IRISH RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

# GENDER PAY GAP REPORT




2026

# CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S INTRODUCTION

As Chief Executive of the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU), I am pleased to present our Gender Pay Gap Report for 2026, which covers the period from July 2025 to June 2026.
This report provides an important opportunity to assess our progress, measure the impact of our actions, and maintain transparency about the work still to be done. It reflects our commitment to building an organisation and a game that is representative, inclusive and accessible to all.

Over the past year, we have continued to make progress. We became the first sporting organisation in Ireland to achieve the Irish Centre for Diversity's Gold Accreditation, recognising the work being undertaken across the organisation to embed equity, diversity and inclusion into our culture and decision-making. We have also continued to invest in leadership development, governance pathways and opportunities for women across the game, while strengthening our focus on attracting, developing and retaining female talent within the IRFU.

That progress is mirrored across Irish Rugby more broadly. Participation by women and girls continues to grow, more women are entering coaching, refereeing and leadership roles, and we are seeing stronger female representation in key areas of the game than ever before. These developments are helping to create more opportunities for women to progress throughout rugby.

At the same time, this report highlights the reality that the IRFU operates within a historically male-dominated sporting environment, and while we are committed to equal pay for equal work, the gender pay gap is influenced by the distribution of men and women across different levels of an organisation. Like many organisations in professional sport, we continue to see a higher proportion of men in senior, specialist and higher-paid roles, which remains the primary driver of our gender pay gap.

Encouragingly, this year's data shows positive movement in female representation within several pay quartiles and continued progress in building pathways that will support greater balance over time. However, sustainable change requires patience, consistency and long-term investment.

Our focus remains on creating opportunities. Through the implementation of our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, continued investment in the women's game, targeted leadership development initiatives and a commitment to inclusive recruitment and progression practices, we are committed to ensure that talented women can see clear pathways to leadership and decision-making roles across Irish Rugby.

While there is more work ahead, I am pleased with the progress being made and the commitment shown by colleagues across the organisation. By continuing to broaden participation, strengthen representation and create inclusive environments where people can thrive, we are helping to build a stronger future for Irish Rugby.





Kevin Potts,
Chief Executive

# GENDER PAY GAP VERSUS EQUAL PAY

The IRFU is committed to equal pay.
The Gender Pay Gap reflects the representation of men and women across different roles and levels of the organisation, rather than whether they receive equal pay for the same job.

## GENDER PAY GAP
WORKFORCE REPRESENTATION

Measures the difference in average pay between men and women across the organisation.

- Shows how men and women are represented across different roles, levels and salary bands.
- A representation measure of the whole workforce.
- Does not compare people doing the same job.

More men in senior, higher paid roles leads to a gender pay gap.

## EQUAL PAY
PAY FAIRNESS

Measures whether men and women are paid equally for the same or equivalent work.

- A legal requirement.
- Compares like-for-like roles doing the same or equivalent work.
- Focuses on fair pay practices within the organisation.

Same job. Same Value.
**Equal Pay.**

A gender pay gap can exist even where equal pay is in place.

# 2026 DATA AT A GLANCE

The data below sets out our gender pay gap results for the 2026 reporting period, covering pay, bonus payments and pay quartiles across all IRFU employees, giving a clear picture of where we stand today.

IRFU has a total headcount of 228 employees (65% male and 35% female). This reports covers a snapshot 12 month period of July 2025 to June 2026.

**Gender Pay Gap Terms Explained**

- "Mean" refers to the average.
- "Median" is the value in the middle of a data set.
- "Benefit in Kind" refers to any non-cash benefit of monetary value.
- "Bonus" is a sum of money added to a person's wages as a reward for good performance.



