

# Removing barriers to women in trail running

# A guide for events

# WHO ARE WE?

## SheRACES

A global network of champions, driving change to support female athletes. SheRACES was founded to ensure women have the same opportunities as men. Where races are designed through a female lens as well as a man's. Where women are encouraged to participate, that differences are taken into account and achievements are held in equal regard.

[sheraces.com](http://sheraces.com)



## PRO TRAIL RUNNERS ASSOCIATION

PTRA is an athlete-owned organisation dedicated to showcasing the passion and determination of professional and elite trail runners and their responsibility in preserving trail running values.

[trailrunners.run](http://trailrunners.run)

## iTRA INTERNATIONAL TRAIL RUNNING ASSOCIATION

ITRA (International Trail Running Association) aims to give a voice to parties involved in trail running in order to promote its strong values, its diversity, the safety of races and the health of runners, as well as to further the development of trail running and ensure a constructive dialogue between the national and international bodies with an interest in the sport.

[itra.run](http://itra.run)

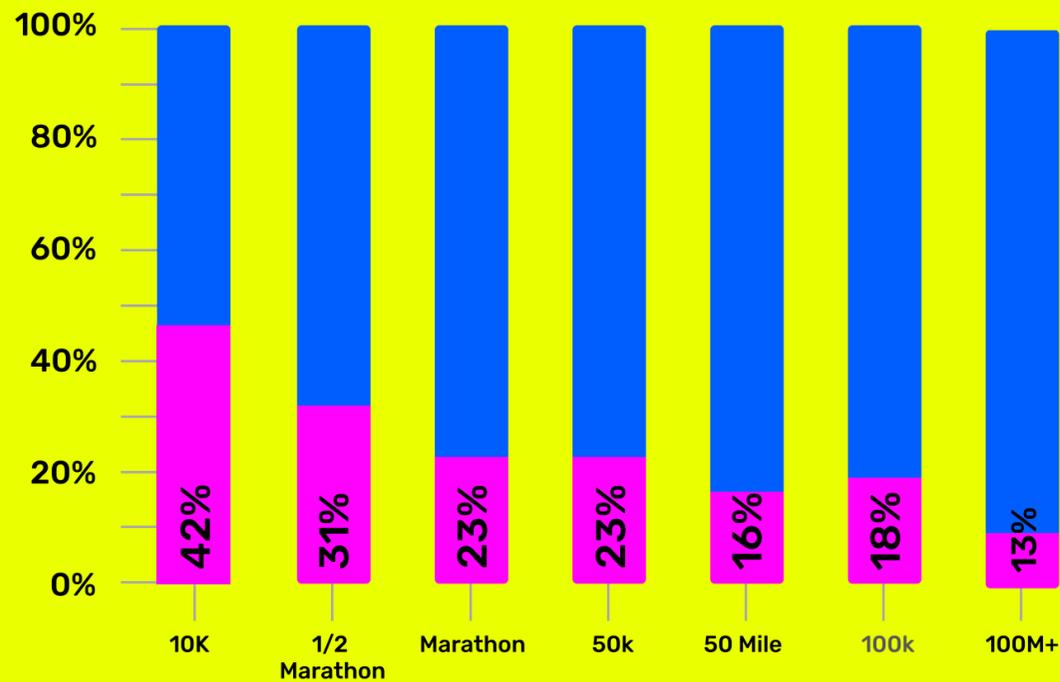
ITRA has partnered with SheRACES and the PTRA Women's Committee to demonstrate our commitment to increasing the participation of women in trail running, at all levels. In this presentation, we share the SheRACES guidelines, as well as success stories, to support our races globally to be more inclusive and successful.

