

# Global Sports Properties 2025

Ranking the world's biggest sports properties based on search data.

**Redtorch**



**SPORTS ON SOCIAL**



**Karishma Riar**  
Head of Research & Insights



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Welcome to Global Sports Properties 2025 – SportOnSocial. This report represents an evolution of our ongoing analysis of the global sports landscape to provide a comprehensive overview of women’s sports rightsholders and their brand health.

Our approach is rooted in the belief that search data offers a clear and compelling snapshot of public interest. It’s a direct reflection of what fans are searching for, what they’re engaging with, and, ultimately, where their attention lies. By analysing Google Trends data (news, web, YouTube search) from 2024 and comparing it to the previous 4-year average (2020–2023), we’ve built a global snapshot of how major sports properties are performing – and what that means for their future.

This year’s findings reveal record-breaking growth in the visibility of women’s sport. Search interest in the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) surged +322%, fuelled by stars like Caitlin Clark, while global leagues such as the Barclays Women’s Super League (BWSL) and Frauen-Bundesliga expanded their digital reach. Athlete-driven narratives and fan-first strategies are accelerating engagement at an unprecedented pace.

These insights present both an opportunity and a challenge for rightsholders: how to maintain growth, strengthen brand equity and ensure the long-term commercial success of women’s sport.

We hope these insights prove valuable as you navigate the opportunities ahead.

# Methodology

## Why Google data?

Google holds over 90% of the global search engine market share and serves nearly 4 billion users worldwide. Redtorch used Google Trends data to capture a clear reflection of the searches people make every day.

## How does it work?

Each sports property was measured individually by all relevant search topics during a 5-year period (2024 compared to each property's previous 4-year) across web/YouTube/news searches.

An annual index score was calculated by averaging each weekly index score. 2024 was then compared against the previous 4-year period (2020–2023).

The percentages illustrate the direction of change in search interest.

## Why compare against the previous 4-year average?

Comparing the annual index against the previous four-year period provides a stronger benchmark for assessing long-term growth and brand health than a simple year-on-year comparison. This approach also helps reduce the impact of anomalies, such as the pandemic disruptions of 2020/2021, ensuring a more accurate reflection of sustained trends.

## Which sports were ranked?

Following the success of our 2024 report, we've expanded the 2025 edition to include 15 additional properties, bringing the total to 70.

To ensure the analysis remains accurate and meaningful, certain sports properties have been excluded due to their recent establishment or insufficient search data over a five-year period. This approach allows us to focus on longer-term trends and deliver insights based on robust, consistent data.



# The evolution of women's sports in 2024



**Women's sport continue to be a dominant growth story in 2024, with rightsholders experiencing record-breaking engagement, commercial success, and global reach. Athlete-driven narratives, increased media visibility, and strategic investments are reshaping the sports industry, solidifying women's leagues as major commercial players.**

Among the fastest-growing sports properties, women's leagues are leading the way, with five of the top 10 seeing significant surges in interest. Women's football, in particular, is expanding its global footprint, with BWSL, Frauen-Bundesliga, NWSL, UEFA Women's Champions League, and LigaF all experiencing substantial growth. This momentum underscores the increasing mainstream appeal of women's football across multiple regions.

The WNBA and BWSL exemplify how athlete influence and media expansion fuel growth, with WNBA search interest up +322% and BWSL rising +145%. Star players like Caitlin Clark have played a pivotal role in elevating engagement levels, demonstrating how individual athletes can drive widespread interest and visibility for their leagues.

This surge in women's sport is not just about growth—it reflects a broader shift in how audiences engage with sports, driven by increasing visibility and accessibility. While WNBA and BWSL are thriving, traditional

powerhouses like the NBA (-2%) and Serie A (-21%) are experiencing declines, highlighting a shift in audience interest and engagement patterns.

At the same time, the rise of alternative and emerging leagues is further benefiting women's sports. The success of WNBA and women's football aligns with a broader shift toward new formats and fresh engagement strategies, particularly as digital platforms and athlete-driven narratives redefine how fans interact with sports. Emerging competitions like padel and innovative tennis formats are harnessing digital-first approaches to amplify visibility, while legacy sports face challenges in maintaining relevance in an increasingly dynamic sports landscape.

For rightsholders, the opportunity lies in leveraging this momentum—enhancing digital engagement, expanding accessibility, and solidifying women's sport as a cornerstone of the evolving sports industry. No longer a niche sector, women's sport are at the forefront of reshaping the global sports hierarchy.