20%

Mean Gender Pay Gap



22%

Median Gender Pay Gap



1%

Mean Gender Pay Gap (part-time employees*)



21%

Median Gender Pay Gap (part-time employees*)



38%

Mean Bonus Gap

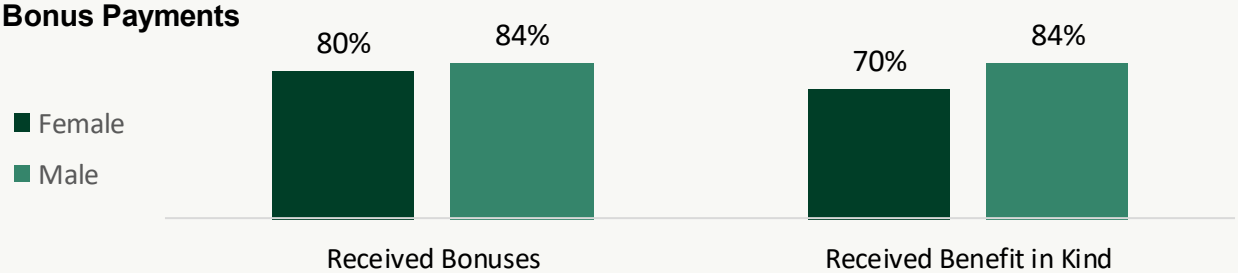


61%

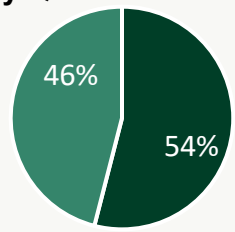
Median Bonus Gap

**Our part-time population is small, with 12 part-time employees within the IRFU. The small size, makes both the mean and median part-time figures sensitive to changes in individual working patterns and hours worked during the reporting period. As a result, the 2026 part-time figures differ substantially from 2025, and year-on-year comparison is of limited value. We report them here as required, but they should not be read as evidence of a structural shift in part-time pay across the organisation.*

