

Which Sport Dominates American Sports Broadcasting?

Sports are a popular pastime around the world. However, for many people, it is about passion. The United States is famous for its participation in various global sporting events. These include soccer, American football, and basketball.

Soccer is by far the most widespread sport worldwide. The 2022 FIFA World Cup Final between Argentina and France amassed about 1.5 billion viewers. It became one of the most-watched sporting events in history.

In contrast, the scenario is different in the United States. The match only attracted 26 million viewers through FOX coverage. So, which sport dominates the American broadcasting space? Keep reading to know the answer.

The Importance of Sports Broadcasting in Promoting Sports in the US

What is sports broadcasting? It is the production and distribution of live or recorded sports events, news, and related content through media channels. Examples include television, online platforms, and radio. The broadcast features commentators who provide real-time analysis.

The Impact of Sports Broadcasting on the US Sports Market

Sports broadcasting solutions through various means have shaped the growth of sports in the United States. From the early days of radio to digital streaming, these channels have influenced fan engagement. Likewise, they affect revenue and cultural significance.

The United States sports rights were worth \$22.42 billion in 2019, accounting for 44% of the global sports media market. In fact, 44 of the 50 most-watched TV broadcasts in the US in 2016 were live sports broadcasts. The National Broadcasting Company (NBC) signed a \$7.75 billion contract in 2014 to broadcast the Olympic games until 2032. It also managed the NCAA through a 2018 deal worth \$8.8 billion.

Revenue Growth in US Sports Leagues

Using revenue, four of the top five professional sports leagues are in the United States. They include NBA (Basketball), NFL (American Football), MLB (Baseball), and NHL (Hockey). The NFL has the largest TV contracts. Partnership with ESPN, NBC, CBS, and FOX from 2023 to 2033 seasons earns \$11 billion annually.

On the other hand, baseball earns \$1.5 billion yearly from contracts with FOX, ESPN, and Turner Sports. Basketball's annual league TV revenue is \$2.66 billion, while hockey earns \$625 million yearly. Thus, American Football dominates in the history of sports broadcasting.

How Broadcasting Has Increased Popularity and Accessibility

Here are the ways broadcasting has popularized sports in America:

The Play-By-Play

Tom Brady, Bill Belichick, and Jason Kelce debut; Colt McCoy has rough broadcast
Play Episode

The Play-By-Play

Cris Collinsworth's extension, Aaron Hernandez show, Caitlin Clark's rookie year
Play Episode

The Play-By-Play

NBA negativity, Caitlin Clark's TIME interview, Bill Belichick to UNC
Play Episode

Broadcasting platforms have increased accessibility to millions of fans beyond local stadiums.

Broadcasting deals generate billions of dollars for the leagues. The money is used to invest in player salaries, marketing, and infrastructure, helping the leagues grow.

TV and streaming platforms have transformed passive viewing into interactive

experiences. Fans enjoy in-depth analysis, instant replays, and live commentary.

Emerging streaming services like Amazon Prime and ESPN+ are securing exclusive broadcasting rights, making sports more accessible on demand.

The Impact of Cultural and Media Trends

Changes in viewer habits and the rise of new platforms have influenced the popularity of various sports. The sports broadcasting technology market, evolving cultural preferences, and shifts in media consumption are also contributing factors.

Digital Streaming and the Shift in Viewer Habits

As more viewers move towards digital streaming platforms, cable TV subscriptions are declining. The NFL and other sports are also embracing streaming deals with Amazon Prime, YouTube TV, and other outlets. The 24 million viewers of the 2024 Christmas Day NFL games on Netflix reflect the shift to streaming.

Younger audiences prefer highlight reels to watching full games. Hence, platforms like TikTok, X, and Instagram have become key channels. Players like Steph Curry and LeBron James generate millions of views on social media. Besides, an esports platform like Twitch attracts younger demographics.

Sports Betting, Fantasy Sports, and Deeper Fan Engagement

The rise of fantasy sports and sports betting has transformed how fans engage with games. As more people explore online betting platforms, such as those offering no deposit bonuses, they can try out new strategies without a financial commitment. For instance, Slotozilla offers no deposit bonus 100, giving users a chance to play for free and potentially win real money. This gamified experience, coupled with bonuses, encourages deeper engagement with the games and athletes fans follow. With these incentives, viewers move beyond watching games to actively participating in the excitement.

Analysis of the Popularity of Different Sports

So far, we've established that American football, baseball, hockey, and basketball are the most popular sports in the U.S. Explore their comparison by 2024 viewership and

revenue in the table below.

Sport Revenue

NFL \$18.7 billion: 66% central revenue, 17% seating/suites, 10% team sponsorship, 2% local media, 6% parking/concession.

NBA \$10.9 billion: 41% central revenue, 26% seating/suites, 12% team sponsorship, 13% local media, 8% parking/concession.

