



# #sport on search

League Tables 2022



# introduction

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*Dear friends and colleagues*

Welcome to #SportOnSearch!

'Search' is becoming increasingly important as a measurement metric of brand health, so we've built on our industry-leading #SportOnSocial and are delighted to introduce #SportOnSearch.

Specifically, #SportOnSearch ranks some of the world's biggest sports properties based on Google searches for them in 2021 compared with their previous 4-year average.

While the rankings might not reflect total search for each property, they do provide valuable insights into whether search – and therefore potential interest – is increasing or decreasing.

It is also important to note that some sports properties have been impacted by the pandemic significantly more than others which might well have affected their rankings.

Ultimately, we believe #SportOnSearch (like Share of Search) provides great potential for both decision-making and growth prediction.



# methodology

## *Why Google data?*

Google has over 90% of the search engine market share and almost 4 billion users worldwide. We used Google Trends data to best reflect the searches people make each day.

## *How does it work?*

- Each sports property was individually measured by all relevant search terms and phrases during a 5-year period.
- An annual index score was calculated by averaging each weekly index score. 2021 was then compared against the previous 4-year period (2017-2020).
- The percentages illustrate the direction of change.

## *Why a 5-year period?*

A 5-year period was chosen so that trends over recent years could be examined and the pandemic disruption of 2020/21 factored in.

## *Which sports have been ranked?*

35 of the world's biggest global sports properties were ranked:

23	leagues and series
12	events and tournaments



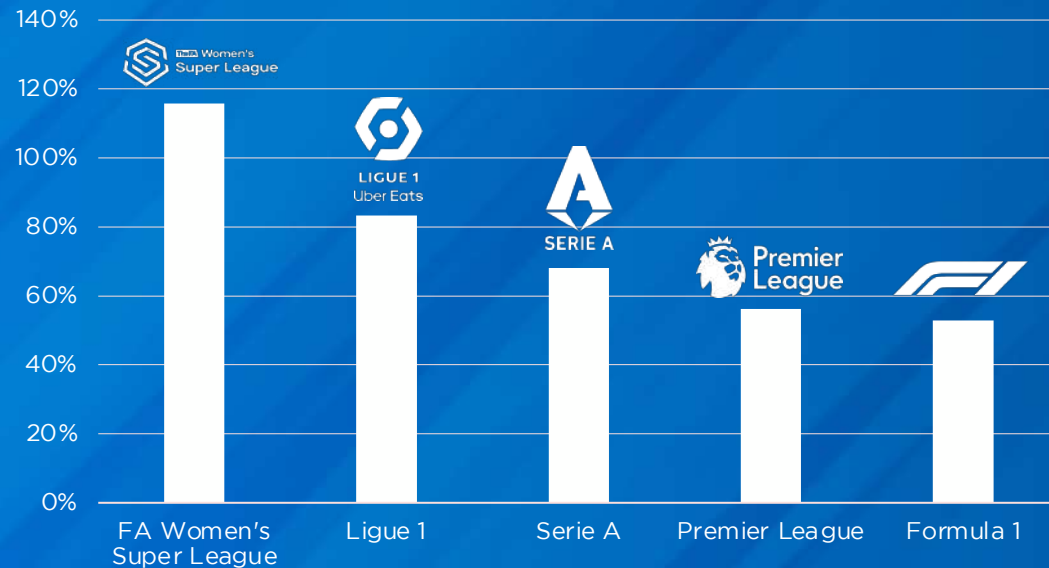
# League Table 2022 – leagues and series

based on 2021 Google Trends search data vs previous 4-year average

Leagues and Series	Sport	2021 vs previous 4-year average (% change)	Leagues and Series	Sport	2021 vs previous 4-year average (% change)
1 FA Women's Super League	Football	+116%	13 Major League Baseball (MLB)	Baseball	+15%
2 Ligue 1	Football	+83%	14 PGA Tour	Golf	+10%
3 Serie A	Football	+68%	15 Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC)	Combat sport	+9%
4 Premier League	Football	+56%	15 National Hockey League (NHL)	Ice Hockey	+7%
5 Formula 1	Motorsport	+53%	16 National Football League (NFL)	American Football	+6%
6 LaLiga	Football	+46%	17 PGA European Tour	Golf	+1%
7 Bundesliga	Football	+43%	18 Major League Soccer (MLS)	Football	-2%
8 National Women's Soccer League (NWSL)	Football	+27%	19 NASCAR	Motorsport	-3%
9 Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA)	Basketball	+22%	20 Formula E	Motorsport	-9%
10 National Basketball Association (NBA)	Basketball	+21%	21 Bellator MMA	Combat sport	-25%
11 UEFA Champions League	Football	+16%	22 World Surf League (WSL)	Surfing	-33%
12 ONE Championship	Combat sport	+16%	23 MotoGP	Motorsport	-37%

