

**THRESHOLD/
MORE IS IN YOU™**

ULTRA 50:50 WHITE PAPER

Evaluating the benefits of investment in gender parity in ultra-distance trail running events.



SheRACES 



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Post Covid female participation in running events declined by 10% (2021-2023). Additionally, female participation in running events further declines as race distances increase. Whilst Threshold events welcome more female participants than industry standards, we wanted to contribute to a positive change within the industry. This started with the adoption of the SheRACES guidelines to support female athletes in 2023.

Both SheRACES and Threshold conducted independent research that identified a series of barriers, some which are societal, and some which are the responsibility of the race organiser. The findings suggested that issues related to female representation and perceptions of the sport, training and preparation, access and support, safety and harassment and menstrual health posed the greatest challenges to female participants.

The Ultra 50:50 initiative set out to address these challenges head on. Where relevant, we made changes to the way we promoted, planned and managed our events. We used our platform to engage a wider range of female athletes to tell their stories, to educate and inspire positive action.

In 2024 we saw a +13% increase in female participation on Threshold Trails Series events. 50k ultras saw a +59% increase in female participation, and 100k non-stop ultras +19%. At Race to the King – the focal point of the Ultra 50:50 campaign – 424 women signed up to a 50k in 2024 compared to 214 in 2023, an increase of 98%.

Women made up 46% of all participants (50k & 100k) in 2023, compared to 42% in 2024. However, this is not a result of fewer women taking part, so much as proportionally more men registering. Positively the focus on female engagement throughout the Ultra 50:50 campaign did not negatively impact on the events' appeal to male participants.

This case study illustrates a clear case for making events more inclusive and attractive to female participants. The potential return on time and financial investment will vary depending on the event and race organiser, but by diverting marketing spend from paid advertising to a more purpose-led campaign, and by making reasonably modest investments in service provision to accommodate the needs of female participants, we have been able to significantly increase participant numbers and the profitability of these events.

In 2025 we will continue to invest in female participation, with a focus on first time ultra runners, by building greater communities around our events to encourage peer to peer support, and by highlighting the challenges that female runners face in terms of safety and harassment whilst running at night or in remote locations. At the front of the field, we are also introducing equal rewards for male and female athletes who break the Race to the Stones course record.



FOREWORD BY SheRACES

There's something special about racing. It brings us together, helps us push our boundaries and gives us a sense of achievement. But despite women being as likely to be runners, we are under-represented in races, especially over longer distances. **Only 30% of ultrarunners were female in 2023, but this falls to just 18% over races over 130km.**

Why? There are many barriers in our way. Some are societal. Girls see themselves as less capable of sport from as young as 5 years old and this lack of confidence can stay with us for life. Women take on more caring responsibilities than men, of both children and our own parents, giving us on average 5 fewer hours of leisure time a week.

But many barriers are put in place by events themselves. SheRACES carried out the first ever in-depth research into these barriers, analysing the experience of over 2,000 female runners from 5km to ultra, back of the pack to podium chasers. We then worked with race directors to develop a set of simple guidelines that all races can follow, as well as more detailed operational guidelines for races such as trail ultramarathons and those with an elite field. These are provided free to all races, with those that genuinely commit to them able to apply for SheRACES accreditation.

Our research, guidelines and advocacy have already driven positive change in many events around the world - from Chicago to Chennai. We have started to

normalise basic provisions for women such as pregnancy deferrals, period products and t-shirts that fit. Women have been empowered to question unbalanced social media coverage, lack of proper female toilet provision and imagery that tells us we don't belong.

Being inclusive isn't just socially responsible; it is commercially prudent. In our research we found that almost 90% of women would be more likely to enter races that committed to inclusivity for women.

Yet despite this, many events across the world are still designed through a male lens. Where women are not actively encouraged to enter, or forced to pay again for their place if they have a baby. Where women aren't given the

experience we deserve on race day. Where the female race is not held in equal regard to the men's.

We are excited to partner with Threshold on this first-of-a kind research into the commercial value of inclusivity for women and commend their foresight in this area. Threshold were one of the first adopters of the SheRACES guidelines and are active advocates for female athletes of all backgrounds. We hope that this analysis encourages more discussion of the significant value of female participation, as well as wider adoption of SheRACES guidelines in all mass participation events globally.



OBJECTIVES OF THRESHOLD PARTNERSHIP WITH SHERACES

Threshold's mantra is **More Is In You™**. Our purpose is to create and deliver world-class events that unlock the potential in people. These events range from a series of marathon-distance hikes for Macmillan Cancer Research raising over £10m a year, to the Babble Ride Across Britain which sees us take 800 cyclists from Land's End to John O'Groats over 9 days every other year.

Inclusivity has always been a major focus of the business which led us to launch our first Ultra event in 2013; Race to the Stones. Since then, the event has grown to become the UK's favourite Ultramarathon with 3,000 runners, joggers and walkers signing up to take on the 50km and 100km distances in 2024.

The Threshold Trail Series has consistently welcomed a higher proportion of women than the industry standard. However, female participation across all running distances has declined by 10% since the COVID pandemic, and there is a 24% drop in female participation in ultras (distances greater than a marathon) compared to participation in shorter 5km events.*

We adopted the SheRACES guidelines across our events in 2023 and the Ultra 50:50 campaign seeks to build on their work, and to reach new running and fitness communities and groups.

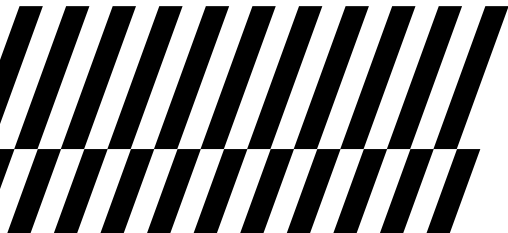
Vision of what we tried to achieve:


- SheRACES and Threshold both aspired to reverse this trend and tackle the challenges to female participation in ultra-distance events through initiatives around health, safety, training and representation.
- SheRACES were able to bring wider expertise. We (Threshold) were able to invest in our events to make additional positive changes and to provide a case study for investment in gender parity at ultra-distance events.