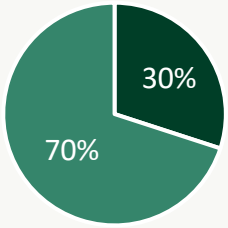
## Bonus Payments



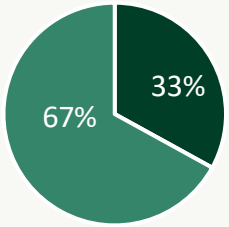

## Pay Quartiles



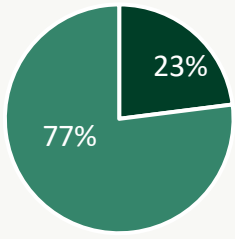

Lower Quartile




Lower Middle Quartile




Upper Middle Quartile

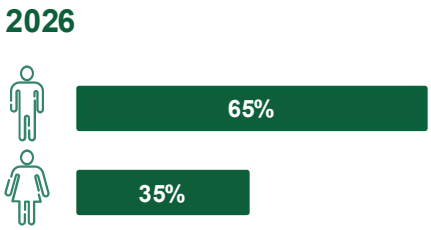


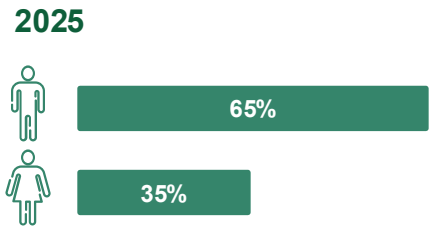

Upper Quartile



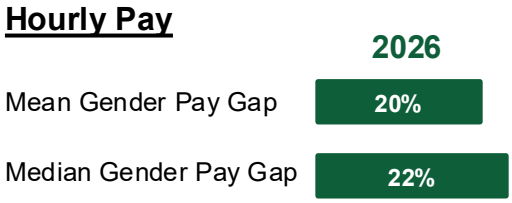
# YEAR ON YEAR COMPARISON

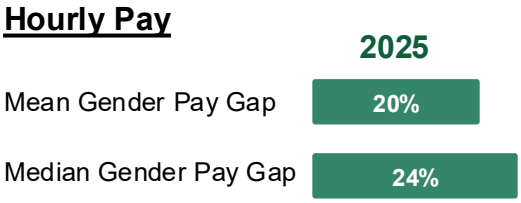
## Headcount Breakdown



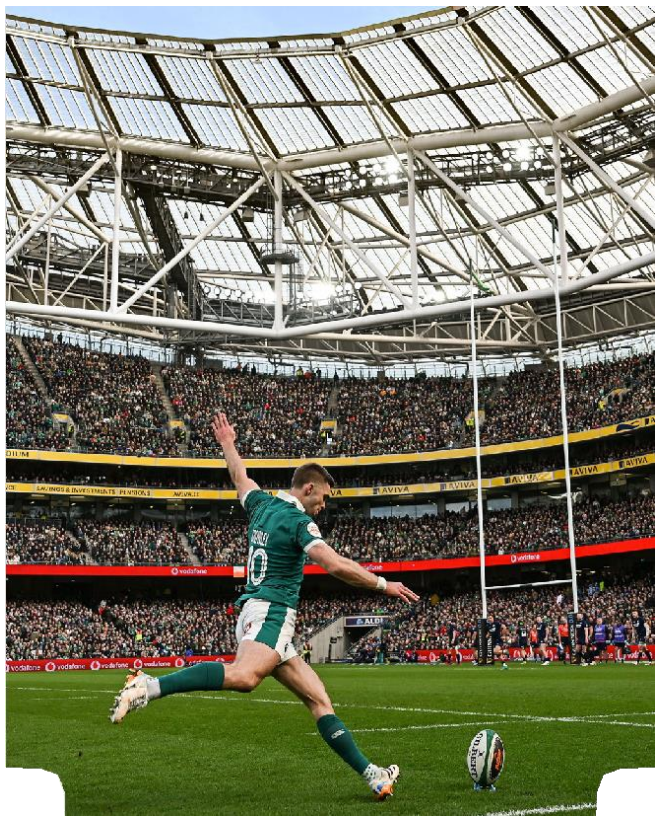

Women currently make up 35% of the IRFU's workforce, with men representing 65%. While this reflects the wider reality of operating in a traditionally male-dominated sector, the IRFU is committed to closing this gap over time. A range of initiatives focused on continued investment in the women's game and more broadly in equity, diversity and inclusion, particularly in areas and levels where women remain underrepresented. These efforts form part of the IRFU's ongoing commitment to building a more balanced and equitable workforce for the future.



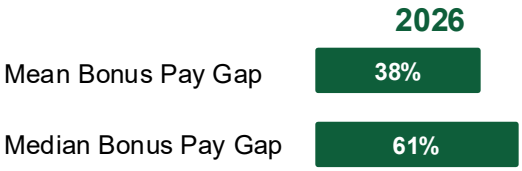

The median gap has fallen from 24% to 22% in 2026. The movement comes from the upper-middle quartile, where female representation rose from 29% to 33%. In the upper quartile, it fell from 26% to 23%. A small number of high-earning male employees hold up the mean gap; however, the median pay gap reflects the shape of pay across the wider employee group, where the picture has improved modestly during the reporting period.

It is important to note that the gender pay gap does not reflect unequal pay for equal work. Colleagues in comparable roles receive equitable pay regardless of gender. Instead, the gap reflects the current workforce composition, with a higher proportion of men in senior and higher-paid positions. Looking ahead, the IRFU remains committed to increasing female representation across all levels of the organisation, with a particular focus on supporting the progression of women into leadership and senior roles, helping to create a more balanced workforce over time.

