

Women's Rugby World Cup 2025

Media and gender case study



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 isentia


SPORT
NEW ZEALAND
IHĪ AOTEAROA



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About this report

The Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 took place from 22 August to 28 September.

This study analyses coverage of the tournament by New Zealand media and its impact on the gender balance of overall sports reporting during the tournament period.

This forms part of the broader Sport NZ-Isentia study, which has been tracking gender representation in sports news since 2019. The study reviews approximately one-third of all New Zealand sports news coverage, selected randomly each day, providing a robust snapshot of trends over time.

Coverage included in this study spans television, radio, print and online sports news. It excludes match broadcasts and live blogging of sports fixtures, meaning Sky Sport is not represented in this analysis.

Note: The 2021 Rugby World Cup was delayed to 2022 due to COVID. This report refers to it as 2022 for consistency.

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Key findings

Weight of coverage

During the tournament, the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 made up 25% of all sports news coverage in Aotearoa New Zealand. This matches the level of coverage seen during the 2022 tournament. This consistency is significant because the 2022 event was hosted in New Zealand and won by the Black Ferns.

The Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 started earlier than usual, which meant it was competing for attention with other major sporting events. These included the Rugby Championship and Bledisloe Cup, Netball's Taini Jamison Series, the US Tennis Open and the World Athletics Championships.

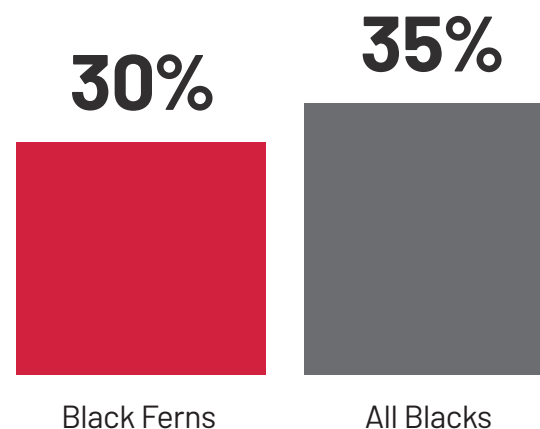
25%

The WRWC 2025 made up 25% of all sports news coverage in NZ during the tournament period.

Head to head

On 13 September, the Black Ferns defeated South Africa while the All Blacks lost to South Africa in the Rugby Championship.

Media coverage over 13-14 September focused slightly more on the All Blacks loss (35%) than the Black Ferns win (30%).



Focus on fitness

More than a third (35%) of media mentions about the Black Ferns focused on player injuries and fitness, reflecting a higher number of tournament-impacting injuries within the Black Ferns compared with previous Rugby World Cups.

Media coverage often highlighted personal stories of disappointment, resilience and overcoming adversity.

Over 3 times

More fitness and injury-related coverage on Black Ferns players compared to 2022.

Coverage

This section looks at the overall presence of women in sports coverage. This includes the amount of media content that is focused on women's sport, the visibility of women across all sports coverage, and the impact of major sporting events.

Coverage

Balance and visibility

This page shows the gender balance and visibility for all sports news coverage in Aotearoa during the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 period.

Coverage of women's sport rose to 42%, up from 38% in 2022.

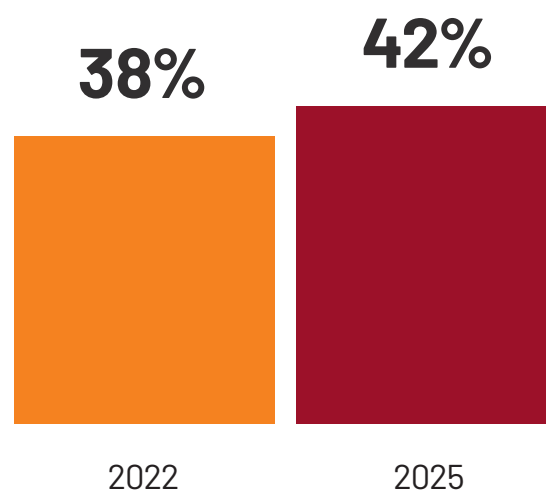
However, this increase was driven mainly by sports like tennis, athletics and rowing – not rugby union (see page 8).

Rugby union made up more than half of all sports stories. Within that, the men's game received 56% of rugby coverage, compared to 44% for women.

Even so, the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 helped lift visibility for women's sport overall, with more female players featured in stories compared to the 2022 tournament.

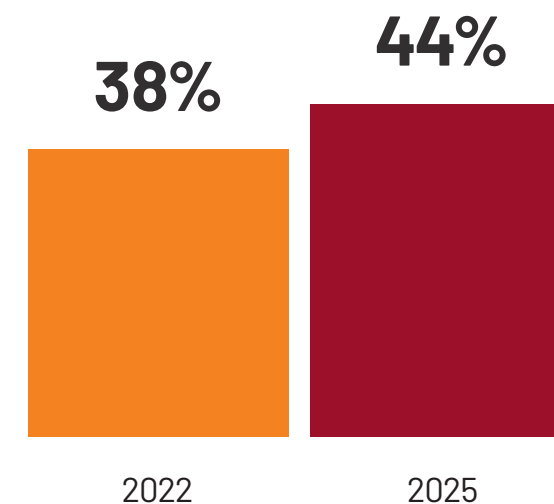
Balance

Balance is the percentage of sports news coverage focused on women.