# Rankings table

Ranking	League & Series	2024 Search	Rank Change	Sport	2023 Search
1	WNBA	322%	8	Basketball	54%
2	Padel World Championship	282%	New	Padel	-
3	Ultimate Tennis Showdown	246%	New	Tennis	-
4	Barclays Women's Super League (BWSL)	145%	-3	Football	258%
5	Frauen-Bundesliga	114%	New	Football	-
6	World Endurance Championship	97%	New	Motorsports	-
7	National Women's Soccer League (NWSL)	95%	3	Football	50%
8	National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA)	94%	6	Multi-sport	37%
9	SailGP	94%	New	Sailing	-
10	Diamond League	91%	-7	Athletics	85%
11	ATP Tour	76%	1	Tennis	42%
12	UEFA Women's Champions League	75%	-7	Football	70%
13	HSBC SVNS	71%	New	Rugby	-
14	PDC World Darts Championship	70%	New	Darts	-
15	Women's Six Nations Championship	68%	-9	Rugby	59%
16	Major League Soccer (MLS)	53%	-14	Football	87%
17	Euroleague	43%	-10	Basketball	56%
18	WWE	39%	1	Combat Sport	21%
19	Arkema Première Ligue	39%	New	Football	-
20	Wimbledon	36%	-3	Tennis	25%
21	Ironman Triathlon	34%	New	Fitness/Running	-
22	One Championship	32%	-11	Combat Sport	50%
23	LigaF	32%	New	Football	-
24	World Surf League (WSL)	31%	9	Surfing	8%
25	EuroLeague Women	26%	-21	Basketball	76%
26	French Open	25%	27	Tennis	-27%
27	Six Nations Championship	24%	13	Rugby	4%
28	National Hockey League (NHL)	23%	2	Ice Hockey	11%
29	WTA Tour	23%	-14	Tennis	27%
30	Major League Baseball (MLB)	18%	-9	Baseball	18%
31	National Football League (NFL)	14%	-6	American Football	16%
32	US Open – Golf	12%	15	Golf	-7%
33	Bundesliga	11%	-17	Football	26%
34	Masters Tournament	10%	14	Golf	-8%
35	Australian Open	10%	20	Tennis	-37%

Ranking	League & Series	2024 Search	Rank Change	Sport	2023 Search
36	Formula 1	9%	-8	Motorsports	13%
37	Indian Premier League	9%	-19	Cricket	25%
38	Indycar	7%	1	Motorsports	4%
39	Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC)	7%	-1	Combat Sport	5%
40	US Open - Tennis	7%	-5	Tennis	7%
41	AIG Women's Open (Golf)	6%	New	Golf	-
42	UEFA Europa League	6%	-18	Football	16%
43	LET golf	5%	New	Golf	-
44	UEFA Champions League	4%	-15	Football	13%
45	LPGA Tour	3%	-25	Golf	19%
46	Premier League	2%	-33	Football	39%
47	Nascar	0%	-2	Motorsports	-4%
48	K League 1	0%	-16	Football	9%
49	MotoGP	0%	-27	Motorsports	17%
50	PGA Tour	-1%	-8	Golf	1%
51	Serie A Women	-1%	New	Football	-
52	Vuelta a Espana	-2%	-21	Cycling	9%
53	National Basketball Association (NBA)	-2%	-30	Basketball	16%
54	LaLiga	-5%	-17	Football	6%
55	CrossFit Games	-6%	-3	Fitness/Running	-25%
56	World Rally Championship (WRC)	-6%	-22	Motorsports	7%
57	Giro d'Italia	-8%	-7	Cycling	-18%
58	Tour de France	-13%	-15	Cycling	-1%
59	The Hundred	-14%	-51	Cricket	55%
60	Open Championship	-18%	-14	Golf	-6%
61	Serie A	-21%	-34	Football	15%
62	Ligue 1	-22%	-36	Football	15%
63	Spartan Race	-27%	New	Fitness/Running	-
64	X Games	-27%	-13	Urban Sports	-25%
65	Formula E	-29%	-16	Motorsports	-16%
66	Women's Open (Golf)	-32%	New	Golf	-
67	Big Bash League	-34%	-31	Cricket	6%
68	United States Women's Open Championship	-44%	New	Golf	-
69	Bellator Mixed Martial Arts (MMA)	-59%	-15	Combat Sport	-31%
70	PGA European Tour	-72%	-29	Golf	2%

# The headlines



## +322%

### Caitlin Clark & Kate Martin fuel unprecedented growth in WNBA search interest

Caitlin Clark and Kate Martin played a major role in driving a surge of interest in the WNBA, rising more sharply than any other domestic league, outpacing the EuroLeague (+43%) and EuroLeague Women (+26%) – and even outshining NBA (which saw a decline of -2%).

Anticipation around the WNBA Draft in April fuelled widespread attention as fans followed the athletes' transition from college to professional stage. Caitlin Clark's social media following escalated in tandem as she gained 1.3 million new followers between April and May alone. Such a rapid rise in digital engagement highlights her monumental role in driving excitement around the league. Their influence extended beyond these early spikes, too, with strong interest continuing from May through October, aligning with the WNBA season and playoffs.

