

STATE OF EQUITY IN CRICKET REPORT

November 2025

— RAISING
THE GAME



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FOREWORD

When I took up my role as ECB Chair, I wanted to set the game of cricket in England and Wales on a path which we would be able to follow from day one, and throughout the years to come. Becoming the most inclusive team sport was an ambition that Richard Gould, ECB CEO, and I set for the game, and I am proud that it has been our North Star since it was first proposed.

This State of Equity in Cricket report demonstrates the game's progress over the past three years and is the result of a shared commitment by the ECB and the whole cricket network to build a more inclusive, diverse and accessible game.

I am grateful to Sport Structures for their independent oversight and assessment of our work, validating the impact we have had while offering practical suggestions on where we need to go further.

I spend a lot of time travelling to different parts of England and Wales and am energised by the commitment I see to delivering real change in those I meet – from ECB colleagues to county cricket organisations, clubs and leagues, commercial partners, charity partners, players and volunteers at all levels. It is a truly collaborative effort to realising our vision.

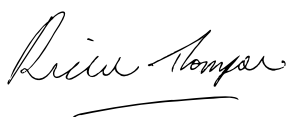
That spirit of collaboration is important. While the ECB governs the game, our members themselves are independently run organisations, and responsibility also lies with each club and their leadership to step up to the challenges that we face.

There are many positives to reflect on. We are opening the game up to more state-school children and more communities each year. We are taking cricket into more cities than before. We are inviting more young players into our player pathways and ensuring that those pathways are open to people from all backgrounds. Facilities are being upgraded to be more welcoming and accessible. We are opening up the game to a new generation of disabled cricketers at school, in clubs and through the Disability Premier League. The women's and girls' game is booming at all levels, from grassroots through to the England teams. Hosting the ICC Women's T20 World Cup next year is a golden opportunity to take women's cricket further into the mainstream.

But we also recognise there is still much more to do, and there are areas where progress is more challenging. Structural and institutional changes take time to bear fruit, but we will press ahead at speed with continued focus and commitment to becoming the most inclusive team sport. The Cricket Regulator has now been established for over a year and we are starting to see greater confidence in reporting discrimination wherever it occurs.

We still need to get cricket into many more state schools, and we need to build on the fantastic progress made by ACE and SACA so that the professional game is as representative as the pathways have become. While I am delighted to see many more women and ethnically diverse people as board members across the game, we need to focus on representation in executive leadership roles to ensure they reflect the communities we serve. Pay in women's cricket has grown rapidly but to close the pay gap with the men's game we need to double down on our efforts to grow the game commercially. And we still need to continue our work to build trust in all communities across England and Wales.

I hope everyone reading this report will take confidence that the efforts being made right across the game are having an impact and our commitment to go further still is sincere. It is vital that we do not take our foot off the pedal – and we will not. I am determined that we meet our goal of becoming the most inclusive team sport and ensuring that cricket really is a sport for everyone.



Richard Thompson, ECB Chair



INDEPENDENT STATEMENT BY SPORT STRUCTURES

The ECB commissioned Sport Structures to undertake an independent assessment of cricket's progress since the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket's report in 2023 and on its ambition to become the most inclusive team sport in England and Wales. Sport Structures has provided the following statement:

Over the past few months, we have listened to people from every level of cricket, from ECB executives to county boards, league organisers, club volunteers, and community partners.

What we heard reflects a game in motion, one that has accepted the findings of the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket (ICEC) and moved from acknowledgement to action.

This report captures that progress and the continuing work needed to embed inclusion and equity across the whole sport.

There is now visible leadership for equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) across the system.

Structures that once lacked clarity or accountability have been re-engineered with stronger governance, transparent decision-making, and independent oversight.

The creation of the Cricket Regulator marks a step change in how the game handles discrimination, safeguarding, and conduct, giving confidence that complaints are taken seriously and investigated fairly.

Governance reform has also advanced markedly. The ECB meets Tier 3 of A Code for Sports Governance, and all counties are working toward the ECB's own Gold-tier governance accreditation by 2028.

We found genuine progress in areas previously identified as major gaps.

The professionalisation of women's and girls' cricket is reshaping visibility and opportunity across the game. However, investment and support are not yet consistent, and expectations of delivery often exceed the resources available.

Achieving genuine equity will require sustained funding, structural alignment, and a clear pathway that enables all parts of the women's game to thrive.

Disability cricket has grown through national structures and partnership with the Lord's Taverners, yet it still needs deeper integration within county and club systems to ensure that inclusion is lived locally, not confined to specialist programmes.

Diversity in leadership and representation is improving but remains uneven.

Board composition across counties is more reflective of modern cricket communities, yet this progress has not fully extended into senior executive and operational roles.

Many stakeholders highlighted that inclusion is strongest where diverse voices are present in decision-making, not just consulted, but empowered. Broadening representation must therefore remain a central measure of success for the next phase of reform.

Across the game, people recognise that culture change cannot be achieved by policy alone.

Many clubs still face limited resources or confidence to translate strategy and policy into daily practice, and leadership diversity at county, club and community level lags behind progress made in ECB boardrooms.

Nevertheless, the tone of the conversation has changed and inclusion is increasingly viewed as integral to cricket's health, not an external demand.

Cricket is not yet where it aspires to be, but it is moving in the right direction, with growing honesty and shared purpose.

The challenge now is to sustain momentum, connect national ambition with local reality, and build a game in which fairness, trust, diversity, and belonging are truly universal.

Prepared by: Sport Structures, October 2025

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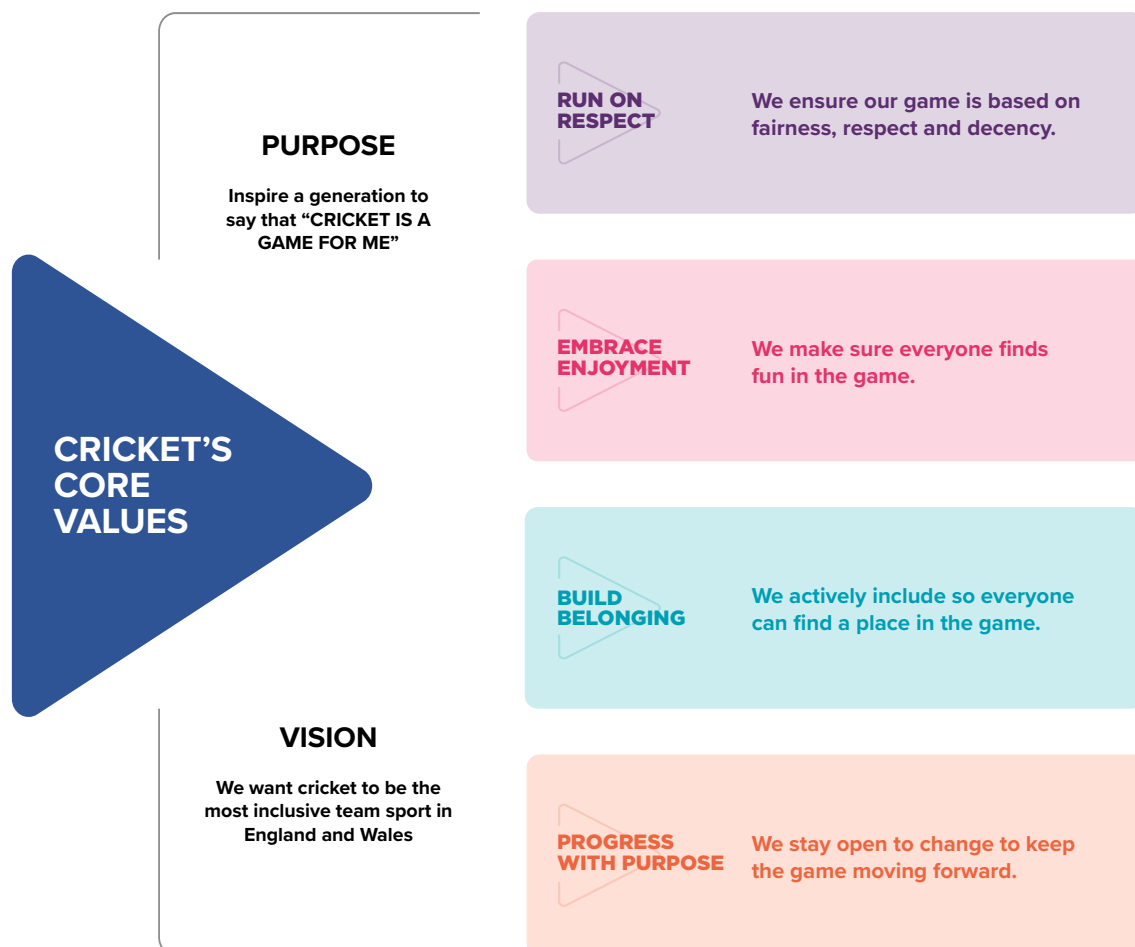
CULTURE AND TRAINING

Introduction

Embedding inclusive cultures and behaviours is helping us transform our sport and underpins our ambition to become the most inclusive team sport in England and Wales. Culture change starts with a clear articulation of the values and behaviours the game is built on and what we will not tolerate, a commitment by leadership to embedding these values through how they run their organisations, and day to day behaviours by everyone in the game.

Values and behaviours are central to a game-wide transformation in culture

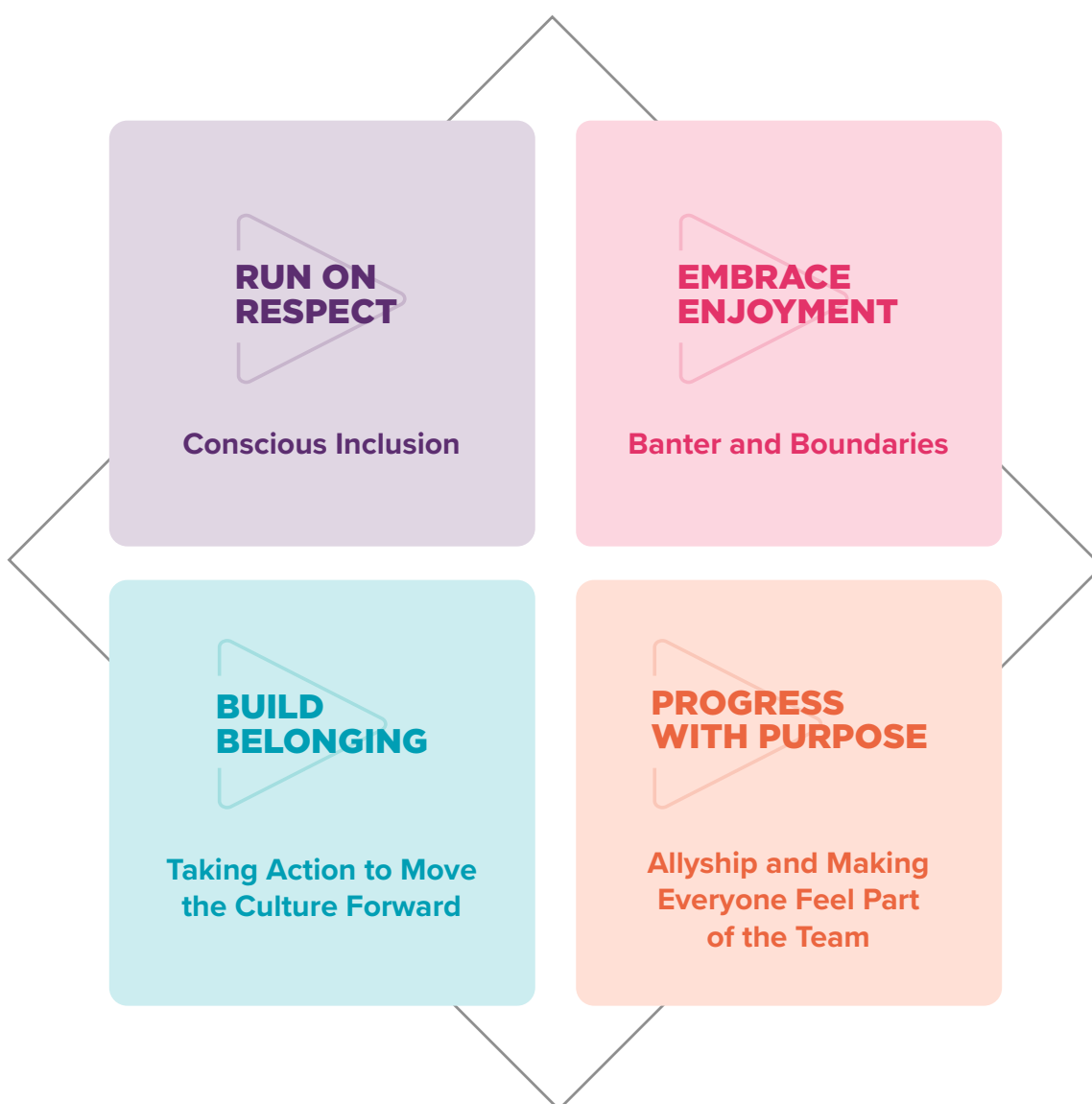
In 2024 we spoke to almost 5,000 people across England and Wales as part of the Big Cricket Conversation to co-create cricket's core values. Cricket's core values establish a shared commitment that shapes the future direction of the game, setting the standard for what an inclusive culture looks like at all levels.



We held focus groups with people from underrepresented groups and our charity partners to ensure their voices and lived experiences were heard. We have run workshops, and created toolkits and supporting assets to help counties and clubs embrace cricket's core values. At the ECB, we have embedded these values throughout our processes, policies and procedures. Every ECB department now has a plan of how they will adopt the values in their department's ways of working, and they are part of staff appraisals, our employee recognition programme and our staff EDI education programme.

The ECB is funding a three-year education programme for staff at the ECB and every county cricket organisation

The programme consists of four modules based around cricket's values, to support the behavioural changes required to create an inclusive culture throughout the game. Participation is part of the ECB's funding agreements with counties with a minimum requirement that 85% of staff complete the training.



Emerging themes from the first 1,000 participants included increased confidence in speaking up in uncomfortable situations, people feeling inspired to change their behaviour, and an appreciation for being provided with the space for meaningful discussion and collaboration with others across cricket about EDI.

We are ensuring cricket's leaders have a strong understanding of race and racism

Over 130 of cricket's senior leaders have completed a racial literacy programme run by Professor John Amaechi OBE's firm APS Intelligence. Senior leadership across the game participated with 93% of County CEOs, Directors of Cricket, Lead Officers and ECB Leadership completing the programme as well as over two thirds of County Chairs.

The overarching objective was to give leaders the tools to be able to create a culture of anti-racism within their organisation. The first half of the programme covered the history of racism and microaggressions and how that can play out in behaviour and in workplace cultures. The second half of the programme asked the leaders to create personal action plans around becoming more inclusive as leaders, anti-racist in their behaviour, and being active allies for people in the workplace.

In our 2025 census of all staff working in cricket, we have seen material improvements in inclusion scores for staff from ethnically diverse communities (84% compared to 73% in 2024), as well as a decrease in experiences of discrimination, though still above where we want it to be.

“

This training provided a powerful space for honest reflection on race inclusion. As leaders in cricket, we have a responsibility to move beyond performative gestures, cut through the noise, and make decisions that drive real, lasting impact. This training led us to do just that: to pause, reflect, and confront the realities of race and inclusion within our sport.