Visibility

Visibility is how often women appear in sports stories as players, fans and reporters.

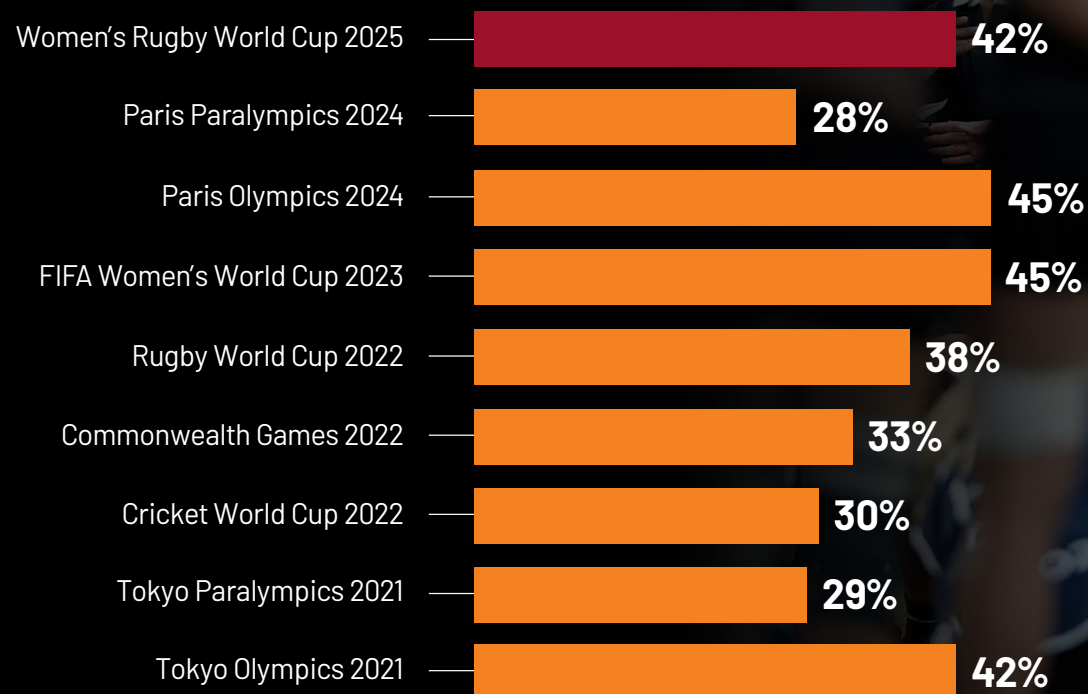


Coverage

Gender balance during major events

This chart shows the gender balance in sports news during key event periods. It highlights how major tournaments can influence the overall balance and visibility of women in sports coverage.

