

BUCS RUGBY UNION

IMPACT REPORT

2025-26 SEASON





FOREWORD

The 2025–26 season has been another significant step forward for university rugby, demonstrating the continued strength, ambition and resilience of our clubs, institutions and participants. It has been inspiring to see the commitment shown across the competition programme, from those competing in our flagship events through to the thousands of students representing their institutions week in, week out.

This report highlights a number of achievements that reflect the positive direction of travel for our sport. We have seen continued growth in the women's game, with an increase in the number of women's teams competing across the programme, providing more opportunities for students to experience competitive rugby. Alongside this, the significant increase in player registrations through GMS represents an important milestone, strengthening the connection between the university game and the wider rugby landscape while contributing to the Rugby Football Union's long-term participation ambitions.

This progress is underpinned by continued collaboration across the game. The RFU recognises the important role that BUCS plays in providing a thriving environment for university rugby, through a broad competition offer and increasing development support for member institutions. Our continued collaboration is vital in delivering positive experiences for participants and maximising the wider impact of rugby union, and will remain an important part of supporting the continued growth and development of the game.

While there is much to celebrate, we also recognise that there is more to do. This report identifies areas where we can continue to strengthen our competitions, improve league health and create an even better experience for all participants. The planned expansion of Women's BUCS Super Rugby, our continued focus on reducing walkovers and supporting sustainable competition structures, and our commitment to fostering a positive culture across the game demonstrate our ambition for the future.

We hope this report not only celebrates what has been achieved this season but also highlights the exciting opportunities ahead. Together, we will continue to build a university rugby programme that is inclusive, competitive and sustainable, ensuring even more students can enjoy the many benefits of our sport for years to come.

Neal Kington - BUCS Head of Competitions
Katy Young - RFU University Partnerships Manager

PLAYER REGISTRATION



*ENGLISH UNIVERSITIES ONLY

MALE

6,374 PLAYERS



FEMALE

3,415 PLAYERS



91 INSTITUTIONS **186** TEAMS

50 INSTITUTIONS ENTERED 2 OR MORE TEAMS

7 X EXETER & HARTPURY TEAMS

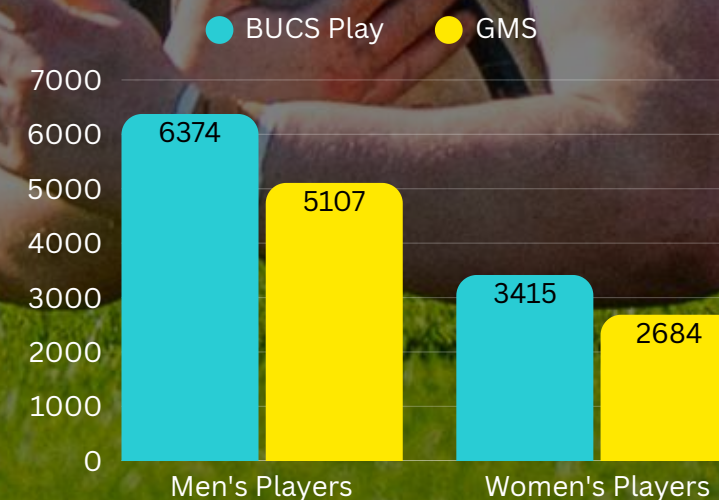
71 INSTITUTIONS **109** TEAMS

26 INSTITUTIONS ENTERED 2 OR MORE TEAMS

3 X LOUGHBOROUGH, HARTPURY & NOTTINGHAM TEAMS

79.5% OF PLAYERS OVERALL REGISTERED ON BUCS PLAY ARE ALSO REGISTERED ON GMS. THE TARGET FOR THIS SEASON WAS 50%.

Player Registrations



IN COMPARISON TO 2024-25 SEASON, THE NUMBER OF MEN'S TEAMS HAS DECREASED FROM 192, HOWEVER THE NUMBER OF WOMEN'S TEAMS HAS INCREASED FROM 96.