KPIs of project:

- >50% female participation in the Threshold Trail Series events.
- 25%+ growth in online engagement (website visitation, organic social media reach and engagement) during the campaign period.
- Develop a blueprint for other event organisers to follow.

*Data provided by Let's Do This.





SheRACES conducted a major study of female participation in 2022. Threshold aligned key quantitative and qualitative questions with this original piece of research to further understand our female ultra runners' unique challenges when preparing for and participating in ultramarathons.

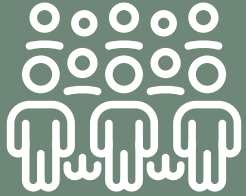
DATASET

Women on the Threshold Trail Series database; a mix of who have taken part in one of Threshold's Ultras or are considering one. The survey received more than 500 responses.

The findings highlighted five distinct themes (summarised below) to address in the Ultra 50:50 campaign and at our events.

RESEARCH AND INSIGHT METHODOLOGY

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS



FEMALE REPRESENTATION AND PERCEPTION

Women tend to be underrepresented in ultra running, particularly women of colour, and the sport can appear to be male dominated. There is a perception that women may not be “good” or “strong” enough, and this can deter some women from participating, especially when ultras are positioned as “macho” or “brutal”.



TRAINING AND PREPARATION

There are limited training resources for walkers and participants mixing running and walking, which tends to disenfranchise women, who make up many ultra-event walkers. Balancing family and childcare responsibilities with the demands of ultra training can be challenging for some women with families, or caring responsibilities, especially those who also work.



ACCESS AND SUPPORT AT THE EVENT

The need for childcare, or facilities for children during events that can last several hours or days can prevent some women from participating. Anxiety related to logistics, including transportation, accommodation around events and cut-off times, can deter some women from entering the sport, especially if they are not part of a group or running club.



SAFETY AND HARASSMENT

Female ultra runners surveyed express concerns about running alone, especially at night, due to safety issues and fear of harassment during training runs or races. Safety concerns often lead women to avoid running in remote or secluded areas, impacting their training opportunities, and limiting their participation in trail events in rural locations.



MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND THE MENOPAUSE

Menstrual cycles, pregnancy, and the menopause can affect energy levels and performance whilst preparing for and participating in sporting events. The availability of clean toilets, sanitary products, and privacy for breastfeeding and addressing menstrual health can be a concern for female ultra runners.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS AND PERSPECTIVES

After identifying these areas, we collaborated with experts in these fields throughout the year to provide further insight into the specific barriers women face and how best to overcome these at our events.

Dr Nicky Keay, Hormone Health Expert

Nicky is a medical doctor advising on hormone health, an Honorary Clinical Lecturer in Medicine at University College London and previously Research Fellow in the Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences at Durham University.

Emma Kirk-Odunubi, Performance Coach

Emma is an Under Armour Ambassador and Sports Scientist who has been in the running industry for over 15 years.

Dr Josephine Perry, Performance Psychologist

Josie has a MSc in Communications, a MSc in Psychology and a MSc in Sport and Exercise Psychology. She also has a PhD in Political Communications.

Sophie Power, Athlete and SheRACES Founder

Sophie is a campaigner, advisor and athlete, passionate about increasing access to sport for women.

Tasha Thompson, Founder of Black Girls Do Run.

Tasha is the founder of Black Girls Do Run. BGDRUK is an England Athletics affiliated London-based grassroots running club and vibrant community.

Gaining a greater understanding of the challenges faced by female athletes it became clear that some barriers were societal, and some were more closely linked to the event experience. Collaboration between event organisers, governing bodies, grassroots organisations, and industry leaders would be key to making long-term societal changes.



THE CHANGES WE MADE

To support female participants, we worked collaboratively with SheRACES and reviewed the services we offer at our events, the support we provide to participants before during and following our events, and the way we promote our events to ensure they are inclusive and welcoming to all.

INITIATIVE	COSTS Incremental spend that is directly attributed to the Ultra 50:50 initiative
STRATEGY AND CONSULTANCY	
Threshold sponsored SheRACES during the 2024 season. Our collaboration helped to shape the Ultra 50:50 initiative, sharing expertise and insights from across the industry to understand the challenges that female athletes face. In addition, our sponsorship recognises the valuable work that SheRACES is doing to level the start line for female athletes.	£5k One off cost
FEMALE REPRESENTATION AND PERCEPTION	
Inspiring role models: We recruited a team of real female Ultra 50:50 Challengers to help inspire other women to take on an ultra. Our Challengers were from diverse communities with varying degrees of running experience. The hope was that their achievements during the campaign would demonstrate that ultra-running is an accessible sport for everyone.	Budget diverted from performance marketing to engaging purpose led content
Diverse representation in marketing: We ensured that all marketing and promotional materials prominently featured female participants, and people from a range of diverse communities.	Nil
Inclusive language: We used language in communications that is inclusive and welcoming to all, avoiding jargon and industry terms.	Nil
TRAINING AND PREPARATION	
Accessible training materials: We consulted with female athletes to review and updated our training materials with a greater focus on walking and walking-running options.	Nil
Female-specific guidance: We worked with female running coaches, doctors, psychologists and athletes with experience in helping women with varying experience levels to prepare for ultramarathons to share training advice and tips – with a particular focus on support for people balancing busy home, family and work lives.	£3k
ACCESS AND SUPPORT AT THE EVENT	
SheRACES accreditation: All Threshold Sports public events are SheRACES accredited. This accreditation helps to reassure participants that our races are inclusive and welcoming to female participants.	Nil
Logistical support: We further enhanced the information provided in our participant communications about travel, transport, accommodation, and shuttle buses to support planning for the events.	Nil