Key event comparisons



Coverage

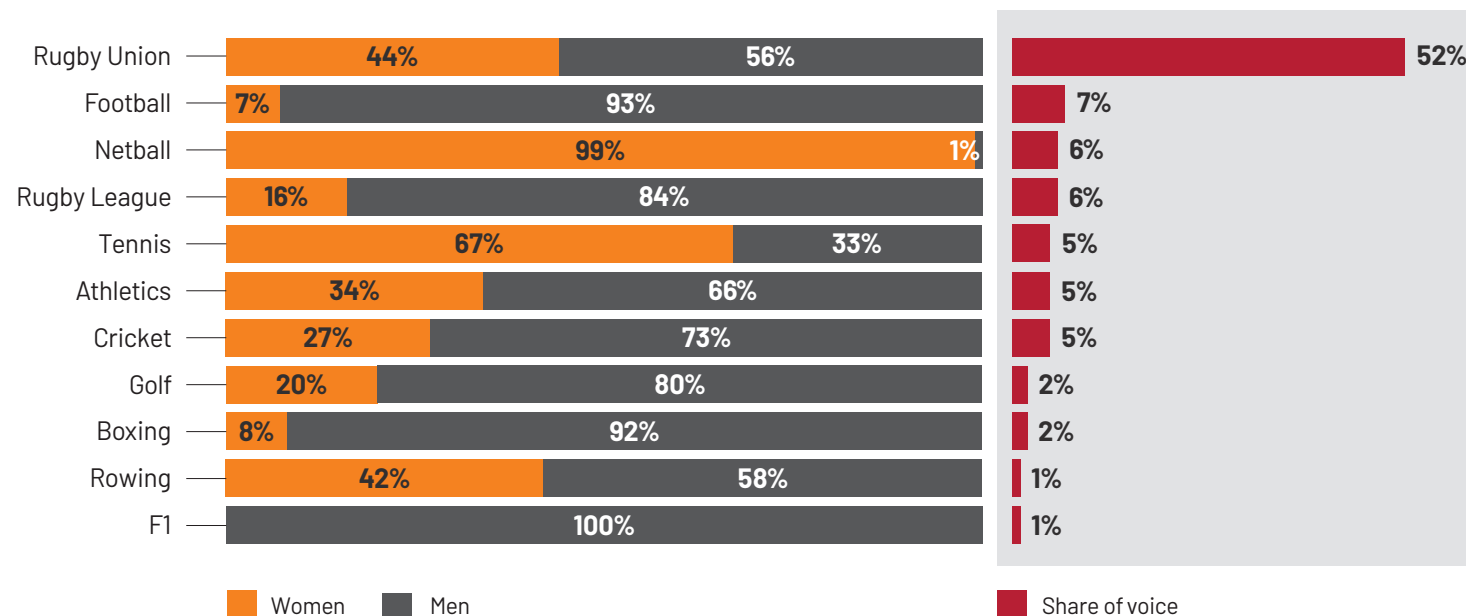
Gender balance by sport

Coverage of women's sport increased during the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 period compared with 2022.

Rugby union accounted for more than half of all sports coverage in NZ (52%), up from 39% in 2022. However, interest in men's competitions was higher than the women's game.

This was partly because the Rugby Championship, Bledisloe Cup, and NPC ran at the same time as the Rugby World Cup due to its earlier scheduling.

Overall coverage during the 2025 Rugby World Cup period



Tennis delivered the strongest growth, where women's coverage more than doubled to 67%, compared to 2022, lifting the sport's share of voice to 5%, supported by Erin Routliffe's US Open success.

Netball featured prominently, with stories focused on the Taini Jamison Trophy and off-court developments involving coach Dame Noeline Taurua.

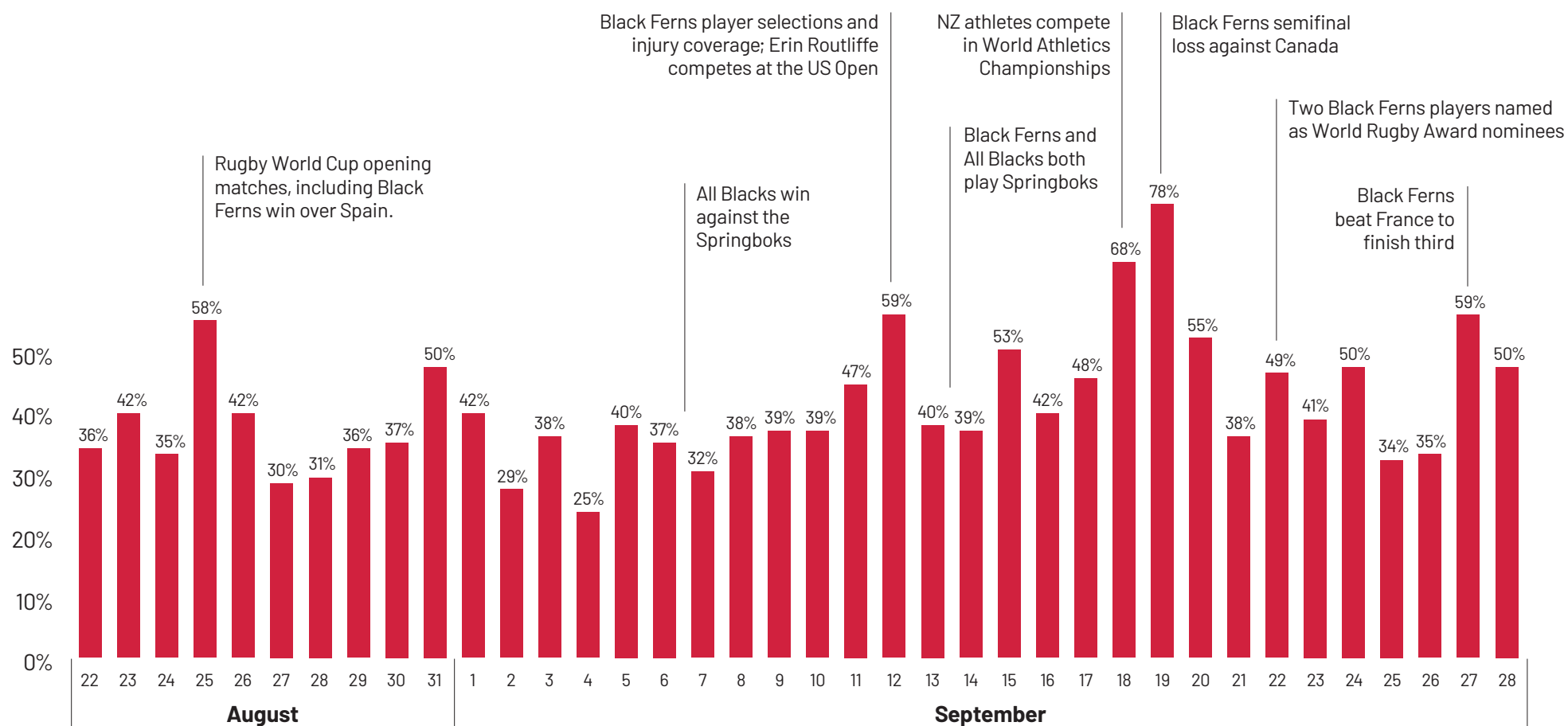
Male-dominated sports such as football, rugby league, cricket and golf saw a drop in share of voice.