FIXTURES



*ENGLISH UNIVERSITIES ONLY

1,403

TOTAL FIXTURES PLAYED

1,184

LEAGUE FIXTURES

219

KNOCKOUT FIXTURES

- MORE FIXTURES IN MEN'S TIERS THAN EQUIVALENT WOMEN'S TIERS.
- MULTIPLE REGIONAL LEAGUES WITHIN MEN'S TIERS
- ONLY ONE LEAGUE PER CONFERENCE IN WOMEN'S TIERS
- TIER 1 AND BELOW, AVERAGE 7.2 LEAGUES PER MEN'S TIER
- 5 WOMEN'S LEAGUES PER TIER

LEAGUE FIXTURES PLAYED PER TIER

TIER	MEN'S	WOMEN'S
BSR	82	32
PREM 1	99	65
PREM 2	69	N/A
TIER 1	93	64
TIER 2	160	89
TIER 3	154	97
TIER 4	140	N/A
TIER 5	40	N/A

- WOMEN'S BUCS SUPER RUGBY HAS SIGNIFICANTLY FEWER FIXTURES COMPARED TO MEN'S BSR DUE TO THERE BEING 7 WOMEN'S TEAMS COMPARED TO 10 MEN'S TEAMS.
- WBSR TO EXPAND TO 8 TEAMS FOR 2026-27



88%

AVERAGE LEAGUE
COMPLETION RATE

2024-25 SEASON COMPARISON:
89% FIXTURE COMPLETION RATE
MORE SCHEDULED FIXTURES (1.610) IN BOTH LEAGUE AND KNOCKOUT
183 WALKOVERS

LEAGUE HEALTH



*FIXTURES FEATURING ONE OR MORE ENGLISH UNIVERSITIES

1,608 SCHEDULED LEAGUE & KNOCKOUT FIXTURES

192 WALKOVERS = **12%**

239 BLOWOUT RESULTS = **17%**

BLOWOUT RESULT = A DIFFERENCE OF 50 POINTS OR MORE

REASONS FOR WALKOVERS:

