

THE FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY OF RACING AND BREEDING

Phillip Newton

Chair
Thoroughbred Breeders' Association





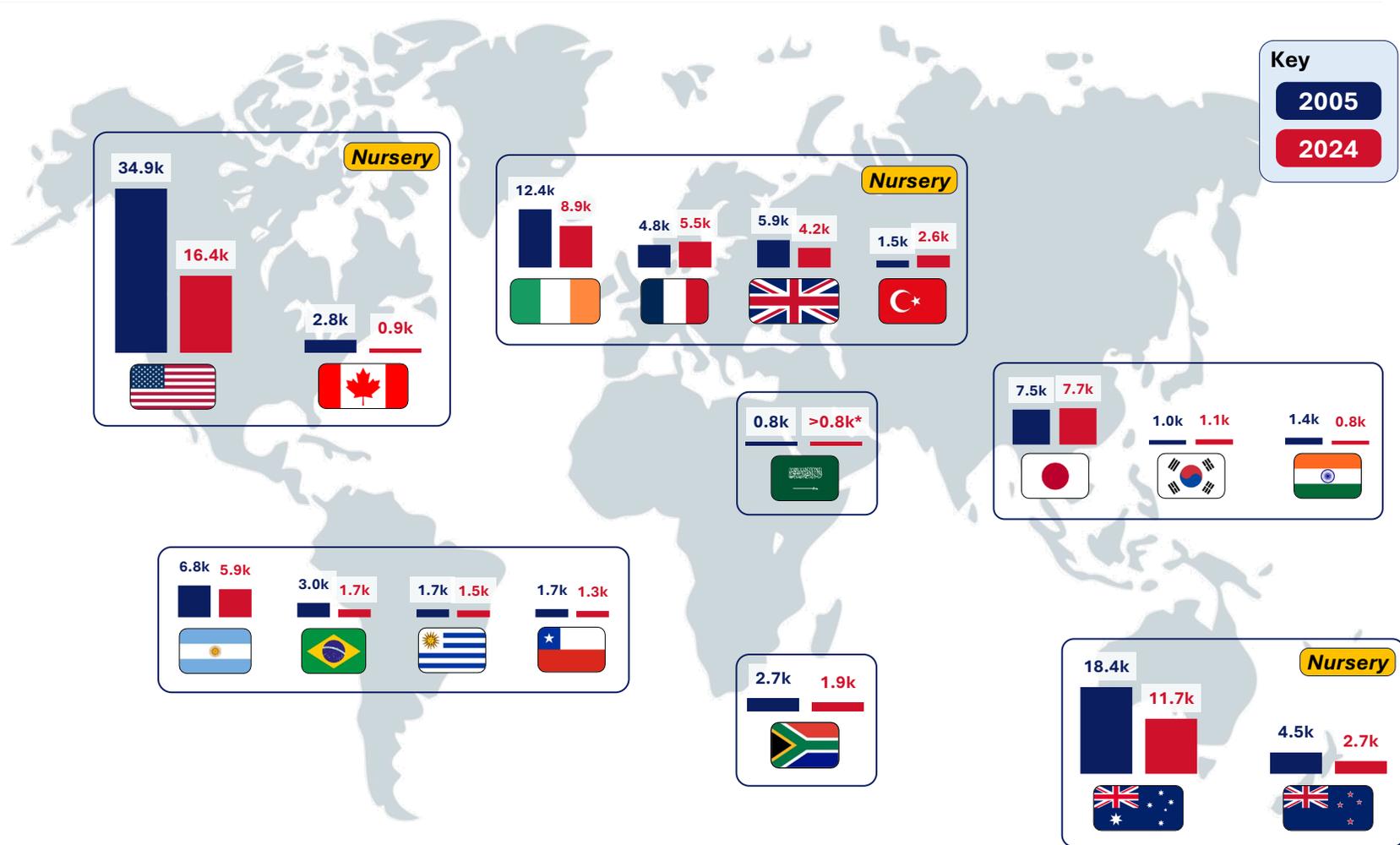
The Future Sustainability of Racing and Breeding