Fidelis Navas, Warwickshire Cricket Foundation

”

The ECB's Strategic EDI Fund awarded £1.1m to Recreational Cricket Board projects in 2024-25

In 2023, the ECB first established a Strategic EDI Fund to accelerate progress and support counties to deliver local interventions. Following bids from Recreational Cricket Boards (RCBs), £1.1m was awarded with the RCBs committing an additional £500k from their own reserves.

One of the most significant projects to be funded was the recruitment of newly created roles of Inclusion Officers at five RCBs. These roles, designed by RCBs, will focus on the culture in grassroots cricket, supporting clubs to create more welcoming environments, attract new members, tackle discrimination and diversify their club committees.

The focus of the Strategic EDI Fund will change over time, reflecting the evolving priorities of the cricket network. RCBs will report back in early 2026 on the impact of the Strategic EDI Fund. Meanwhile, work is ongoing to decide on priority areas of investment for the professional game.



The ECB is investing in creating a more inclusive talent pathway

In 2024 the ECB appointed two Talent Pathway Inclusion Officers to design and implement projects to make the pathway more inclusive and diverse.

They have begun a programme of workshops aimed at Talent Pathway Leaders and coaches, which will conclude at the end of March 2026. To date, 28 workshops have been delivered to more than 400 full-time and part-time talent pathway leaders and coaches, including attendance by 88% of full-time Pathway leaders and coaches.

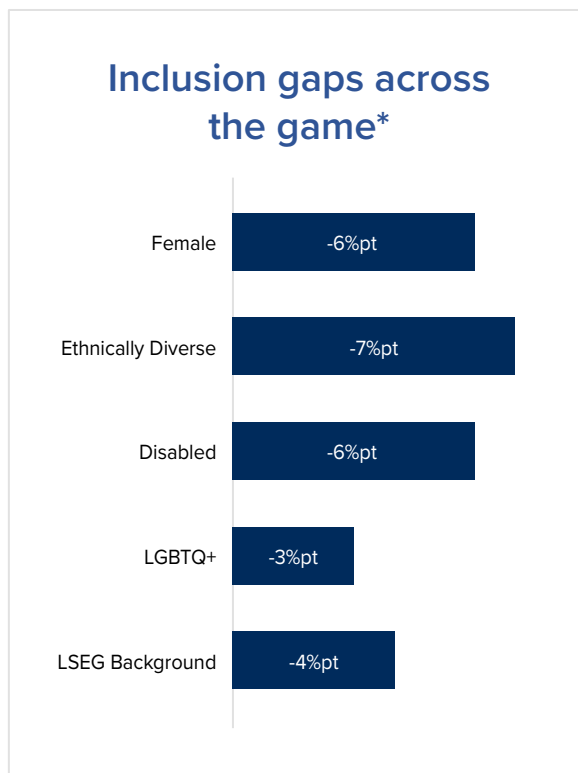
Sessions aim to instil best practice principles and processes for player identification, removing unconscious bias from the system.

“We’re aiming to change the pathways permanently and access all the possible raw talent out there.”

Jaime Newell and Tony Fretwell,
the ECB’s **Talent Inclusion Officers**

Most players and staff say they feel welcomed and included but some inclusion gaps still remain

Data from the 2025 EDI Census shows that the majority of professional and recreational players (92%) and people working in cricket (87%) feel welcomed, included and like they belong at their club or organisation.



What are inclusion gaps?

To measure inclusion, we ask people within cricket to rate statements that link to our definition of inclusion, such as “I feel valued at my organisation” or “I feel respected at my club”.

We then look to see whether there are materially different ratings between different demographics - we call this difference an ‘inclusion gap’. While we want the inclusion scores for everyone to be high, we focus our efforts on minimising the gap in inclusion levels between different groups (such as men and women).

*The inclusion gaps in this chart include professional players, recreational players, ECB staff, county staff and Non-Executive Directors within cricket.

Since 2023, we have seen four out of five of the game's inclusion gaps get smaller. The biggest of these movements was for disabled people working in and playing cricket, where the inclusion gap has closed from -15%pt in 2023 to -6%pt in 2025.

Within cricket's workforce, inclusion levels for ethnically diverse staff have increased from 73% in 2024, to 84% in 2025, closing the inclusion gap to -4%pt compared with white staff (88%).

Throughout 2025, a series of listening sessions have been taking place with staff from underrepresented groups to better understand what is causing the inclusion gaps and identifying further steps we can take to improve experiences.

The ECB is proud to have recently been awarded Silver on the Inclusive Employers Standard. The Inclusive Employers Standard is a robust evidence-based inclusion accreditation run by Inclusive Employers. It helps organisations understand more about where they are in their inclusion journey and identify key areas of focus to develop in the future. The process involved submitting a detailed overview of ECB's inclusion activities in line with the six pillars of inclusion framework, which were then independently assessed.



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LEADERSHIP

Introduction

Leaders in cricket carry both a responsibility and an opportunity to shape the culture of the game. Whether in the boardroom, clubhouse or on the pitch, their decisions, behaviours, and values have an impact on how inclusive and welcoming our sport is. Visible leadership is a critical driver of equity, diversity, and inclusion – challenging long-standing norms and fostering inclusive spaces where everyone feels respected, represented, and empowered to thrive.

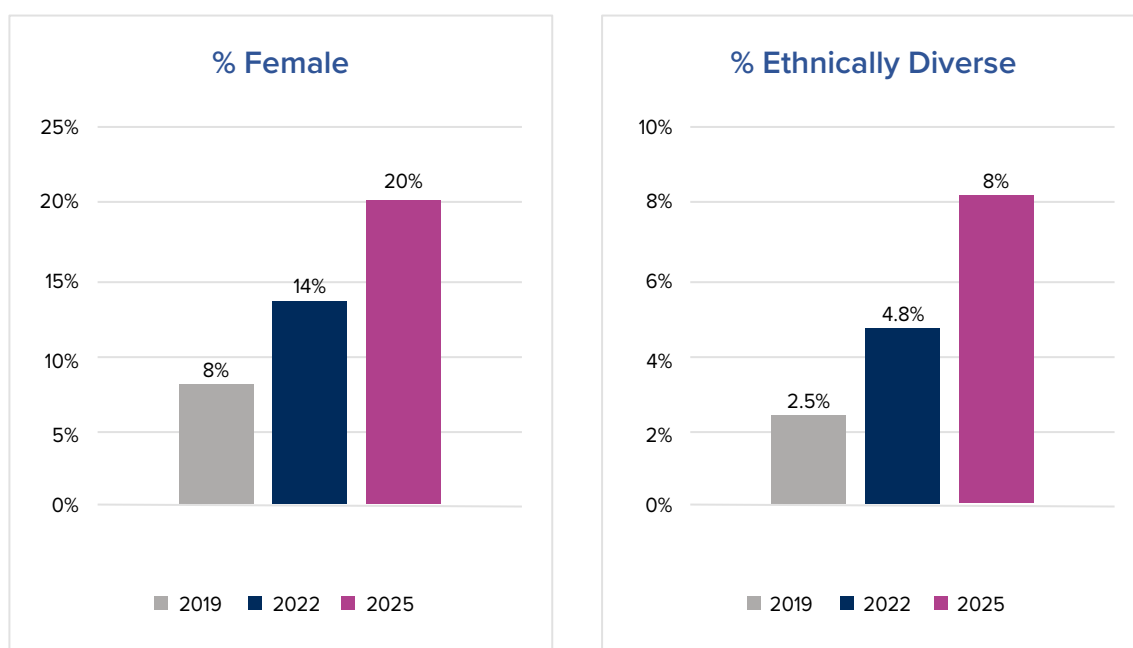
The diversity of cricket's senior leadership is improving, albeit slowly

Cricket has many senior leadership roles, and it is important that these roles represent the diversity of people who play, watch and support the game.

When we talk about cricket's senior leadership we are referring to 124 roles across the game: the Chairs and CEOs of 18 Professional County Clubs (PCCs) and the MCC, the 38 Lead Officers / CEOs of Recreational Cricket Boards (RCBs), the 36 Chairs of RCBs, and the 12 members of the ECB Board including the CEO and CFO.¹

Cricket's leadership remains predominantly white and male, but we are seeing incremental progress in gender diversity and ethnic diversity.

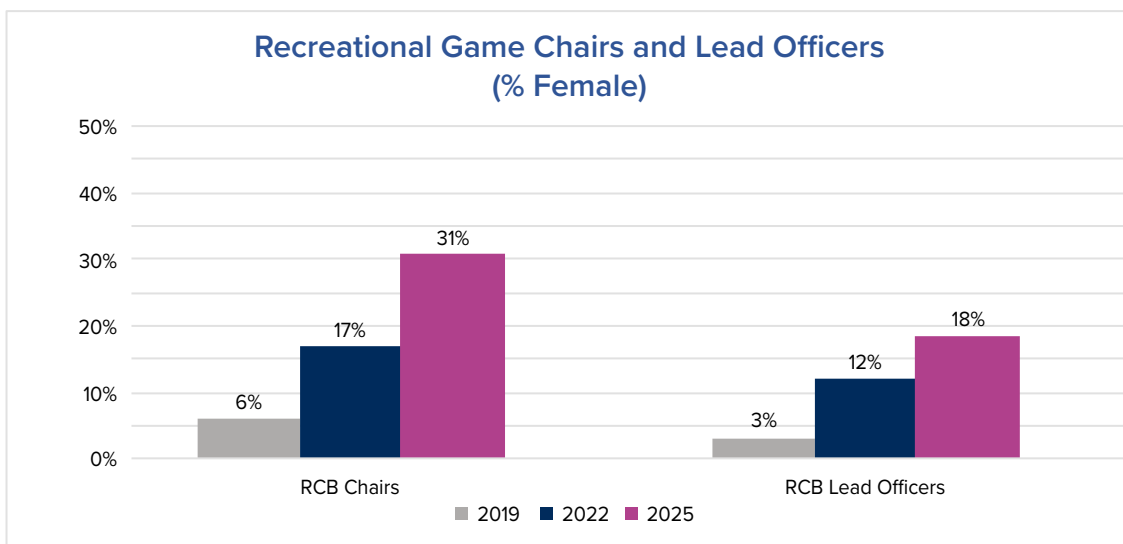
Cricket's Senior Leadership



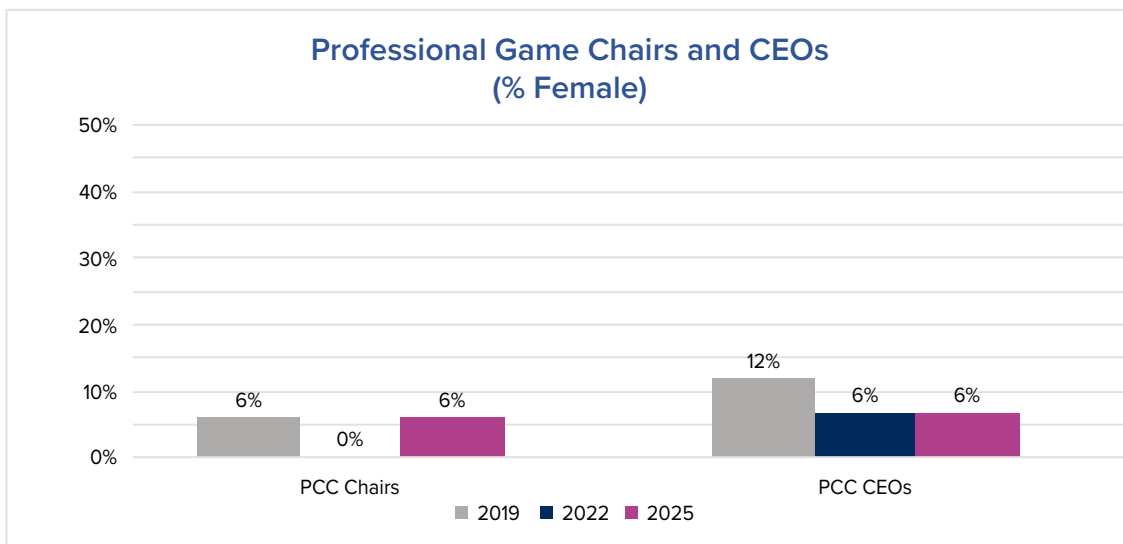
¹ The ICEC defined cricket's most senior leadership as a combination of the ECB Board, the 18 First Class County (now Professional County) Chairs and CEOs, the 21 County Cricket Board Chairs, the Marylebone Cricket Club CEO and Chair and the National Counties Cricket Association Chair. Against this definition, as of 2025, 16.7% of cricket's most senior leadership are female and 8.3% are ethnically diverse, compared to 12.7% and 5.6% respectively in the ICEC Report.

The recreational game is leading the way on gender diversity in leadership

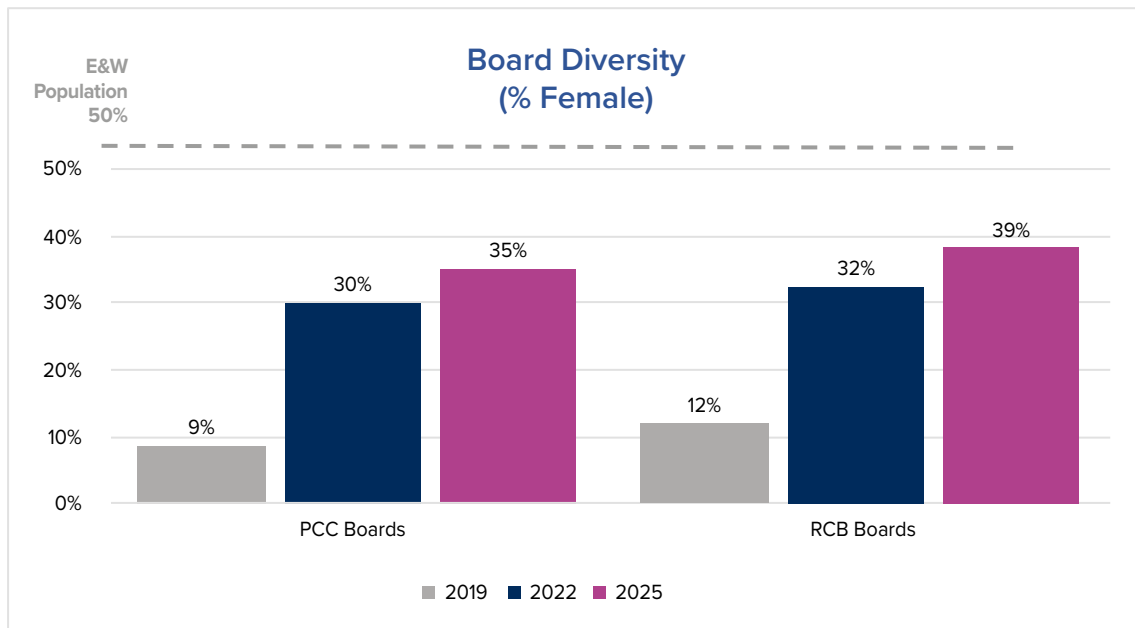
We recognise it will take time to change the leadership profile of cricket but there have been encouraging signs in recent years, particularly in the proportion of women in Chair and Lead Officer (CEO) roles in the recreational game. Under the new County Governance Framework, the game is committed to achieving gender diversity of at least 40% of each gender on every Board by May 2026, with 20 of the 36 RCBs already compliant, compared to 5 of the 18 PCCs.