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INITIATIVE	COSTS Incremental spend that is directly attributed to the Ultra 50:50 initiative
ACCESS AND SUPPORT AT THE EVENT	
Extended cut-off times: We have extremely generous cut off times and clearly communicate these in promotional materials and participant communications. Crew shift patterns reflect these extended event times ensuring the H&S of participants and crew wellbeing is considered.	Nil
Community Engagement: We are working with a range of grassroots running clubs including (but not limited to): Black Trail Runners, Track Mafia, Into Ultra, and Black Girls Do Run. These multi-year partnerships help us to introduce ultra running to more diverse audiences and underrepresented groups helping to counteract the imbalances in the running community.	£3k £4k of complimentary places offered to community organisations
SAFETY AND HARASSMENT	
Training partners: We encourage participants to connect with other participants via social media / social forums to help find other participants in their local area to train or participate with.	Nil
Trackers: Trackers are made available for people concerned about running alone.	Cost to participant
Live Event Support: All pitstops are fully managed, with friendly team members and volunteers on hand to provide support. We encourage our participants who are concerned about anything to talk to our team, and we can help to reassure them or find a solution to their challenges. Crew and volunteer briefings are comprehensive and highlight the need to support all participants needs.	Nil
MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND THE MENOPAUSE	
Pregnancy deferral policy (2 years): This is in place and shared online at registration. The policy also includes deferrals for partners of pregnant women and people who are adopting.	Nil
Sanitary products: Tampons, sanitary towels and disposal bags are available in toilets at base camp and all pitstops along the route.	£1.2k
Toilet cleaning: Toilet facilities at base camp and pitstops are regularly checked and cleaned throughout the events to ensure they are well maintained.	Nil
Quiet spaces: These are made available at base camp and pitstops if a participant needs privacy to address health concerns.	£0.5k
Menopause: Guidance regarding training during menopause was shared as part of the Ultra 50:50 campaign.	£0.5k

A woman in athletic gear is running through a field of tall, green grass. In the background, there is a farm with several buildings and a line of trees. The sky is overcast. The overall scene is rural and scenic.

THE ULTRA 50:50 CAMPAIGN

This was the key activity to address Female Representation and Perception. We selected a team of six women – our Ultra 50:50 Challengers – all from different backgrounds and with varying abilities and experiences, to follow their journeys, supporting them with training advice, nutritional support and equipment.

ULTRA 50:50 CHALLENGERS

ROMEY LANGLEY



Having recently become a mother for the first time, Brighton-based Romey was navigating a new set of challenges in training for running 50km at Race to the King. Managing sleepless nights, the needs of a breastfeeding baby, and the effects of pregnancy and birth on the female body, Romey proved that giving birth needn't hold women back from chasing their dreams.

“Becoming a mum is incredible, but it is all-consuming. Signing up to an event I would have completed before parenthood helps me feel like myself again. Plus, I hope to make my daughter proud of her mum one day.”

LISA ARSCOTT



Lisa is a teacher and Black Trail Runners run leader from Birmingham who hoped to inspire more women to take part in trail running, particularly those from diverse backgrounds. Having completed all of Threshold's trail events in a single year to celebrate turning 40, Lisa was no stranger to the challenges of an ultramarathon. She was aiming to improve upon her performance at the 100k distance in 2024 by focusing more on rest and recovery in training, and hydration during the event itself.

“Less than 1% of trail runners are black, and there is a noticeable lack of female participation in trail running. I am hoping that this campaign will help people see that it is indeed accessible to all. Race to the King is my absolute favourite event, and the support that Threshold gives is second to none. I just want more people to get to experience this.”

HESTER SCOTTON



Hester is the CFO of a FTSE250 listed company and a mum to an 18-month-old and a 13-year-old. When she was pregnant with her son 14 years ago, she decided she wanted to be a good example to him, and so her training journey began, and running has been part of her life ever since. She has competed in duathlons, ultras, marathons and half marathons, but found the discipline and structure needed for training was a challenge with her busy work, relationship and family commitments. At times she felt she was letting herself and her coach down.

“I am delighted to be part of the Ultra 50:50 Campaign. Inclusivity is something that I feel passionate about both in my personal and professional life – if I can inspire anyone to believe that they can take part, I will feel a huge sense of pride! The great thing about the Threshold Trail events is all the exercise I do contributes to building endurance and there is no expectation regarding (cut off) times. Building for this event has helped me rediscover the joy of training.”

ULTRA 50:50 CHALLENGERS

NAZRIN KHANOM



Hackney-based Nazrin is a relative newcomer to running, having taken up the activity in June 2022. Since then, she's tackled multiple marathons and half-marathons and has set up SHE Runs; a club working to help more Asian, Muslim and female runners find a like-minded community. She took on Race to the King in memory of her late brother, who lost his life to brain cancer 2 years ago.

"I live by the mantra, 'No challenge, no change'. I am doing this for myself, and in memory of my dear brother who was very active but lost his mobility to cancer. Movement is a blessing, and it is our duty to take care of it until we cannot. I'm also running to inspire a younger generation to enter the sport, to show it's for everyone. Bring it on."

DEBORAH WARD-JOHNSTONE



46-year-old Deborah is a two-time cancer survivor looking to mark the fifth anniversary of getting the all-clear by taking on 50km at Race to the King. Although she regularly jogs with her dog Luna, this was Deborah's first official long-distance running event. She raised funds for Cancer Research UK.

"This is a big stretch for me. I've cheered my husband along for four marathons, but I've always told myself I couldn't do it and my stoma was a bit of an excuse! Now, I've been cancer-free for five years - if this isn't the right time to take on such a physical challenge, then I don't know when is. I know that it's okay to walk, and besides: why not go one better than my husband?" We hope that our Challengers experiences and achievements will help to inspire other women to participate in ultra running."

SEMEENA KHAN



Semeena is a Sussex-based running coach, ASICS FrontRunner and Community Lead for Muslim Runners; an organisation working to encourage more Muslims to take up running and an active lifestyle. In 2021 she won the Sussex Sports Volunteer of the Year award for co-founding the Sudhan Welfare Society, an organisation which aims to tackle inequalities in activity levels in the South Asian Community, combat loneliness and address accessibility to getting active and getting moving. Semeena has completed multiple road marathons and viewed the step up to ultra trail as an exciting challenge.

"My mantra is to be the change and keep showing up. There is a significant lack of representation of ethnic minorities in running. Promoting diversity and inclusion in the world of running, especially in trail running, is an important mission now more than ever. Being a road runner, I'm excited to hit the trails to fully embrace the beauty of the countryside right at my doorstep, but the terrain and elevation are definitely going to be a challenge for me."

CAMPAIGN CONTENT

Ultra 50:50 content was developed with one of three main goals in mind: to either educate, inspire or engage prospective participants in our Challengers' journey to Race to the King. In doing so we hoped to remove some of the barriers faced by female athletes as they prepare for and participate in ultra-distance events.