Fewer major men's tournaments like the Rugby League World Cup and T20 Cricket World Cup, both held during the Women's Rugby World Cup 2022 period, helped increase coverage for women's sport overall.

Coverage

Women's sports coverage daily trend

This chart shows the daily percentage of all sports news coverage dedicated to women's sport during the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 tournament period. Coverage peaked on Black Ferns game days, with the highest point at 78%, occurring after their loss to Canada.



The media

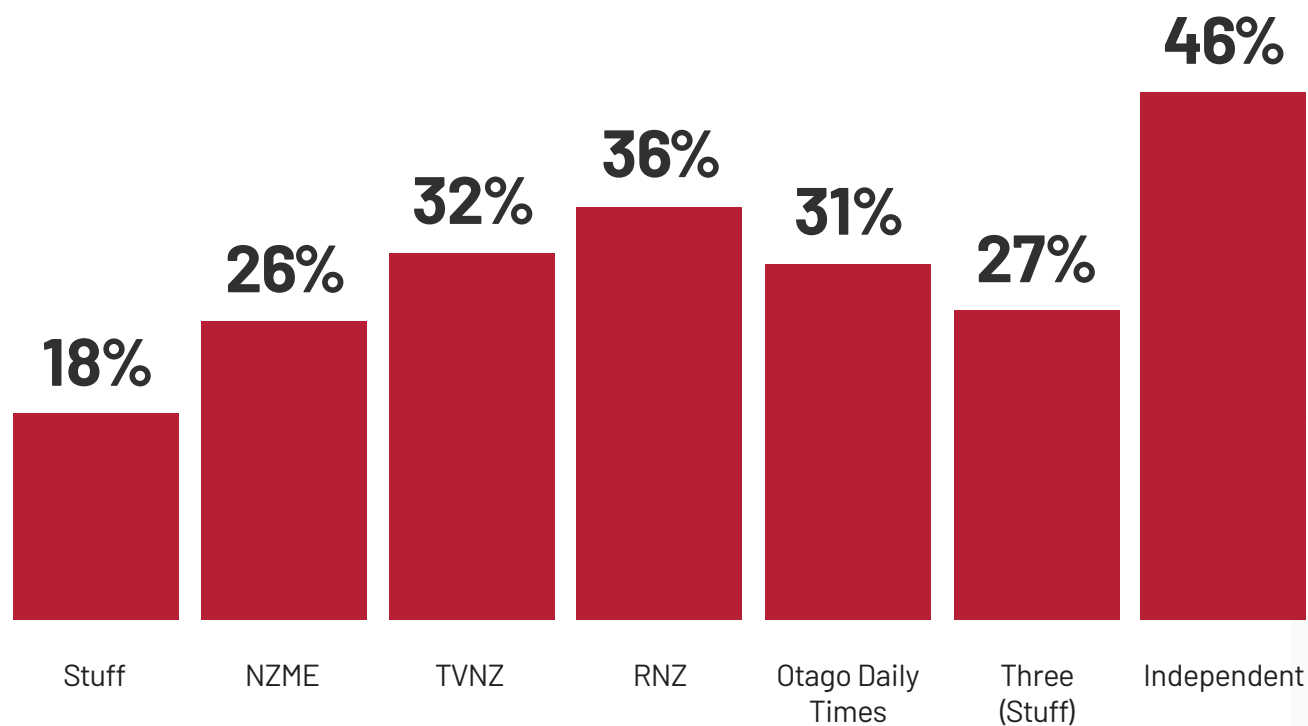
This section looks at the gender balance and bylines of major media outlets to explore what patterns or preferences can be seen by media type, organisation and sport.

The media

Coverage by media outlet

This chart shows how much of each media organisation's coverage focused on the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 during the tournament period.

RNZ led major outlets with 36% of its coverage referencing the tournament. Independent media outlets collectively recorded the highest focus at 46%, continuing to drive high women's sport visibility. These include Newsroom (LockerRoom), Te Ao Māori News, Sport Nation, Waatea News, Radio 531PI, The Platform and The Spinoff.

