

2025 was another landmark year for women's sport in the UK, spurred on by the Lionesses retaining their UEFA European Women's Championship title and the Red Roses securing their first Women's Rugby World Cup title since 2014. From the Tour of Britain Women and the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup to the first women's tennis tournament at Queen's Club in more than fifty years, these events underscored both the cultural significance and growing commercial power of women's sport, driving unprecedented audience growth and engagement across disciplines.

Despite a decline in linear broadcast audiences over the first half of the year, 2025 still delivered record-breaking visibility, notable commercial expansion and increased strategic investment in women's sport - highlighting how fan engagement transcends linear broadcasting and that major events continue to act as catalysts for growth. As we move into 2026, we reflect on the key moments and data from 2025 and consider what lies ahead.

We will be tackling these issues (and many more) at the annual Squire Patton Boggs **Women's Sport Symposium** on 18 March 2026 in London. Please [register your interest](#) in attending here.

## Audience Growth and Media Visibility

The disappointing decline in linear broadcast coverage hours in the first half of 2025<sup>1</sup> did not last long. Major women's sport events from summer onwards not only delivered exceptional sporting moments but also smashed attendance and viewership records; underscoring the rising demand for women's competitions.

The UEFA Women's EURO 2025 final between England and Spain reached a peak audience of 16.2 million across the BBC and ITV, which was the highest peak for any UK sports broadcast last year.<sup>2</sup> The Women's Rugby World Cup final set new benchmarks of its own, with 5.8 million viewers watching England defeat Canada, making it both the most-watched women's rugby union match in UK television history and the most-viewed rugby match of the year at the time.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond football and rugby, Emma Raducanu and Aryna Sabalenka's round-three clash at Wimbledon drew a peak audience of five million, the third-highest viewership recorded for a non-final Wimbledon match in the past four years.<sup>4</sup>

These figures demonstrate the pivotal role that major events play in driving visibility and attracting new audiences to women's sport. Importantly, however, audience growth was not just limited to flagship events; viewing hours for the Netball Super League surged by more than 300%, while average audiences for women's matches in The Hundred rose by 26%.<sup>5</sup>

Fan engagement in women's sport extends far beyond traditional broadcast metrics. Growth has been equally strong, if not stronger, across digital platforms. TikTok and YouTube saw sharp increases in women's football content consumption, reflecting shifting fan behaviour and the ever-expanding influence of social media. Although the Barclays Women's Super League experienced a decline in in-stadium attendances during the 2024/2025 season, its TikTok presence surged, with WSL accounts recording a 154% increase in views.<sup>6</sup> Chelsea Women lead the way with 258 million views over the season.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Rachael Kennedy, "[Women's sport needs more than broadcast to grow](#)" (InsiderSport, 27 June 2025).

<sup>2</sup> "[Female Viewership Grows as Women's Sport Breaks New Records Across Broadcast and Digital](#)" (Women's Sport Trust, 28 October 2025).

<sup>3</sup> "[Women's Rugby World Cup final smashes viewing records and becomes most-watched ever on UK television](#)" (BBC Media Centre, 29 September 2025).

<sup>4</sup> "[Five million watch Sabalenka beat Raducanu](#)" (BBC Sport, 5 July 2025).

<sup>5</sup> "Female Viewership Grows as Women's Sport Breaks New Records Across Broadcast and Digital" (Women's Sport Trust, 28 October 2025).

<sup>6</sup> Josh Sim, "[WSL TV audiences down 35% but women's sport is thriving on social](#)" (SportsPro, 26 June 2025).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

This pattern continued throughout the year, with several women's sport properties reporting substantial increases in digital content consumption.<sup>8</sup> A key driver of this growth is authentic, personality-led storytelling. The Women's Rugby World Cup leaned intentionally into the "power of personality" as a core pillar of its digital strategy, a move that helped the tournament achieve 1.1 billion social impressions overall.<sup>9</sup>

This year-round digital engagement is particularly valuable where women's sport often suffers from unfavourable broadcast windows, whereas social content is less affected by timing and helps to maintain fan interest long after major events have concluded.