There has been no progress in the gender diversity in Chair and CEO roles in PCCs, and this is a key focus for the coming years.



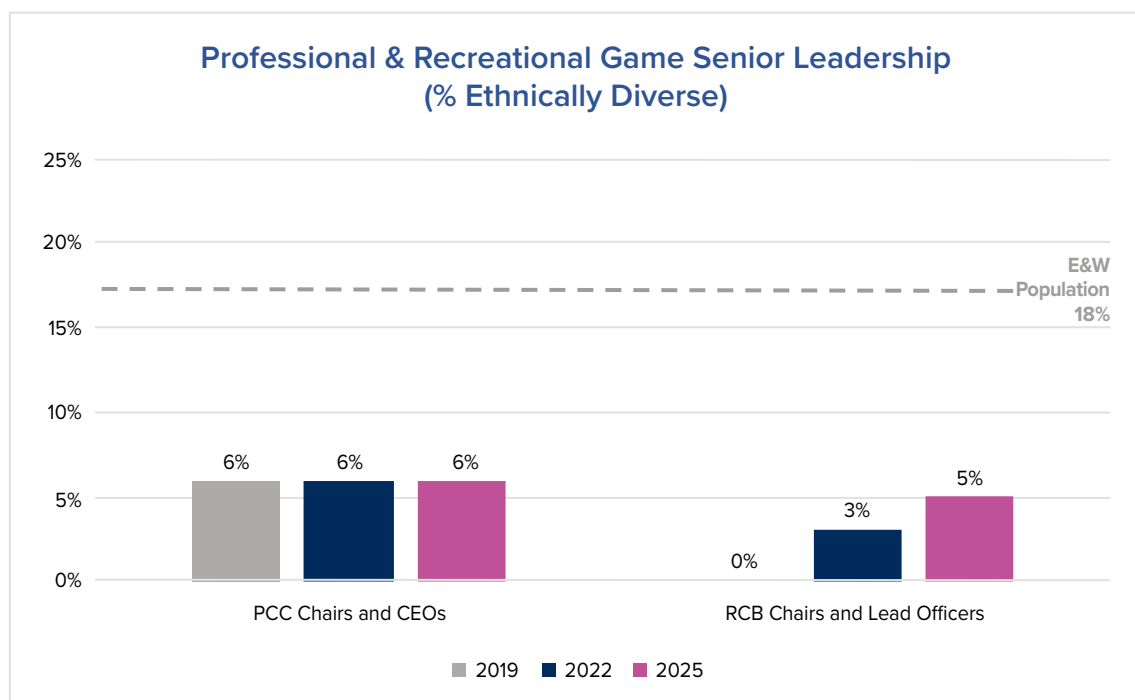
The leadership pipeline of female non-executive directors is strong, and we are committed to supporting women to progress into the most senior leadership roles.



Ethnic diversity in Chair and CEO roles across the game requires further action

Ethnic diversity across Chair and CEO / Lead Officer positions in cricket remains low and interventions in recent years have not yet led to improvements in representation.

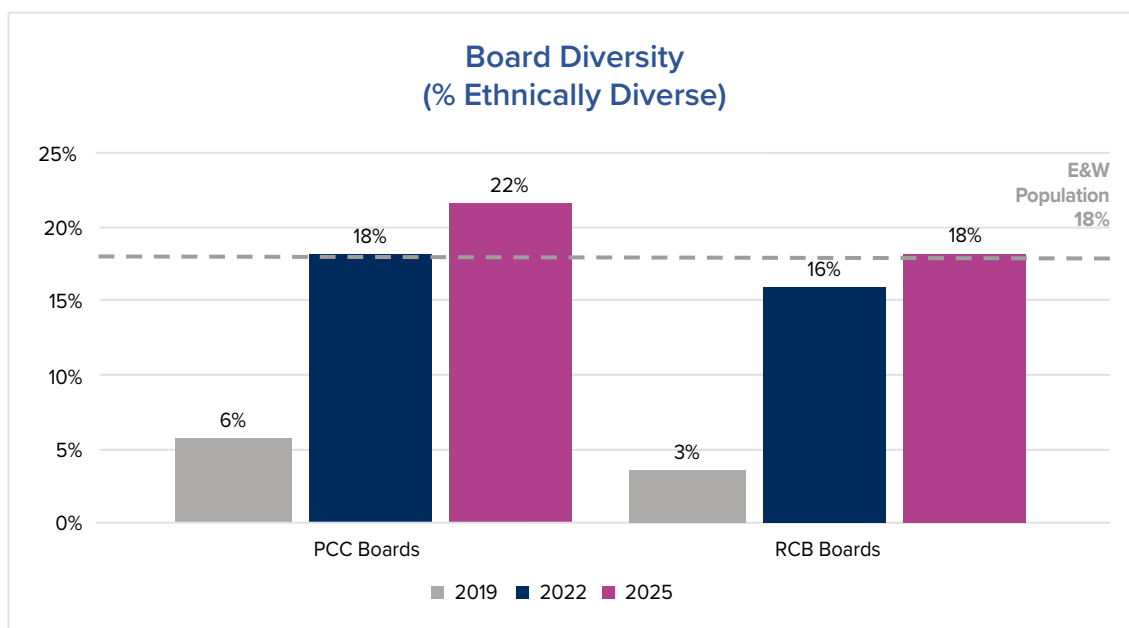
However, with strong representation within Non-Executive Directors across PCCs and RCBs, we are looking at how we can develop the next generation of Chairs from within the game.



Ethnic diversity within cricket's non-executive leadership continues to improve, but there remains a lack of Black representation on Boards

Clear commitment from all county cricket organisations, as well as targets within the CPA, has seen ethnic diversity improve materially since 2019, and the game remains on track to achieve its targets.

Updated CPA Standards from 2025 now include the best practice recommendation in the Parker Review, requiring a minimum of one director from an ethnically diverse community, regardless of local population demographics. Whilst we have seen increases in ethnic representation on boards, only 2.5% of NEDs come from Black backgrounds.



We also encourage county cricket organisations to ensure other forms of diversity are represented on their Boards and monitor this annually through our game-wide census.

Based on the latest data from October 2025, 4% of NEDs identify as LGBTQ+ (in line with England and Wales population), and 73% attended a state school. However, only 5% are disabled or have a long-term illness.

During 2025 we conducted a Future Leaders research project, working with counties to understand their processes, succession planning, and approach to recruiting senior leaders, both executive and non-executive.

The aim of the project is to understand the career path of Chairs, CEOs and Lead Officers to progress into their current position, and the recruitment processes they underwent. The next phase of the Future Leaders Programme will explore talent mapping and understanding the people in the next rung of executive management roles and how they might progress to more senior positions, with a dedicated focus on making cricket's leadership cohort more ethnically diverse.

The ECB's leadership is committed to driving progress on EDI

Executive accountability for EDI sits with the Director of Business Operations & EDI, with a remit to embed EDI into core business operations. Progress continues to be overseen by the ECB Board EDI sub-group which meets quarterly. It is chaired by ECB Chair Richard Thompson, includes ECB CEO Richard Gould and is attended by four further ECB Board members.

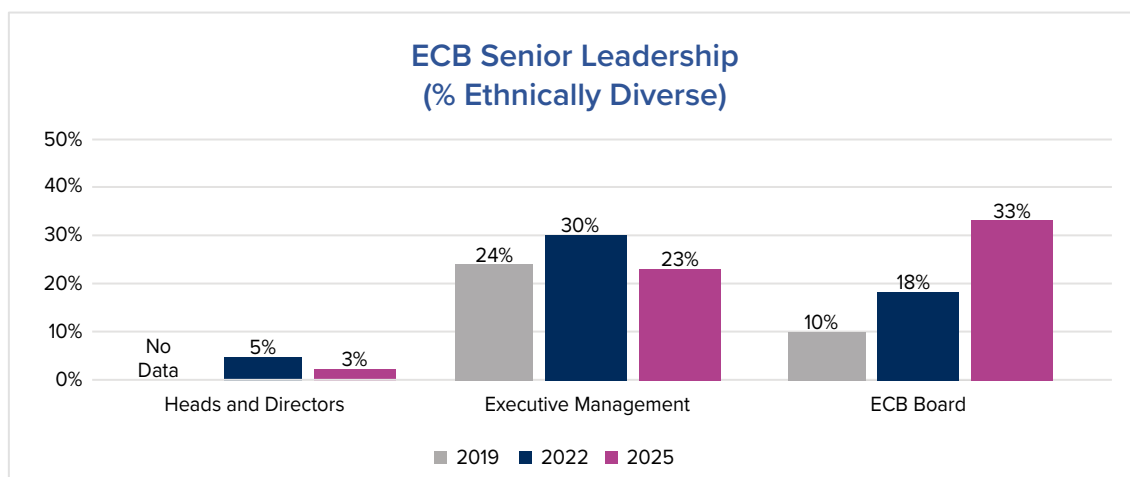
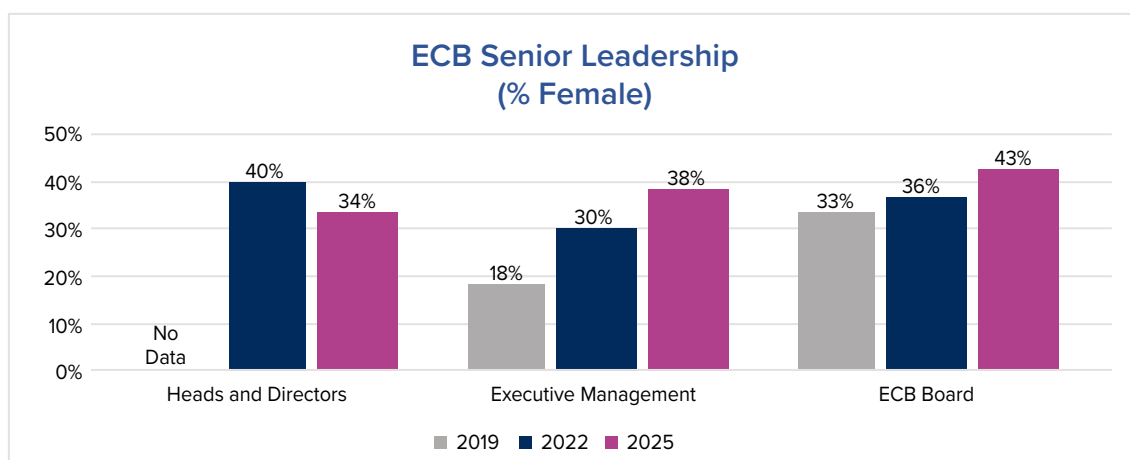
The ECB has strong diversity at Executive and Board level with a focus now required on developing the leadership pipeline

The ECB's board diversity remains strong at 42% female (vs. target of 50%) and 33% ethnically diverse (exceeding our target of 20%). Our Senior Independent Director is female, and we remain committed to ensuring strong diversity on the ECB Board in future recruitment. The ECB works with executive search firms to help increase the diversity of candidates applying for our most senior roles.

Despite improvements in the number of women at Executive and Board level we still do not have enough representation in Head Of and Director level leadership roles. This is a key contributor to the ECB's gender pay gaps. In April 2024, excluding players the ECB's mean gender pay gap was 18.7% and median pay gap was 19.5%.

Ethnic diversity at an Executive and Board level matches or exceeds the England and Wales population, but there remains significant progress to make in ensuring meaningful representation at more junior levels. The ECB's 2024 ethnicity pay gap tells a mixed story. Excluding players, a mean pay gap of -4.1% (in favour of ethnically diverse staff) reflects the representation of ethnically diverse staff in senior executive roles, whereas the median pay gap of 8.6% indicates there is more work to do on ethnically diverse representation in middle and senior management levels.

We track a wide range of diversity metrics across the ECB and seek to represent the diversity of the communities cricket serves. At a combined Head Of, Director and Executive level, 5% of staff identify as LGBTQ+ and 12% are disabled. State school representation varies more, with 77% of Heads of and Directors being state educated, compared to only 54% of the ECB's executive management team.



3

PEOPLE

Introduction

We are committed to ensuring that cricket's workforce represents the communities that the game serves. Whether that is paid or unpaid roles - from coaches and officials through to administrative staff - we have seen improvements over the past five years, but we are also aware of the progress that still needs to be made.

To objectively monitor our progress we developed an internal dashboard that measures cricket's inclusion, diversity, fair access and equity using a standardised grading system of A to F for each metric. The wide range of people working in cricket, and their experiences at work, are central to the dashboard grade.

In the past two years we have improved our overall EDI grade from a D to a C+, with our aim being to increase cricket's grade to B by 2028, and an A beyond that.

The ECB is supporting counties to reach higher EDI standards

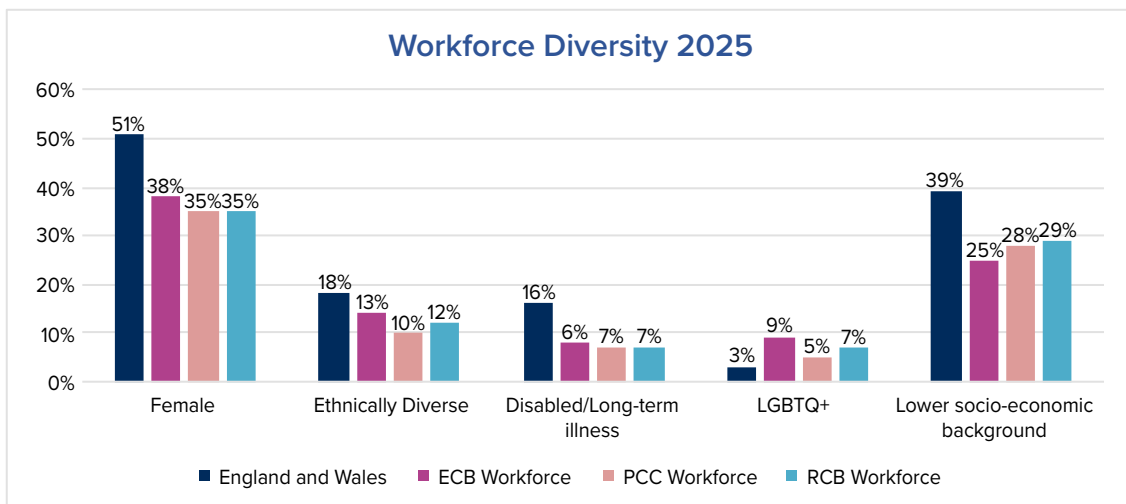
Through the County Partnership Agreement (CPA), the ECB has in place a series of minimum standards for all county organisations on different aspects of EDI. These include providing EDI education for staff and players, Board diversity targets, having executive and Board leads for EDI, and mandatory reporting of discrimination. All counties must also have detailed and public EDI action plans that demonstrate how they are supporting cricket's most inclusive team sport ambition. As of October 2025, the compliance rate against the EDI standards by the counties is 92%.

From 2025, we have introduced minimum standards related to fairer recruitment including the requirement that Professional County Clubs must have an HR resource within their staffing structure. We believe this will help drive greater diversity within their workforce.

The ECB's EDI team holds monthly meetings with county executive and Board EDI Leads and two full-day sessions each year to bring people together to share learnings, ideas and collectively address key challenges facing the game. This group contains a wealth of experience and expertise, bringing valuable insights from across the game and other sectors.