Interest was particularly high in North American basketball strongholds like the US (+66% of regional interest) and Canada (+34%) where the impact of collegiate success translated into heightened enthusiasm for the professional game.



## +282%

### Doha 2024 Padel World Championship puts sport on the global map

The Padel World Championship in Doha, Qatar, in late October and early November significantly increased the sport's global visibility. The championship coincided with a marked rise in interest, particularly in regions with a strong tradition of padel (e.g. Spain, Portugal, South America) which saw an average +88% uplift in search vs 2023.

All this reflects the sport's established popularity in these areas as well as its growing appeal in new markets. Notably, search interest in padel (+282%) significantly outpaced the +60% average generated by tennis rightsholders – and grew at nearly five times the rate in 2024, highlighting the sport's accelerating global momentum.



## +246%

### Ultimate Tennis Showdown captivates fans with new format & star players

Ultimate Tennis Showdown experienced distinct spikes of interest during February, August, October and December, each aligning with the four rounds of the competition. Norway experienced a +23% uplift in interest vs 2023, coinciding with the participation of Casper Ruud (World #6) from Oslo, the Norwegian capital that hosted the first round.

France (+64%) and Denmark (+30%), saw even higher growth vs 2023, reflecting the strong influence of local athletes. These patterns underscore the direct impact of local athletes' participation and the strategic hosting of events in cultivating regional interest and enhancing the global footprint of the competition.

Moreover, Ultimate Tennis Showdown (+246%) significantly outperformed established tournaments such as the ATP Tour (+76%), WTA Tour (+23%) and Grand Slam tournaments (+19% on average). This substantial uplift in search interest highlights an evolving tennis ecosystem where emerging formats and local athlete influence can disrupt traditional hierarchies in the sport.

# The headlines



## +145%

### WSL's season climax & global reach drive major surge in interest

Interest in BWSL saw a noticeable spike in mid-May, coinciding with the culmination of the season. Searches around topics such as Crystal Palace FC, league standings and upcoming fixtures came to the fore during this period. In addition, current WSL players of African heritage generated 6.6x more social media engagements compared to previous years, underscoring the growing influence and visibility of these athletes. This is a clear indicator of the expanding global appeal of the league, particularly in African markets, with notable interest from countries such as Uganda, Eswatini, Zimbabwe and Nigeria.

WSL outperformed other women's football leagues (+145%) with a significant rise in search interest compared to Frauen-Bundesliga (+114%) and NWSL (+95%), highlighting the growing global recognition WSL entertains, driven by the league's increasing visibility and its expanding presence in both traditional and emerging markets.



## +114%

### Frauen-Bundesliga's 2024 momentum: RB Leipzig's top-tier ascent

Interest in the Frauen-Bundesliga saw a significant rise in 2024, with key moments and developments driving engagement. . Leveraging the success of their men's team, RB Leipzig Women's promotion to the top tier attracted fans already familiar with the club's brand, resulting in a surge of media coverage and crossover support.

Beyond this, the league's inclusion in EA Sports FC 24 introduced the Frauen-Bundesliga to a broader audience of gamers and online content creators, a trend mirrored by other included women's leagues worldwide that witnessed a notable increase in visibility.

Individual players also played a major role in boosting popularity, with standout names like Laura Freigang and Lena Oberdorf enjoying a collective 50% follower growth across their social media channels, as their on-field performances and personal stories captured public attention. Their rising profiles, coupled with strategic marketing and sponsorships, further underscored the growing momentum behind women's football in Germany.



## -14%

### The decline in interest for The Hundred

The decline in interest for The Hundred (-14%) can be largely attributed to the natural drop-off since its 2021 launch-year hype, when curiosity and media attention were at their peak. In 2023, increased YouTube and news coverage drove higher searches, but interest waned without similar amplification in 2024.

As the league has matured, the absence of major format innovations, high-profile player signings or fresh marketing campaigns has limited its ability to maintain the initial excitement and attract new audiences.

At the same time, The Hundred competes for attention with other cricket formats, particularly IPL and international tournaments which continue to grow and attract audiences.

# Growth of sports in 2024

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# The shifting landscape of global sports interest in 2024

Search trends from 2024 highlight significant shifts in global sports interest. Padel led the way (+282% average growth), fuelled by its expanding international footprint and marquee events like the Padel World Championship in Doha. The sport's accessibility and strategic global expansion continue to strengthen its brand health, positioning it as a rising force in racquet sports.