# League Table 2022 - leagues and series

League Table 2022 - Top 5



## Women's football

There has been far greater exposure in women's football since players competed in the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup and the Olympic Games. Landmark TV deals and significant investment by some of England's biggest clubs in their women's teams (e.g. Manchester City, Manchester United, Chelsea) have accelerated its growth.

## Star player power

The football leagues that attracted star players saw a notable uplift. Examples include PSG which signed Lionel Messi in 2021, and Juventus which benefitted in Serie A from the inclusion of Cristiano Ronaldo (2018-2021).

## Success on the pitch

As French clubs progressed into the latter stages of the UEFA Champions League, interest in Ligue 1 increased. The dominance of English clubs in European competitions saw a similar increase. Successes on the pitch - combined with a mixture of free-to-air and paid channel broadcast deals - have also driven growth.

## Rivalries and storytelling

Since Liberty Media took over F1, a well-constructed strategy has resulted in consistent growth in Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas. This has been supported by the 'Drive to Survive' documentary series on Netflix and the excitement of an exhilarating 2021 season finale.

# growth outlook – leagues and series



Credit: @BarclaysFAWSL

## • *Women's sport will continue to grow*

The FA Women's Super League will benefit from the 2021 record-breaking 3-year TV deal with Sky and the BBC, and the UEFA Women's Euro 2022 taking place in England.

The WNBA will continue its year-on-year growth off the back of a big 2021 season, and an increased 36-game regular-season schedule for 2022.



## • *Comeback for American leagues*

An already huge 2021/22 season will see the NFL and NBA jump up the 2022 rankings: we expect a double-digit uplift of interest in 2022 and significant growth in Mexico, Brazil and India.

As the MLS is in the last year of its current domestic media rights deal it will be looking for year-on-year growth.



## • *Interest will drop in European football leagues*

High levels of interest in some European leagues (such as Serie A and potentially Ligue 1) will drop as star players leave their respective leagues.

A 6-week break due to the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar will directly affect the 2022-2023 season, with minimal adjustments made to the domestic calendar.



## • *Motorsports will climb*

We anticipate an uptrend in growth for F1 based on the success of previous seasons, especially if the Hamilton vs. Verstappen rivalry continues.

Formula E will see a rise in interest, with 16 rounds on 10 circuits. MotoGP should see a reverse in declining interest.

# League Table 2022 – events and tournaments

based on 2021 Google Trends search data vs previous 4-year average

	Events & Tournaments	Sport	2021 vs previous 4-year average (% change)
1	 Wimbledon	Tennis	+105%
2	 Indian Premier League (IPL)	Cricket	+38%
3	 French Open	Tennis	+33%
4	 The Masters	Golf	+24%
5	 The Open	Golf	+6%
6	 US Open	Tennis	+6%
7	 U.S. Open	Golf	+5%
8	 Giro d'Italia	Cycling	0%
9	 Vuelta a España	Cycling	-8%
10	 Australian Open	Tennis	-11%
11	 Six Nations	Rugby	-17%
12	 Tour de France	Cycling	-22%



# 2022 Top 5 - events and tournaments

## *Return after the pandemic*

There was even greater interest in Wimbledon after the 2020 event had been cancelled because of COVID-19. World number 1 Novak Djokovic won the Men's Singles; interest in the Southern hemisphere increased when Australian, Ashleigh Barty, took the Women's Singles.

## *Extended calendar*

In unusual circumstances, the 2021 Indian Premier League was hosted over two periods: April to May and September to October (the latter in the United Arab Emirates). The result? Two significant peaks of interest which led to a higher average annual index score than previous years.