February 2026



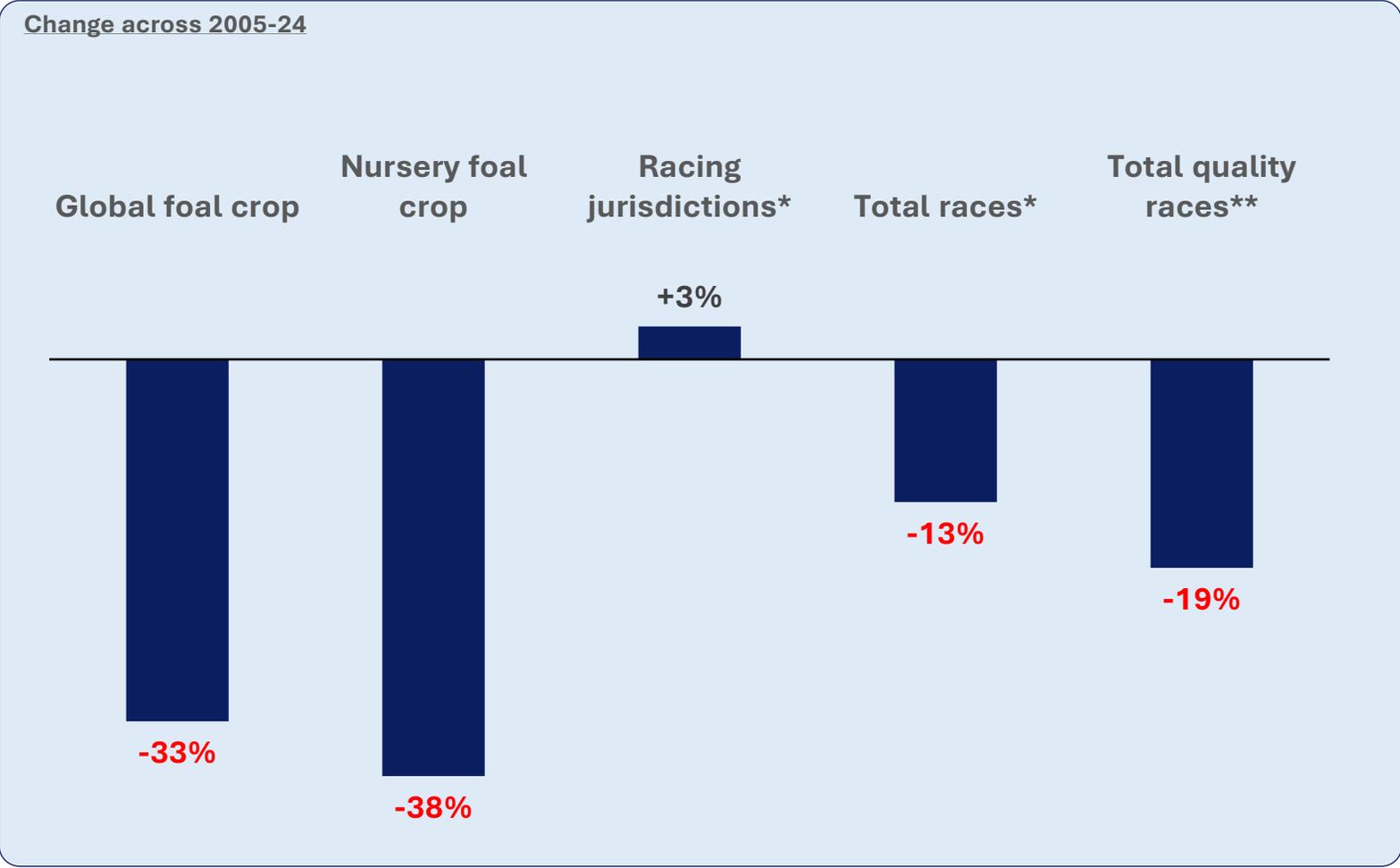
The global foal crop has fallen by one-third since 2005

Global foal crop, 2005 vs. 2024



- Globally, the foal crop is estimated to have fallen from almost 125,000 in 2005, to just over 80,000 in 2024
- This has primarily been driven by production in the traditional nursery regions, which are now producing 38% fewer foals

This drop in the foal crop has not been mirrored in the global race programme



- Whilst the global race programme is now smaller than it was in 2005, it has not reduced by as much as the foal crop has. This holds true for both the overall race programme, and top-class racing.
- Any further widening of this gap between supply and demand will damage racing's competitiveness and customer appeal

Racing faces both internal and external challenges



Internal

- Standards of **equine welfare**, both real and perceived, remain a challenge for the sport. This is putting racing's social licence under increased scrutiny.
- **Genetic compromise** is an area of increasing concern, with commercials of the industry driving ever larger stallion books
- Global **foal crop** trends cast doubt on sustainability and economic viability of the supply chain
- Racing has not attracted **external investment** to the extent that other sports have in recent years