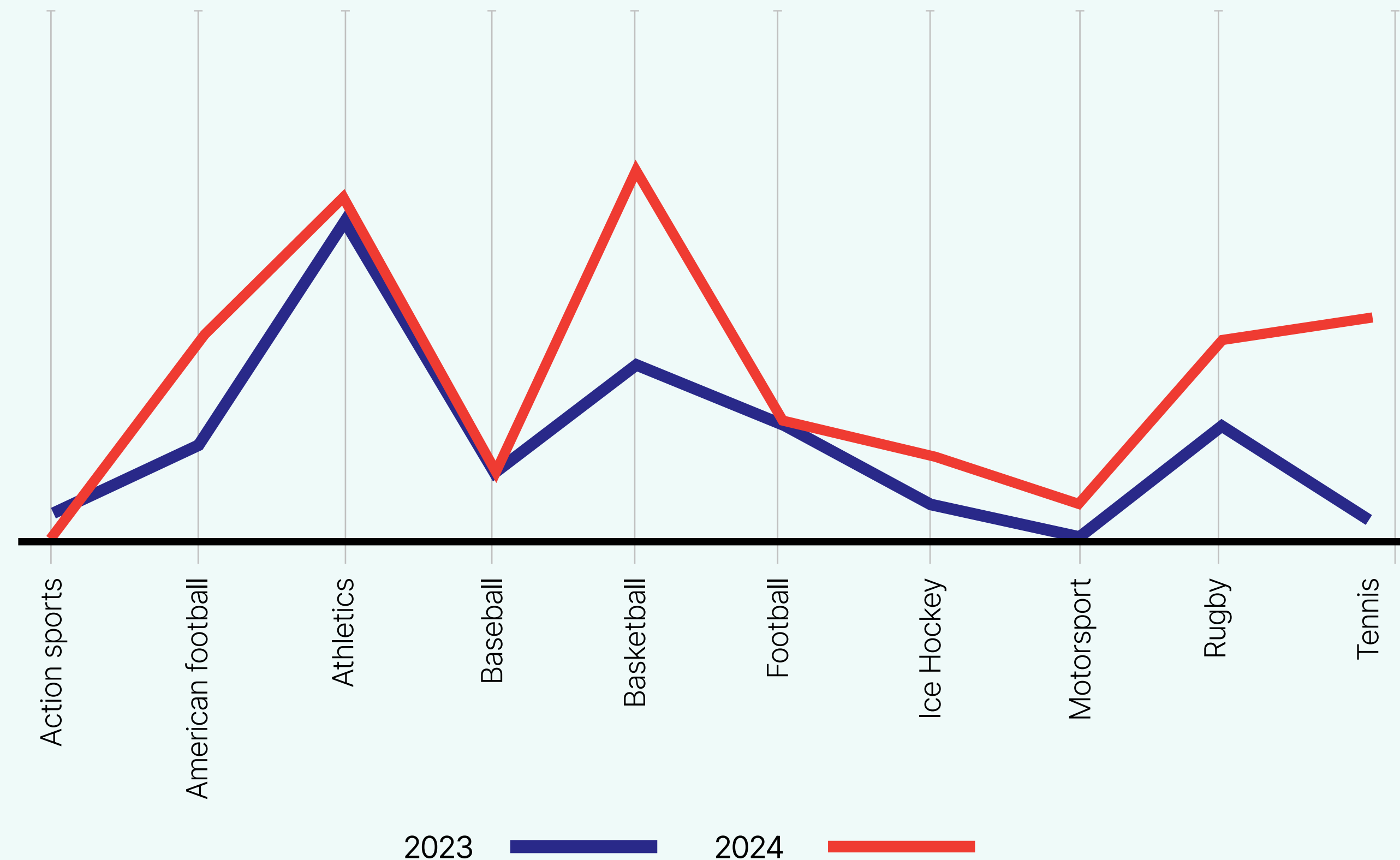
Athletics (+91%) remains a strong global brand, with consistent search interest driven by elite performances and national representation. However, its relatively slow growth compared to emerging sports indicates a need for stronger strategies to maintain engagement year-round, rather than just around major events.

Some established sports, however, are seeing brand stagnation. Cycling, cricket, and golf recorded lower growth or even decline despite their historical dominance. This presents a challenge for rightsholders in maintaining global relevance, particularly as younger audiences gravitate toward faster-paced, entertainment-driven sports like Ultimate Tennis Showdown and combat sports. Without adaptation, these traditional sports risk losing long-term engagement.

Basketball (+97%) and multi-sport events (+94%) also saw strong growth, largely driven by the WNBA surge and increased attention around major competitions (e.g. NCAA tournament). The rise of women's basketball, particularly in North America, reinforces the global strength of basketball as a commercial and cultural brand. Similarly, sailing (+94%), with innovative formats such as SailGP, is gaining traction and bringing fresh appeal to a traditionally niche sport.

The data signals a broader shift in global sports consumption, where women's leagues, alternative formats, and agile sports are redefining the industry's future. Rightsholders who fail to adapt risk brand erosion and declining relevance in an increasingly competitive sports market.