Consistent census data collection enables insight driven interventions

The game-wide EDI census, which has run since 2021, is the most significant source of data and insights for the demographics of people within cricket and how they feel about inclusion. The census is open to cricket's paid workforce, professional players and non-executive directors. In 2025, we had 2,700 respondents and we use this data to shape our initiatives across the game.



Our starting ambition is to match the population of England and Wales within our workforce, with a recognition that given playing profiles, we should expect to over index in some demographics, particularly ethnic diversity and LGBTQ+ representation.

We are seeing positive changes in the gender diversity of staff in the recreational game, with 35% being female in 2025, an increase from 25% in 2021.

Census data shows LGBTQ+ representation continues to grow within the game's workforce

There is strong LGBTQ+ representation across the county network and ECB, as well in women's cricket at a professional domestic and international level.

Through our partnership with Out4Cricket, we continue to look to support inclusive environments throughout the game. For the past two years, we have worked with Out4Cricket to support eight RCBs in creating tailored, local LGBTQ+ inclusion plans. The initiatives vary across counties, but there has been a focus on organising taster sessions for LGBTQ+ communities, supporting the development of LGBTQ+ playing clubs and developing a network of 'ally' clubs as beacons of good practice on LGBTQ+ inclusion.

Following the Supreme Court ruling earlier this year, regulations regarding eligibility for transgender players in women's and girls' cricket were changed, with only those whose biological sex is female now being eligible to play in female-only cricket matches. Transgender women can continue playing in open and mixed cricket. We acknowledge the impact of this decision on transgender women and will continue to work with RCBs to support people impacted by this change in our regulations, while we continue to await updated guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

We are continuing to deliver interventions to improve gender diversity in coaching

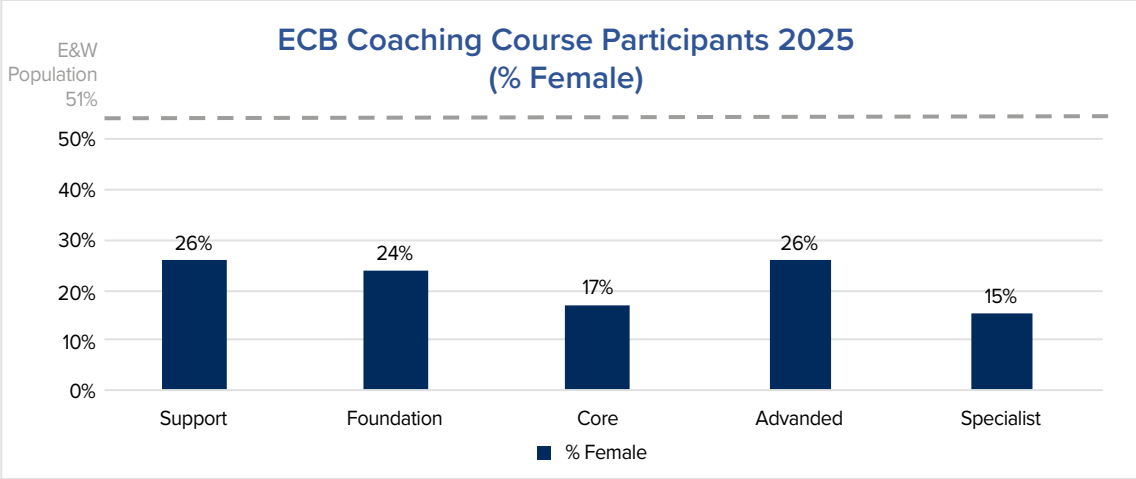
The ECB offers a progressive pathway of five coaching levels, beginning with Support and advancing through Foundation, Core, Advanced, and Specialist levels.

While progress has been made in recent years to increase the diversity of participants, we still need to accelerate this process, particularly at the higher coaching levels. In 2025, the ECB has funded over 1,000 coaching bursaries – of which 51% were awarded to women and 22% to coaches from ethnically diverse communities.

In 2025 there were:

- one of 16 (6%) female head coaches in The Hundred
- one of eight (12%) female head coaches for Tier 1 women’s teams
- no female head coaches in the men’s professional game

To further accelerate change in the professional game we developed an innovative ‘Player to Coach’ programme, which will support female professional players to transition into coaching at the end of their playing careers. The first cohort of 12 players start the programme in November 2025.

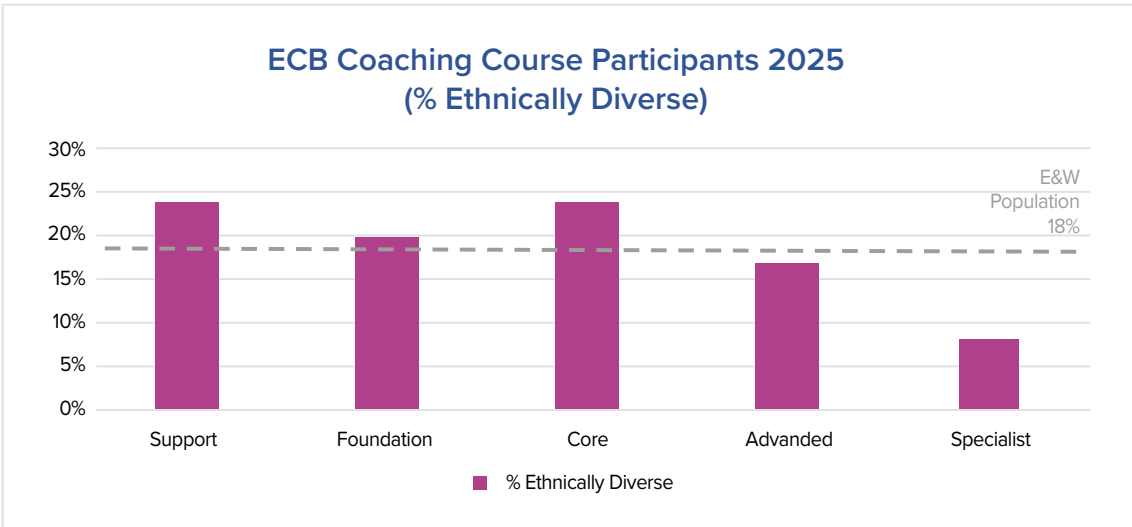


We have seen positive progress around ethnicity diversity in coaching

There have been material interventions in the past five years to improve ethnic diversity in coaching, including changes to that have made it easier to apply to courses

At a professional level, we have seen positive progress in the men’s professional game where 11% of head coaches in the men’s professional game are Black, and one ethnically diverse head coach in The Hundred 2025 (6%). This progress has not been mirrored in the new women’s professional domestic structure however, with no ethnic diversity among the Tier 1 women’s head coaches.

Our focus for 2026 and beyond needs to be maintaining high levels of engagement with our coaching courses, and increasing ethnically diverse representation at Specialist level.

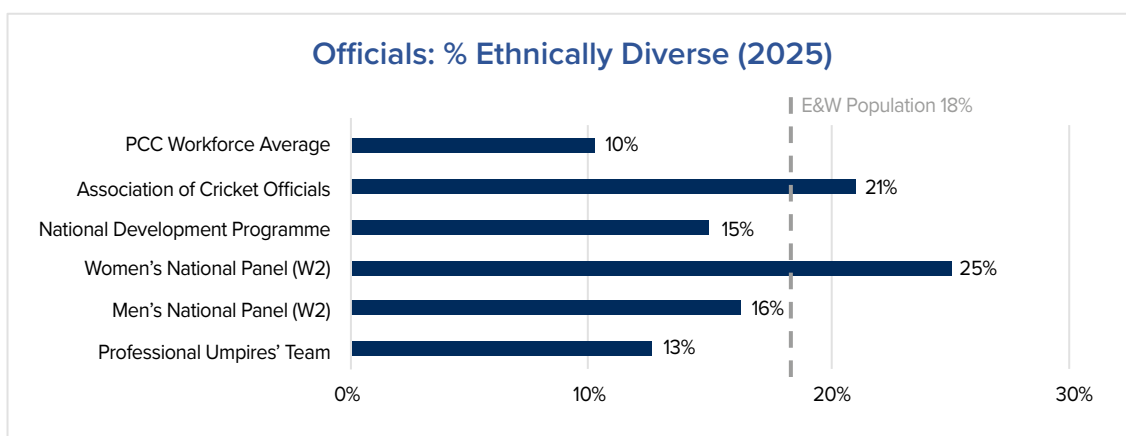


We have more female and ethnically diverse match officials than ever before

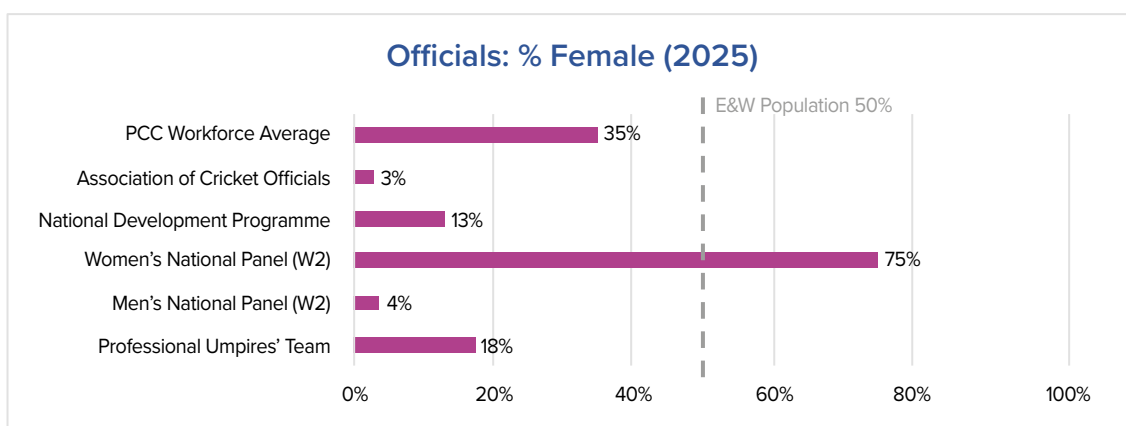
There has been a concerted effort to develop more female and ethnically diverse officials. Over the past three years, we have restructured our approach to umpiring - introducing greater oversight and scrutiny of recruitment and appointments, following a standardised and objective process. Since its launch in November 2023, nearly 500 women and more than 550 ethnically diverse people have attended the ECB's new entry-level umpire training course.

We provided funds to the Association of Cricket Officials (ACO) in several counties to make targeted interventions to recruit more female and ethnically diverse umpires. That project has proved so successful that we have doubled the funding for 2026.

We see promising levels of ethnic diversity within umpiring roles across the game, particularly when compared to the broader PCC workforce.



However, female representation in umpiring will require sustained focus over many years, to increase from its current low base. While we are beginning to see progression of women from the Women's National Panel into more senior umpiring roles, we remain far below the England and Wales population at 51%.



In 2022, we established the Professional Umpires' Team, with Sue Redfern becoming the first woman to sign a full-time professional contract.

We then introduced umpiring pathways for the men's and the women's games. The 56-strong men's game umpiring group (M2) generally umpires men's county Second XI cricket and Recreational Counties cricket. The women's game umpiring group (W2), newly established this year, generally umpires women's Tier 2 cricket.

CASE STUDY

OXFORDSHIRE'S FUTURE LEADERS

Volunteering is a cornerstone of the recreational game, and we are supporting the next generation to get involved.

Our Young Cricket Collective programme is a commitment within our Volunteer Action Plan and is designed to attract and retain volunteers within the recreational game. We have produced a volunteer curriculum for young people so they can gain qualifications in coaching, umpiring, scoring and contribute to creating welcoming environments at their club.

In 2024, Oxfordshire Cricket launched a Future Leaders Academy to equip young people with the skills and confidence they need not only to volunteer in cricket but thrive as leaders in their communities.

The Future Leaders Academy is a free programme open to all young people aged 13-18, whether they are affiliated to a cricket club or not. In fact, participants come from a wide variety of sporting backgrounds, reflecting the programme's inclusivity.

One of the key aspects of the Academy is its alignment with the Duke of Edinburgh Award volunteering hours. This gives young people the opportunity to earn a prestigious qualification while gaining practical experience that benefits them and their communities.

The launch of the Future Leaders Academy brought together 187 participants from 43 clubs and 58 schools, with a mix of backgrounds and interests. In its first year, the Academy offered a range of eight modules focusing on areas such as coaching, umpiring, scoring, safeguarding and first aid. Participants are required to complete four mandatory modules and can choose from up to four optional ones that include nutrition, psychology, grounds workshops and marketing. These modules are designed to be practical, hands on, and immediately applicable to the participants' roles as volunteers.

Initial feedback from participants, parents, and facilitators has been overwhelmingly positive with 94% of parents noting a positive influence on their child's leadership and communication skills, while 88% of parents also observed a positive effect on their child's mental health.

The long-term vision is to create a sustainable pipeline of volunteers and leaders who can continue to support the local cricket scene and other community initiatives for years to come. After its successful first year, Oxfordshire Cricket was rewarded with ECB investment through our Strategic EDI Fund to grow the programme faster.



4

GOVERNANCE

Introduction

Cricket's governance has been strengthened over the past two years, and new governance standards currently being adopted will ensure this continues. However, more work is needed to bring greater diversity to the game's most senior non-executive leadership positions.

Governance structures now better reflect the importance of EDI and the women's game

The game has taken several steps to make its fundamental governance arrangements stronger and more inclusive. Most notably:

- The importance of EDI and protections for key groups have been enshrined in the ECB Articles of Association.
- The ECB Articles have also been updated to incorporate the same protections for women's professional domestic cricket as the men's game.
- The ownership and governance model of professional women's domestic cricket has been aligned with that of the men's game.

Articles of Association: 3.1.5 to uphold and enhance the traditions and spirit of the sport of Cricket, fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment across the sport, including the promotion and delivery of equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Cricket organisations are embracing good governance and working towards best practice

During 2020-24, county cricket organisations adopted Phase 1 of the ECB's County Governance Framework – embedding foundational governance arrangements and meeting basic Board diversity targets. In 2025 the game adopted an enhanced Framework, including extended Board diversity targets. All counties are expected to adopt its Gold Tier in the next two years.

To achieve Gold Tier status, counties will need to show evidence of embracing good governance. For example, carrying out external Board effectiveness reviews, running strong non-executive director induction processes and developing succession plans.

To ensure genuine adoption, a new independently validated Gold Accreditation Scheme has been introduced, delivered by sports governance experts ITrustSport. To date, Gloucestershire Cricket Foundation and Somerset Cricket Foundation have successfully achieved Gold Accreditation.

Work is under way to support greater diversity of PCC members

Fifteen of the 18 Professional County Clubs are private membership organisations, with members having a stake in how the game is governed. Based on 2025 data, an average of 5% of members are ethnically diverse and 11% are women. Growing and diversifying county memberships is a key objective within the ECB's EDI Action Plan, as well as supporting PCCs to increase commercial revenue and become more financially sustainable.

Over 16,500 people completed a membership survey this year to help the game better understand what current county members value and to gain more insights into what would encourage more cricket fans to become members of a county club. In 2026, we will look to work with PCCs to test and pilot new initiatives to further diversify their membership bases.