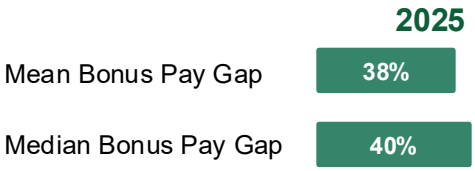


# YEAR ON YEAR COMPARISON

## Bonus Pay

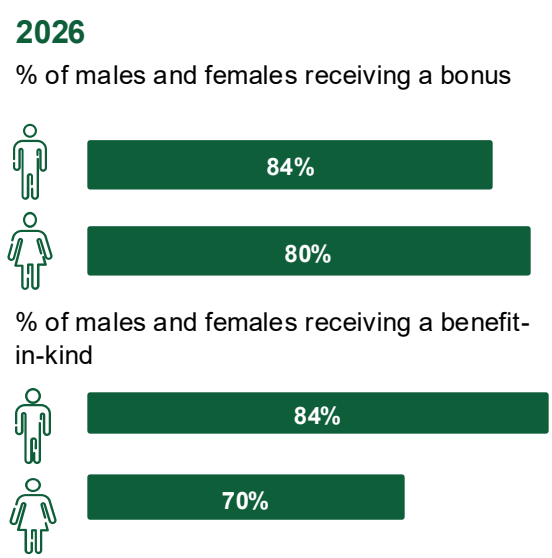



## Bonus Pay

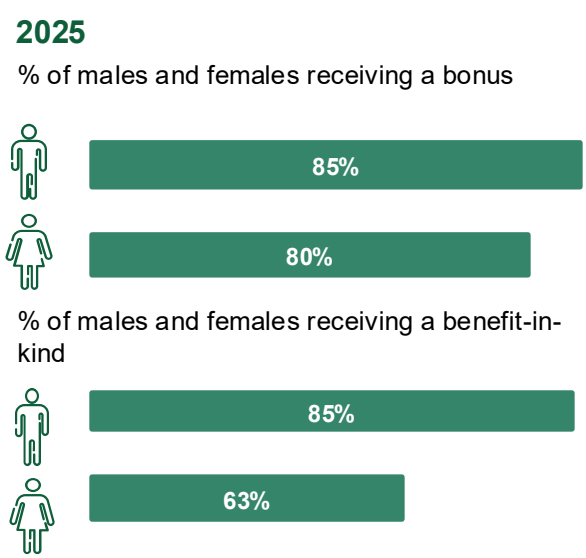



The IRFU's 2026 bonus gap results indicate that bonus outcomes continue to be influenced by the distribution of employees across senior and leadership positions, where bonus opportunities tend to be more significant. The mean bonus gap remained unchanged at 38%, with several high-value bonus awards paid to male employees continuing to influence the result. The median bonus gap, however, increased substantially, from 40% to 61%, suggesting that the typical male bonus recipient received a higher award than the typical female recipient. While a number of female employees received significant bonus payments during the year, these awards were concentrated amongst a smaller group of individuals. Consequently, both the level and distribution of bonus payments contributed to the widening of the median gender bonus gap in 2026.

## Gender Pay Gap Bonus




## Gender Pay Gap Bonus

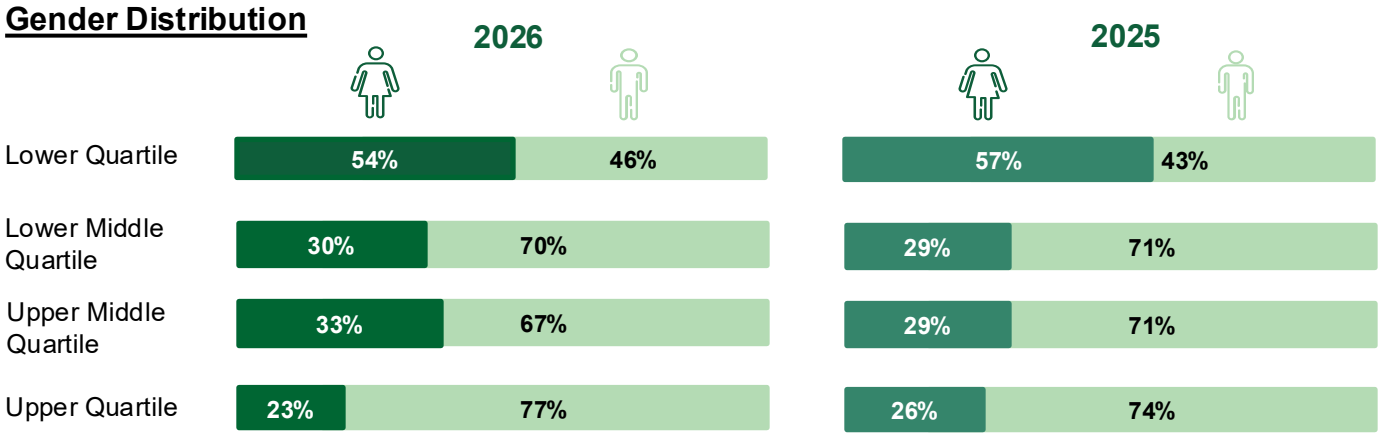



The proportion of employees receiving benefits in kind remained higher amongst male employees in 2026, with **84% of men** receiving BIK compared to **70% of women**. However, female participation increased significantly from 63% in 2025, resulting in a narrowing of the gap between genders. Differences in BIK participation may reflect workforce composition, the distribution of roles eligible for certain benefits, and individual choices regarding optional benefit schemes. The increase in female participation represents positive progress towards a more balanced distribution of non-cash benefits across the organisation, whilst the IRFU remains committed to improving female representation at all levels and addressing the underlying factors contributing to gender-based disparities over time.