## Top 10 Growing Sports of 2024



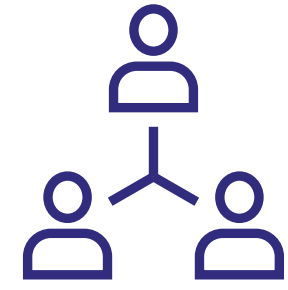
# Deep-dive on women's sport



This section explores the overarching factors that contributed to the surge in global popularity of women's sport. By examining what we believe to be the main drivers of this growth, we aim to uncover deeper insights into the specific growth opportunities and emerging trends shaping the future of women's sport.



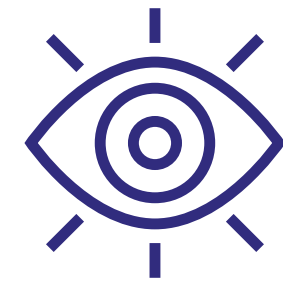
# Overarching drivers



## Athlete influence

Athletes have become central figures in driving interest/engagement within women's sport. Their outstanding performances, personal stories and active engagement on social media platforms have significantly increased visibility and drawn larger audiences, both locally and internationally. Clark's social media following surged by +154% following the WNBA draft, correlating with the league's significant rise in searches and highlighting once again how individual athletes can amplify interest in their sport and contribute to its overall growth.

Sky Sports found that nearly 70% of people viewed professional athletes as the most influential sporting role models for young women, underscoring the crucial role female athletes, particularly footballers, play in shaping the next generation of sports fans/participants.

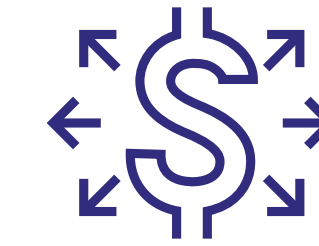


## Media coverage & digital engagement

Enhanced media coverage and a shift towards digital platforms have broadened the reach of women's sport, making events accessible to a global audience.

Increased digital presence has enabled fans to interact more closely with their favourite sports, driving consistent engagement throughout the year. Barclays Women's Super League (WSL), for example, garnered 15.9 million interactions across its Instagram/TikTok channels, while viewing figures for WSL games streamed online more than tripled this season following the league's switch to YouTube as its streaming platform.

Similarly, the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) closed its monumental 2024 season with a record-breaking 2.5 million viewers for its championship weekend, highlighting the growing digital engagement/fan loyalty across the leagues.



## Commercial investments & sponsorship

There has been a notable increase in commercial interest and investments in women's sports, driven by the growing recognition of their market potential.

Revenue generated by women's elite sports surpassed US\$1 billion for the first time in 2024, with total forecast revenues reaching US\$1.28 billion. The largest markets were North America, contributing US\$670 million (52%), and Europe US\$181 million (14%). The two most valuable sports were football, projected to generate US\$555 million (43%) and basketball US\$354 million (28%).

Sponsorships/partnerships provided not only financial backing but helped raise the profile of women's leagues/events, contributing to their overall growth/sustainability. WNBA delivered a record US\$136 million in media value for sponsors during the 2024 regular season. Sponsorships/partnerships therefore played a significant role in elevating the profile of women's leagues/events, thus contributing to their overall growth/sustainability.

# Athletes & influencers drive relevance in women's sport

The rise of star power in women's sport has dramatically reshaped modern sports consumption, with online visibility playing a pivotal role in promoting athletes. Search interest from various sports leagues shows how upcoming stars drive significant increases in attention and broaden the reach of their respective sports.



## WNBA: the influence of Caitlin Clark & Kate Martin

Clark's meteoric rise in WNBA is a prime example of how a single athlete can drive huge interest in a sport. Spikes in search interest were particularly noticeable during April/May, coinciding with the start of the season. Martin's involvement added another layer to the league's visibility. Overall, WNBA saw heightened interest throughout the season, especially from May to October which demonstrates how a league's brand health is intricately tied into the rising stardom of its athletes.

Clark's dominant performances caught attention beyond the traditional WNBA fan base, extending its reach in North America and internationally. This points to the power of athletes in creating a sustained conversation around the sport, especially when combined with their personal brands and social media presence.



## NWSL: Barbra Banda's regional influence

NWSL provides another good example of athlete-driven engagement. Interest in the league was especially pronounced in North and South America, with specific spikes related to Zambian players like Banda. She was the second-highest scorer in the league in the 2024 season, generating high search interest, particularly in Zambia where she has become a local hero. This indicates the global appeal of athletes who can act as powerful ambassadors for their sports, turning local stars into international sensations.

Similarly, NWSL's Malawian top scorer, Temwa Chawinga, contributed to this rise in interest, illustrating the influence of international players in generating regional interest and elevating the league's global profile.

# Top 3 women's sport properties by search growth



# Takeaways

## Leverage athlete-driven content & marketing

Athletes are not just competitors – they are brands, influencers and key drivers of engagement. Leagues/rightsholders should empower athletes to share personal narratives and build deeper connections with fans through tailored social media frameworks.