Counties that demonstrate strong governance can unlock additional funding

The Game Changer Fund (GCF) launched in 2024 and helps RCBs to attract external investment. To receive funding, RCBs must be 'ECB Ready to Invest': they must have a bold plan for initiatives that can make a measurable, transformative difference to their communities, be compliant with CPA Standards and show evidence of strong governance.

To date, we have conditionally approved seven applications, committing £847k of GCF investment, and unlocking an additional £740k into the recreational game.



CASE STUDY

GLOUCESTERSHIRE CRICKET FOUNDATION – GOLD STANDARD

This year, Gloucestershire Cricket Foundation became the first county organisation to achieve Gold standard governance under the ECB's County Partnership Agreement (CPA).

The award was made after Gloucestershire completed the ECB's new Gold Accreditation Scheme, run independently by ITrustSport.

“

Achieving Gold standard governance is a significant achievement for any county. Our congratulations go to Gloucestershire Cricket Foundation for their hard work and diligence in meeting this standard. Much of the Gold tier is related to the culture and behaviours of well-governed Boards as it is about structures or policies. We look forward to seeing many more county organisations showcasing their governance credentials in the coming months and years ahead.

Ed Ringe
Head of Governance at the ECB

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“

At Gloucestershire Cricket Foundation we see good governance as vital to ensure all our organisation operates at the highest standards, so we are proud that this award recognises our commitment.

Steve Silk
CEO of Gloucestershire
Cricket Foundation

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Gloucestershire
Cricket Foundation

5

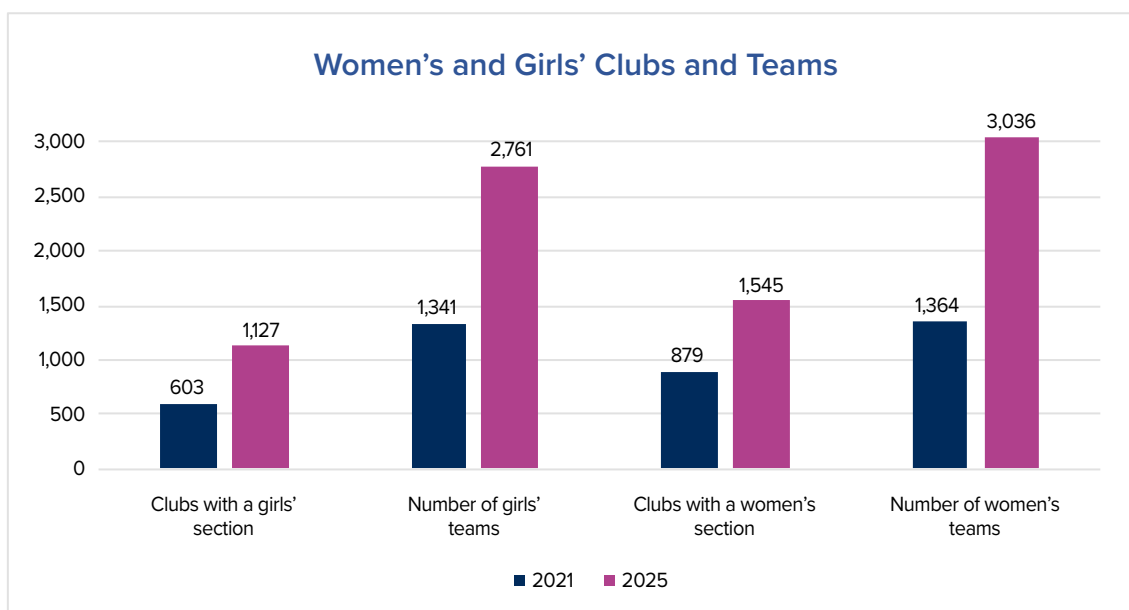
WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' CRICKET

Introduction

There continues to be exceptional growth and progress in both professional and recreational cricket for women and girls. The staging of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 provides an important opportunity to grow the audience for women's cricket, increase its commercial value, create role models and inspire more players and participants.

More and more women and girls are playing grassroots cricket

Our clubs and leagues welcome more players every year with the number of women's and girls' teams doubling since 2021. There is ongoing consultation with women's and girls' leagues across the game to establish a sustainable national recreational women's cricket league structure across England and Wales.



Our commercial partners are supporting the growth of women's and girls' cricket

The Metro Bank Girls in Cricket Fund, co-designed and jointly funded by Metro Bank and the ECB, focuses on recruiting, educating, supporting, and celebrating the people that make girls' cricket happen in clubs, with the ambition to triple the number of girls' teams at clubs by the end of 2028.

In conjunction with Metro Bank, we recently launched the [Seeing is Believing](#) campaign, a bank of images that showcases women's and girls' cricket, in a bid to close the image visibility gap between the men's game and the women's game. The collection is the most viewed on the ECB Resource Hub since it went live, averaging close to 50 views per day since launch. There are now more than 500 free-to-use images of women's and girls' cricket within this image bank.

The ECB Partnership with Initial Washroom Hygiene has seen Period Dignity dispensers and sanitary bins installed free of charge in 750 cricket clubs across England and Wales. This partnership continues to ensure that cricket clubs are inclusive and welcoming environments, and that menstruation is not something that holds back women and girls from being involved in cricket.

In 2025, a record number of girls (30,627) took part in All Stars and Dynamos, our national youth programmes. Of that number, 8,363 received bursaries, supported by Sky, which accounted for 43% of all bursaries.

A new women's domestic structure is growing the professional game

A fundamental restructure of women's domestic cricket was delivered in 2025, creating a three-tier structure involving all counties to further grow the depth and reach of the women's professional game. The ECB has committed a total of £8m new funding per year into women's domestic cricket by 2027 – taking annual investment to around £19m.

We launched two new professional women's competitions in 2025: the Vitality Blast (won by Surrey) and the Metro Bank One Day Cup (won by Lancashire Thunder). These were staged alongside the launch of a new knock-out cup competition, the Vitality T20 Women's County Cup (won by Lancashire Thunder) which saw teams competing from across all three tiers.

In 2025, all PCCs hosted double-headers with their men's teams in the inaugural Vitality Blast Women's competition and welcomed over 97,000 ticket holders. This is more than three times the attendance for the final year of the Kia Super League in 2019. Hampshire drew crowds of more than 3,000 for their women's matches in their four double-headers while Somerset welcomed an attendance of 2,328 for a standalone match against Lancashire Thunder. The Tier 1 Vitality Blast finals day – involving The Blaze, Warwickshire Bears and ultimate winners Surrey – attracted 6,245 people to the Kia Oval.

Almost 18,000 attended the Metro Bank One Day Cup women's Tier 1 competition, and a record 330,000 fans attended women's matches in The Hundred.

We are making cricket an exciting career option for women, although there is still a long way to pay parity

The number of women's professional domestic cricketers has risen from 0 in 2019 to 41 in 2020, and now 129 in 2025. This will grow to around 150 next year when Yorkshire become the ninth county in Tier 1 and will grow further in 2027 when Glamorgan join Tier 1.

One of the most meaningful commitments to gender equality was the equalisation of the minimum domestic salary for men's and women's players, set at £28,000 in 2025, and aligning terms of employment for male and female domestic players to create one consistent contract template for professional domestic cricketers.

Alongside the rise in the number of professional players, the minimum total salary pot for women's domestic players has increased from £720,000 in 2021 to £4m in 2025 for the eight Tier 1 counties – effectively doubling every year.



The men's equivalent pot for 2025 was around £24m across 18 Professional Counties but drives much greater revenue generation, which we are still working towards in the women's game. We are on a decade long-term journey towards a position of commercial sustainability, and in that time the ECB will invest around £400m to make women's cricket commercially vibrant and viable.

Salaries for women in The Hundred have more than tripled in three years

The average salary in The Hundred women's competition has also increased from £8,000 in 2021 (the year of launch) to £29,100 in 2025. Over that same period, the lowest salary band increased from £3,600 to £10,000.

Next year, the top salary will rise to around £130,000, from £15,000 in 2021, for the month-long competition. The minimum salary will also rise to £15,000, matching the highest salary band when the competition began in 2021.

In 2026 the total spend on women's salaries in The Hundred will be 43% of the men's, an increase from 25% in 2022.

We are investing to drive commercial growth

Our investment in the domestic structure, The Hundred and the England Women team's helps to grow the audience for women's cricket which, in turn, increases the commercial and media value of the women's game.

We are seeing positive progress in attendances, with a total England Women's attendance in 2024 of 105,023 – the highest seen in a non-Ashes year. For context, the total attendance was 23,688 in 2018 and 32,281 in 2019. In the 2025 season The Hundred women's competition again broke the global record for total attendance at a women's cricket competition, with 349,401 fans in attendance. We are committed to growing audiences – both in venue and through broadcast – to help develop a commercially sustainable game.

We want a thriving, viable and robust future for women's and girls' cricket at every level. Any ambition we have for true pay parity must acknowledge the disparity in current earning potential between men and women in the global franchise league market and how that situation influences our own decisions around player remuneration.

More women are also becoming umpires

We have also been investing in developing more female umpires and match officials. Further data is available in Chapter 3 - People, but across both professional and recreational cricket, the number of female umpires has been increasing.

“

Umpiring really is the best seat in the house. It allows me to switch off from work and everything else. I've a busy life, but when I step onto the pitch I don't think about anything else. For me, cricket is the release.

Kelly Alcock,
Staffordshire-based Umpire

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CASE STUDY

AMBER CASELY, SOMERSET CRICKET FOUNDATION

The Metro Bank Girls in Cricket Fund has seven pillars: Ignite, Aspire, Enhance, Network, Reach, Celebrate and Evolve. That last pillar focuses on identifying, supporting and selecting new female coach developers, and the benefits are evident with 56% of the 2024-25 cohort being female.

Amber Casely, Women and Girls Development Officer at Somerset Cricket Foundation, was part of a cohort of 24 women on the 2024-25 programme that kicked off in Derby.

“

Throughout the Evolve training, I was told that I had the expertise, I just needed to have self-belief, I really wanted to improve and knew I had the skills, I just lacked in confidence. The delivery team supported me and coached me through it, providing me with tools to help me to reflect. When it came to my final assessment to be signed off as a Coach Developer, I felt so much more self-assured and positive. My assessor said I was like I was a new person! The Evolve training has supported me in becoming a great coach educator, but also in improving my professional and life skills.

I now feel like I can make such a big difference in growing the game. I am a strong believer that if you can see it, you can be it. And so, for other female coaches it is important to have somebody who's relatable to you and 'gets you' a little bit more. That's the role I now play.

I think having female coaches is important, but I do also feel equipping male coaches and up-skilling them to be able to have conversations [for example, about menstrual cycles and puberty] are important. That's what is great about the Metro Bank Girls in Cricket Fund, it is inclusive for everyone who is supporting women's and girls' cricket.

Amber Casely

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6

DISABILITY CRICKET

Introduction

This has been a pioneering year in disability cricket with England Men's ground-breaking mixed disability series against India providing a template for the future of disability cricket at international level. The Disability Premier League (DPL) continues to thrive while the Disability Cricket Champion Clubs programme is expanding with additional resources to help the recreational game become more inclusive.

We have a good understanding of the areas where we have not yet progressed the sport as much as we would like. For women's and girls' disability cricket we have work to do to ensure that our structure and support evolve in line with the growth of the men's disability game.

We are ambitious about becoming the most inclusive sport for children with disabilities and special educational needs

Through our new multi-year partnership with the Lord's Taverners, we are becoming a leading sport for disabled children. Lord's Taverners programmes continue to make a difference to thousands of young lives through their Super 1s Hubs, schools programmes and Table Cricket.

With increased ECB investment from 2023, Lord's Taverners delivers cricket programmes to 50% of the approximately 1,000 SEND and ALN schools in England and Wales, reaching almost 26,000 young people in 2024. Our ambition to be the most inclusive team sport sees us seeking to offer cricket to 100% of the SEND and ALN schools across England & Wales.

More recreational clubs are championing disability cricket

The Disability Cricket Champion Club (DCCC) programme supports clubs to welcome individuals with additional needs and disabilities to play, follow, officiate and volunteer in cricket. The aim is to create a truly equitable club game that welcomes everyone.

DCCCs are eligible for a £500 annual support grant, while clubs new to the scheme receive a bag of kit specially designed to support special educational needs and disability cricket. In 2024, the ECB funded 138 DCCCs and in 2025 we are on track to fund 158, our highest total yet.



CASE STUDY

BEAULIEU CRICKET CLUB – DISABILITY CRICKET CHAMPION CLUB

Beaulieu Cricket Club serves as an access route to cricket for people with disabilities in the New Forest area of Hampshire.

The club has been a long-standing Lord's Taverners Super 1s hub and is now one of the success stories of our Disability Champion Club programme. Beaulieu has been providing cricketing opportunities to a range of youngsters with disabilities, who have since progressed into the Sunday friendly side and the competitive Saturday league cricket sides.

Two of the club's Super 1s participants have gone to become fully qualified coaches employed by Hampshire Cricket Board.

There is an annual hardball fixture between Beaulieu CC and a Hampshire mixed disability team, which is extremely competitive and well attended by the local community.

Ian Bowman, Chair of Beaulieu CC, explains that embracing disability cricket has helped sustain the club through challenging times following the Covid-19 pandemic. Beaulieu is a famous village but with few families and with larger clubs in the local area.

"We had a thriving colts section but this faded away after Covid. In contrast our work with disability cricket has been a great success," says Bowman. "It started in a small way when we were asked if we could provide facilities for an evening coaching session by one of our members, who is a special needs teacher and had a professional interest.

"It has been a joy for us to see boys from our Super 1s group grow in confidence and succeed on Sundays and then in league cricket."

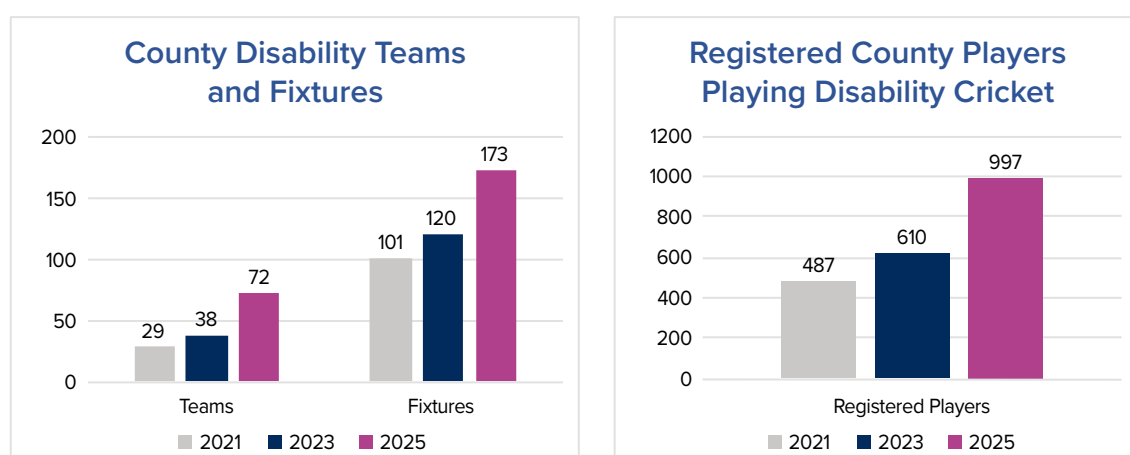


There is more to do to develop disability cricket offers for women and girls

The Lord's Taverners report a 23% female participation rate in their Super 1's programme, which will provide the foundation for more women and girls to progress towards disability performance pathways in future. However, it will take time to develop this critical mass of female disability participants to feed a talent pathway. There is a growing need to address the lack of a formal pathway for women and girls in Disability cricket. Our ambition is ultimately to deliver a women's DPL in the future.