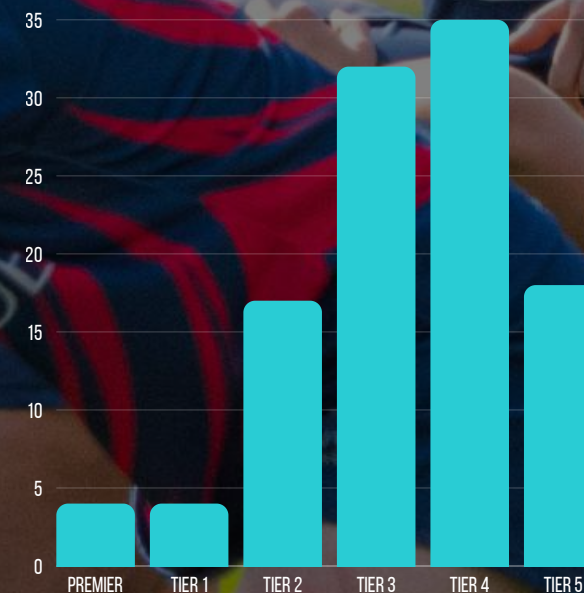
UNABLE TO FIELD A TEAM - **82.5%**

UNABLE TO FIELD A SUITABLY TRAINED FRONT ROW - **7%**

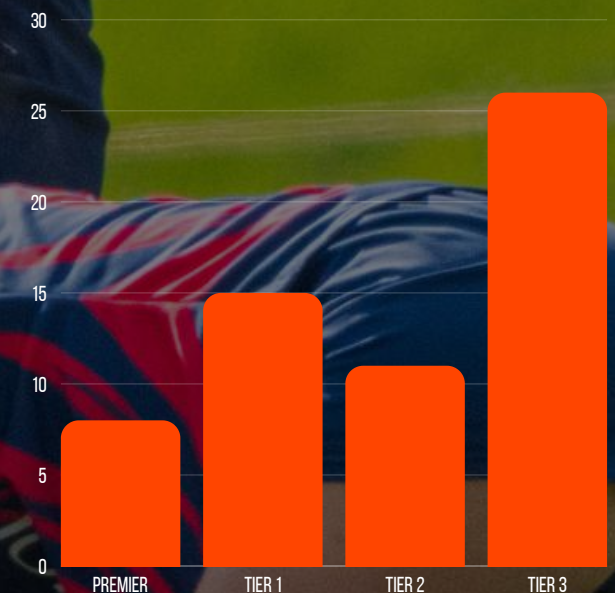
OTHER - **10.5%**

183 TOTAL WALKOVERS IN 2024-25
THIS SEASON UP BY 4.9%

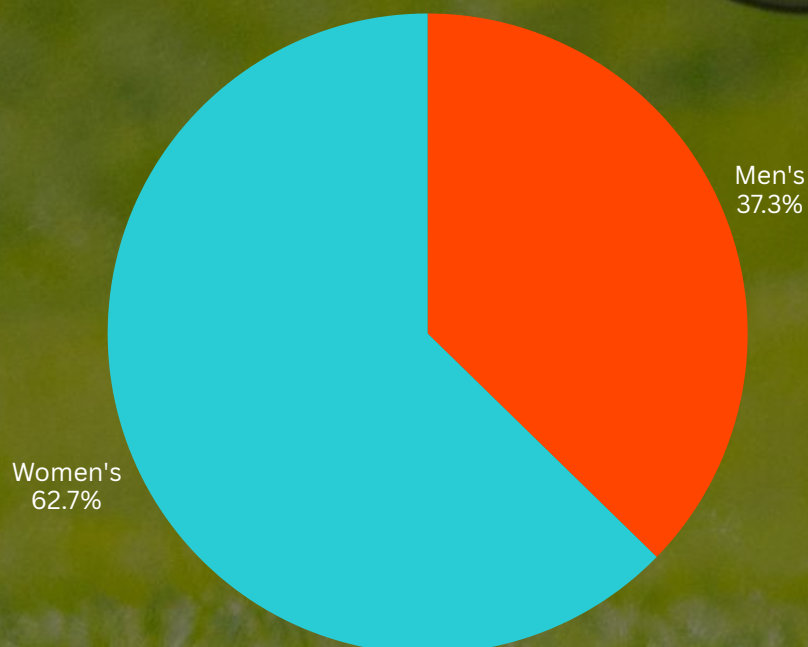
MEN'S WALKOVERS BY TIER



WOMEN'S WALKOVERS BY TIER



Men's vs Women's Blowouts



WOMEN'S TIER 1

11/15 WALKOVERS FROM USW (6) AND CANTERBURY CC (5)

32 BLOWOUTS - 1A

5/6 BLOWOUT WINS FOR CARDIFF MET 2S

MEN'S TIER 3

40% WALKOVERS FROM WESTMINSTER (7) AND KINGSTON (6)

60% WALKOVERS SPLIT ACROSS 13 TEAMS

9 TEAMS 1 WALKOVER

22 BLOWOUTS

SPREAD ACROSS ALL TEAMS - NO MORE THAN 2 PER TEAM

WOMEN'S TIER 3

43% WALKOVERS - STAFFORDSHIRE (11)

42 BLOWOUTS

9/9 BLOWOUT WINS FOR SHEFFIELD HALLAM

EVENTS



BUCS BIG WEDNESDAY

25TH MARCH 2026

LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S

TROPHY AND VASE FINALS

724 RUGBY UNION TICKETS SOLD



BUCS SUPER RUGBY MILK CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

22ND APRIL 2026

RODNEY PARADE, NEWPORT

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

1,062 TICKETS SOLD

31,000 MEN'S LIVESTREAMS

6,600 WOMEN'S LIVESTREAMS



UNIVERSITY RUGBY DEVELOPMENT DAY

5TH MAY 2026

SIXWAYS STADIUM, WORCESTER

GUEST SPEAKER ABBY DOW

UNIVERSITY RUGBY AWARDS

120 ATTENDEES

[READ MORE HERE](#)



BUCS CELESTIAL 7S

6TH JUNE 2026

RICHMOND ATHLETICS GROUND

18 INSTITUTIONS

26 MEN'S TEAMS

18 WOMEN'S TEAMS

CHAMPIONSHIP, TROPHY AND MEN'S SHIELD (NEW)