- Build athlete-specific content teams to support storytelling where short-form video thrives – TikTok, Instagram, YouTube.
- Encourage real-time, unfiltered content to drive engagement – behind-the-scenes moments, training insights and fan Q&As create authentic connections.
- Develop athlete-influencer collaborations – athletes can be their own influencers, expanding reach beyond traditional sports audiences.
- Make strategic use of regional/global stars – local heroes like Banda generate uplifts in specific markets and offer opportunities for targeted marketing/sponsorship.
- This enhances fan engagement, strengthens the brand health of sports properties and ensures long-term visibility in an increasingly competitive entertainment space.

## Invest in athlete development & visibility

Rightsholders should position athletes as marketable stars by investing in brand-building initiatives that extend beyond competition. A well-branded athlete boosts not only their own profile but elevates their entire sport.

- Provide training in personal branding & fan engagement with a focus on short-form digital channels.
- Support athletes with sponsorship education – help them monetise their platforms while ensuring alignment with league values.
- Create media & event opportunities – feature athletes in mainstream/digital-first content (e.g. docuseries, podcasts, collaborations).
- Leverage insights to identify emerging stars early/amplify their visibility globally.
- Positioning athletes as both competitors and global sports brands, leagues will drive audience retention, attract sponsors and future-proof their engagement strategies.

## Expand sponsorship & distribution models

The demand for authentic, purpose-driven engagement means that traditional sponsorship models must evolve. Fans expect meaningful connections and rightsholders should redefine how they commercialise athlete narratives.

- Move beyond logo placements – integrate athlete-led storytelling, brand activations, social-first sponsorship strategies.
- Develop interactive and digital-first content partnerships – leverage streaming platforms, creator collaborations and podcast sponsorships to diversify engagement.
- Create regionally customised sponsorship opportunities, e.g. brands targeting African markets could collaborate with stars like Banda or Chawinga for localised marketing campaigns.
- Experiment with new distribution platforms – social media native broadcasts/fan-driven content hubs are shaping the future of sports consumption.
- Aligning sponsorship/media strategies with changing fan behaviours, leagues and federations will increase commercial value while strengthening the emotional connection between athletes, brands and global audiences.

## **A final thought: the future of women's sports is athlete-driven**

The data is clear – athletes are now the primary gateway for fan engagement/commercial growth. Strategically supporting their brands, expanding sponsorship approaches and leveraging emerging platforms will define the future success of women's sport. Those leagues that embrace these shifts today will be the ones leading the industry tomorrow.





# Niche & innovative formats benefit disproportionately from social media



Short-form, fast-paced sports are gaining momentum in women's sports, thriving on platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts. These platforms prioritise high-energy, shareable moments, allowing emerging sports to gain visibility and build audiences without relying solely on traditional broadcast deals.

**These sports are tailor-made for social virality**, where a single high-energy moment can propel an athlete/match into global consciousness. Social media has allowed emerging sports to bypass traditional gatekeepers, making direct-to-fan engagement more impactful than ever. This shift means that even smaller-scale sports can generate global awareness through digital storytelling, highlighting their most engaging moments in real-time.

**For women's sport rightsholders**, this presents a major opportunity to reach younger, digitally savvy audiences. The combination of fast-paced, easily shareable content and algorithm-driven discovery ensures that these sports remain highly visible without the need for massive broadcast deals.

**Breaking through the clutter** remains a challenge, even for short-form formats. The Hundred in women's cricket, despite being designed for fast-paced entertainment, is struggling to establish itself in an already crowded women's cricket calendar. Despite efforts to modernise cricket with a condensed format, The Hundred competes against the long-standing ICC Women's T20 World Cup and international series, making audience fragmentation a real concern.

The -13% drop in overall cricket search interest in 2024 highlights this challenge. Although cricket has a loyal fan base, saturation may be diluting engagement. Even shorter, more accessible formats are struggling to carve out long-term loyalty, particularly when they lack the historical weight of legacy tournaments.

Ultimately, niche and innovative formats are uniquely positioned to leverage digital-first engagement strategies, but their long-term success will depend on their ability to carve out distinctive identities and overcome competition within their own sport.

# Takeaways

## Creating multi-platform, engaging content

A one-size-fits-all content strategy no longer works—leagues and federations must customise content for different platforms to maximise reach and fan engagement.

- Repurpose game highlights into platform-specific content – short-form Reels (15–30 seconds) for Instagram/TikTok, 3–5-minute recaps for YouTube, immersive live content for Twitch.
- Leverage player-driven storytelling – behind-the-scenes access, mic'd-up moments and day-in-the-life features enhance emotional connection.
- Introduce experimental mini-event formats – e.g. Women's Six Nations "Power Surge" moments or a fast-paced "Super Set" for women's tennis to capture engagement across digital/traditional audiences.

## Partner with influencers & creators for wider reach

Sports marketers should collaborate with influencers/digital creators to expand audience reach beyond core sports fans. Influencers bridge gaps between sports, lifestyle and entertainment, making women's sport more discoverable to new demographics.