MLB\$10.9 billion: 26% central revenue, 31% seating/suites, 11% team sponsorship, 23% local media, and 10% parking/concession.

NHL\$6.8 billion: 19% central revenue, 44% seating/suites, 14% team sponsorship, 12% local media, and 12% parking/concession.

NFL Viewership and Media Revenue Trends

The central revenue for most sports consists of broadcast and media deals. In 2023, the NFL grew from 93 of the top 100 most-watched TV broadcasts. However, it slipped 2.2% in 2024, climbing down to 70. The sports averaged 17.5 million viewers across all networks, from 17.9 million. That said, the introduction of Netflix and Amazon provided a much-needed boost.

Streaming's Impact on Sports Broadcasting

Streaming has played a key role in sports broadcasting. Instead of sport broadcast networks, many young viewers have turned to digital platforms. The first live NFL games were broadcast on Netflix last Christmas.

More than 24 million fans tuned in to watch the Pittsburgh Steelers battle with the Baltimore Ravens. Likewise, Amazon's Thursday Night Football coverage rose to 13.2 million, jumping 11%. Together with the Black Friday game, the figure rises to 13%.

Disney recorded an average of 15 million views for all NFL games. Last year, the figure was 17.4 million, meaning the outlet suffered a 14% decline. FOX declined by 3% to 23.9 million, while NBC increased by 1% to 21.6 million viewers weekly. Its digital platforms,

NBCSports.com and Peacock, saw a 38% increase, drawing 2.2 million viewers per game.

Amazon paid \$1 billion to provide Thursday night games on digital. In contrast, Netflix paid \$150 million to stream the Christmas games.

Predictions

Based on current trends, the NFL is likely to maintain its dominance in American sports broadcasting. The NFL is embracing digital streaming platforms and traditional broadcasting sports channels. As a result, it will continue to do well in the evolving media landscape. Nonetheless, as streaming services grow and secure broadcasting rights, other leagues may discover new opportunities to expand their audience.

The MLS is the least popular sport of the big five, attracting just over \$2 billion in revenue. However, the presence of prominent figures like Lionel Messi indicates a bright future. As media trends change, we will witness a new type of engagement between fans and teams or athletes. A league's ability to adapt to these shifts will determine its long-term success in today's digital world.

NFL dominates 2024 ratings despite 2.2% dip

January 9 - Though its viewership took a 2.2 percent tumble in 2024, the NFL's numbers far eclipsed another other programming in U.S. broadcasting -- sports or otherwise.

Among the top 100 broadcasts in the U.S. in 2024, the NFL claimed 70 -- down from 93 the previous year.

Across all networks, the NFL averaged 17.5 million viewers, down from 17.9 million, but the league's media presence received a massive boost from Amazon and Netflix this season. The league's average viewers per game does not include Peacock, ESPN+ or international games on NFL Network.

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Streaming also played a major factor, as broadcast networks saw record numbers of their audiences turn to digital platforms to access football broadcasts. Netflix broadcast its first live NFL games on Christmas, while Amazon saw the biggest year-to-year boost of any NFL rights holder.

Amazon's "Thursday Night Football" coverage jumped 11 percent to an average of 13.2 million, and when including its Black Friday game, that number rose to 13 percent.

As for Netflix, the world's largest streaming service's live debut on Christmas averaged more than 24 million viewers for the Kansas City Chiefs-Pittsburgh Steelers and Baltimore Ravens-Houston Texans matchups.

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Over at ESPN, the outlet owned by Disney averaged 15 million viewers for all 22 of its NFL games, its second-best season in 24 years. However, the figure is down about 14 percent from last year's 17.4 million average viewers. Last year's average was partly due to 19 "Monday Night Football" simulcasts or exclusives airing on ABC, mainly because of the writers' and actors' strikes in Hollywood.

At Fox, its pregame show was the most watched of any pregame show for the 31st year, but the entirety of its NFL coverage took a 3 percent tumble. Fox's late Sunday afternoon America's Game of the Week was down 3 percent to 23.9 million, but still led all league broadcast windows.

'I have concerns from a business standpoint for the league that if the Canadian economy suffers by what's going on, that will impact

NBC saw a 1 percent uptick from 2023 for "Sunday Night Football," which brought in 21.6 million viewers on a weekly basis. However, the digital audience from NBC's Peacock and NBCSports.com, along with NFL Digital properties, drew an average of 2.2 million per game -- a 38 percent increase for "SNF" over 2023.

For CBS, the Nov. 17 Kansas City Chiefs-Buffalo Bills matchup drew an average of 31.1 million, one of 2024's biggest audiences. Per industry sources, the network finished down 1 percent at an average of 19.2 million per game. CBS did not release any viewership data after the season.