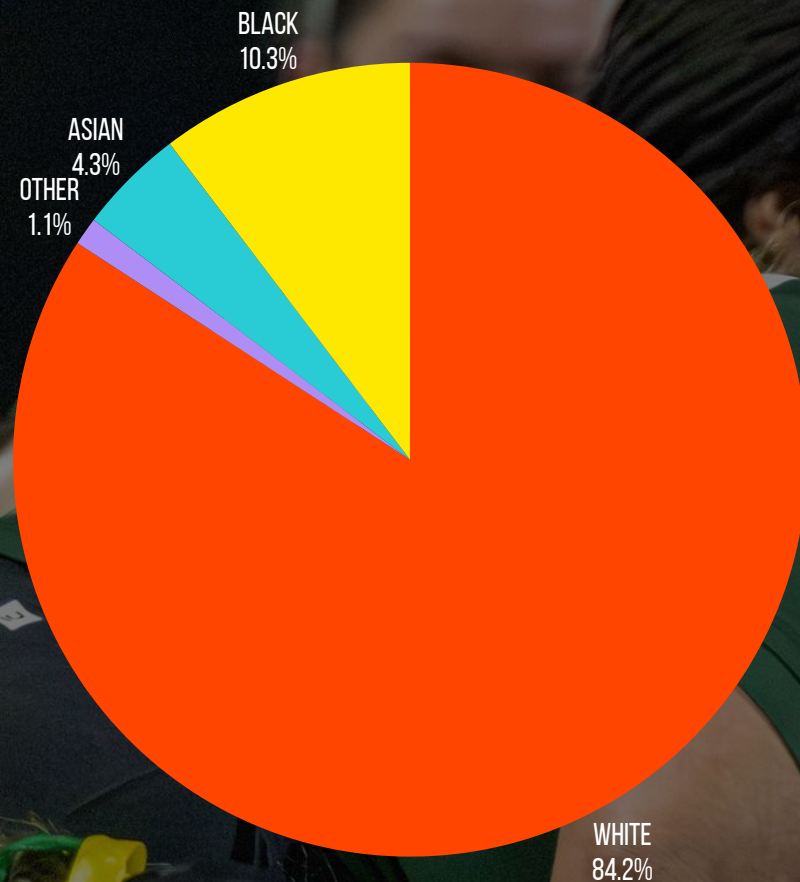
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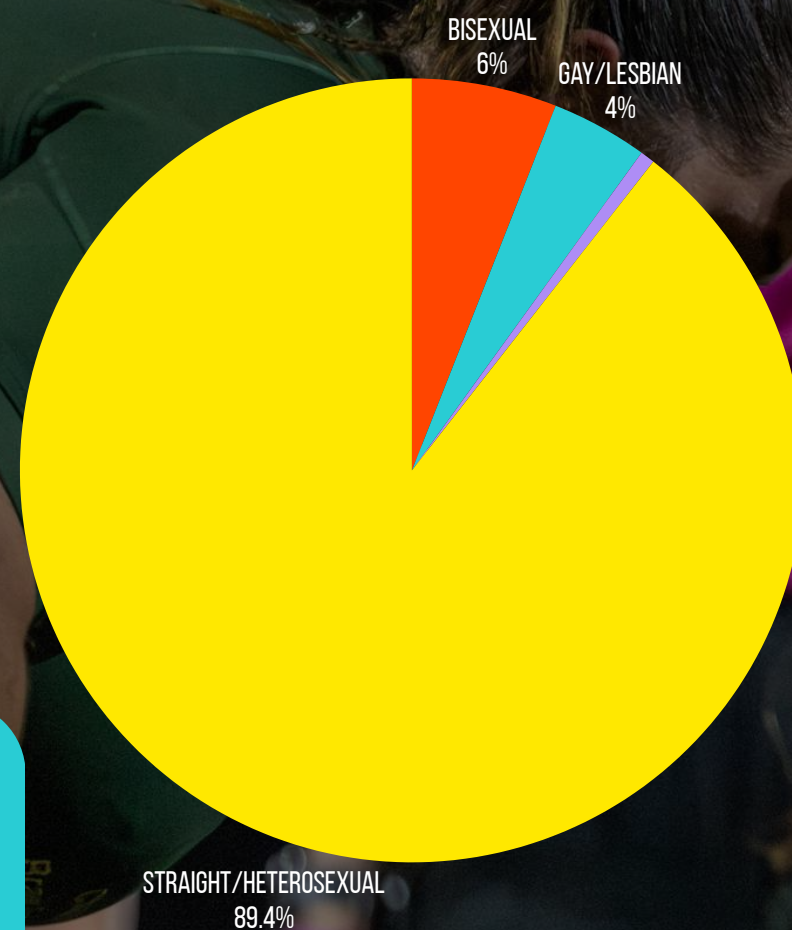
84% WHITE

89% HETEROSEXUAL

ETHNICITY



SEXUALITY



BROADER BUCS REPRESENTATION (UK)

WHITE - 70%	BLACK - 9%
ASIAN - 13%	MIXED - 5%
OTHER - 2%	



COMPARED TO THE OVERALL BUCS ETHNIC REPRESENTATION, BUCS RUGBY UNION IN ENGLAND HAS A HIGHER PROPORTION OF WHITE AND BLACK PARTICIPANTS, WHILE ASIAN, MIXED AND OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS ARE UNDERREPRESENTED. THIS IS CONSISTENT WITH THE BROADER DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RUGBY UNION, WHICH HAS HISTORICALLY HAD A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE PARTICIPANT BASE.