Here is an outline of the major pieces of content published as part of the Ultra 50:50 campaign.



NOVEMBER 2023

- A video showcasing our campaign launch event featuring industry leaders sharing their experiences and insights about female participation in running.
- A series of images and bios introducing our Ultra 50:50 Challengers.
- A series of infographics outlining the challenges faced by female participation as uncovered by our research.
- A video interview with each of our Ultra 50:50 Challengers sharing some of their hopes and fears about their involvement in the Ultra 50:50 initiative.

DECEMBER 2023

- A series of video clips of our experts and advisors taken from our campaign launch event with insights and advice about tackling an ultra.

JANUARY 2024

- We hosted a webinar with Emma Kirk-Odunubi and Harrier Trail Running designed to encourage and empower first-time ultrarunners which we then shared on YouTube.

FEBRUARY 2024

- A series of videos filmed at a night-time trail running event hosted by Maverick Race, who gifted places to female Threshold Trail Series participants via a giveaway.
- We launched our running and walking training plans in partnership with Runna and Wild Ginger Runner respectively.
- We hosted a webinar with Olympic marathoner Steph Davis about training and preparing for an ultramarathon which we then shared on YouTube.

MARCH 2024

- We launched our Ambassador programme featuring a number of women from a diverse range of backgrounds and experience levels.
- A video featuring a selection of our Threshold Ambassadors discussing the significance of International Women's Day.

APRIL - JUNE 2024

- We published a series of video interviews with our Ultra 50:50 Challengers, filmed in their own homes, focusing on their specific reasons for taking part and their progress towards Race to the King.
- During the events, we celebrated the male and female winners for each event equally, with social posts, race reports and equal inclusion in post event emails.



IMPACT

EVENT RECRUITMENT

PARTICIPANT DATA

FEMALE REGISTRATIONS	2023	2024	YoY Growth
RTTK - COASTAL 50K	185	312	69%
RTTK - CASTLE 50K	29	112	286%
RTTK - 50K TOTAL	214	424	98%
RTTS - 50K DAY ONE	170	252	48%
RTTS - 50K DAY TWO	172	206	20%
RTTS - 50K TOTAL	342	458	34%
50K	556	882	59%
RTTK - 100K NON-STOP	245	240	-2%
RTTS - 100K NON-STOP	549	653	19%
100K NON-STOP	794	893	12%
RTTK - 100K OVER 2 DAYS	157	N/A*	N/A
RTTS - 100K OVER 2 DAYS	335	313	-7%
TOTAL ACROSS ALL PACKAGES	1842	2088	13%

*The RTTK 100k 2 Day option was not available in 2024.

13% MORE WOMEN TOOK PART IN 2024

We saw a net increase in the total number of women registering for the Threshold Trail Series. Where 1,842 registered in 2023, 2,088 signed up in 2024, representing an increase of 13%. When accounting for the removal of the 100k Over Two Days package at Race to the King, the increase is close to 24%.



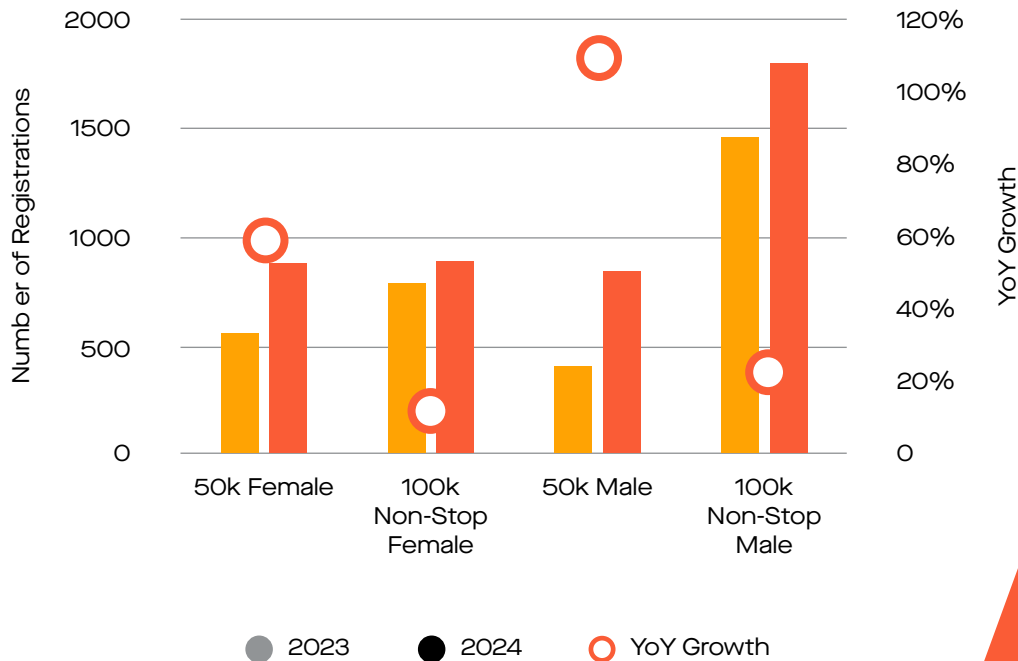
GROWTH WAS STRONGEST IN THE 50K DISTANCE

59% more women signed up for a 50k in 2024 compared to 2023. At Race to the King – the focal point of the Ultra 50:50 campaign – 424 women signed up to a 50k in 2024 compared to 214 in 2023, an increase of 98%. Growth in absolute numbers was greatest on the Race to the King Coastal route. This event has the least elevation of the 50k options and therefore is most attractive to new ultra runners looking for their first trail event experience.

WHEN TAKEN AS A PERCENTAGE OF OVERALL REGISTRATIONS, WE SAW A DECREASE IN FEMALE REPRESENTATION

Women made up 46% of all participants (50k & 100k) in 2023, compared to 42% in 2024. However, as shown by the graph below, this is not a result of fewer women taking part, so much as more men registering. The focus on female engagement throughout the Ultra 50:50 campaign did not negatively impact on the events appeal to male runners.