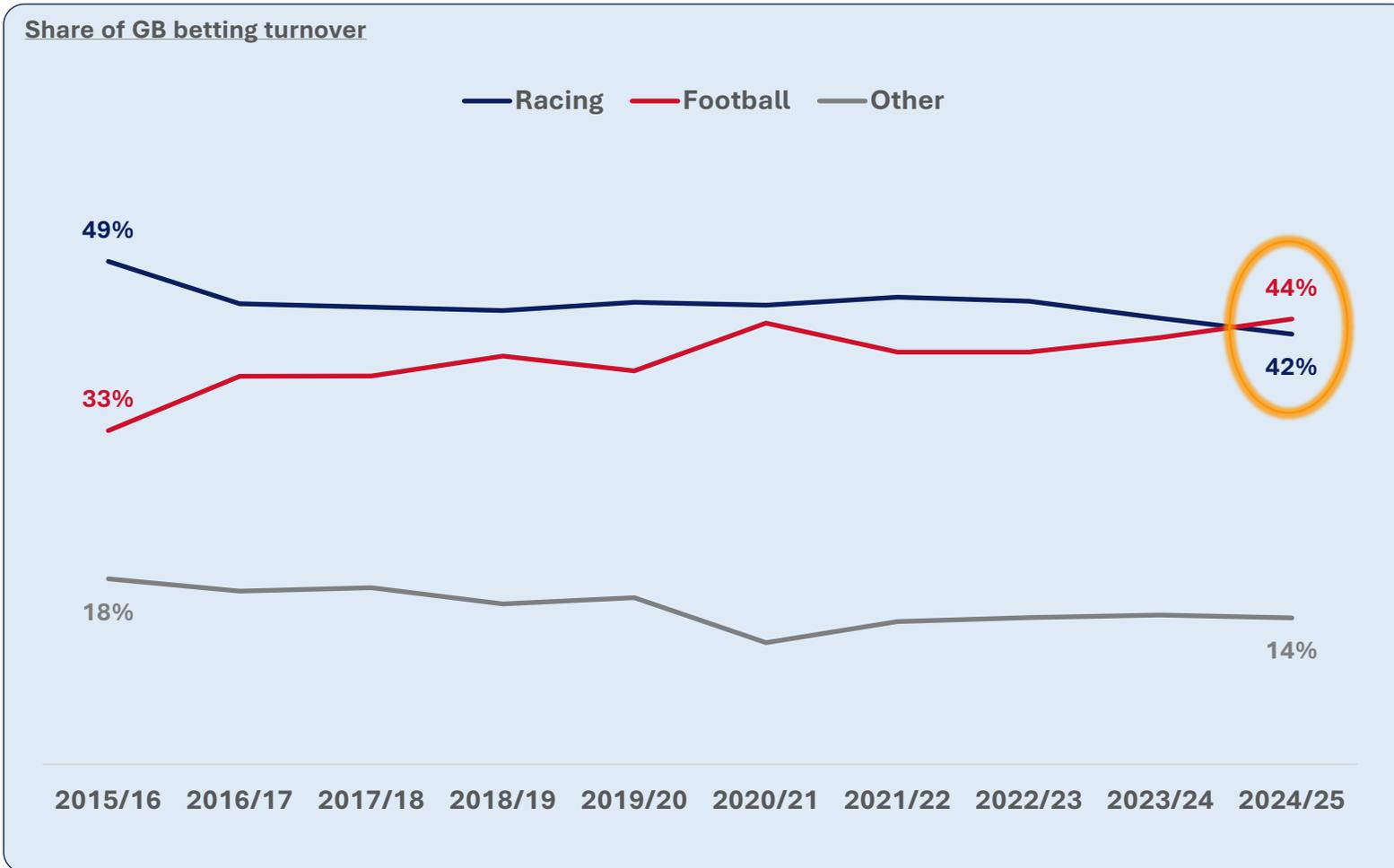


External

- The **betting landscape** is more crowded than ever (see British data on following slide)
- Tightening legislation is pushing punters to the unregulated **black market**, whose operators sit outside of the sport's financial ecosystem
- Consumption habits of **younger audiences** are not compatible with gaps of 30+ minutes between races
- Venue **cost bases** are increasing, with no guarantees that revenues can keep up