# YEAR ON YEAR COMPARISON

## Gender Distribution



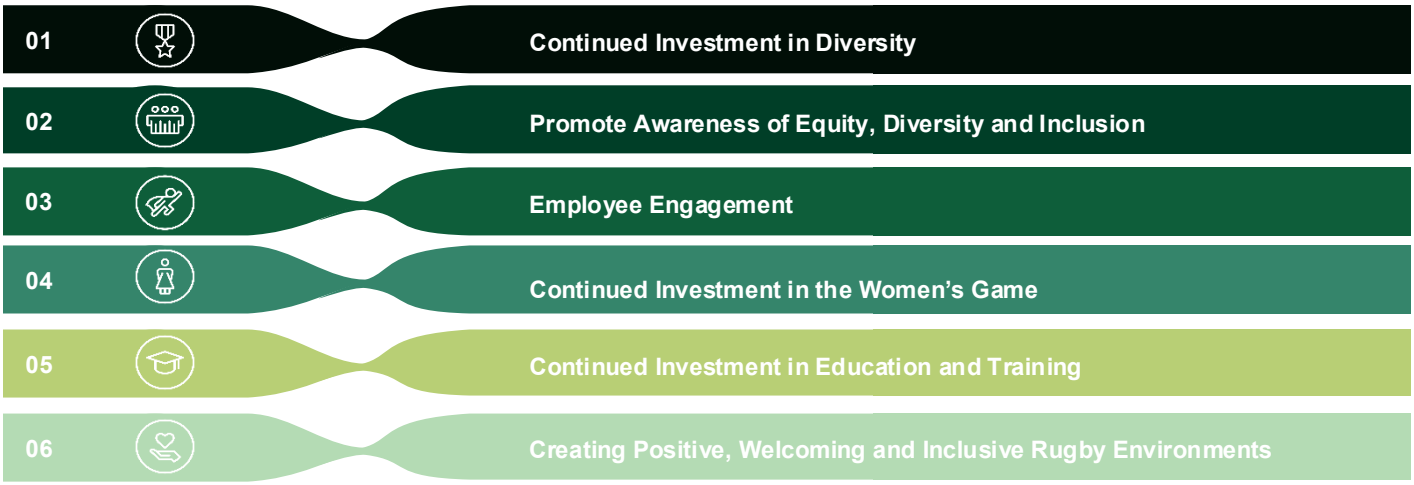

The IRFU's 2026 pay quartile analysis highlights a relatively balanced gender distribution within the Lower Quartile, together with increased female representation (compared to 2025) in both the Lower Middle and Upper Middle Quartiles. However, men continue to dominate the Upper Quartile, representing 77% of employees in the highest-paid roles. As senior and higher-paying positions remain concentrated within this quartile, the distribution of men and women across pay levels continues to be a key driver of the organisation's gender pay gap. To support a more balanced pay profile, IRFU remains committed to strengthening female representation into senior roles with leadership and decision making responsibilities. This includes continued investment in female leadership development, governance representation and the long-term talent pipeline across the women's game.







# 2026 ACTION PLAN - PROGRESS




The IRFU has continued to make strong progress against its commitments to advance equity, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) across the organisation and the wider game. Building on this foundation, the IRFU is embedding initiatives that address the structural drivers of gender pay gaps across the organisation, while fostering a more inclusive and representative culture. In 2026, the organisation has focused on six priority areas:

## CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN DIVERSITY

The IRFU achieved the Irish Centre for Diversity GOLD award in March 2026, being only one of 41 organisations to do so and the first ever sports organisation to achieve this standard. The IRFU undertakes regular policy reviews to ensure alignment with best practice and partners with relevant external partners for the development of workshops, training and resources, including the Irish Centre for Diversity and the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre for work on discrimination and misogyny.