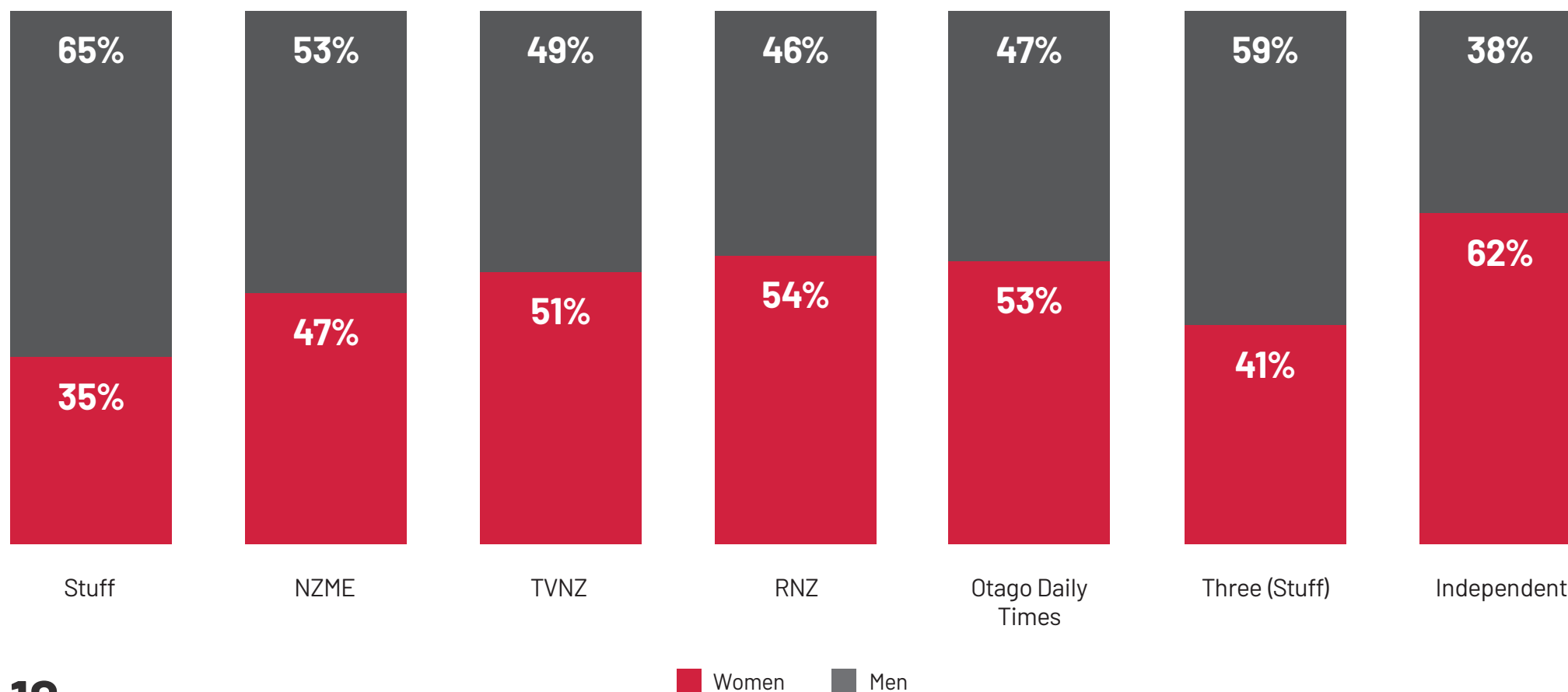


The media

Gender balance by media outlet

This chart shows the overall gender balance for each media outlet during the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 period, including both Women's Rugby World Cup content and all other sports coverage.

The biggest increases in women's coverage compared with the 2022 tournament came from the Otago Daily Times (up from 35% to 53%) and NZME (up from 35% to 47%).



The media

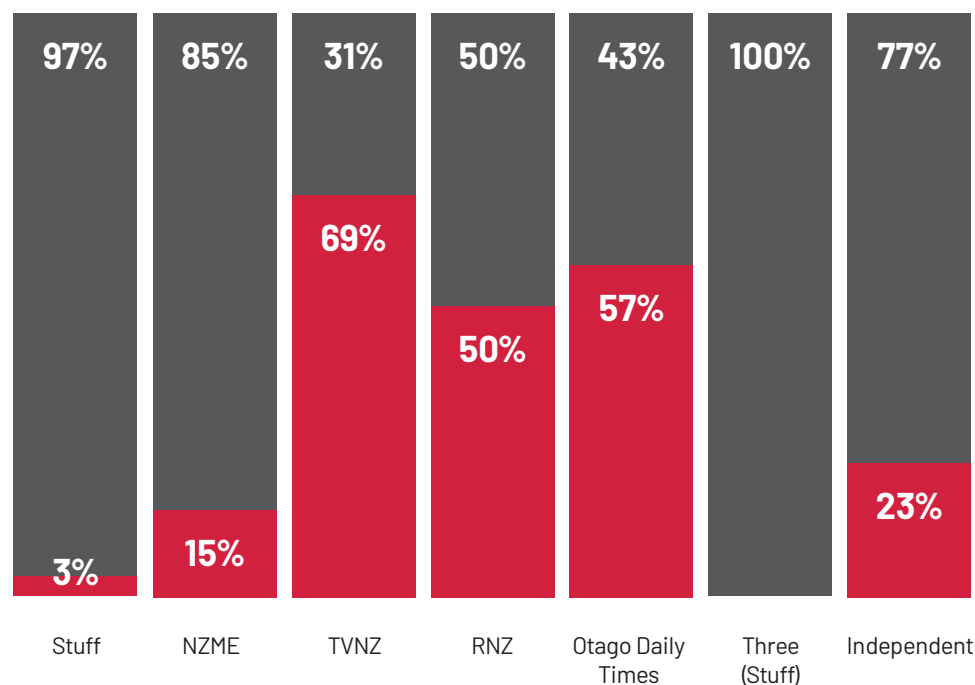
Bylines – reporters

These charts show the gender balance of reporters during the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 period.