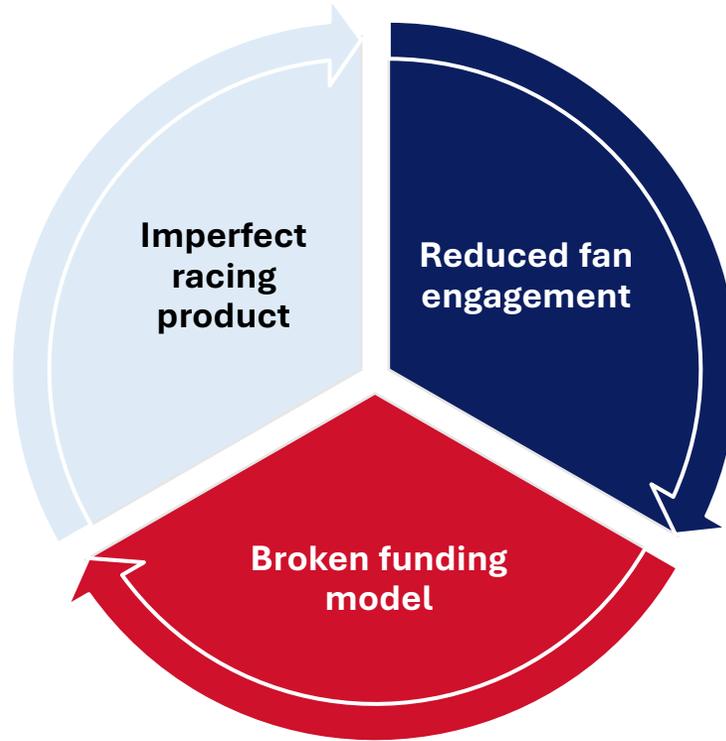
For the first time ever, football has overtaken racing as the most wagered-on sport in Britain



- Historically, horse racing has had higher levels of British gambling turnover than any other sport
- That position has been under increasing threat since the pandemic, and in 2024/25 football's market share overtook that of racing
- Football is now also a higher margin product than racing, which further increases its importance to bookmakers

Great Britain faces a range of issues, some unique, and some familiar to other jurisdictions

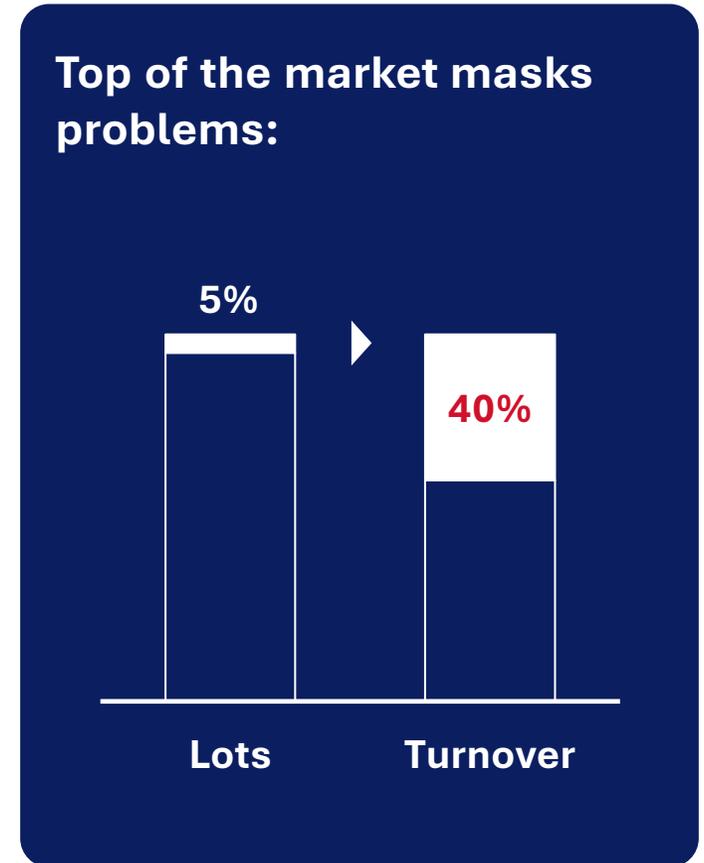
- In 2025, 40% of British races had **fewer than eight runners**
- Foreign purses mean that the continued **attraction of top international runners** cannot be taken for granted