REGISTRATIONS BY GENDER



FEMALE REGISTRATIONS	2023	2024	YoY Growth
RTTK - COASTAL 50K	61%	51%	-17%
RTTK - CASTLE 50K	39%	48%	22%
RTTK - 50K TOTAL	57%	50%	-12%
RTTS - 50K DAY ONE	56%	50%	-10%
RTTS - 50K DAY TWO	61%	54%	-12%
RTTS - 50K TOTAL	58%	52%	-11%
50K	58%	51%	-12%

RTTK - 100K NON-STOP	39%	35%	-10%
RTTS - 100K NON-STOP	34%	33%	-4%
100K NON-STOP	35%	33%	-6%
RTTK - 100K OVER 2 DAYS	59%	N/A	N/A
RTTS - 100K OVER 2 DAYS	59%	58%	-3%

TOTAL	46%	42%	-8%
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WOMEN MADE UP 51% OF ALL 50K REGISTRATIONS IN 2024 COMPARED TO 58% IN 2023

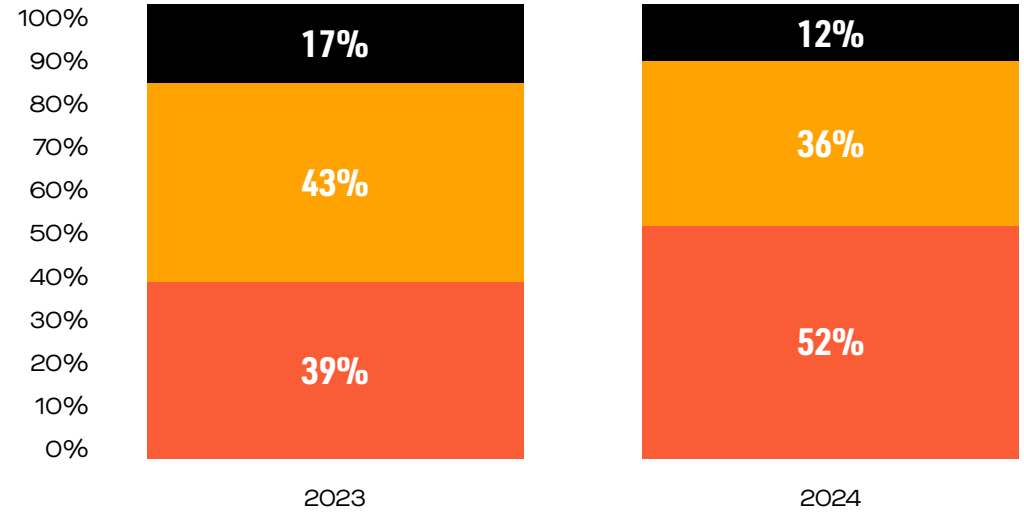
As noted above this shift is attributed to the disproportionate growth in male participants as opposed to a decline in female participants.

MORE WOMEN IDENTIFIED AS 'RUNNERS' THAN IN 2023

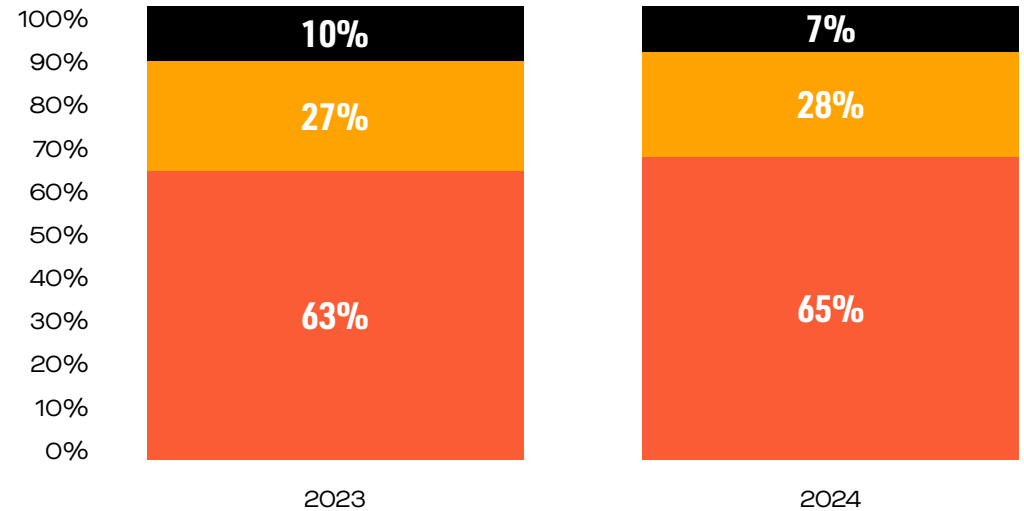
When asked if they identified as runners, walkers, or a combination of both, over half of women in 2024 chose runners compared to less than 40% in 2023. This trend was not mirrored in male participants, whose athletic makeup remained proportionately similar to 2023.



FEMALE ATHLETIC CATEGORY



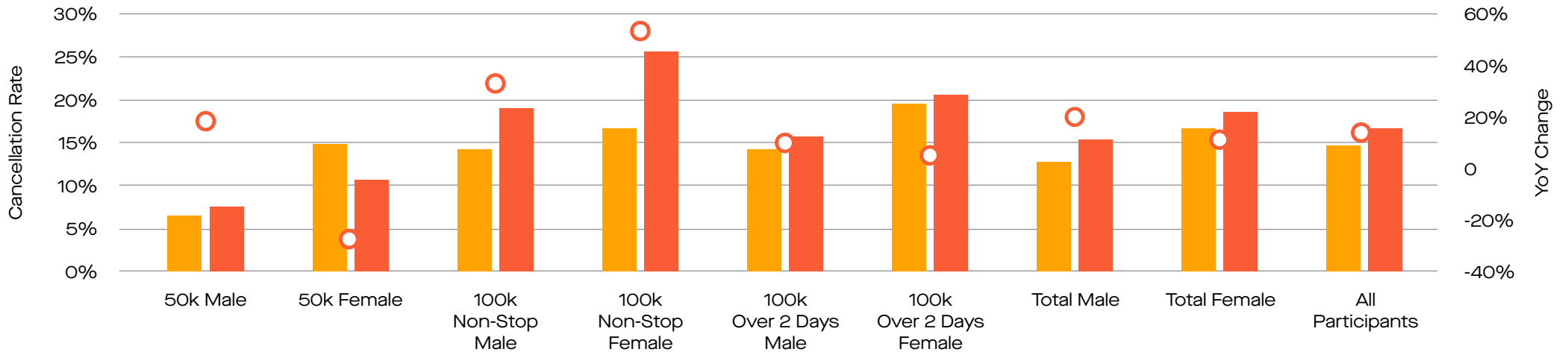
MALE ATHLETIC CATEGORY



● Runner ● Walker/Runner ● Walker

CANCELLATION RATES

● 2023 ● 2024 ○ YoY Growth



MORE PEOPLE CANCELLED IN 2024

We saw an increase in participants cancelling or deferring their place, from 15% in 2023 to 17% in 2024. The cancellation rate of male participants grew more than that of females from 2023 to 2024.