## Commercial Acceleration

Heading into 2026, rising media visibility has created a uniquely engaged, cross-platform audience, driving a flourishing commercial landscape for women's sport. Commercial revenue was the primary growth engine behind Women's Super League clubs in 2023-2024 (as reported in 2025), generating £65 million in combined revenue (a 34% increase on the previous season).<sup>10</sup>

By mid-2025, sponsorship awareness in women's sport had reached nearly 29 million UK adults, with 30% of consumers viewing brands more favourably when they sponsor women's sport.<sup>11</sup>

These figures underline the significant commercial opportunity available to brands throughout 2026 – an opportunity some are already capitalising on. Announced in December 2025, the Women's Tennis Association entered a major long-term partnership with Mercedes-Benz. If it runs the full 10-year term, the deal is projected to be worth up to £375 million, positioning it as potentially the largest commercial agreement in women's sport to date.<sup>12</sup>

Further, global kit supplier Nike has also announced a new partnership with the inaugural British & Irish Lions Women's Series in 2027, marking a significant milestone for the sport.<sup>13</sup>

However, challenges still remain, with women's sport often struggling to land broadcast and sponsorship deals that reflect its true value, particularly in terms of fan engagement, viewership and investment potential. Notably (and notwithstanding the Red Roses' successes on the world stage), Premiership Women's Rugby remains without a title sponsor, which is a key component for the English top flight's enduring growth and stability.<sup>14</sup>



## Looking Forward to 2026

The commercial trajectory of women's sport in the UK and internationally is unmistakably upward. Last year's record-breaking audiences, increased media visibility and expanding commercial investment have strengthened women's sport – not just as a cultural force, but as a thriving and resilient commercial sector. The performances of national teams such as the Lionesses and the Red Roses, alongside standout moments across a variation of sports, have demonstrated the scale of public and commercial appetite for elite women's sport.

A key challenge in 2026 will be sustaining this momentum in a year without a major international women's football tournament, which traditionally has been the strongest driver of mass viewership. However, opportunities remain substantial.

The Milano Cortina Olympic Winter Games are "set to become the most gender-balanced Olympic Winter Games in history"<sup>15</sup>, and the ICC Women's T20 World Cup will take place on home soil – both poised to serve as catalysts for continued growth. Alongside these events, enhanced social content strategies and more favourable broadcast scheduling will be essential to maintaining and strengthening public engagement throughout the year.

Commercially, brands are beginning to recognise the value of aligning with women's sport. With audiences that are engaged, diverse and rapidly expanding, 2026 offers substantial opportunity for investors, rights holders, broadcasters and sponsors willing to contribute strategically and consistently. It is now crucial for those stakeholders to seize the opportunity and recognise the real value of, and commercial opportunities around, women's sport to ensure that it thrives and reaches its economic potential in the near and longer term.

8 "Female Viewership Grows as Women's Sport Breaks New Records Across Broadcast and Digital" (Women's Sport Trust, 28 October 2025).

9 "[With a billion social media impressions, Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 created new stars and a new addressable audience](#)" (Rugby World Cup, 29 October 2025).

10 "[2025 Annual Review of Football Finance](#)" (Deloitte, 12 June 2025).

11 Ed Dixon, "[What do fans really think about women's sports sponsors?](#)" (SportsPro, 8 July 2025).

12 Russell Fuller, Amy Lofthouse, "[WTA signs with Mercedes in 'most significant deal in our history'](#)" (BBC Sport, 10 December 2025).

13 "[British & Irish Lions agree partnership with Nike](#)" (Lions Rugby, 14 January 2026).

14 Sara Orchard, "[Record-breaking World Cup, so why no title sponsor for domestic league?](#)" (BBC Sport, 30 January 2026).

15 "[Milano Cortina 2026 set to become the most gender-balanced Olympic Winter Games in history](#)" (International Olympic Committee, 24 June 2022).

## Women's Sport Symposium 2026

Squire Patton Boggs is hosting its third annual Women's Sport Symposium on 18 March 2026, where leading figures from across the sports industry will convene for a dynamic exploration of what lies ahead for women's sport.

Our agenda features keynote presentations and panel discussions addressing the sector's most important opportunities and challenges, including investment and ownership models, media rights and audience reach, and venue development and innovation.

We welcome all those working in sport, including athletes, governing bodies and leagues, clubs and teams, broadcasters and media companies, agencies, sponsors and investors. If you would like to attend, please [register your interest](#).

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