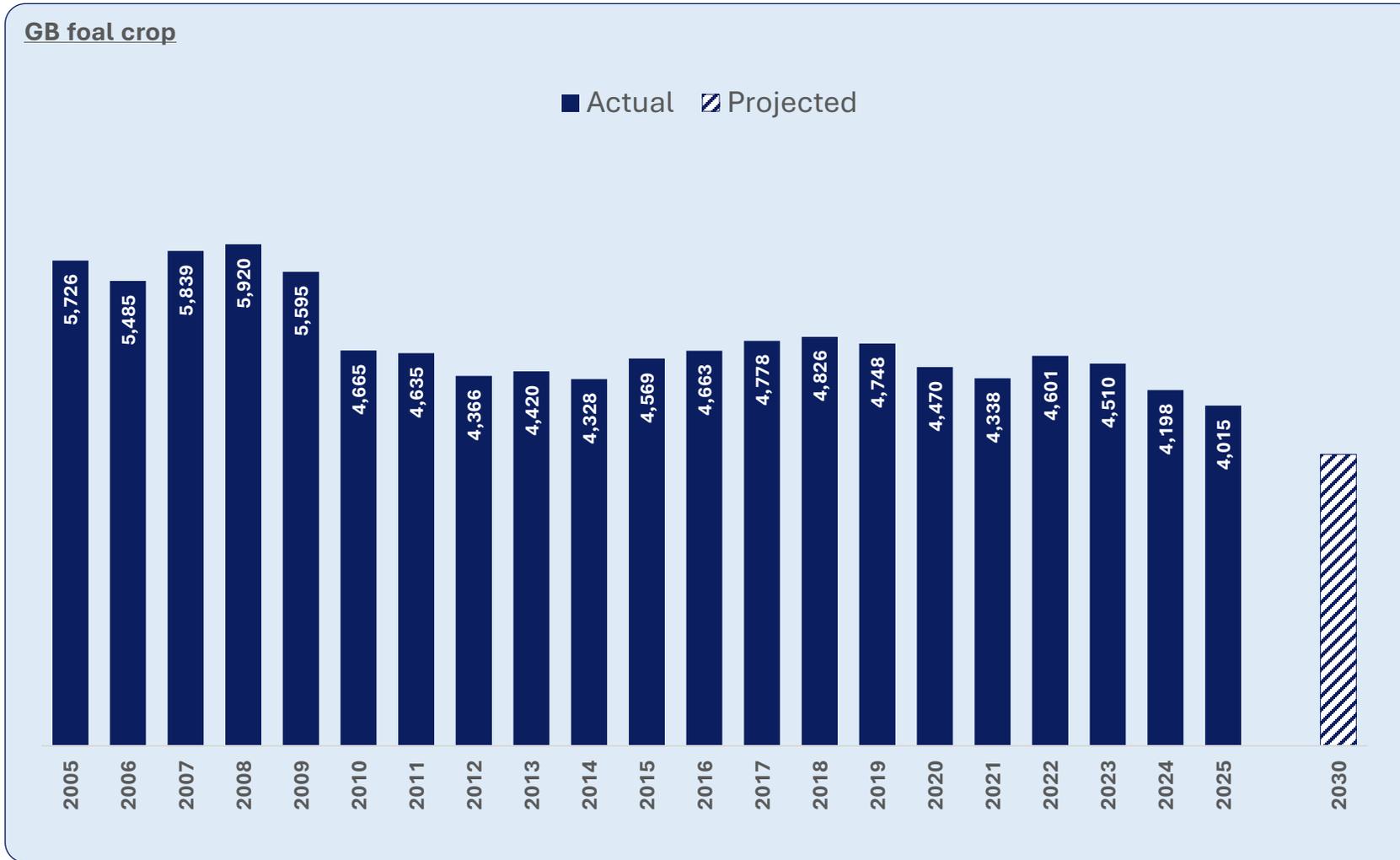
- Britain's racing fans are an **ageing demographic**, with almost half of fans aged 45 and over
- **Legislative change** is squeezing turnover levels
- **Societal trends** place increased emphasis on welfare

- Percentage of turnover returned to the sport is **low by global standards**
- Structure is not conducive to attracting **external investment**
- **Prize money** in real-terms is now £10m less than in 2018

