee on the Draft Online Safety Bill, *Draft Online Safety Bill*, 14 December 2021, p.51, <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/8206/documents/84092/default/>

<sup>12</sup> British Horseracing Authority, “*Respect in Racing*” Campaign launched by British racing industry, 22 September 2022, [https://www.britishhorseracing.com/press\\_releases/respect-in-racing-campaign-launched-by-british-racing-industry/](https://www.britishhorseracing.com/press_releases/respect-in-racing-campaign-launched-by-british-racing-industry/)

environment in which females can flourish. Initial suggestions of solutions could include:

- Creating training and education in issues of equality, diversity and inclusion.
  - Developing reporting mechanisms for sexual harassment and other discriminatory forms of behaviour.
  - Developing recommendations to address other gender-related issues.

This approach of conducting bespoke research to help identify solutions is something that can be replicated across other sports.

## **5. What needs to change at a regulatory level to facilitate more parity between men's and women's sport?**

The BHA took regulatory action in 2021 to ensure that, by October 2024, all of Britain's 59 racecourses comply with new minimum standards around to suit jockeys of all ages and genders and futureproof the weighing room environment.<sup>13</sup> These standards include:

- additional private changing and shower facilities in male and female changing rooms, following the initial increase by February 2022
- shared communal rest, food provision, and warm-up areas for jockeys
- new communal working space for valets, equally accessible from both female and male changing rooms
- sufficient flexibility to adapt changing room sizes according to varying numbers of participants and to changing societal needs

These changes were welcomed by then Professional Jockeys Association (PJA) Chief Executive, Dale Gibson, who said:

*"We have been lobbying for major improvements to facilities, particularly for our female riders, for years. Progress until now has been disappointing, but we welcome the change in approach and a lot of work has gone into the creation of this plan."*

*"The agreed improvements contained within it will bring all venues up to a defined minimum standard and the result will be improved facilities and a far more professional working environment for all our members".*

Other than the work that is ongoing to improve facilities, from a regulatory perspective, male and female jockeys compete on an equal footing, following the same pathway to becoming a jockey through our Racing Schools and riding within the same rules and licensing conditions.

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<sup>13</sup> British Horseracing Authority, *Plans agreed to update and modernise weighing room facilities*, 23 November 2021, [https://www.britishhorseracing.com/press\\_releases/plans-agreed-to-improve-and-modernise-weighing-room-facilities/](https://www.britishhorseracing.com/press_releases/plans-agreed-to-improve-and-modernise-weighing-room-facilities/)