- Engage creators from diverse spaces – fitness, fashion, gaming and entertainment influencers can integrate women's sports into their content organically.
- Bring in high-profile personalities for event coverage – e.g., fitness influencers at LPGA events or music/entertainment figures reacting to viral sports moments.
- Leverage humour/pop culture trends – personalities like Snoop Dogg/Kevin Hart adding comedic commentary, similar to the equestrian "crip walking" moment at the Olympics, makes niche sports more relatable.
- Use athlete-influencer collaborations – athletes co-creating content with digital personalities increases engagement, virality and sponsorship value.

## Optimise event formats & monetisation for digital audiences

As digital consumption rises, leagues must rethink event formats/monetisation strategies to capture audiences who engage across multiple screens.

- Experiment with hybrid event formats – introduce "Power Surge" moments in women's rugby or condensed, high-intensity game structures like "Super 10-Minute Halves" in the WSL can attract digital-native audiences.
- Optimise scheduling to avoid competition – hybrid scheduling models should consider digital consumption patterns/avoid conflicts with major sports events.
- Maximise interactive digital engagement – live Q&As, fan votes for game decisions and real-time stats improve fan immersion.

# The diversification of media streaming: expanding reach & redefining sports consumption



Women's sport events were once restricted to traditional pay-TV exposure but are now expanding onto digital platforms, dramatically boosting public awareness, brand health and search interest. Events such as the FA Women's Cup, WWE on Netflix, and the WSL ESPN deal have tapped into massive global audiences, meeting fans where they already consume content: on digital/social platforms.

**An additional surge in attention from the Olympics**, a key driver for Discovery+ in Q3 2024, it accounted for one in 4 new subscribers and made it one of the fastest-growing streaming services of the year. This highlights how marquee sports events, when displayed on accessible platforms, can drive significant subscriber growth, brand equity and engagement.

**By leveraging the broad reach of online streaming/social media**, women's sport no longer rely solely on traditional broadcasts to build audiences. Instead, they are meeting fans where they already are – on phones, tablets and smart TVs. This accessibility is crucial for casual viewers who may not actively seek out

women's football, professional wrestling or emerging sports leagues but can now discover them organically through algorithm-driven recommendations/ shareable content.

**A broader multi-platform approach** does more than increase brand visibility – it strengthens the commercial value/ longevity of sports properties, unlocking new sponsorship deals, merchandise sales and international partnerships. The momentum from these multiple touchpoints (social media, streaming services, free-to-air coverage) marks a new era of inclusivity/accessibility in sports, where once-niche competitions are transforming into global entertainment brands.

This shift to digital-first sports consumption is not just a trend – it's a transformation. As more leagues embrace diversified media distribution, women's sport will continue to break barriers, reach new markets and solidify as globally recognised sports brands.

# Takeaways

## Expand multi-channel distribution & accessibility

Traditional broadcast models alone are no longer enough – leagues/federations must leverage multi-platform strategies to reach wider audiences.

- Partner with major digital platforms – e.g. YouTube, Amazon Prime Video, TikTok Live, Twitch – which offer global reach for emerging sports that lack major broadcast deals.
- Lower entry barriers with free content models – offer free-to-air tiers or limited-time promotions to attract new fans to smaller competitions and drive long-term retention.
- Diversify monetisation within digital ecosystems – OTT platforms can integrate pay-per-view events, in-app purchases or fan-driven premium content for additional revenue.
- Use social media alongside immersive platforms – besides TikTok/Instagram, sports should explore engagement on platforms like Roblox, Fortnite and the metaverse where interactive experiences are shaping next-generation sports fandom.

## Increase visibility of emerging sports

For new formats/underrepresented sports to thrive, maximising discoverability is essential.

- Prioritise free/easily accessible streaming options – OTT platforms like YouTube, Twitch or Amazon Freevee provide a cost-effective way to reach millions of fans.
- Create partnerships that drive engagement – e.g. WSL could expand its presence on Twitch where live chat/real-time fan interactions deepen connections.
- Leverage personalised content strategies – enabling fans to choose between full matches, highlights or player-specific recaps to ensure engagement across different levels of interest.
- Promote emerging sports beyond niche communities – esports leagues have successfully built global audiences by integrating with streaming-first platforms, a model traditional sports can learn from.

## Integrate sports with pop culture & entertainment

To attract mainstream attention, sports must intersect with cultural trends and tap into entertainment-driven engagement strategies.

- Merge sports with pop culture – aligning with gaming, music and social media trends to make competitions feel more relevant to younger, digital-first audiences.
- Use high-profile entertainment crossovers—collaborations with music festivals, gaming events, or pop culture influencers can introduce sports to entirely new demographics.
- Explore interactive sports experiences in virtual worlds – partner with Roblox, Fortnite or Web3 metaverse spaces to allow leagues to create immersive, gamified fan experiences.
- Incorporate gamification & interactive engagement – fantasy leagues, fan voting on in-game decisions and real-time participation models increase engagement by turning passive viewers into active participants.