## PROMOTING AWARENESS OF DE&I

The IRFU continues to strengthen its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion through a range of initiatives designed to create a more welcoming and accessible game for all. During the year, 54 additional clubs participated in the Positive Rugby project, bringing participation to 97 clubs across the four provinces, while the Women's Network expanded to 236 LinkedIn members and 142 WhatsApp members. Further initiatives included anti-racism workshops delivered through the Irish Centre for Diversity, Respect & Allyship training for coaches and volunteers, Pride festivals across local clubs, disability rugby programmes operating in 58 clubs with 61 teams, and the introduction of enhanced accessibility measures at clubs and stadia. These initiatives demonstrate the IRFU's ongoing investment in fostering an inclusive culture and increasing opportunities for participation across diverse communities. By creating a more inclusive and supportive environment, these actions also contribute to improving the recruitment, development and retention of women across the game, supporting the IRFU's broader gender equality and Gender Pay Gap objectives.

# 2026 ACTION PLAN - PROGRESS

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The IRFU continues to build on feedback from staff, running engagement initiatives, and ensuring colleagues' voices remain central to shaping future plans. The EDI staff group has met five times over the past year to review progress and support the ongoing development of the EDI Action Plan. In parallel, the staff representative group has met regularly throughout the year, discussing a diverse range of topics driven by employees.

## CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN THE WOMENS GAME

Ongoing consultations with local clubs are helping to identify and understand the challenges facing women and girls in rugby. These insights are guiding the development and continued efforts to promote inclusive and well-equipped club environments that support participation and retention. The launch of the dedicated Women and Girls Strategy in June 2025 delivered meaningful progress across participation and visibility. The IRFU has demonstrated its continued investment in the women's game through increased public funding for provincial pathway structures, the recruitment of four Women's Provincial Pathway Managers, and the expansion of leadership and governance supports. This investment is contributing to measurable progress, including a 16% increase in female adult players, a 56% increase in female referees, 653 active female coaches, and the establishment of 694 new women and girls' teams.

## CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The IRFU has continued it's commitment to developing a wide range of inclusivity and diversity training for volunteers and committees across clubs and provinces, new e-learning modules with partners such as International Gay Rugby, Sporting Pride, the Irish Centre for Diversity, and the Immigrant Council of Ireland, and Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, as well as ongoing support for Spirit ED&I projects such as Pride festivals, disability festivals, and expanded accessibility initiatives such as audio description at the Aviva and the Hidden Sunflower Scheme. The IRFU Leadership programme has a focused female accelerator element to support progression of females in the game and the volunteer element has a 50:50 representation of participants across its 80 places in 2025 and across 54 people in 2026.

## CREATING POSITIVE, WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE RUGBY ENVIRONMENTS

Supported by the implementation of ED&I Action Plans across the whole game and guidance to clubs on leadership and governance to strengthen equity and representation, the IRFU is consistently enhancing the culture within club environments.

Looking further ahead, the IRFU's Strategy to 2028 reinforces these commitments by setting clear long-term goals for ED&I. Together, these actions demonstrate the IRFU's determination not only to address gender pay gap figures, but also to actively shape a fairer, more inclusive workplace and sporting environment. They set a clear direction for progress year on year, ensuring consistent focus, measurable impact, and alignment with the IRFU's broader People & Culture and Rugby strategies

# 2027 ACTION PLAN

The IRFU recognises that its staff come from diverse backgrounds, with varying experiences and needs. We are committed to ensuring diversity & inclusion is embedded into our day-to-day working practices. The IRFU actively promotes fairness, respect, equality, diversity inclusion and engagement and is committed to continuous improvement.

## 1 Continued Investment in Diversity

The IRFU, in order to maintain and continue our investment in diversity, will:

- Build on the successful achievement of the Irish Centre for Diversity's Gold Award in 2026 by implementing recommendations of their Report, in particular the development of specific ERGs across a range of topics.
- Annually review our policies in order to ensure that we fully align with current best practice and legislation. While the IRFU is only obliged to update our policies every two years, we are dedicated to showing continued investment and commitment to maintaining positive working practices;
- Continue to champion the Women's Network within the IRFU, which will seek to engage male allies across all aspects of the business
- Invest in neurodiversity awareness, work placements for people with a disability and expand the accessibility working group with Aviva Stadium to ensure an accessible environment for all.