# WHAT IS HAPPENING?

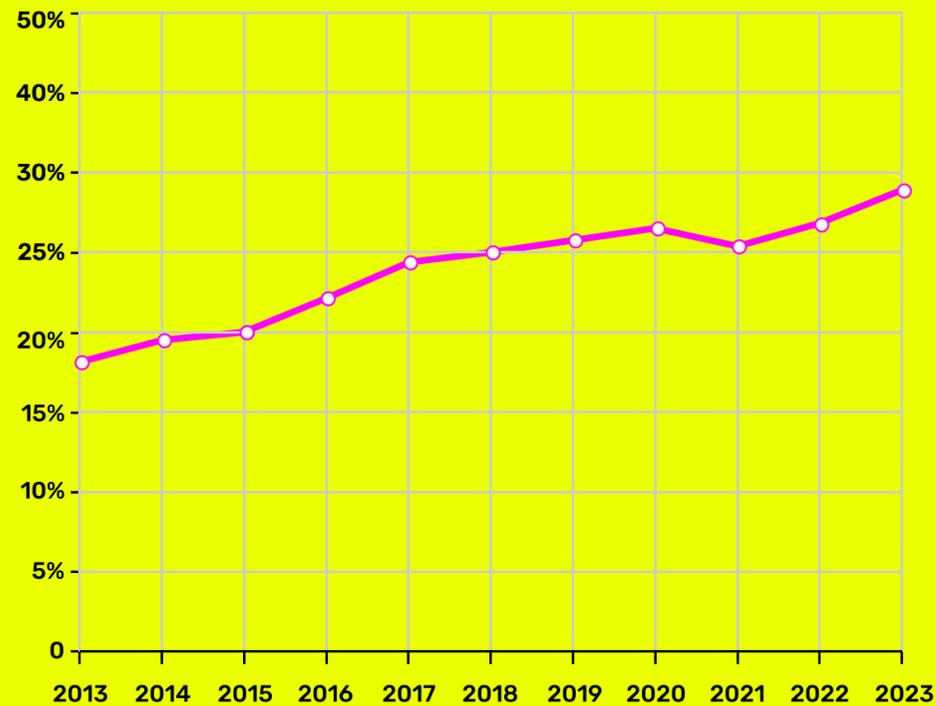
Women are a minority on trail race start lines, especially in longer races.

Participation falls from 42% at 10km distance to only 13% for races over 100 miles. Overall participation is increasing – from 17.6% in 2013 to 28% in 2023, led by Oceania and the Americas.

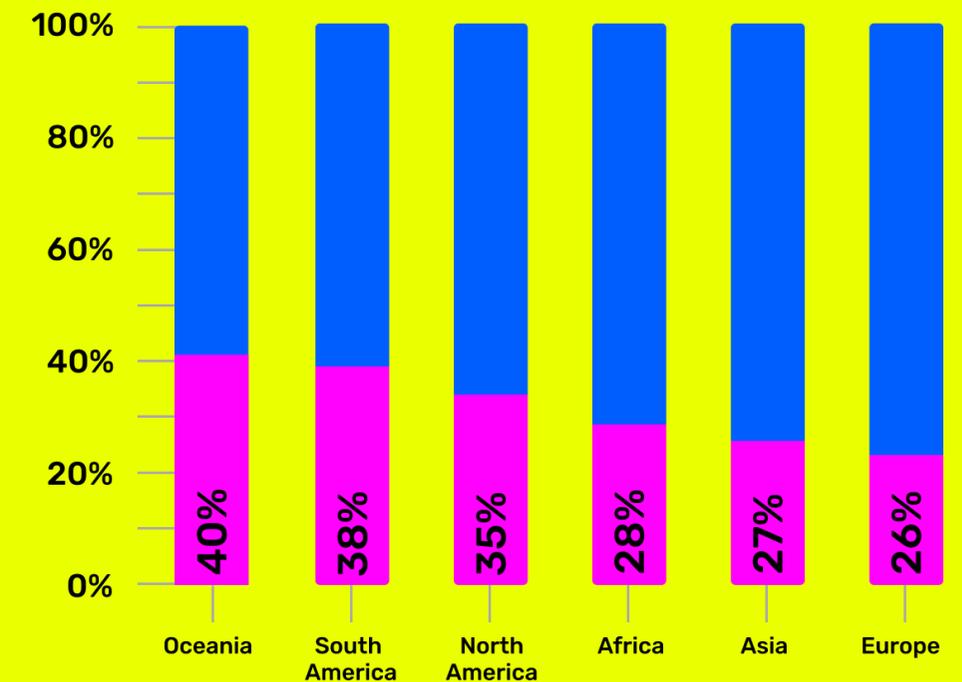
### % of female participants across distances