RUGBY UNION REMAINS PREDOMINANTLY HETEROSEXUAL, WITH APPROXIMATELY 11% OF PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFYING AS LGBTQ+. THIS DEMONSTRATES A DIVERSE RANGE OF SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS WITHIN THE SPORT AND HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT WHERE ALL PARTICIPANTS FEEL WELCOME.



*BUCS PLAY DATA FROM ENGLISH UNIVERSITIES

BEHAVIOUR CHARTER



THE THIRD YEAR OF THE CHARTER SAW THE FOLLOWING IMPACT:

- **RUGBY UNION CULTURE AND CONDUCT LETTER** DISTRIBUTED TO ALL ASSOCIATED MEMBERS AT THE START OF THE SEASON
- PRE SEASON **RUGBY UNION HIGHER EDUCATION BEHAVIOURS CHARTER WEBINAR**
- **DISCIPLINARY GROUP FORMED** AND MET QUARTERLY TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF THE CHARTER
- **TOOLKIT CREATED** TO SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS IN MANAGING BEHAVIOUR EFFECTIVELY AND ENSURING ADHERENCE TO THE CHARTER
- ADHERENCE OF THE CHARTER WAS WRITTEN INTO BUCS **REGULATIONS**



HIGHER EDUCATION RUGBY
UNION DISCIPLINARY GROUP

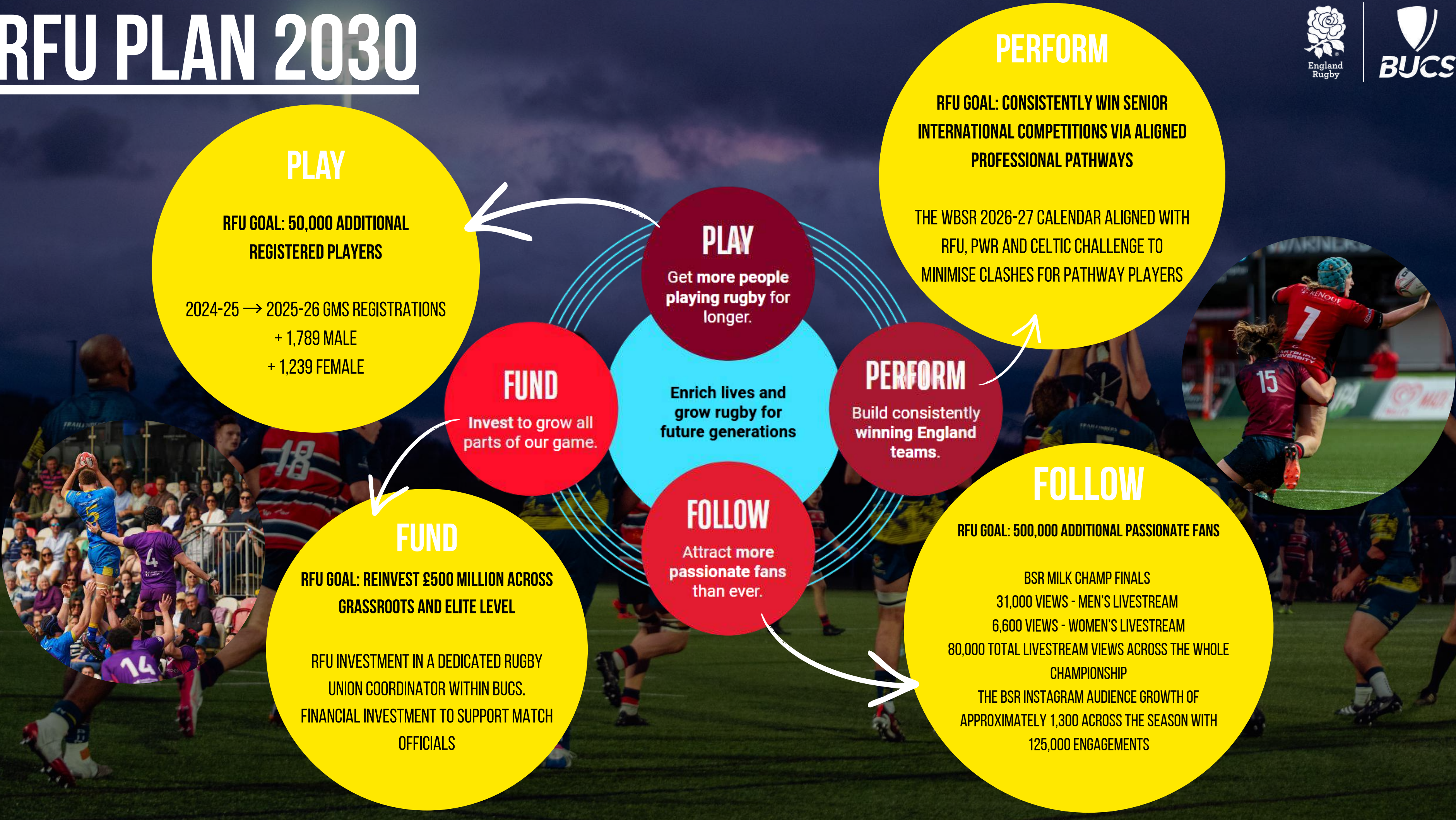
7 X CASES IN 2025-26
8 X CASES IN 2024-25