This implies that the general increase in cancellation rate was not necessarily to do with gender and was possibly a result of attracting more first-timers.

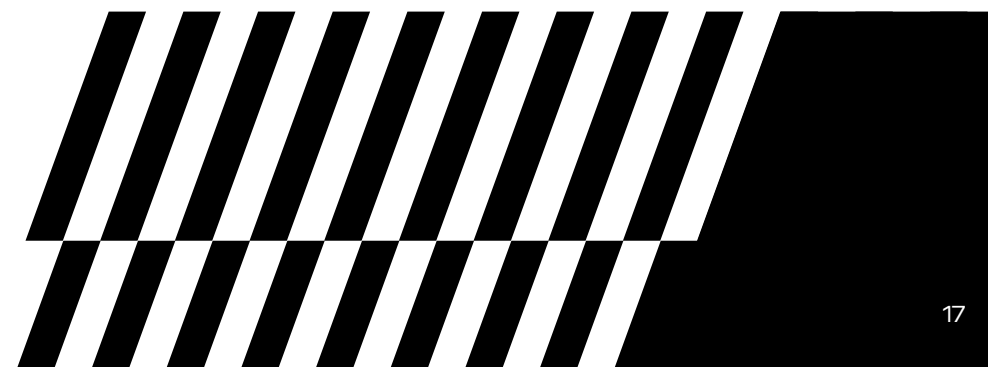
	2023	2024
50K MALE	6%	8%
50K FEMALE	15%	11%
100K NON-STOP MALE	14%	19%
100K NON-STOP FEMALE	17%	26%
100K OVER 2 DAYS MALE	14%	16%
100K OVER 2 DAYS FEMALE	20%	21%
TOTAL MALE	13%	15%
TOTAL FEMALE	17%	19%
ALL PARTICIPANTS	15%	17%

50K WOMEN CANCELLED LESS IN 2024

The only category in which the cancellation rate decreased was for female 50k participants. 15% cancelled or deferred in 2023, but only 11% did so in 2024. This is despite this category growing by 59% year-on-year, and may be linked to the sense of occasion, a reduction in the perceived barriers and higher levels of commitment inspired by the Ultra 50:50 campaign.

WOMEN CANCELLED MORE THAN MEN

Female participants consistently cancelled or deferred their place at a higher rate than male, with around 19% of females cancelling or deferring in 2024 compared to 15% of males. Reasons for deferrals are not recorded.



POST-EVENT SURVEY

After each event we issue a post-event survey to all participants. This year we included a series of questions that were specific to female participants to better understand the impact of the Ultra 50:50 initiative and the event experience for female participants. 599 people completed the surveys after this year's events.

SURVEY RESPONSES

- 70% of women who filled out our post-event survey indicated they were familiar with our Ultra 50:50 Campaign.
- 94% of female respondents said they felt Threshold "fully valued" female participants. When asked why, the main reasons cited were:

SANITARY PRODUCTS AND FACILITIES

- Many responses highlight the availability of sanitary products (tampons and pads) in the toilets as a significant factor.
- The presence of female-only toilets and the cleanliness and maintenance of these facilities were frequently mentioned as positive aspects.

SAFETY AND INCLUSIVITY

- Participants appreciated the measures taken to ensure their safety, such as the buddy system for those walking or running at night.
- The event's efforts to make female participants feel included and safe were noted, contributing to a sense of security.

PROMOTION AND REPRESENTATION

- The 50:50 campaign aimed at equal gender representation was repeatedly mentioned. This campaign was evident through promotion, communication, and participant statistics.
- The use of promotional materials featuring female athletes and the inclusion of female volunteers and staff were seen as positive steps towards inclusivity.

COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS

- Pre-event communication about the 50:50 campaign and the measures taken to support female participants were appreciated.
- Continuous messaging and emphasis on inclusivity in emails and social media posts helped in making the participants feel valued.

SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT

- The support from staff and volunteers, especially during difficult times in the event (e.g. at night), was frequently mentioned. The encouragement and assistance provided helped female participants feel valued and supported.

PROVISIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

- Specific accommodations such as the option for breastfeeding, separate results for female participants, and adequate provision of toilet facilities along the route were noted.
- Participants also mentioned the provision of female-specific amenities at basecamps and the finish line, such private spaces and female toilets.

The survey also highlighted some further differences between the barriers and motivations associated with ultra running before and during the events:

- The top barriers that female participants face in the preparation for an ultramarathon are: balancing a busy job (17%) with a lack of time to train (12%), and safety concerns regarding running alone (10%) in remote locations (10%), and / or at night (11%).
- The survey highlighted that the top barriers to participating in an ultramarathon event are balancing a busy job (13%), concerns about not being good or fit enough to take part (12%), and the cost associated with events (11%).

Interestingly, the benefits that female participants experience of taking part in ultramarathon events are more varied than we may have expected:

- Equal to improved health and fitness (25%) is the positive impact on mental health (24%).
- Additionally, connecting with nature out on the trails (19%), the inclusive nature of ultramarathons (15%) and the sense of community experienced at ultramarathon events (13%) also rated highlight amongst participants.