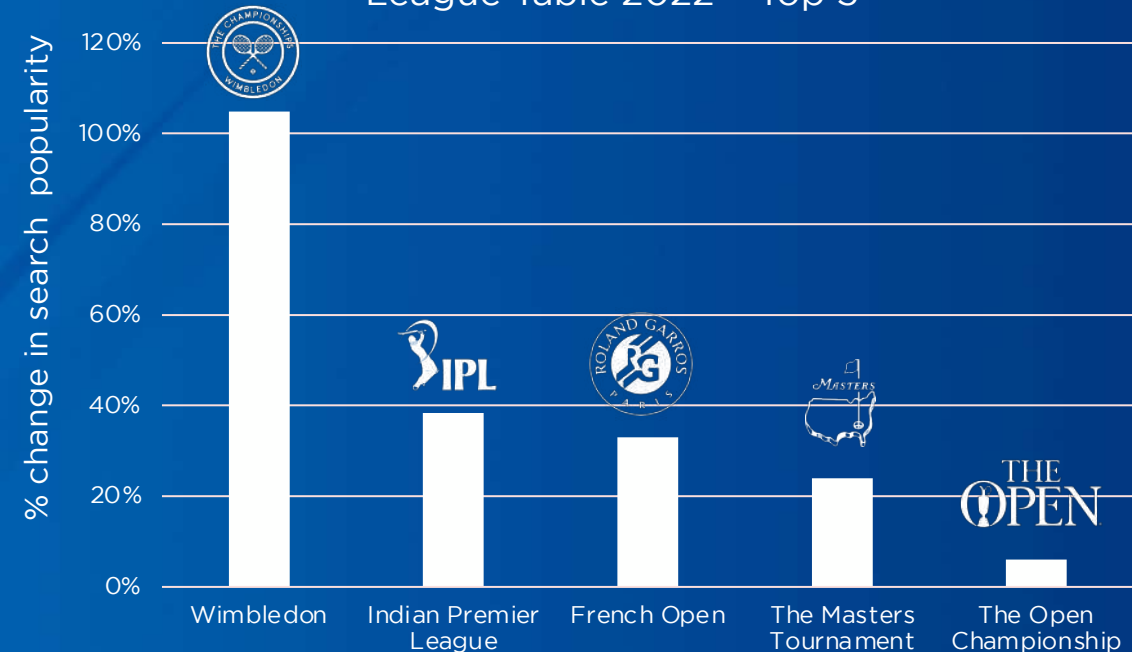
## *Extra spotlight*

Naomi Osaka's decision to withdraw from the French Open on mental health grounds generated controversy and global headlines. Novak Djokovic triumphed in the Men's Singles.

## *Increased participation golf consumption*

Golf surged in popularity during the pandemic, and events benefitted from this rise in interest. The Masters Tournament gained many new fans as Hideki Matsuyama became the first Japanese golfer to win a men's major championship, and 'Matsuyama Mania' swept the country following his triumph at Augusta National.

League Table 2022 - Top 5





# growth outlook – events and tournaments



## *More growth for biggest events and tournaments*

Wimbledon and the IPL will maintain their positions at the top of the Table, with consistently strong year-on-year growth driven by Europe, Asia and Australasia.

Emma Raducanu will be enjoying her first home tournament since winning the US Open while Federer, Nadal and Djokovic continue their battle to claim the most majors.



## *Cycling staged for a comeback*

Interest in the Grand Tours has been sliding over the last couple of years but should see a comeback as regular dates and fixtures return to the calendar.

Biggest of them all, the Tour de France should see an uplift as a less cluttered global summer sporting calendar than 2021 gives them the opportunity to build a bigger audience.



## *Six Nations will grow*

The 2021 Six Nations Championship took place just 3 months after the end of the previous tournament – and entirely without fans.

With continued access to free-to-air channels and fans back in stadia (and the usual one-year break between tournaments) we expect at least a 10% growth in popularity.

Markets such as Argentina will fuel global interest.



## *Golf tournaments need popular players to perform*

Interest in The Masters and The Open peaked in 2019 with Tiger Woods' and Shane Lowry's spectacular (respective) victories.

The current lack of high-profile players – with the majority of the world's Top 10 largely unknown to the casual viewer – could see major golf tournaments suffer in the short term.

# Redtorch

## say hello

Redtorch is an award-winning research, digital and social media agency trusted by the biggest brands in sport to grow and engage global audiences.

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