# Future outlook



# The headlines



## WNBA's Rising impact

According to our projection, WNBA is set to reach new heights, influenced by an infusion of collegiate talent like Caitlin Clark. Expanding broadcast partnerships to streaming services and growing digital exposure place the league firmly on its way to becoming a staple of American sports.

Reports show that attendance is poised to grow, reflecting the excitement of a rising generation of supporters. Combined with the influence of social media highlights featuring these stars at their best, the WNBA isn't expected to slow its growth anytime soon—helping pave the way for women's sports in 2025.



## WSL Riding the Wave

WSL has seen incredible growth over the last 3 years and our forecast shows this trajectory is set to continue. The significant increase in match attendance in 2024 is a perfect indicator of the how the events appeal to new global followers of the sport.

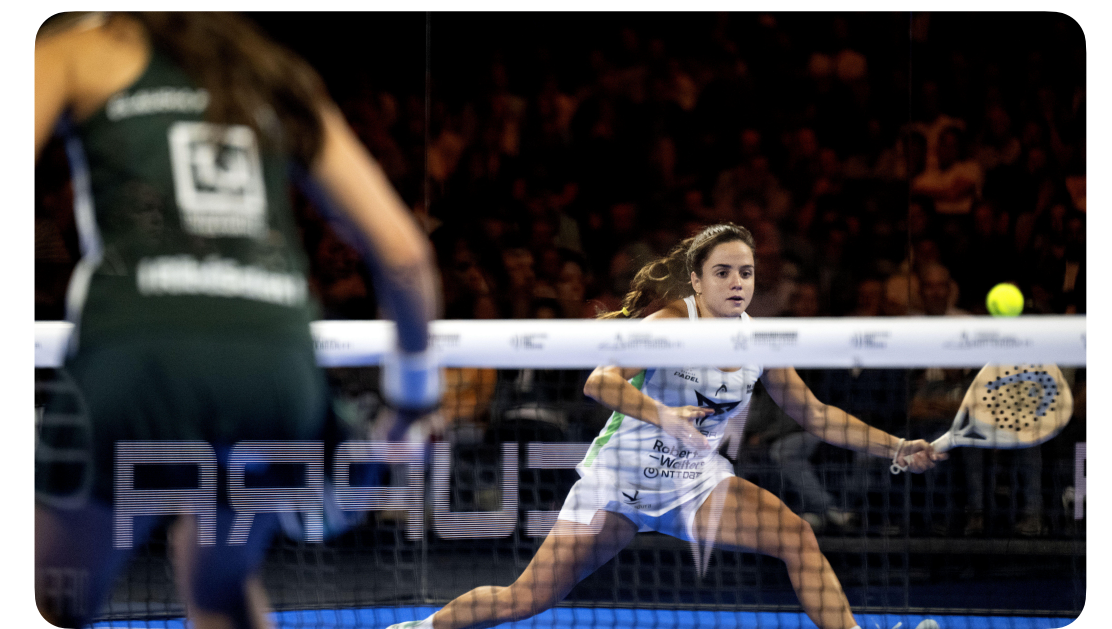
Recent partnerships with Sky Sports, BBC and YouTube for broadcasting have helped the league access new audiences and consequently work its way to becoming a global household name in 2025.



## NWSL's Expanding Influence

NWSL is projected to experience substantial growth, with significant increases in viewership and engagement. This is expected to be fuelled by high-profile signings from Africa, Europe and South America, as well as the growing synergy with the US Women's National Team.

The league's expansion with new teams/ potential stadium developments will contribute to its rise. Engagement is likely to peak around the start of the season in the spring, and again during the playoffs/finals in late fall.

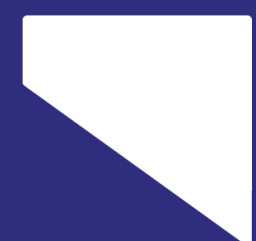


## Surge in Padel

The Padel World Championship/emerging padel leagues have experienced remarkable growth, driven by their rapid global expansion as more countries introduce professional tours. The sport's social-media-friendly nature and the increasing interest from influencers have further contributed to its rising popularity. Padel notably sees major engagement spikes around high-profile tournaments, typically taking place mid-year or in autumn and consolidating its position as an exciting and widely followed sporting event.

# Redtorch

An independent Research & Creative Agency  
dedicated to making sport more relevant.



hello@redtorch.sport  
www.redtorch.sport

Unit 37, 1st Floor  
Tileyard Studios  
Tileyard Road  
London, N7 9AH

Maison du Sport  
International  
Avenue de Rhodanie  
54 1007 Lausanne  
Switzerland