PRESS COVERAGE

- We generated 30 pieces of press coverage specifically linked to the Ultra 50:50 initiative.
- The coverage had an estimated 522k views (on and offline), with 22 pieces being online and 7 being in print. This had an estimated audience reach of 463m people.
- The coverage led with the Ultra 50:50 Challengers stories, as their inspirational journeys brought to life the barriers they had overcome to participate in an ultra-distance event.
- Key highlights included features about the Trail Series in the Daily Mail, Women Running, Hello, Stylist and Runners World.

463M REACH
52K VIEWS

“

“We worked with Threshold Sports on a strategic PR campaign to help raise awareness of the challenges women face when it comes to participating in ultramarathons. We feel incredibly proud to partner with a company that is truly committed to driving positive change in the industry.”

The theme of gender equality in sports continues to drive growing media attention and the Ultra 50:50 campaign generated a great deal of positive media coverage showcasing the changes being made by Threshold to achieve gender parity across their events.”

We saw media interest across running and fitness titles but also in national media outlets that were keen to report on the challenges related to female participation in ultra-distance events and the initiatives around health, safety, preparation and representation to provide a commercially sustainable blueprint for other event organisers that share this mission.”

Layla Smith, Managing Director
of Aspire PR

”





PARTNERS

CONVERSATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS TRIGGERED BY THE CAMPAIGN INCLUDED

- Harrier
- Vaga
- Strava UK

PARTNER ACTIVATION

Threshold Partners engaged with the campaign due to the synergy with their own goals and objectives related to increasing female participation in sport / ultra running. Harrier, Pressio, Runna, Vaga, Profeet, Perkier, Trailmed and High5 all offered the Ultra 50:50 Challengers products or services to support them with their training and preparation for Race to the King.

ONLINE IMPACT

We drove significant growth in all digital metrics (a key sign of demand) throughout the campaign period. The relatable Challenger stories that we featured in the campaign resonated well with existing and prospective participants.

WEBSITE VISITATION

Threshold Trail Series website (www.thresholdtrailseries.com)

Metric	Aug '22 - July '23	Aug '23 - July '24	YoY Increase
Traffic (Sessions)	226k	550k	143%
Users	126k	470k	273%
Organic Search Traffic	131k	198k	51%

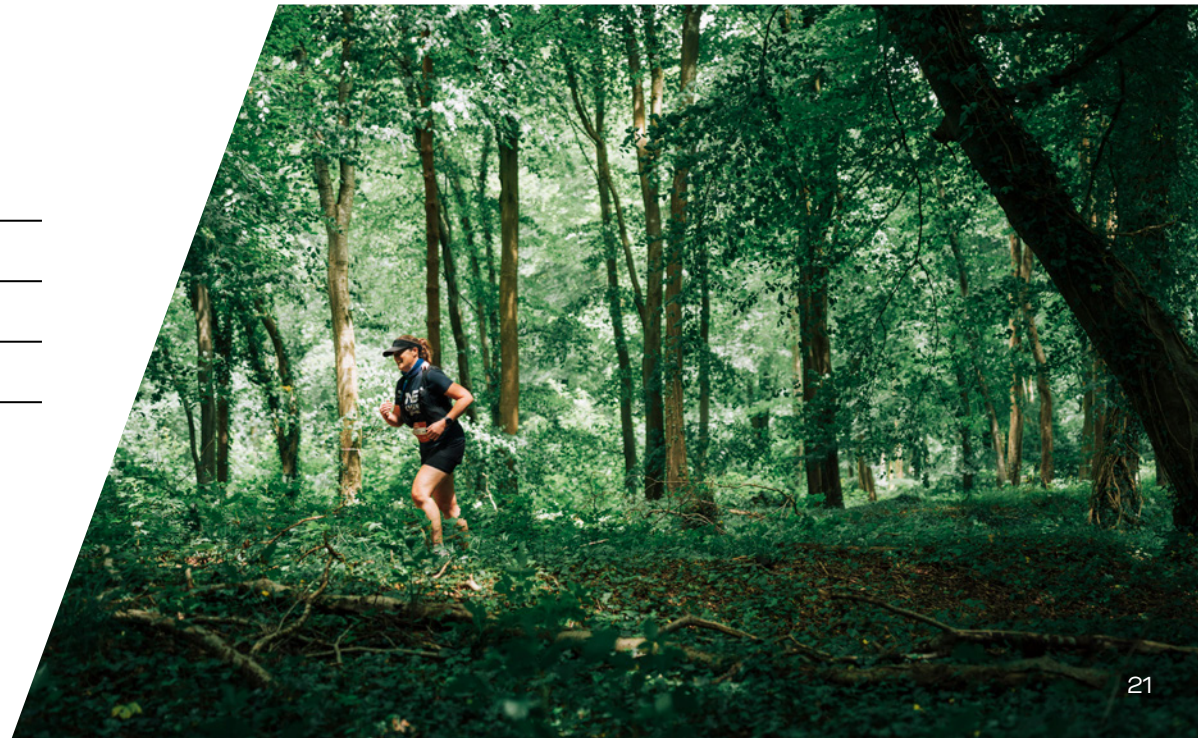
SOCIAL CONTENT

Threshold Trail Series - Facebook and Instagram

Metric	Aug '22 - July '23	Aug '23 - July '24	YoY Increase
Reach (FB)	209.1k	399.2k	91%
Reach (IG)	141.6k	409.4k	189%
Reach (Total)	350.7k	808.6k	131%

ULTRA 50:50 CONTENT ONLY

Month	Social media reach	Social media impressions
November 2023	121.6k	146.2k
December 2023	36k	43.4k
January 2024	16.9k	18k
February 2024	44.4k	48.4k
March 2024	144k	190.8k
April - June 2024	209.8k	312.8k
Overall	572.7k	759.6k



RACE TO THE STONES



DIRECT MARKETING

Ultra 50:50 Email open rates and engagement:

- Across the course of the year, we sent 17 emails to our marketing database either directly promoting Ultra 50:50 or other initiatives focused on inclusivity, including invitations to webinars and community pop-ups focused on supporting newcomers to ultramarathons.
- These emails had an average open rate of 36%, and a click-to-open rate of 4%. This is largely in line with our standard open rates of between 30 and 40% and our CTO rates of between 3 and 6%.
- The email announcing the launch of the campaign was sent to 35,000 people with an open rate of 39% and a CTO rate of 4%.