### % of female participants year on year



### % of female participants across continents



## WHY IS THIS?

SheRACES conducted a detailed survey of over 2,000 female runners (mostly UK based) about their racing experiences.

Some barriers to entering races are societal, such as having caring responsibilities and less time to train.

But we found that many reasons why women did not enter, or had poor racing experiences, are things events can easily change.

Survey of

# 2000

Women

# 72%

have been put off entering a race

# 54%

would like to see more inclusive marketing

# 66%

would like better provisions including toilets and changing facilities

# WHAT CAN EVENTS DO?

## Guidelines

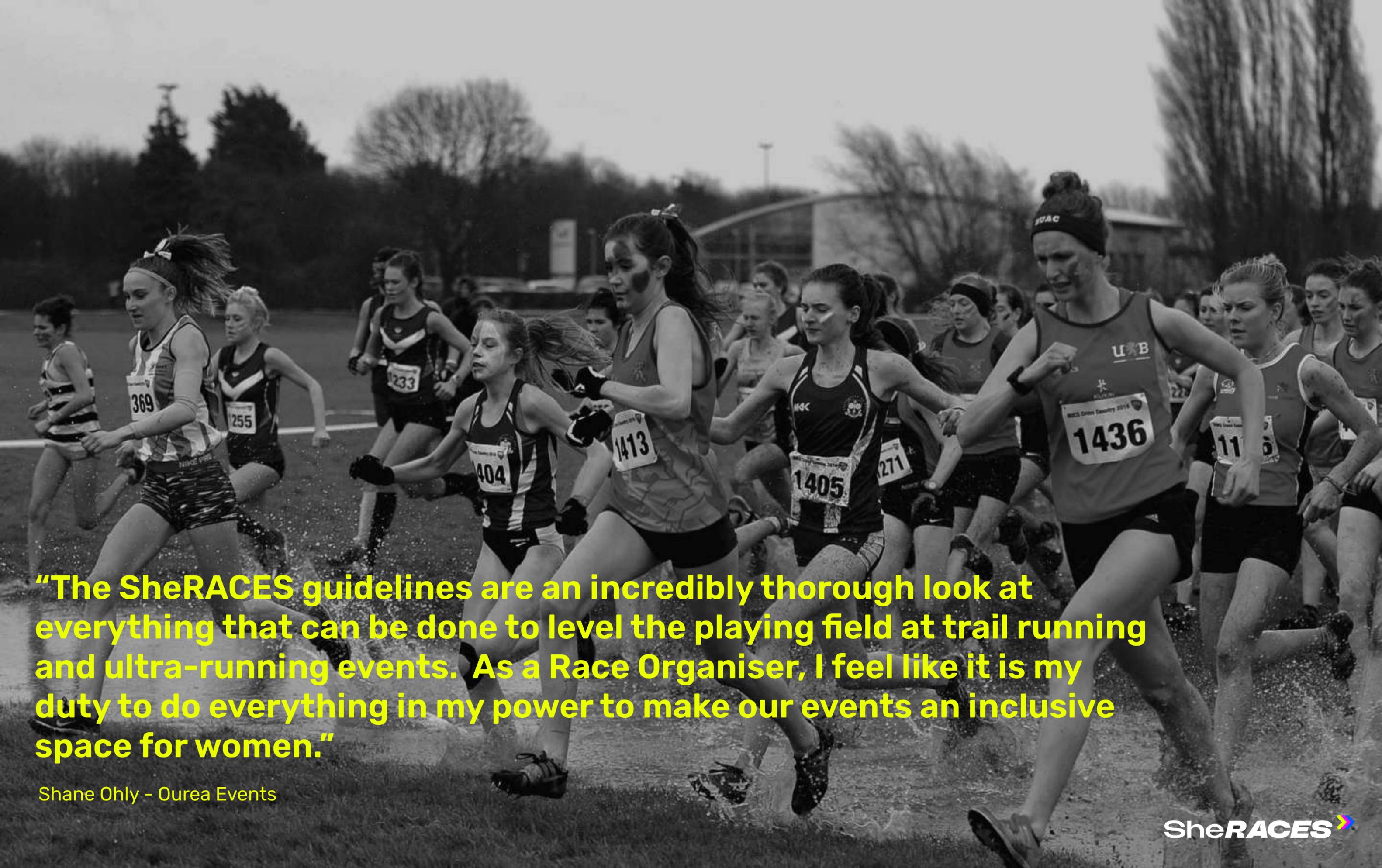
Using these insights, SheRACES has worked with trail race directors to develop easily implementable guidelines for events. These are designed to support you to get more women on your start lines, for those women to have a more positive experience, and for the female competition to be equally valued. Races committing to these minimum guidelines can also benefit from being more visible to entrants.