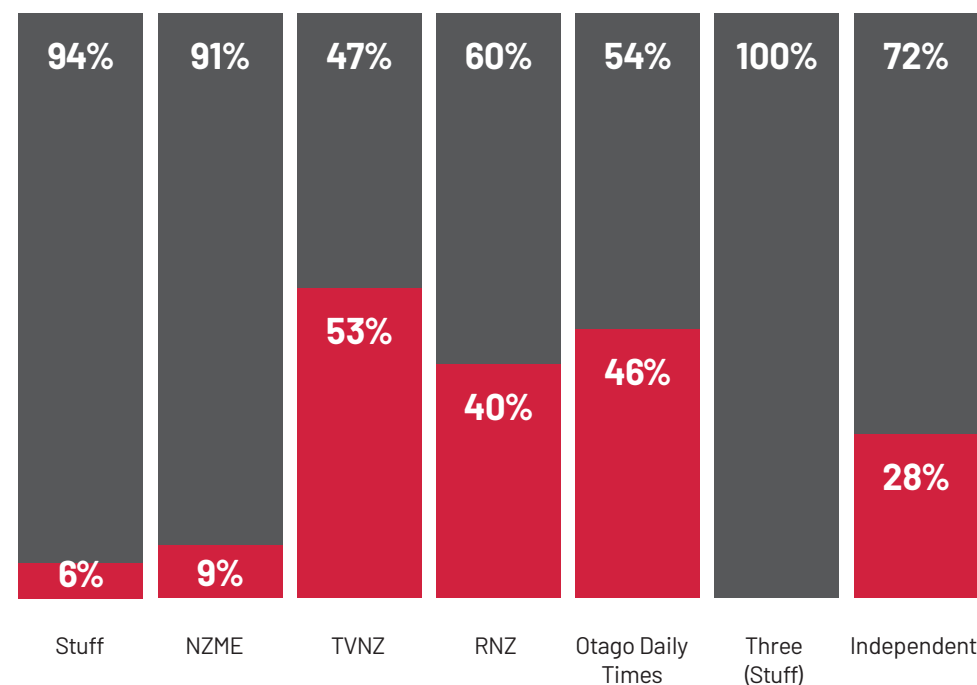
- The left chart shows byline representation for Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 coverage.
- The right chart shows the byline representation across all sports reporting during the same period.

This includes print, online and broadcast reporters, but excludes studio-based presenters. TVNZ, RNZ and the Otago Daily Times recorded the highest percentage of female reporters for both Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 coverage and overall sports reporting during the tournament period.

Rugby World Cup coverage



Overall coverage during the Rugby World Cup period



■ Women ■ Men

The media

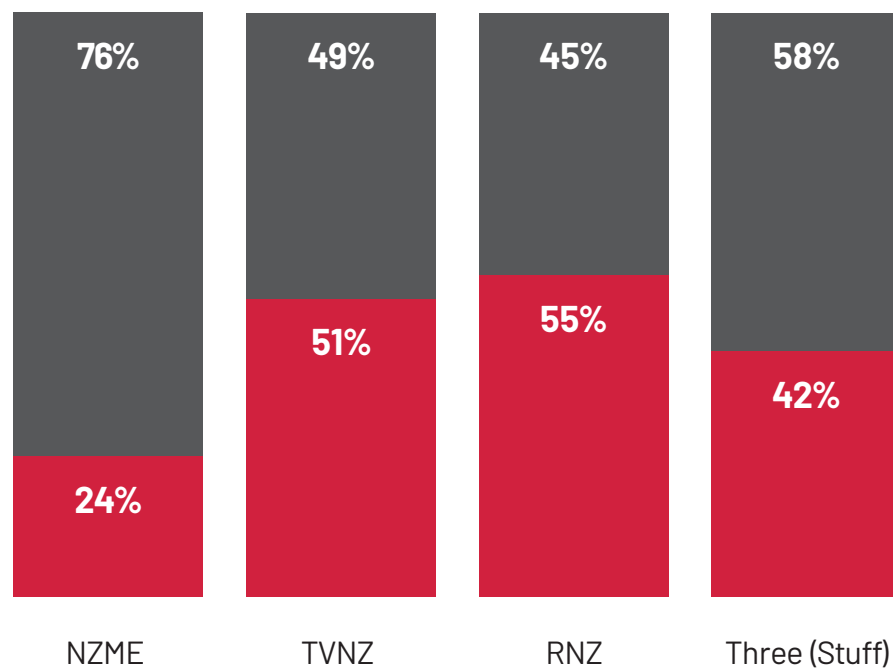
Bylines – presenters

These charts show the gender balance of studio-based broadcast presenters during the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 period.