The domestic disability game continues to grow at pace

Since 2021, the number of county teams playing disability cricket through the D40 and S9 competitions, and since 2024 S9 Challenge, has more than doubled and there are now almost 1,000 registered players across England and Wales helping to provide a strong pipeline of talent for the DPL.



The Disability Premier League is an established part of the cricket ecosystem

The fourth edition of the DPL, which set the template for mixed disability cricket, was supported by Toyota and, once again, showed off talent and competitiveness in abundance. The final was due to be broadcast live on Sky Sports once more, only for rain to intervene.

The DPL has become increasingly embedded within the ECB portfolio of professional competitions, further bringing disability cricket into the mainstream. There were 86 players in the 2025 selection draft, an increase from 60 in 2022 when the competition launched.

We are discussing next steps for the DPL with key stakeholders, to understand the best ways to drive more regional and local interest and support for each team and increase commercial opportunities.

We are showcasing mixed disability cricket on the international stage

For the first time at international level, players with different impairments came together in an innovative mixed disability series between England Men and India this summer with England winning the series 6-1.

Players from England's Physical Disability, Learning Disability and Deaf squads faced India in a seven-match IT20 series that included a fixture at Lord's as part of the MCC's Disability Cricket Day. Each game was played at a Professional County ground and was live streamed via the ECB, and broadcast live to an audience of millions in India. The sixth match of the series was broadcast live on Sky Sports, the channel's first international disability match.

The principle of the shift towards a mixed disability format is to promote a more sustainable future for disability cricket at elite level. There is currently an inconsistent approach across different countries which limits opportunities for investment and growth. It is hoped that other nations, who may be earlier in their disability cricket journey, embrace the concept and our ultimate goal is Paralympic inclusion. We recognise that a mixed disability set-up creates additional challenges and may disappoint some players who would previously have been selected for England in their impairment group.

England Men's mixed disability side will now play a return series in India in January 2026 and the hope is for South Africa to tour England next summer.

“

I think mixed disability cricket is the way forward. It creates a much more competitive environment. It makes it so much harder to get in an England squad, so you feel like you've earned it a bit more.

Liam O'Brien, England Men's Mixed Disability vice-captain

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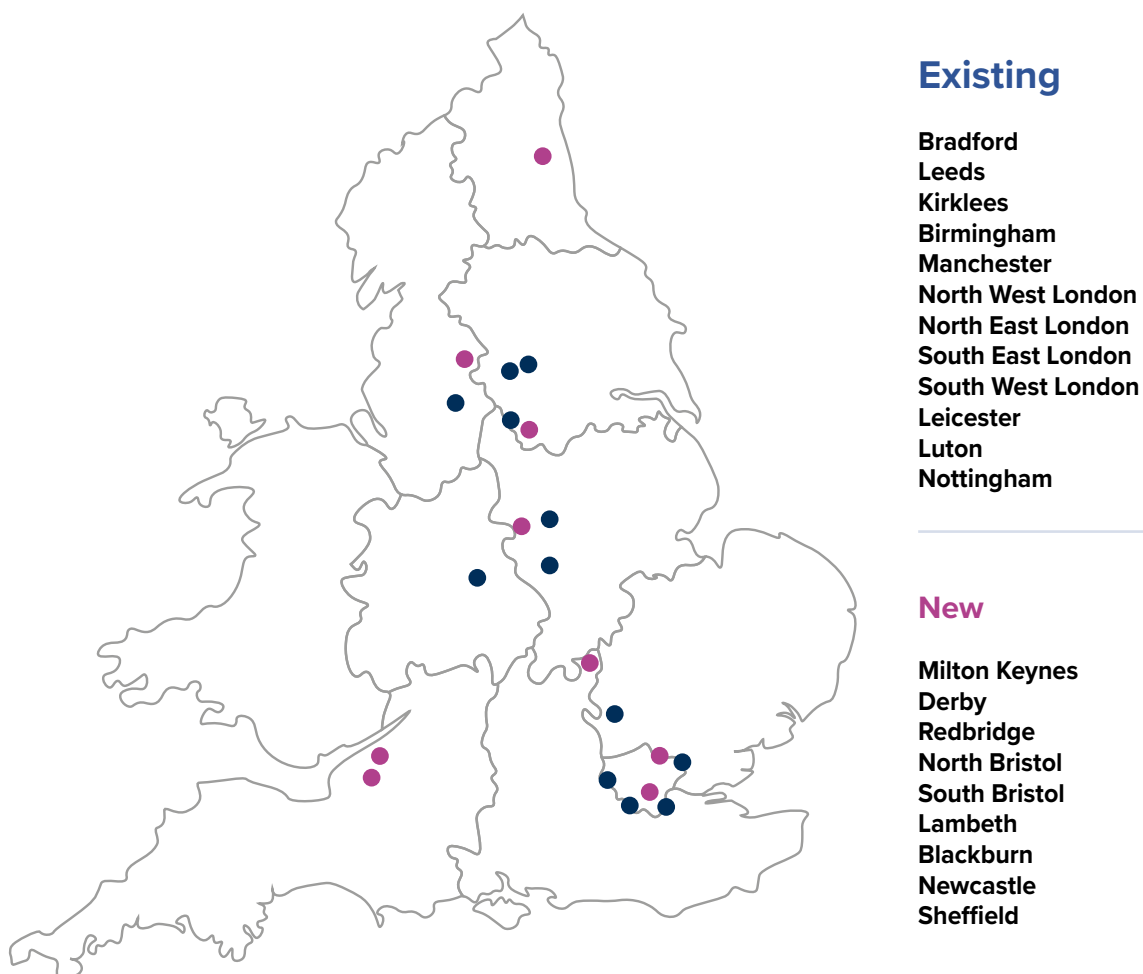
ETHNICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Introduction

Our Ethnically Diverse Communities Action Plan, published in 2024, seeks to engage more people from South Asian and African Caribbean communities by focusing investment and resource on major cities that are home to the majority of ethnically diverse communities in England and Wales. The plan includes pillars focusing on tackling and preventing racism, celebrating culture, and developing the next generation of cricketers.

Our Cricket Cities programme is breaking down barriers for ethnically diverse communities

In 2025 through our network of Cricket Boards and Foundations we invested £1.2m in 21 'Cricket Cities' – the most ethnically diverse urban areas – a significant increase from the 12 supported previously. In the coming two years, a further £2.3m will be invested.



The Cricket Cities programme recognises the needs of different areas will be different and has focused in its first year on implementing a place-based approach that assesses the whole cricket ecosystem, what support is required, and how best to deliver it. The programme focuses first on listening to local South Asian and Black communities, creating partnerships, and delivering outcomes that work for the community.

We have formed partnerships with local community organisations to create bespoke opportunities to play the game, such as Women's Cricket Hubs, and a tape ball offer. For the next three years, we will continue to nurture and develop these relationships to build trust and ensure the specific needs of each community are met.

The work of the Cricket Regulator is also essential in tackling racism within the game, and ensuring that the new community groups engaged through the Cricket Cities programme and anywhere across cricket have a safe and positive experience



CASE STUDY

MILTON KEYNES – A NEW CRICKET CITY

Milton Keynes, in Buckinghamshire, became one of eight new Cricket Cities in 2025.

A dedicated team within the city has developed an inclusive cricket offer while also focusing on understanding and building connections with local ethnically diverse communities.

One of the areas of focus has been raising the profile of cricket throughout the city. Free-to-access street cricket sessions have helped 50 young people from in Milton Keynes from Indian and Pakistani communities take up the game.

A new city-wide tape ball league was established with 18 teams taking part in the first year, giving more opportunities for communities to play cricket in all its formats. Other initiatives include driving female participation through a Coffee with Cricket programme, led by the community and offering a welcoming environment.

This is what a Cricket City looks like: a Recreational County Board understanding their local community and working in partnership with the community to deliver inclusive programmes.



We are continuing to build trust with Black communities

We are committed to continuing to support Black communities and Black-led clubs in cricket, earning their trust and working with them to support their development. In 2024 Devon Malcolm OBE became the ECB's first Black Communities Liaison Officer and has been leading on ECB's activities including:

- **Research:** Mapping of Black communities and Black-led clubs across England and Wales.
- **Club Development:** Directly supporting the development of Black clubs, competitions and activations nationally.
- **Local advocacy:** Advising Recreational Cricket Boards (RCB) on how to better engage and (alongside the African Caribbean Cricket Festival) support various local events.

We continue to work with several Black-led cricket clubs providing facilities, club development and club assets. This has included the funding of an extended and renovated pavilion for Leeds Caribbean Cricket Club, supporting the development of a new pavilion at Sheffield Caribbean Cricket Club (with planning permission recently obtained) and the construction of new practice facilities at Bristol West Indian Phoenix Cricket Club.

We are supporting and celebrating South Asian and Black communities in cricket

This year we have staged two major events which celebrate the ways that South Asian and Black communities contribute to the rich tapestry of cricket in England and Wales.

African Caribbean Cricket Festival

The festival is a vibrant annual event celebrating the profound legacy and influence of Black communities in English cricket.

The third festival took place at Leicestershire's Uptonsteel County Ground, featuring matches, music, traditional food, games and coaching for young people.



National Tape Ball Competition

Our competition aims to recognise the profound role the format has in South Asian communities and highlight their contribution to the recreational game.

The ECB's second National Tape Ball Competition took place at Emirates Old Trafford and expanded from 18 to 32 teams with significant growth among women's and girls' teams, which doubled from last year.



“

Seeing all of us (Alex Tudor, Curtly Ambrose, Courtney Walsh, Chris Jordan, Devon Malcolm) in the same room is unheard of. I don't think you'll see that again other than at an event like this.

Jofra Archer

”



By working with partners, we are creating opportunities to play and develop, and tackling barriers to engagement

We continue to work with and fund our strategic partners, the African Caribbean Engagement programme (ACE) and the National Asian Cricket Council (NACC).

The ECB's partnership with ACE runs cricket programmes in seven locations: North and South London, Bristol, Birmingham, Sheffield, Nottingham and Manchester, delivering in schools and local community hubs. So far in 2025, ACE has reached more than 12,000 young people, with graduates Amy Wheeler and Troy Henry making their professional debuts this summer for The Blaze and Sussex CCC respectively.

Davina Perrin has also been [mentored](#) by the ACE founder, Ebony Rainford-Brent. Perrin announced herself to the wider cricketing world with a 42-ball century for Northern Superchargers against London Spirit in The Hundred Eliminator at the Kia Oval in August 2025.

The NACC is our key advisory partner that supports the ECB's and County Boards' engagement with South Asian communities. Over the past year this includes:

- **Advocacy:** Supporting Recreational Cricket Boards through advisory groups and planned engagements throughout the season.
- **Club development:** Supporting 15 clubs directly with advice on developing participation, improving facilities and recruiting volunteers.
- **Women's and Girls' Cricket:** Nationally supporting the growth of South Asian women's and girls' fixtures and partnering with Take Her Lead and Mind to support self-care.
- **Increasing opportunities:** In partnership with the Grounds Management Association and MCC, delivering an inclusive event with the aim of growing the number of ethnically diverse groundskeepers.

A focus for next year is working with both organisations to make the most of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in England and Wales.

8

STATE SCHOOLS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BARRIERS

Introduction

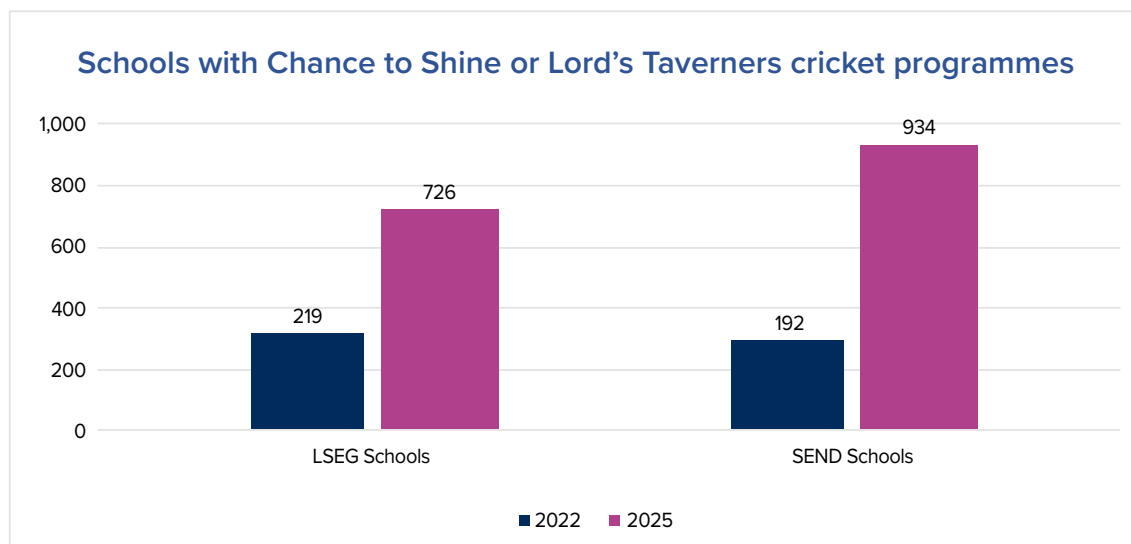
State schools play a vital role in helping us make cricket more widely accessible to young people. Through our State School Action Plan, we are working to increase participation, improve access and support state school talent, addressing the historic underrepresentation of state educated pupils at all levels of the game.

We have made a long-term commitment to primary school cricket

Our partnership with Chance to Shine and Recreational Cricket Boards delivers cricket in 4,268 primary schools, approximately 25% of all primary schools in England and Wales, with many other primary schools delivering cricket themselves or through other partners.

For the first time, we have agreed a multi-year partnership with Chance to Shine from 2025-28 confirming our commitment to providing high quality cricket opportunities in primary schools.

Year on year, a higher proportion of this funding is being used to deliver to children who are least likely to have other opportunities to play cricket. This includes lower socio-economic groups (LSEG) in schools where 40% or more pupils receive free school meals and in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND or ALN in Wales) settings. Further detail on our work in SEND schools can be found in Chapter 6 – Disability Cricket.



We are training teachers to deliver cricket in secondary schools

The ECB has historically invested in primary schools cricket, but new investment supporting teachers is designed to boost the number of children playing cricket in state secondary schools. We have spent 2025 designing and testing our Cricket for Teachers upskilling programme, working with an initial 11 Recreational Boards.

During a training session, teachers are shown how to deliver fun and engaging softball cricket activities for pupils in Years 7 to 9 (ages 11-14). The programme has been designed from an educator's perspective, so it aligns with the national curriculum and can also be adapted for SEND and ALN settings. Once teachers are trained, schools can order a free high-quality, softball kit bag, funded by the ECB.

We hope to reach 300 schools and 500 teachers in the 2025-26 academic year, impacting an estimated 162,000 students. Our aim is to train more than 1,000 teachers by 2030.