## Elite Guidelines

For those races with an elite field or high media coverage, SheRACES has developed specific guidelines, supported by the Pro Trail Runners Women's Committee.

## Every Race is Unique

88% of women would be more likely to enter an event that was inclusive of women. Every race is different; what's right for a short trail race in summer, will be different from a longer race in extreme conditions. But some things are the same: designing races so women are actively encouraged to be there, with a positive experience when we race and having our competition held in equal regard.

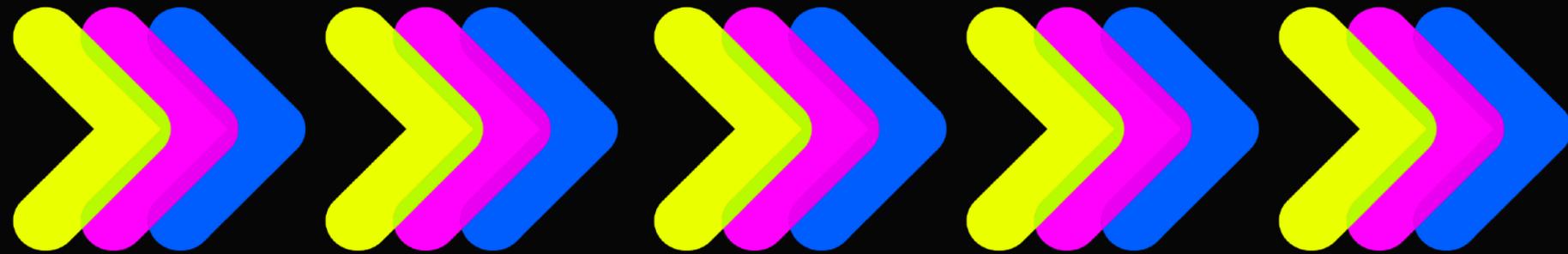


**“The SheRACES guidelines are an incredibly thorough look at everything that can be done to level the playing field at trail running and ultra-running events. As a Race Organiser, I feel like it is my duty to do everything in my power to make our events an inclusive space for women.”**

Shane Ohly - Ourea Events

OUR GUIDELINES

# Our Guidelines



# OUR GUIDELINES

## Level The Start Line



### Inclusive imagery

To make women feel welcome, include a range of images of competitors in your marketing. From those at the front, to the back markers, include women of all ages, shapes and colours.



### Race overviews

Consider the language used in marketing – words like ‘toughest’ and ‘dangerous’ can be a barrier to entering. Instead give advice on what is needed to finish, for example the average pace, total climbing, and minimum training guidelines.