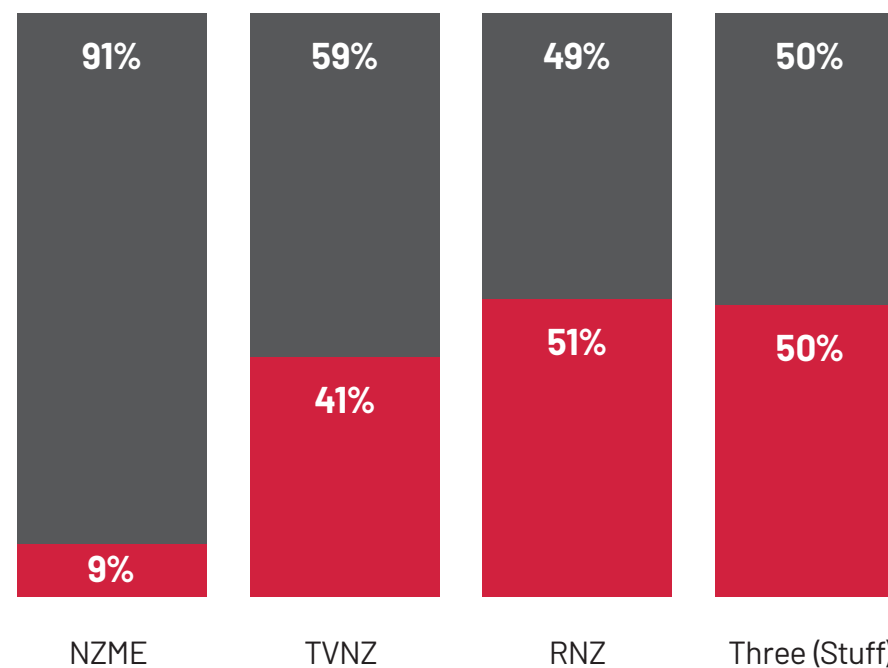
- The left chart focuses on Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 coverage.
- The right chart shows presenter balance across all sports coverage during the same timeframe.

This analysis looks at the gender of presenters but does not include whether the stories they read were written by female reporters.

Rugby World Cup coverage



Overall coverage during the Rugby World Cup period



■ Women ■ Men

Event comparisons

This section compares coverage of the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 with previous Rugby World Cups that have taken place over the course of the Sport NZ–Isentia study, which has been running since 2019.

- Men's Rugby World Cup 2019:
20 September to 2 November 2019
- Women's Rugby World Cup 2021 (2022):
8 October to 12 November 2022
- Men's Rugby World Cup 2023:
8 September to 28 October 2023
- Women's Rugby World Cup 2025:
22 August to 28 September 2025

Event comparisons

Overview

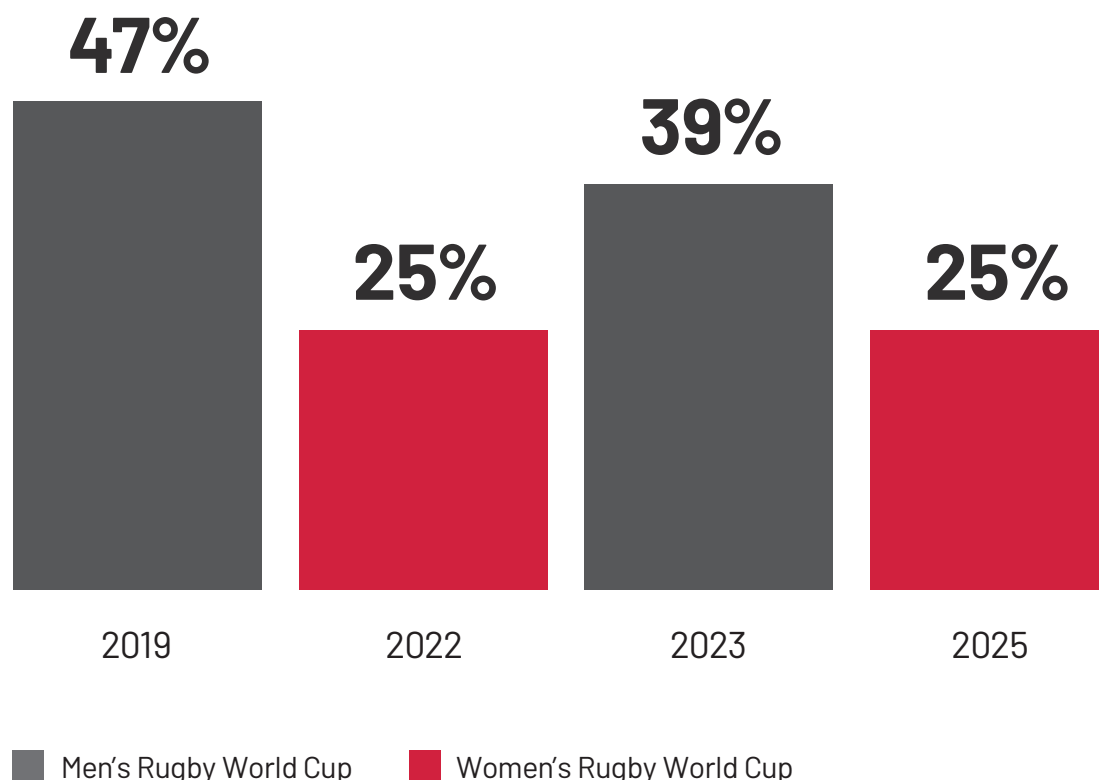
This chart shows how much coverage focused on the Rugby World Cup during the tournament period for each of the 4 tournaments included in the Sport NZ–Isentia study.