The economics of breeding in Great Britain do not add up

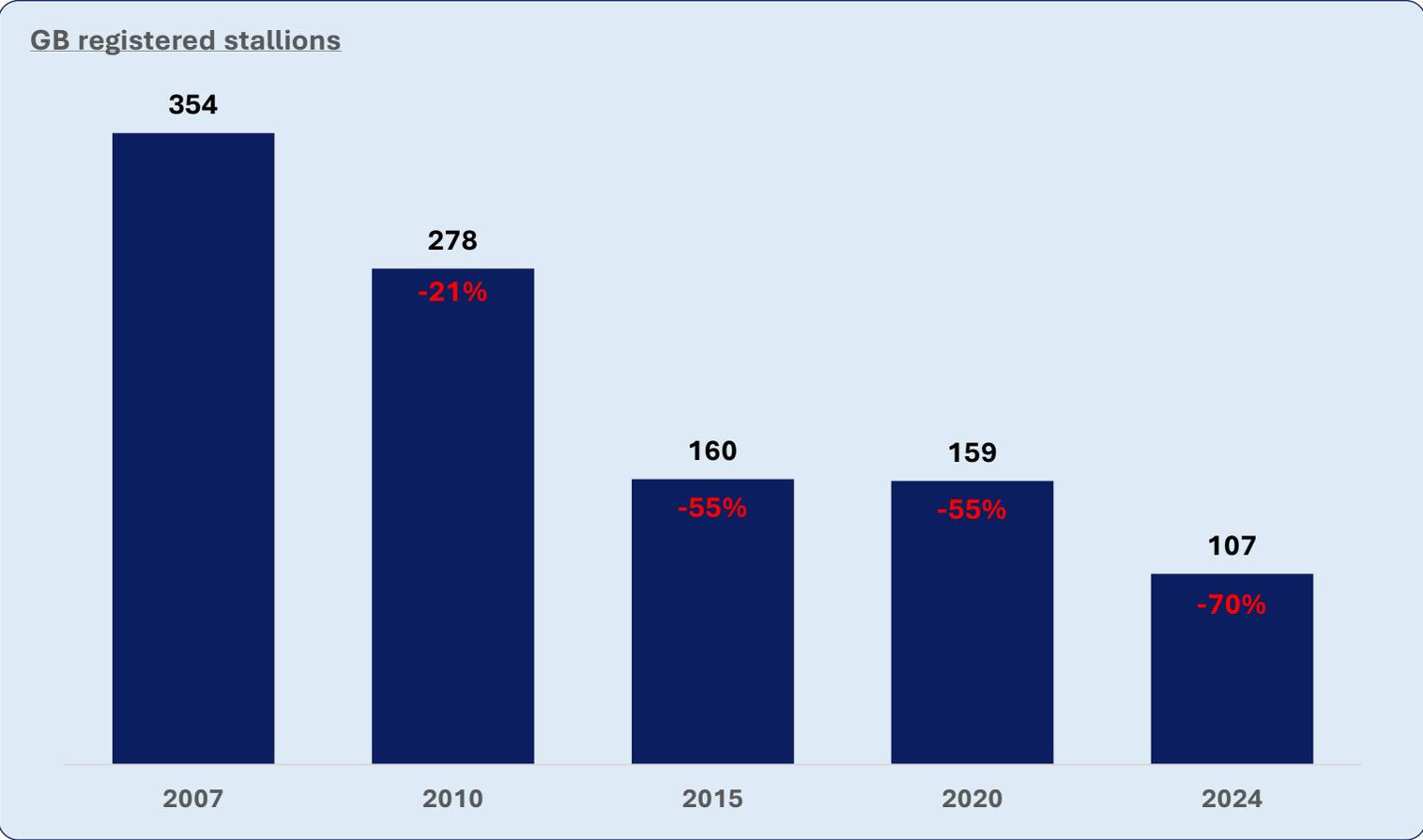


The British foal crop has fallen by 13% since 2022



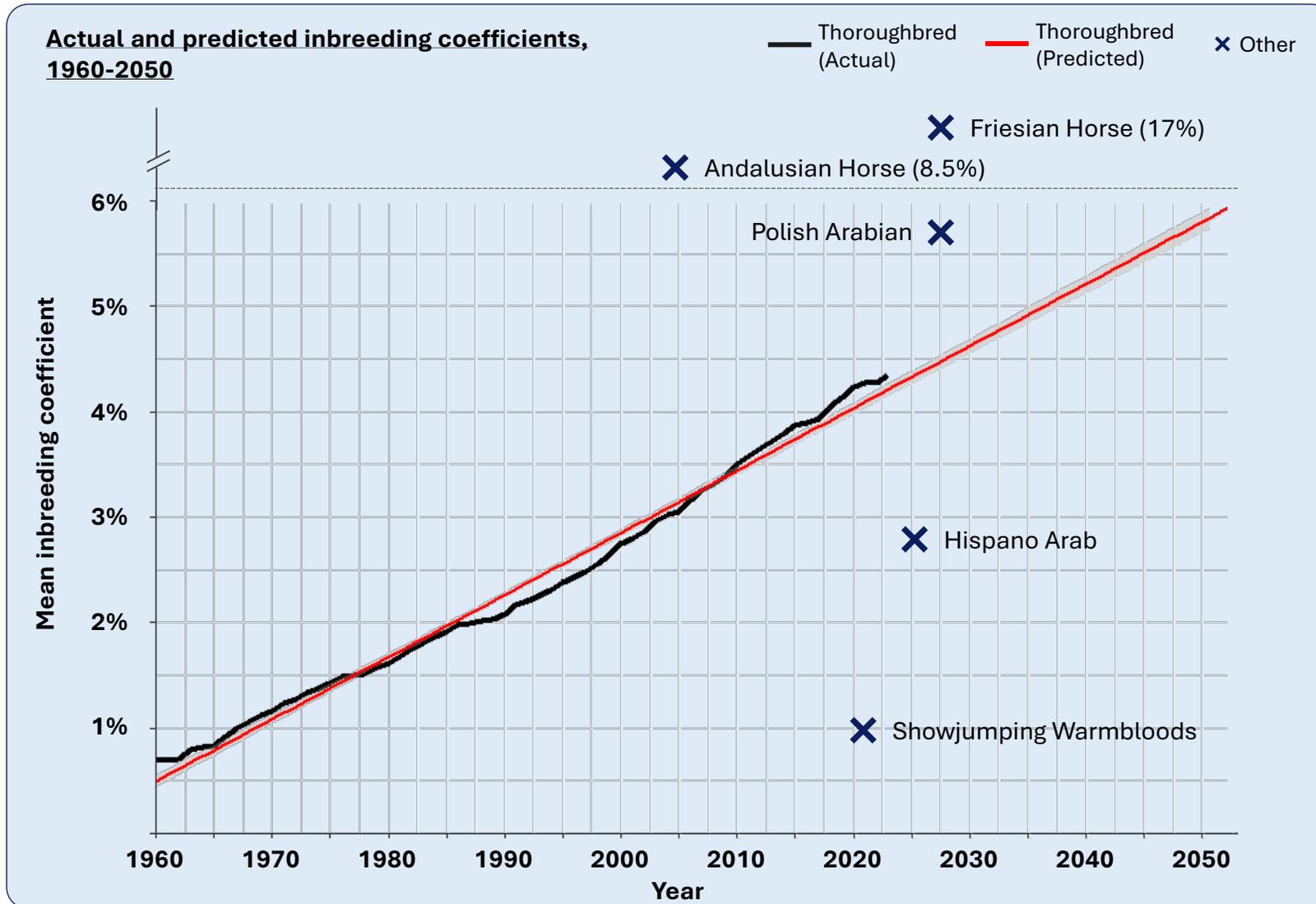
- In 2025, GB produced almost 600 fewer foals than in 2022, which represents a fall of 13%
- At the current rate of decline, the foal crop is expected to drop to below 3,500 over the next five years

And the fall in number of registered stallions raises questions of genetic diversity



- Britain now has 247 fewer registered stallions than in 2007, which represents a -70% decline
- This relative drop is the largest seen across all stud books featuring 100+ registered stallions globally

The thoroughbred population is on a worrying trajectory



• The British and Irish thoroughbred population is not yet in a desperate position, but the present trajectory implies increased fertility and performance challenges over the next 25 years unless an intervention is made soon

The TBA is piloting a scheme that can help raise awareness of the importance of genetic diversity



SPARKS scheme: Informing and shaping broader industry awareness and education strategy