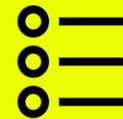
### Fair deferral policies

Events should ensure that no woman is penalised for having a child and can take her place on the start line when she is fit, healthy and ready.

**Races with no lottery:** Races should offer pregnant women a deferral for up to 2 years (or a refund).

**Lottery races:** For ballot entry races, places should be rolled over for up to 2 years. For races that require points, qualifying times, or have double entry lottery bonuses if unsuccessful in the draw, these should also be carried over for 2 years.

**Bonus points:** Consider deferral options for partners when the race is close to the baby due date, as well as for those adopting children.



### Planning

Include as much information about the logistics of the race on the website. How to get there, where to stay, bag drop facilities, toilet facilities, kit recommendations and more. An active social media page and reviews from other women is also helpful.



### Generous cut-offs

Strict early cut-offs can penalise and deter women, who have on average more even pacing through the longer races. Shorter races should also be inclusive of beginners, who might be running and walking.



### Active selection

For those races with low female participation and ballot entry, reserve a portion of slots for women to ensure better representation.

[Read Our Full Guidelines](#)

# OUR GUIDELINES

## Equal The Experience



### Toilets and changing facilities

Ensure there are appropriate toilet facilities at the race start and finish, and where relevant on course. Aim to have changing facilities for women before and after the race too, and period products available at each aid station.



### Breastfeeding athletes

Include a note on your race guidelines asking entrants to get in touch if they have any other needs, such as breastfeeding where we might need a pump at an aid station or race finish, as well as a chair. A breastfeeding athlete may need to be able to meet her crew in more places than other athletes. Many conditions are hidden, both for men and women, so encouraging that conversation of additional needs is inclusive for all athletes.

[Read Our Full Guidelines](#)



### Safety

Ensure women feel safe before, during and after your event. For crowded races, consider separate areas for women. Rolling starts where possible can be more comfortable for all racers. Have a mix of male and female volunteers at each aid station.

If a race goes through remote areas or the night, offer safety trackers and 'buddy up' runners at checkpoints.

Also consider the end location and time, making sure runners can safely get to their destination. If results are posted online, allow names to be anonymised on request. Race rules should also include etiquette on course. For example, peeing on the trail/at the start line, passing too closely from behind and making inappropriate comments is unacceptable.



### T-shirts that fit

Unisex t-shirts are not unisex; they are male fit. When t-shirts are offered, women should be given an equally well-fitting t-shirt to men, with a size guide with measurements included on the entry form. If other rewards are offered, these should also be equally appropriate to women.

# OUR GUIDELINES

## Respect Our Competition



### Room to Race

Allow the leading women their own space at the start if relevant. This allows athletes to be recognised (and identify each other) but also to ensure the women's race has the same clear start as the mens.



### Equal prize money

Where prize money is offered, it should be equal for men and women. Awards should also be of equal value and suitability.



### Equal Coverage

Any discussion of the race – before, during or after – should include equal reference to the women's field and result as the men's. When results are posted online, the women's results should also be separated out.



### Celebrations

The women's race should be celebrated equally to the men's, including breaking a tape, podium celebrations and online coverage.

[Read Our Full Guidelines](#)

# OUR GUIDELINES

## Elite Guidelines

SheRACES has worked with PTRA to develop guidelines for those races with elite competitors.



### Promote Strong Female Competition

Assess runners' ITRA rankings to review the field. Offer free or supported places (at least equal to those offered in the mens' field) to increase depth if needed. Allow athletes who have been pregnant to apply based on pre-pregnancy ITRA index.



### Equal Coverage

From detailed race previews, to well researched and balanced commentary and video during and social media posts after. Ensure content focuses on women as athletes (and not on what they look like). Online tracking should be split by category to make the race easy to follow.