Both Women's Rugby World Cups made up a quarter of all sports coverage during their tournament periods.

The 2025 result is notable because the 2022 event was a home tournament and a win for the Black Ferns, circumstances that often attract higher media interest.

Both women's tournaments overlapped with major men's sporting events, which influenced media coverage. The 2022 tournament coincided with the Men's T20 Cricket World Cup, Rugby League World Cup and an All Blacks northern hemisphere tour. In 2025, earlier scheduling meant the tournament ran alongside the Rugby Championship and Bledisloe Cup.

In contrast, the men's Rugby World Cups were held during relatively less crowded periods for international sport.



Event comparisons

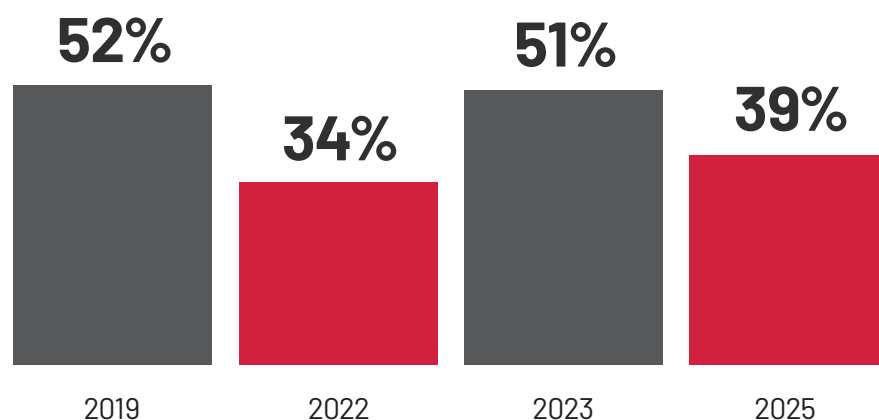
Coverage trends

Rugby World Cup – pool stages

This chart shows the share of media coverage during the pool stages of each Rugby World Cup tournament.

For the men's tournaments, the pool stages made up about two-thirds of the event and generated over half of all Rugby World Cup coverage, showing strong interest in the early rounds as the All Blacks progressed.

By comparison, women's tournaments were shorter, with pool stages covering about three-fifths of the competition but contributing less than 40% of overall coverage.

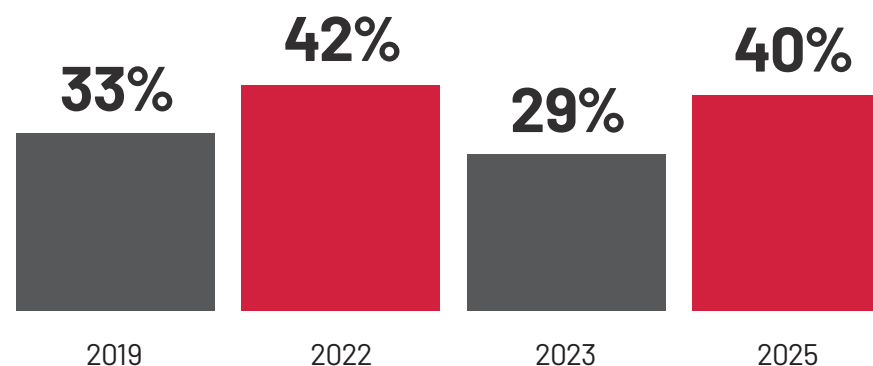


Rugby World Cup – game coverage

This chart shows the share of Rugby World Cup coverage that appeared on the day before and the day of each game.

The women's tournaments in 2022 and 2025 received more coverage around game days compared to the men's tournaments, where reporting was more evenly spread across the event.

These patterns affect gender balance in different ways. Concentrated game-day coverage builds short-term visibility during high-interest moments, while steady coverage across the tournament helps maintain engagement with the women's game.



■ Men's Rugby World Cup ■ Women's Rugby World Cup

Event comparisons

The media

This chart shows the percentage of each media organisation's coverage that focused on the Rugby World Cups for each tournament year – both men's and women's.

National media outlets such as Stuff, NZME, TVNZ and RNZ recorded the highest levels of Rugby World Cup coverage in 2019, when the All Blacks entered as defending champions, aiming for a third consecutive title.

While coverage has remained strongest during men's tournaments, most media outlets increased their reporting on the Women's Rugby World Cup between 2022 and 2025. The Otago Daily Times stands out as the only standalone media organisation to give more coverage of the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 than any of the other tournaments.

Newshub is not shown here but was included in this study until its closure in July 2024. With Newshub closing, TVNZ reducing news bulletins and shows and other media downsizing, the 2025 analysis draws from a smaller media pool than previous Rugby World Cups.