We are introducing a new competition format for state secondary schools

In 2025, we carried out a comprehensive review of state-school cricket competitions which exposed several key challenges, such as low teacher confidence, lack of equipment or appropriate facilities, transport costs and lack of appropriate playing offers.

Only 2% of state-school students currently play in competitive inter-school or intra-school competitions. The new format will be a mass participation, softball competition for Year 7-9 state secondary school students. Initially delivered as an intra-school competition to remove transport costs as a barrier, it will use the same equipment from the Cricket for Teachers programme and can be delivered indoors or outdoors in a range of locations.

Our mass participation competition will complement existing state-school offers such as Chance to Compete and the ECB Girls' Indoor Competition. We welcomed the MCC and MCC Foundation launching a new national hardball competition for 2026, the Barclays Knight-Stokes Cup, with over 1,000 teams already registered for a chance at participating in the final at Lord's.

Talented state-school players now have access to additional coaching and match play opportunities

Increasing participation in state schools is a key focus, but we have also taken significant steps to increase access to coaching and development opportunities for talented state school cricketers.

Through our partnership with MCC Foundation we have been able to expand the number of Hubs offering training and match play opportunities out of school for talented youngsters. And through our reforms to the Talent Pathway, state-school pupils are now able to access additional hours of coaching to help even the playing field with independent school pupils. There is more information on these initiatives in Chapter 9 - Talent Pathway and the Professional Game.

We are trialling innovative approaches to improve cricket facilities for state-school pupils

We know that access to facilities is a barrier for many state schools and we are exploring new ways of addressing this challenge. We recently opened our second all-weather dome in Darwen, Lancashire, designed to host cricket year-round, regardless of weather conditions. It features three full-length lanes and can also be used for match play, transforming into a flexible space for coaching, matches and community events.

Boosting access to cricket for state-school pupils is at the heart of the project. Darwen Cricket Club and Lancashire Cricket Foundation will work together to deliver cricket programmes in partnership with more than 13 state schools in the local area. Activity will take place in schools, in the dome and on the cricket ground.

In 2025, we secured an initial £1.5m of government funding to build 2 new domes in Farington, Lancashire and Luton, broadening access to cricket facilities. While it is only the first tranche of funding released from the UK Government and Sport England, we are working with them to identify future dome funding opportunities to increase access more quickly.

There is more information in Chapter 10 - Facilities on our work in this area.

9

TALENT PATHWAY AND THE PROFESSIONAL GAME

Introduction

In October 2024, we launched our Talent Pathway Action Plan – a strategic commitment to making our talent pathway more diverse, inclusive, and accessible. The plan set out five priorities designed to ensure that every talented young cricketer can progress, regardless of their background or personal circumstances. This plan is integral to our efforts to improve representation and diversity across professional cricket.

Financial barriers to the talent pathway are being removed

We know cricket can be expensive and we have committed to identifying ways we can support those parents for whom cost is a barrier. The ECB worked with Loughborough University to identify the right questions to ask families when they came into the pathway, to uncover where additional, individualised support was needed.

Following a pilot scheme with ten counties, a new ‘common approach’ document was co-written with counties, offering a consistent way to identify and support families facing financial barriers. Together with an explainer video, this was circulated to all counties in July 2025 and will be implemented into their programmes for 2025-26. Identified parents are then supported appropriately with options such as bursary funding, reduced costs, provision of equipment, or tailored support to remove other barriers (such as transport options or alternative training times).

We have restructured the talent pathway and doubled the number of spaces at the first stage

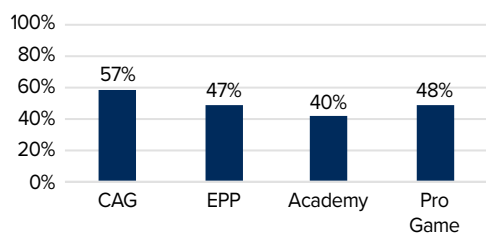
We have stopped U10-U12 County Age Groups (CAG) programmes, which means team selection now starts later, broadening the base and allowing twice as many young people to play. We worked with counties to co-design an Early Engagement Programme (EEP) which consists of a free-to-access trial, coaching and match play.

EEPs will launch across all 38 counties during 2025-26, providing access to coaching and match play for over 7,000 boys and girls aged U10-U12.

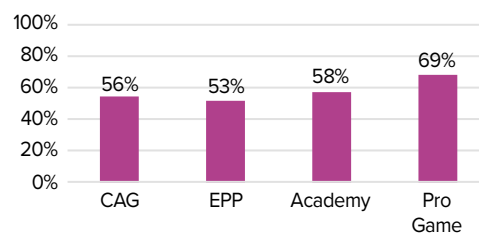
We are supporting state-school players to enter and stay in talent pathways

Cricket’s talent pathways and professional game remain under-represented by young people from state schools. This is central focus of our Talent Pathway Action Plan.

Boys' Pathway 2025: Educational Background (% state school)



Girls' Pathway 2025: Educational Background (% state school)



Through our partnership with the MCC Foundation (MCCF) and with the county network we are expanding MCCF Hubs and creating new performance hubs which support state-educated children to access training and match play. In 2026 the game aims to deliver 210 hubs, engaging 7,560 participants.

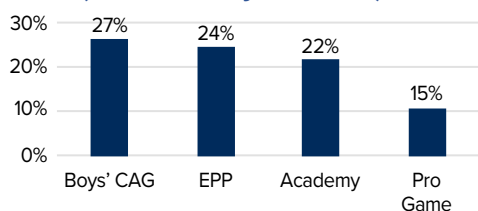
We are also working with Professional Counties to provide Programmes of Supplementary Support (including 50% additional coaching hours) for existing pathway players who attend state schools, which aims to narrow the gap between them and their independent school educated peers.

In 2024-25, 11 PCCs participated in a pilot and engaged 422 cricketers aged under 13-15, providing additional coaching and playing opportunities. All 18 PCCs will provide Supplementary Support in 2025-26, engaging an estimated 690 state-educated boys and girls.

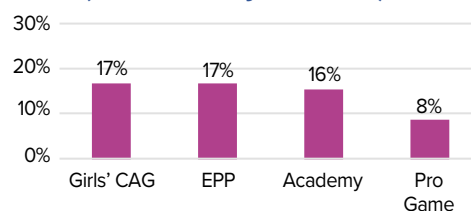
Talent pathways have increased South Asian representation, but Black representation remains low

Ethnic diversity within both boys' and girls' talent pathways has increased significantly in recent years. At CAG level, 27% of boys and 17% of girls are from ethnically diverse communities.

Boys' Pathway 2025 (% Ethnically Diverse)

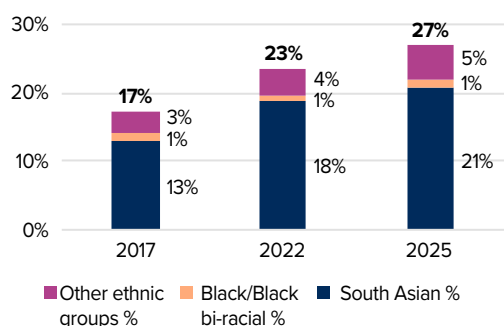


Girls' Pathway 2025 (% Ethnically Diverse)

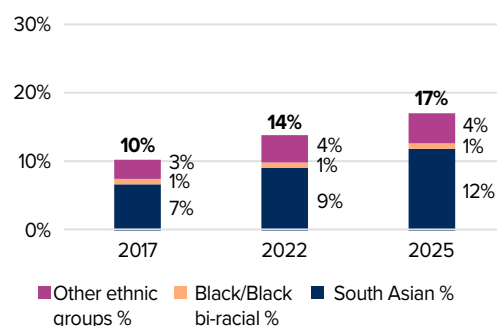


The majority of this increase in ethnic diversity has been from greater representation of South Asian players in the pathway.

Boys' Country Age Group



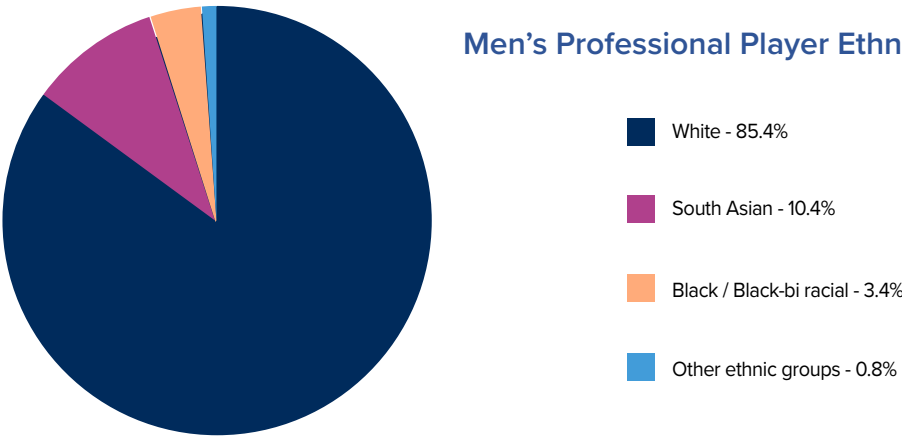
Girls' Country Age Group



Interventions that started in 2017 are delivering sustained impact in the men’s game

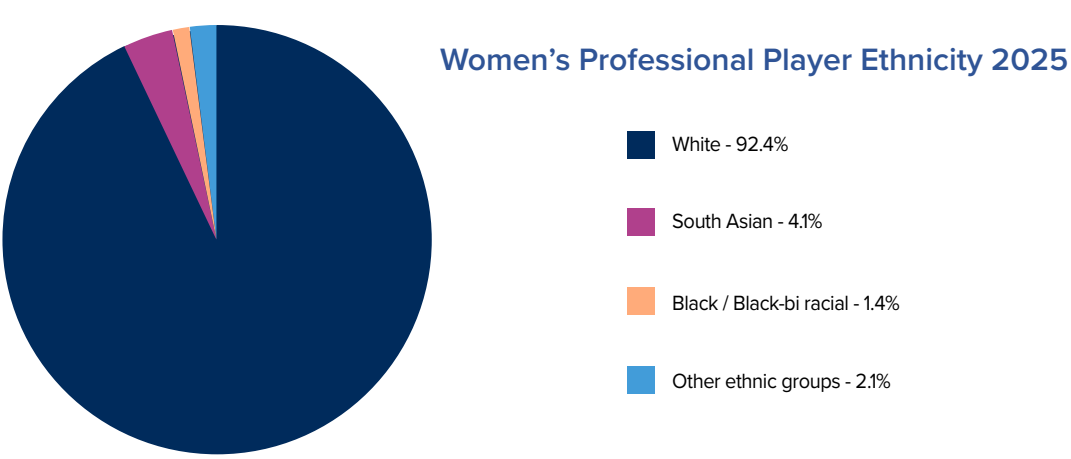
We know that interventions for young people in the early stages of the talent pathway will take years to flow through to the professional game. The latest professional player data for the men’s game indicates that our efforts across the talent pathway system, initially through the South Asian Action Plan, are yielding positive results.

At under-23 level in the men’s professional game, ethnic diversity has increased to 24% compared to 11% for over-23s. And in 2024-25, 24% of players across the England Men, Lions and U19 squads were ethnically diverse, which is above the national demographic according to the 2021 England and Wales census.



We are seeing steady progress in the women’s game, but from a lower base

It is only five years since the first women’s professional domestic contracts were awarded, and the professional player pool is still much smaller than in the men’s game. Over this period investment in the girls’ talent pathways has increased significantly, and right from the start we were much more aware of how to create equitable, diverse and inclusive environments.



In 2025, ethnic diversity in the girls’ pathway broadly represented the England and Wales population, though our ambition is to match recreational participation levels, which is higher. It is likely to be a few more years before these interventions impact the professional game. In the women’s professional game, ethnic diversity is currently just 8%. However, encouragingly, 35% of players selected for the 2026 England Women U19s programme were ethnically diverse (up from 5% in 2023, 10% in 2024 and 15% in 2025).

Progress is supported by partnerships with SACA and ACE

The South Asian Cricket Academy (SACA), supported by ECB funding, has had great success in supporting male players to secure professional contracts – with the number of British South Asian players in the game more than doubling since SACA's inception from 22 in 2022 to over 50 today. Overall, 18 graduates from the SACA programme, including eight in 2025, have now signed professional contracts. More than 60 players received winter training with SACA, 44 players represented the SACA XI in matches against counties in 2025 and 24 players received county trials following those fixtures.

The ECB is committed to extending its current partnership with SACA during 2026, including the launch of a pilot initiative aimed at supporting the progression of British South Asian women into professional cricket.

The African Caribbean Engagement (ACE) programme, which was launched in 2020 to address the decline of Black players at all levels, has started to impact the professional game with the emergence of Amy Wheeler at The Blaze, Troy Henry at Sussex and Davina Perrin at Warwickshire and Northern Superchargers. (More information on our partnership with ACE can be found in Chapter 7 - Ethnically Diverse Communities).



CASE STUDY

HOW YORKSHIRE WIDENED THEIR PATHWAY

In June 2025, Subhaan Ali was playing for Yorkshire U16s, by August the U18s and then in September for the 2nd XI against Surrey.

The 17-year-old seamer from Bradford is an example of how Yorkshire, since 2022, have opened up access to their Talent Pathway by reducing financial barriers, implementing more objective selection processes to reduce bias and using innovative data analysis.

James Martin, Head of the Performance Pathway at Yorkshire, believes that a player like Subhaan would previously have struggled to get noticed.

“

Previously there was a nominations process and for Subhaan, he wouldn't have had a way of getting nominated for the pathway. But now you can come along to an observation session and showcase your talent.

We needed to see more cricketers and we understood the barriers that were in place.

James Martin

Head of the Performance Pathway at Yorkshire

”

After consultation with players and parents involved in the Pathway, Yorkshire effectively redrew their map in order to create more access points for talented players. Using demographic data, they split the county based on population density which is why there is a single East/Central region rather than the obvious four points of the compass.

Since 2022, Yorkshire have increased the number of boys attending observation sessions from 840 to 1,600 while the number of girls has gone up from 140 to 440, which Martin describes as a “seismic shift”.



10 FACILITIES

Introduction

The ECB invests significantly in facilities across the professional and recreational games – with over £50m invested since 2023. Through the sale of the stakes in The Hundred, a further £50m has been raised which will support a decade long programme of strategic projects in the recreational game, boosted by additional financial support from the game's partners.

The game is working to create more inclusive places to experience cricket and improve access to the game, particularly in urban areas. ECB provides design guidance, tools and resources; along with directly investing in hundreds of projects.

There remains much work to do across the whole cricket landscape that includes more than 60 venues for professional cricket (including 18 major stadiums), more than 5,000 cricket clubs and over 9,000 places where people play the game.

We continue to support recreational clubs to create welcoming environments

We support the network of over 5,000 cricket clubs to create welcoming and inclusive environments and enable the widest possible audience to enjoy our game.

Since 2023, we have invested £6.5m in 826 projects across the themes of Creating Welcoming Environments and Enhancing Playing Opportunities (for women, girls and disabled participants) with a further £1.85m contracted or committed (across 328 projects) in 2025. A further £8.9m has been invested in 91 strategic projects for women's and girls' cricket and diverse communities in urban areas, with a further 22 projects and £2.25m committed.