Invite participants

Those asked are responsible for around 500 British-domiciled mares

Understand mean kinship

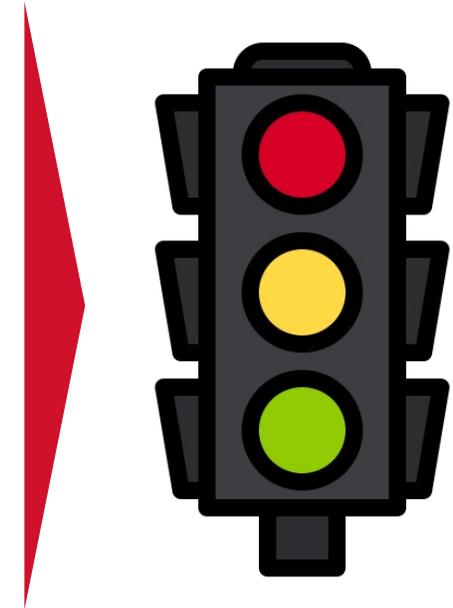
Assessment of how related one horse is to another, looking at recent and historic common ancestors

Project inbreeding coefficients

Promote consideration of the resultant risk score, with anonymity of stallion data protected

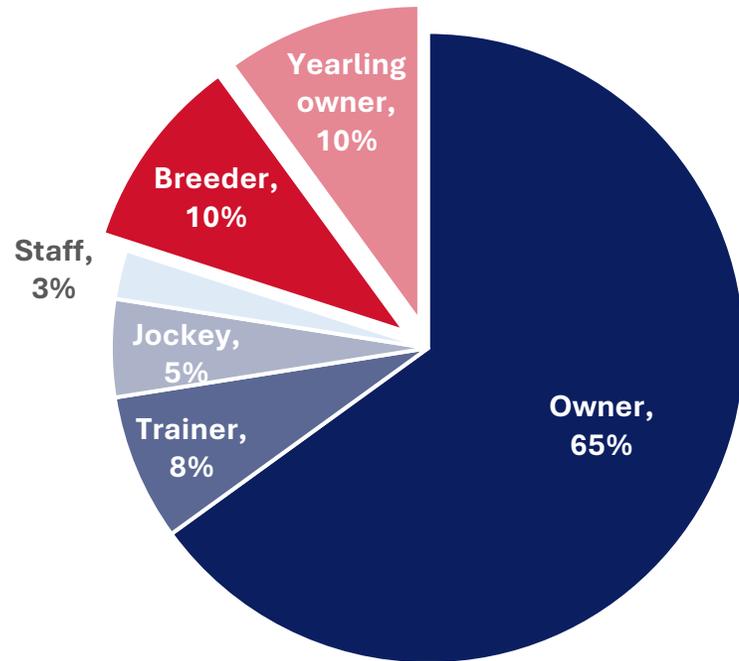
Encourage breeding like-to-like

Matings should ideally be between horses who have similar inbreeding coefficients, summarised via a “traffic light” system



Great British Bonus is an example of an established initiative aimed at addressing Britain's problems

GBB distribution



3,634 races
in 2025

1,836
on the Flat

1,798
over Jumps

419 bonuses
paid out totaling
more than
£6 million

A total of
£4,451,000
paid out to
Flat fillies

A total of
£1,568,000
paid out to
Jumps fillies

Two major GB projects provide a blueprint for setting the sport on a prosperous trajectory

		Project Pace	Project Beacon
Project type		Financial feasibility study	Consumer research and strategy
Aims		To understand whether a repositioning of Britain's elite Flat racing product could provide a significant increase in the sport's revenues	To provide British racing with a fuller understanding of how customers like to engage with the sport, and the barriers that are preventing deeper fandom
Progress		Calculation of business case provides platform to potentially explore appetite of external investors	Identification of six strategic "jobs to be done" which can drive engagement across growth targets

There is a clear need for a long-term breeding strategy



Underpin a sustainable pipeline

- All other successful industries have strategies to ensure future product supply
- Failure to do so risks continued reduction and homogenisation of the race programme



Incentivise and manage production

- Commercial forces should be harnessed for the betterment of the thoroughbred
- Coherent people strategy cannot be overlooked



Ensure sufficient quality and quantity

- Racing must ensure it is producing the right horses in the right quantities to maintain a compelling product
- This should include safeguards to improve the long-term health and integrity of the breed

Development of a long-term breeding strategy



Trying to tackle our issues in isolation is doomed to fail

-  **Leverage the value and reach of elite racing programme**
-  **Convert new audiences to endorse racing's social licence**
-  **Attract new income streams**
-  **Recognise and support nursery jurisdictions**
-  **Develop a common welfare strategy**
-  **Enact a global genetic diversity policy to ensure the long-term health of the breed**
-  **Ensure breeding strategies of individual countries are consistent with global policy**