COMMERCIAL

Social media advertising has accounted for major proportions of investment from event marketing budgets in the last decade. This has been understandable with the short term results it can drive.

However, the focus of the Ultra 50:50 campaign was always longer term with changes to the event itself being matched with reallocation and refocussing of existing marketing budgets to tell the story of female participation and the participants.

However, the campaign delivered swifter results than we expected with rapid growth in participation for both men and women in the first year.

MARKETING ROI

It is always challenging to draw direct comparisons when a marketing campaign coincides with adjustments to the product offering. However, the data above highlights some shifts in reach and engagement YoY that significantly outweigh the change in investment suggesting the Ultra 50:50 campaign was a major driver of results.

The social content reach (+131%) and web users (+273%) is particularly notable with the events being well established in the market.

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

The campaign opened doors for conversations with several emerging brands who championed female participation who were also able to be responsive with budgets. It has also broadened our network for longer term discussions with major partners who have specifically referenced the campaign alignment with their objectives. We believe this will add significant value in years 2 and 3 of these changes being made.

OPERATIONAL COSTS

One-off consultancy investment aside, the actual level of investment in female provision was remarkably low at less than 1.5% of total event delivery cost making it a relatively minor adjustment to budgets.

Ultimately, every event differs in terms of the potential costs and upside of equivalent investment and changes which is why we have developed a simple tool for event to use with their own data. See appendix.

2025 ENHANCEMENTS

In the spirit of our mantra 'More Is In You', we recognise that we can always go one step further. In 2025 we will continue the Ultra 50:50 initiative, maintaining all the improvements we have already put in place, but with a focus on four key areas for ongoing improvement.



EQUAL RACE TO THE STONES RECORD PRIZE FUND

Beginning in 2025, ten years since Sarah Morwood set the current women's course record, Threshold Sports will award £1,000 to any man or woman who breaks their respective gender's Race to the Stones course record. In the event that neither record is broken, another £1,000 will be added to the fund in 2026, and so on, until the record is broken. The prize fund will then reset to £1,000 for the following year.

We hope that this cash prize will help nurture the development of trail running as a sport, particularly ultra-distance trail running, and help draw more attention to the incredible athleticism on display at the front-end of an ultra like Race to the Stones.



THRESHOLD 500 TRAILBLAZERS: EMPOWERING FIRST-TIME FEMALE ULTRA-RUNNERS

Our experience of working with female runners has highlighted that taking that leap from shorter distance events such as Park Runs, 10k or half marathon events to ultra events (more than 50km) is one of the most challenging psychological barriers.

Therefore in 2025 our goal is to attract 500+ first-time female ultra-runners to our Trail Series events.

The Threshold 500 Trailblazers campaign will excite, empower and engage female runners to give them the confidence and knowledge to tackle their first ultra.



BUILDING COMMUNITY AROUND EVENTS

In addition to our established Facebook forums that enable followers to connect, we are investigating a new strategic partnership to list all of our public events on the Heylo platform.

Heylo will help to facilitate the creation of communities around our events, enabling participants to connect with other people in their local area, to chat, share photos, tips and advice. This peer-to-peer support in the preparation for the events can help to motivate participants and connect people who may not have a training network in their local area.



NIGHT RUNNING SUPPORT

The extensive training that is needed for an ultra requires participants to train throughout the winter, often on dark mornings or nights, and sometimes in remote locations. We will continue to share practical advice regarding winter training (such as sharing your routes, using trackers etc), and we are partnering with kit partners to support female runners as they train on darker winter evenings.

CONCLUSIONS FOR THE MARKET

THERE IS A CLEAR INCENTIVE

The data above illustrates a clear case for making your event more attractive to female participants. The potential return on time and financial investment will vary depending on the event and race organiser. However, the following are the key areas we have identified that all event organisers should focus on.

FEMALE REPRESENTATION AND PERCEPTION

- Adjust your language and imagery pre, during and post event in all communications.
- Equal feature of the female race: coverage, prizes, profile and positioning.

DEFERRAL POLICIES

- Ensuring your pregnancy deferral policy is clear and shared at the point of registration.

EXTENDED CUT-OFF TIMES

- Ensure cut-off times are reflective of the course length and athletic performance of the participants, allowing ample time for everyone to complete the event.

FEMALE TOILET, SANITARY PRODUCT PROVISION AND PRIVATE SPACES

- Ensuring female toilets, sanitary products and private spaces are available at all basecamps and pitstop locations.

MERCHANDISE

- Ensure merchandise and race t-shirts are optional and have male and female fittings.



DOWNLOADABLE TOOL FOR MODELLING THE COMMERCIAL UPSIDE

To support event directors in assessing the potential value of investing in their event to make it more accessible to women, we have created a simple Excel tool they can download and use for their event modelling.

KEY ASSUMPTIONS

The primary commercial upsides are from additional ticket sales and sponsorship revenue.

Incremental ticket sales are assumed to be high-margin with limited additional variable costs.

We have taken a 3-year view to realise the value as it takes time to build a reputation.

The downloadable model allows you to input the following data points and model the potential commercial upside over three years:

- Current ticket sales
- Current average ticket price
- Current sponsorship
- Additional costs for implementing measures

[DOWNLOAD](#)

SAMPLE CONTENT

CURRENT POSITION				
Current Entries			1,000	
Avg entry fee			£95	
Current Sponsorship			£50,000	

ADDITIONAL INCOME	YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	3 YR POSITION
% revenue growth	5%	10%	20%	
Additional Entries	50	100	200	
Addtl income	£3,800	£7,600	£15,200	
Addtl Sponsorship	£2,500	£5,000	£10,000	
	£6,300	£12,600	£25,200	£44,100

ADDITIONAL COSTS				
Item 1	£2,300			
Item 2	£1,500			
Item 3	£500			
Item 4	£1,000			
Item 5	£2,000			
Item 6	£-			
Item 7	£-			
Item 8	£-			
	£7,300	£7,300	£7,300	£21,900

NET POSITION	YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	3 YR POSITION
	-£1,000	£5,300	£7,900	£22,200

**THRESHOLD/
MORE IS IN YOU™**

**WANT TO KNOW MORE?
GET IN TOUCH.**

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SheRACES 