Our Interest Free Loan scheme has also contributed to creating welcoming environments, with £854k in 30 partnered loans made to clubs to support projects to improve their facilities since 2023, in addition to standalone loans. £14.9m has been invested in projects through this scheme since its inception in 2006.

We are increasing access to cricket facilities in urban areas

We aim to ensure we reach all communities across England and Wales, providing more high-quality places and opportunities to play and addressing the deficit of facilities in urban areas.

We have worked with local authorities and commercial partners such as KP Snacks to invest in places to play, with over 300 non-turf pitches and eight practice facilities constructed in urban parks since 2018. This includes 50 non-turf pitches and six practice facilities built in 2025.

Our development of Covered Outdoor Cricket Facilities (Cricket Domes) has accelerated, with domes completed and open in Bradford and Darwen, under construction in Willenhall and under contract in Luton and Farington.

We have also published guidance notes on developing projects and technical design of cricket domes and aim to develop 40 projects in the coming years.

Sport England and ECB are increasing investment in grass pitches for under-served demographics

We have partnered with Sport England to launch the Grass Pitch Improvement Fund, with the aim of investing £5m to improve more than 200 grass pitches or outfielders that will support greater access for under-served demographics. The target groups for the fund are women's and girls' cricket, disability cricket, ethnically diverse communities, and lower socio-economic groups. As of October 2025, 132 projects have been supported with £2.8m of funding.

A significant finding has been the intersectionality of projects in cricket – almost two thirds have been identified as impacting more than one target group, while the other third having a significant impact on one particular group. In 2026 we aim to invest in at least 150 pitches (grass and non-turf) to accelerate access and inclusion.

Professional Cricket Clubs are making their venues more welcoming and inclusive

The ECB Facilities team works closely with venues to provide for the needs of the diverse audiences who attend cricket and sets ambitious standards for accessibility and inclusivity. Funding is made available as part of the £5m annual Facilities Maintenance Grant programme and the £16m Inclusive Infrastructure Fund. Private investment into The Hundred has also created the opportunity for Professional County Clubs to invest millions more in infrastructure.

There are 11 elements of upgrade for venues including accessible seating, changing areas, toilets, family toilets, multi-faith rooms and sensory rooms.

Published guidance supports venues to upgrade facilities for fans

In 2024, we published ground-breaking Welcoming Venues guidance to support venues to enhance their facilities and operations for accessibility, families and multi-faith spaces. We have also published guidance to support clubs to provide more inclusive food and beverage offerings, along with developing family zones and alcohol-free zones at all venues (including developing family toilets).

Recent investment by ECB, MCC and Professional Cricket Counties now means that all 18 HQ venues will have changing places facilities and multi faith rooms in place for the 2026 season. Five sensory rooms have also been developed and the largest outground in the country (Scarborough CC, Yorkshire) also has a changing places facility and a multi-faith space.

In 2025, with the support of AccessAble, we have piloted a new digital resource that will vastly improve information on accessibility at three professional venues.

We are improving facilities for players and match officials

Major projects to create inclusive Players and Match Officials Areas (PMOA) have taken place or are under construction at seven venues, creating spaces that support male or female officials and coaches, and redesigning players' changing rooms to be gender neutral with additional privacy and flexibility. We are using the experience of supporting these projects to create a new guidance note (to be published in 2026) that will accelerate change at more venues.

CASE STUDY

COUNTY GROUND, NORTHAMPTON

The transformation of the Hevey pavilion at Northamptonshire CCC was a major part of the masterplan for the development of the venue. The players and officials' areas (PMOA) were dilapidated, cramped and inaccessible for people with disabilities.

The PMOA now meets all requirements of the Facilities Standards and sets an example for all professional cricket grounds with the quality of the finished product and inclusive design.

Officials' accommodation now enables male and female officials to have private changing/showering spaces with direct access to their own meeting room and adjacent pitch side area for match referees and scorers.

The development included a lift, making both PMOA and NCCC offices accessible.



We will capitalise on the opportunity of hosting the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026

Next year, we will invest £5m into 300 small-scale projects to create welcoming environments and enhance playing opportunities for women and girls, supporting the aim of getting 6,000 girls' teams playing competitive cricket by 2028.

We will continue to provide interest free loans to clubs to create welcoming environments, expanding the ceiling on loans to £75,000 in 2026.



CASE STUDY

REDBRIDGE GRASS PITCH IMPROVEMENT FUND (GPIF) PILOT

The project

In 2023, the ECB, working with the London Borough of Redbridge, Vision Redbridge (their leisure partner), Essex Cricket and the Grounds Management Association, started a three-year project investing £850k in improving grass pitches at 21 cricket grounds in 11 sites in the borough.

Works include renovations of squares and outfield, installation of hybrid pitches, supply of mowers and rollers, irrigation and grounds manager training. Eleven non-turf pitches have been installed to increase carrying capacity.

In 2024, there were approximately 15,795 men, women, boys and girls using the 21 grass pitches, up from 13,805 participants in 2023, and that figure is forecast to grow further, to over 17,000 by 2026.

Wider impacts

Redbridge CC and Seven Kings CC have gained Essex league status, with visiting clubs and officials commenting positively on hybrid pitch performance.

- Both clubs have experienced increased demand for membership with Redbridge also reporting 50% growth of junior cricket participation over the past two years because of the improved facilities.
- Relationships with local resident volunteer groups has enabled a growth in volunteering and decrease in anti-social behaviour. Now that Goodmayes Park is considered a safe community space, Ekota Academy has received further funding to support 300 students from low socio-economic backgrounds on free ECB National Programmes.
- The number of state-school fixtures has grown and there are also girls-only festivals staged on the majority of the sites.



Sixteen volunteer grounds managers attended an evening pre-season training session on mowers, rollers and hybrids with Stuart Kerrison, Head Grounds Manager at Essex CCC in April 2025

11

REGULATION AND TACKLING DISCRIMINATION

Introduction

The Cricket Regulator, ring-fenced from the rest of the ECB to ensure independence in its investigations, is now established and is leading the game's efforts to tackle discrimination in cricket across England and Wales, with its 2025-28 strategy 'From Compliance to Culture'.

The setting up of the Cricket Regulator and the Cricket Discipline Panel aims to give participants greater clarity on regulatory policies and simpler processes for reporting by discrimination.

As well as addressing incidents of discrimination, the Cricket Regulator is also focusing on proactive prevention through education and training in the wider cricket network and using data to identify trends. The education and support team has been working across the recreational game to support the management of discrimination cases and help clubs understand more about discrimination.

There has been a rise in the reporting of discrimination

The Cricket Regulator team has directed significant resource on supporting the recreational and professional game in understanding and reporting discrimination, through dedicated discrimination advisor roles, formal and informal education and the introduction of mandatory reporting within the County Partnership Agreement (CPA).

We have seen a large uplift in the reporting of discrimination concerns across the game, particularly in county organisations where dedicated anti-discrimination roles have been established. We believe this is indicative of increased knowledge, trust and confidence in the reporting structures, investigative capability and process.

In the first ten months of 2025, the Regulator dealt with 44 incidents of discrimination in the professional game, roughly double the number from 2024. Where charges are upheld by the independent Cricket Discipline Panel, case outcomes are routinely published. The types of discrimination reported to the Regulator spans the full range of protected characteristics and other factors.

44 concerns of discrimination were reported in the professional game in 2025. Overall, more than 270 incidents of discrimination were reported to the Regulator in 2025

However, latest data indicates a significant decrease in experiences of discrimination within cricket's workforce

The annual game-wide census of all staff working in cricket includes a series of questions relating to experiences of discrimination and confidence in reporting. In 2025, we saw a material reduction in staff saying they had experienced discrimination in the past year (almost halving for ethnically diverse staff), as well as increased confidence that action would be taken if staff spoke up.

This does not mean that challenges relating to discrimination in the game have been resolved, and certain demographics of the workforce are still more likely to experience discrimination. However, it is a positive indication that education, alongside clear reporting mechanisms and awareness of consequences of discriminatory behaviour are beginning to have an impact across the game.

The ECB and the Cricket Regulator continue to strengthen regulation and standards

In the professional game, ECB regulations set out a clear framework for dealing with discrimination. A triage process helps to decide whether a case is a matter for the Cricket Regulator or if it is an issue that should be handled locally. The Cricket Regulator investigates allegations independently and can bring charges where there is a case to answer.

The Cricket Regulator now has wider powers to hold Directors at PCCs, RCBs, and the ECB personally to account for their misconduct. Previously misconduct by such individuals was dealt with through disciplinary action being taken against their organisation.

Through the County Partnership Agreement and Venue Operations Manuals, we are ensuring that counties have an obligation to pass any reports of discrimination received onto the Regulator, ensuring a thorough picture as possible of the landscape across cricket.

Allegations relating to discrimination in pathway and academy selection continue to be received

Player selection continues to be an area of focus for the Regulator. Where direct discrimination is harder to evidence, the Regulator also works with the complainant and the county to understand the selection processes and monitor improvements in these processes. As a result of these investigations several counties have developed more transparent and objective selection processes.

The Regulator would welcome more reporting in relation to payment for selection or coaching gatekeeping.

The Regulator is supporting the recreational game to identify and tackle discrimination

There has historically been a lack of clarity across the recreational game over which bodies have authority to deal with allegations of discrimination, as well as concerns about the expertise and resource required to manage allegations. While reporting of incidents has risen, we still feel that discrimination is under-reported in the recreational game. We recently concluded a series of five regional meetings with RCB Lead Officers and will present our recommendations in early 2026.

We have established a process where Recreational County Boards and leagues can refer the most serious and complex breaches to the newly formed Recreational Discipline Panel, which includes a range of independent experts.

In 2026, the Regulator's Investigation and Case Work (ICW) team will be supplemented by additional 'on call' staff as required. This team will investigate the more serious cases of misconduct, including discrimination, in the recreational game.

In 2025, the Regulator delivered face to face training to over 1,300 players, coaches and support staff

Education and training is one of three core pillars of the Regulator's strategy, and programmes tailored to addressing the greatest threats across the game will continue to be developed and delivered in 2026 and beyond. In 2025, training included the new Tier 3 women's sides right through to The Hundred franchises. Each session included input on professional standards specifically aimed at countering discrimination and misconduct.

To further strengthen education across the game, two new e-learning programmes were launched in 2025. The Prevention of Sexual Harassment within Cricket course provides practical guidance on recognising, preventing, and responding to incidents of sexual harassment, outlining the legal responsibilities of cricket organisations under the Equality Act 2010 and the Worker Protection Act 2023.

The Cricket Regulator has also developed Introducing the Boundary which focuses on understanding and addressing different forms of discrimination on and off the field, whilst promoting the reporting processes.

Together, these educational programmes represent an important step in the Cricket Regulator's ongoing commitment to fostering safe, inclusive, and respectful environments throughout the sport.

Improved data capture and analysis will lead to more targeted responses to discrimination

The Cricket Regulator has introduced a new case management system, allowing the recording of more data, which is then analysed to spot trends or areas of concern around the game. From the start of 2026, the Cricket Regulator will have a dedicated data analyst to capture and use to inform our approach further. This will enable the ECB to understand we focus on education and training around the biggest issues.

The Regulator will also be working with cricket organisations to ensure they capture this information more accurately, thereby understanding the issues in their area and responding appropriately.

The independence of the Regulator from the ECB is validated on an annual basis

There is no evidence that the ECB has sought to, or actually exerted, influence or interference with the Cricket Regulator's investigation, charging and/ or disciplinary powers and rather the independent regulator has established the necessary standard operating procedures and control mechanisms to best ringfence and protect its independence. The team are focused on their unique governance and regulatory role and demonstrate strong behaviours in preserving that independence.

Sport Resolutions, March 2025

CONCLUSION

I want to thank you for taking the time to read this comprehensive update on the state of equity in cricket. I hope you feel inspired by the wide-reaching initiatives being delivered and the positive impact they are having in communities across England and Wales.

As ECB CEO, I am committed to transparency and being held to account when it comes to our ambitions around equity, diversity and inclusion. I have welcomed this opportunity to publicly share the game's progress and openly highlight the areas where new approaches and interventions are required to address a lack of progress.

Although our work across cricket is divided into different areas of the game in this document for readability, our approach is underpinned by a focus on bringing cricket together to deliver the structural and systemic change required. EDI is everyone's responsibility, and here at ECB, our teams work together to develop integrated approaches.

For example, our ambition to reach 6,000 girls' teams playing recreational cricket requires not just the creation of those teams, but more access for girls to play at school, more role models and visibility at an elite level, and the training of new coaches and umpires to support them. It requires the work of the Cricket Regulator to stamp out sexism and misogyny, access to high quality facilities, for our Articles to reflect the importance of women's cricket, and the hard work of county cricket organisations and charity partners to deliver all of this locally. Through 2026 and beyond, you will see a continuation of our commitments to ensure everyone has access to the game, alongside a focus on diversifying cricket's workforce – at junior levels as well as CEO, Chair, and senior leadership levels.

I am grateful for the ongoing support and commitment of so many people across cricket - the counties, our charity partners, volunteers, coaches, officials, fans and players who all contribute to the rich tapestry of our game, and all have a role to play in making cricket the most inclusive team sport in England and Wales.



Richard Gould, ECB Chief Executive Officer



MEET OUR EMPLOYEE NETWORKS

Established in 2022-23 and open to everyone working in the game, cricket's employee networks are co-chaired by ECB and County staff. They play an essential role in cricket's ambition to become the most inclusive sport by connecting people across the sport, championing the voices of the communities they represent, and providing safe spaces.

Women in Cricket

Activities range from holding focus groups with parents in cricket to gather insights and foster connection, raising awareness of topics such as domestic abuse to educate people on its prevalence, to staging a match at Edgbaston with all-female ground staff amplifying role models across cricket.

Race in Cricket

Celebrating diversity and key moments, sharing stories of people from ethnically diverse communities and different faiths and creating safe spaces for people to have their voices heard are all key focus areas for the Race in Cricket network.

The Cricketability Network

This network seeks to amplify the voices of colleagues who are disabled, D/deaf, have long-health conditions or are neurodiverse, ensuring they feel respected, valued and supported in the game.

LGBTQ+ Community in Cricket

The original network, having started as an ECB employee network in 2017, the LGBTQ+ Community in Cricket network advocates for queer, non-binary and transgender colleagues, ensuring key moments – such as Pride and Rainbow Laces – provide a platform for people to connect, be seen and heard.

Social Equality Network

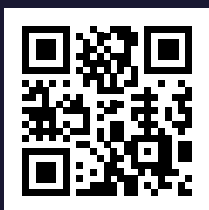
Representing colleagues from state schools or from lower socio-economic backgrounds to advocate for the challenges that they face while working in the game, through creating opportunities to share experiences, and events and campaigns to amplify their voices.

If you'd like to reach out the networks or join their mailing lists, please contact us on diversitymatters@ecb.co.uk.



Get Involved

Whatever your age, gender or experience, there is a game of cricket out there for you. Discover your route into the game and find where cricket is played near you - <https://www.ecb.co.uk/play>



Contact us

- If you want to report discrimination in a cricketing environment, please visit: [ecb.co.uk/reporting-discrimination](https://www.ecb.co.uk/reporting-discrimination)
- To share a story about positive change: raisingthegame@ecb.co.uk
- To ask a question about our EDI work: diversitymatters@ecb.co.uk
- For media Enquiries: media@ecb.co.uk

**RAISING
THE
GAME**