### Review race logistics

Visibility is key in the female race as athletes are mixed up with men. The top female athletes should be visible on the start line, with time checks and placings given for competitive runners at specified points. All competitive women should be in the first pen. Race timings should ensure top women do not finish in a quiet coverage time, with first female given a winners' tape (and men around her redirected to go around it).



### Equal Celebration

Women should have prizes of equal value and suitability to men, with the same size podium and number of categories. Coverage should be equal, at the same time as the male podium with the female athletes given time to collect sponsor items as needed.

[Read Our Elite Guidelines](#)



**“Female athletes work hard! We deserve equal media coverage, support, appreciation, and respect. Our visibility matters to help grow the sport and to show the world that trail running and ultra running is for everyone!”**

Camille Herron

# COMMITMENTS FOR EVERY RACE

Every race is different, but these are the key steps that every race can take to fully include women on their start lines. Races that commit to them can also be featured on the SheRACES website and use the logo in their communications. For more details, see [www.sheraces.com](http://www.sheraces.com)

Show a diversity of athletes in marketing and social imagery.

Ensure all prizes and rewards for women are of at least of equal value to those for men. This includes prize money, number of categories and a choice of female fit or unisex t-shirt (where offered).

Review toilet and changing facilities to ensure they are sufficient and well communicated. Have period products available at start and finish lines, and where possible on course.

Ensure the women's race is given equal prominence in social media posts, interviews and other communications.

Allow women who fall pregnant before the race to transfer their place to a future event within 2 years (for non-ballot races, refunds or athlete transfers are also permissible).

Communicate and enforce a no-tolerance policy for harassment of any kind (to include runners, all event volunteers and staff).

The women's race should be celebrated equally to the men's, including breaking a tape, podium celebrations and online coverage.

Actively seek feedback from participants after each race and make best efforts to make changes to support them better.

Make these commitments easy to find on the website or in participant information.

# INNOVATION

Races all around the world are innovating to support women on their start lines:



## Childcare

Kunanyi Mountain Run in Australia offers a variety of trail race challenges, including an ultramarathon (ran solo or in a relay), its original mountain run and a kids' race. In keeping with the family friendly vibe, and enabling more woman to take part, it also has Bush Play, where you can drop off kids to have fun while you run. It's heavily subsidised to keep costs low, available for children aged 5-12, and run by experienced and qualified teachers.

[www.kunanyimountain.run](http://www.kunanyimountain.run)



## Equal Ballots

The High Lonesome 100 in Colorado is an endurance race through the Rocky Mountains, which has made a public commitment to improve diversity in trail racing. Its lottery entry system is transparent on its website, equally divided into a men's pool and a women's pool with the same number of places available. Prior to the switch to a lottery system, female participation was between 20-22% of the field.

[www.highlonesome100.com](http://www.highlonesome100.com)

SheRACES shares ideas from race directors around the world. Sign up to our newsletter for ideas on how to improve your race and share your innovations with us:

[Subscribe](#)

# INNOVATION

Races all around the world are innovating to support women on their start lines:



## Confidence

Lack of confidence is one reason why some women don't make the start line. Due North Events has recognised this fact. Its self-navigated 100K race is supported by map-reading courses, as well as route reces with female leaders. It now offers 50K and 25K options, which are open to walkers and runners, with a 50% female sign-up rate for the 50K. This will hopefully help to drive female sign-ups to the 100K in future years. The 25K is on a fixed route following a GPX file, to make it even more accessible.

[duenorthevents.com](http://duenorthevents.com)



## Female Only Ultra

She Ultra is a female-only ultramarathon in North Wales, designed specifically to encourage, support and break down barriers towards women entering an event of this scale. With a female-only support team (including medical support), safety trackers and a clearly marked course, this is a great example of a race organiser finding a practical and proactive way to get more women onto the ultra start line for the first time.

[penllynultra.co.uk](http://penllynultra.co.uk)

SheRACES shares ideas from race directors around the world. Sign up to our newsletter for ideas on how to improve your race and share your innovations with us:

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