## 2 Promote Awareness of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The IRFU will continue to increase awareness of Equity, Diversity & Inclusivity through learning and development, clear processes and the sharing and monitoring of diversity targets that will embed a positive culture of EDI throughout all of the IRFU including:

- Continuing the rollout of relevant E-learning modules and other learning initiatives that will include topics such as diversity and unconscious bias for all IRFU staff;
- An Equity, Diversity and Inclusion group was established in 2024 and is now embedded in the organisation, which will continue their meetings and initiatives to further understand the experience and culture within the IRFU;
- Continue to acknowledge and recognise key diversity milestones achieved through regular and targeted communication to all of our staff via our newsletter and town hall meetings;
- Continue to encourage Equity, Diversity & Inclusivity to be an agenda point of discussion with representatives from various rugby unions to inform future actions, share best practice and learnings;
- Continue to promote internal IRFU milestones within the ED&I space on external platforms, including on social media platforms such as LinkedIn; and
- Continue the female accelerator course which is designed to support women at representative levels of the game to move into key decision-making and senior leadership roles. The club IRFU Leadership course has a 50:50 gender balance, with the expansion of the female specific leadership course and training of mentors to provide support in this space, the IRFU is committed to achieve representation in key decision making roles.
- The IRFU are committed to ensuring we are aligned to the legislation requirements for the EU Pay Transparency.

## 3 Employee Engagement

The IRFU are committed to continuous engagement and seeking of feedback from their employees.

- The IRFU are committed to gaining insight from employees which will be used to drive change within the organisation across all aspects of the employee lifecycle, including aspects such as EDI;
- The IRFU will continue to run a staff engagement group which hosts team huddles that discuss a range of topics in relation to employee voice and wellbeing; and
- The IRFU will build on feedback from Great Place to Work and Irish Centre for Diversity Gold Award survey to continue to embed a culture of inclusivity for all employees.

# 2027 ACTION PLAN

While not directly impacting the gender pay gap data, we believe the following actions will empower our organisation to influence the position of women in rugby and to create a more equitable and inclusive community across the whole of the game that is representative of Irish society.

## 4 Continued Focus on the Acceleration of the Women's Game

The IRFU produced its Strategy in June 2025 that includes the women's game as one of its core pillars, the following targets have been set to create inclusive experiences for all involved:

- Create an attractive pathway for female coaches/match officials and volunteers in the women's game;
- Drive a club ethos and culture that will accelerate the development of the women's game through leadership and mentoring programmes;
- Work towards 40% female governance representation at provincial and club level, ensuring women are included as key decision makers in the club;
- Create dynamic marketing campaigns with a view to lifting the profile of women in rugby;
- Continue the IRFU Club Facility Grant to assist clubs to create inclusive spaces; expand the IRFU Healthy Ireland Walking Tracks fund to increase female participation within clubs and pilot the Healthy Ireland IRFU Healthy Clubs programme that includes EDI as a key pillar in the award.
- Continue the expansion of the Women's Rugby Network to provide support to those working in the female game through a series of Podcasts
- To upskill coaches and volunteers with female specific sports information and provide period positive and breast health initiatives through the network and club workshops
- Ongoing efforts to strengthen succession planning and support the advancement of women through targeted development initiatives

## 5 Continued Investment in Education and Training

The IRFU will build on its education and training programme to ensure coaches and volunteers are skilled in the area of EDI.

- Inclusivity & Diversity training to expand to all volunteers and committees across the clubs and provinces;
- Continued work with International Gay Rugby, Sporting Pride, Irish Centre for Diversity and Immigrant Council of Ireland to provide e-learning to supplement D&I module; new modules on anti-racism, LGBTQ+ inclusion and misogyny in partnership with Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
- Continued investment in the Spirit EDI projects, such as Pride festivals, anti-racism workshops and expansion of the disability projects throughout our clubs.
- Continue strengthening our investment in Leadership and Management Development through strategic partnerships with University College Dublin, fostering a culture of excellence and continuous growth supporting career pathways for males and females within the organisation.
- Continue to invest in Female Leadership Development by actively supporting women to participate in high-impact leadership courses, fostering growth, confidence, and representation at all levels.

## 6 Creating Positive, Welcoming and Inclusive Rugby Environments

The IRFU Strategy has set out the following targets to 2028:

- Implement Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action plans for the whole of the game to complement the EDI Policy in place for staff; and
- Provide guidance and support to our clubs to implement an equitable game for all through the Welcoming Clubs Self Assessment Tool and related toolkit
- Continue collaborating with charities through initiatives such as audio descriptions, work access, and communication boards throughout stadiums and clubs fostering an inclusive environment where everyone feels supported and empowered.