PROTECT
OUR
GAME



RFU PLAN 2030



PLAY

RFU GOAL: 50,000 ADDITIONAL REGISTERED PLAYERS

2024-25 → 2025-26 GMS REGISTRATIONS
+ 1,789 MALE
+ 1,239 FEMALE

PLAY

Get more people playing rugby for longer.

FUND

Invest to grow all parts of our game.

FUND

RFU GOAL: REINVEST £500 MILLION ACROSS GRASSROOTS AND ELITE LEVEL

RFU INVESTMENT IN A DEDICATED RUGBY UNION COORDINATOR WITHIN BUCS.
FINANCIAL INVESTMENT TO SUPPORT MATCH OFFICIALS

FOLLOW

Attract more passionate fans than ever.

PERFORM

RFU GOAL: CONSISTENTLY WIN SENIOR INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS VIA ALIGNED PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS

THE WBSR 2026-27 CALENDAR ALIGNED WITH RFU, PWR AND CELTIC CHALLENGE TO MINIMISE CLASHES FOR PATHWAY PLAYERS

PERFORM

Build consistently winning England teams.

FOLLOW

RFU GOAL: 500,000 ADDITIONAL PASSIONATE FANS

BSR MILK CHAMP FINALS
31,000 VIEWS - MEN'S LIVESTREAM
6,600 VIEWS - WOMEN'S LIVESTREAM
80,000 TOTAL LIVESTREAM VIEWS ACROSS THE WHOLE CHAMPIONSHIP
THE BSR INSTAGRAM AUDIENCE GROWTH OF APPROXIMATELY 1,300 ACROSS THE SEASON WITH 125,000 ENGAGEMENTS

2026-27 SEASON



WBSR EXPANSION

EXPANDING TO 8 TEAMS FOR 2026-27

LEAGUE FORMAT CREATED TO MINIMISE EXTERNAL CLASHES -
CELTIC CHALLENGE, PWR CUP, U21 SIX NATIONS

MAXIMISE FIXTURES



PARTICIPATION

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS TO GROW THEIR PROGRAMMES

ENCOURAGE NEW PLAYERS TO JOIN A UNIVERSITY CLUB

ASSISTING GMS PLAYER REGISTRATION - CONTRIBUTING TO RFU'S
2030 GOAL OF AN ADDITIONAL 50,000 REGISTERED PLAYERS

WORK WITH INSTITUTIONS TO IMPLEMENT T1 AND INNER WARRIOR
OFFERS TO ENCOURAGE NEW PLAYERS TO THE GAME.

LEAGUE HEALTH

FOCUS ON REDUCING WALKOVERS AND BLOWOUTS IN LOWER TIERS

MEN'S TIER 4 REGULATION AMENDMENT AROUND FRONT ROW -
ENCOURAGING FIXTURES TO GO AHEAD DESPITE LIMITED FRONT ROW
PLAYERS