While the two-time defending champion Chiefs were the clear top draw among NFL viewers, the Cowboys took a surprising tumble among viewers and were even flexed to a lesser broadcast spot in Week 17.

Speaking of the Cowboys, their game against the Giants on Thanksgiving drew a final average of 38.8 million, making it the most-watched game of the 2024 season.

NFL dominates most-watched US TV broadcasts of 2024 but share of top 100 hit by election coverage'

College football, Paris 2024, women's March Madness and World Series also generated some of the biggest audiences.

The National Football League (NFL) accounted for 72 of the 100 most-watched US TV broadcasts of 2024, according to Nielsen ratings.

Confirmed:

Super Bowl LVIII was the most-watched US broadcast in 2024 with 123.7 million viewers

Sport delivered 80 of the 100 most-watched US broadcasts last year

Four college football games, two nights of Paris 2024 Olympics coverage, the women's March Madness final and game five of the World Series also feature in top 100

Context:

The number of slots occupied by the NFL in the ranking of the 100 most-watched US

broadcasts was down considerably in 2024 compared to 2023, when the league accounted for 93 per cent of the list.

However, in a US election year, a big source of competition was politics, which claimed 16 of the top 100 slots, including four of the top ten. According to Sportico, the NFL's share of the list is almost identical to the last US election year in 2020, when the league delivered 71 of the biggest broadcasts.

The Kansas City Chiefs and the Dallas Cowboys were the most represented teams on the list with 13 appearances each, while the Baltimore Ravens were involved in ten of the most-watched broadcasts, followed by the Buffalo Bills with nine.

Both of Netflix's Christmas Day games, which marked the first time the streamer had broadcast the NFL, also featured in the top 50.

Coming next:

The biggest NFL audiences on the 2024 list were generated at the start of the year, which is when the playoffs take place. The league will once again be confident of delivering some of the most-watched broadcasts of 2025 when the postseason gets underway on 11th January.

Global value of sports media rights tops \$60bn

The global value of sports media rights has broken the \$60bn barrier for the first time, boosted by the Summer Olympic Games and Uefa Euro 2024, according to the new SportBusiness Global Media Report.

The total value stands at \$62.61bn for 2024, a 12-per-cent increase on last year's figure of \$55.85bn, with the year-on-year growth propelled by the presence this year of several marquee global events.

The top sports have also increased their value. This year saw particular growth from cricket (over 15 per cent up on 2023) and US college sports (over 12-per cent growth).

Football and American football dominate, together bringing in 54.5 per cent of the overall value. Football's value has increased by almost 12 per cent on last year, bolstering its already-commanding position as the world's most valuable sport. It holds over a one-third share of global media rights revenues.

Broadly, the world's major properties continue to thrive despite flattening or declining rights fees felt by many others. This year saw the NBA strike 11-year, \$76bn global media rights agreements with incumbent Disney and newcomers NBC and Amazon from 2025-26.

In 2025, the headline figure is projected to increase on 2023's value, to \$56.61bn.

This would seem to put the brakes on the narrative of an industry in decline that has gathered pace in some quarters. However, a nuanced analysis points to an industry that is flourishing at its upper end but in which properties beyond the top tiers are struggling to maintain value.

Sports media remains in flux as it continues to navigate the consumer changes that have accompanied the rise of digital over analogue.

In the world's biggest market, the US, the decline of regional sports networks continues, while 2024 saw drawn-out carriage disputes.

And not even the top properties are guaranteed strong uplifts.

At the end of 2023, after last year's report was published, the English Premier League's first domestic media rights auction for almost six years produced an overall increase of just over three per cent. The deals secured the status quo till 2028-29 for what is the

main pillar of UK sports broadcasting, but did appear to confirm a view that 'flat is the new up' for many properties.

Beyond the biggest global leagues and competitions, it is not only lower-tier properties which are struggling to eke out stable rights fees in the attention economy. This year saw France's Ligue 1 strike late deals for its domestic media rights from 2024-25 onwards, with a much-reduced annual value on the previous cycle. Meanwhile, Italy's Serie A has struggled with international rights sales.

Nevertheless, as Imran Yusuf, Editor of SportBusiness Media, says: "Media groups the world over understand more than ever the unique power of live sport to draw audiences and drive revenues – even if these verticals may evolve from the models used in previous decades.

"The year ahead will see Netflix take a bigger step into live sports broadcasting, with a number of key media rights deals on the horizon. These include the UFC seeking a new US deal for 2026 onward and Australia's NRL also taking its rights to market. It also remains to be seen if Fifa can strike strong broadcast deals for the Club World Cup.

"As ever, there's a lot going on. This report presents all the key data for sports media rights going back to 2020 and projecting to 2027, to give you a complete overview."

As in previous editions, the Global Media Report breaks down the market by sport, property and territory.

All of the data contained within the report comes from SportBusiness Media's Rights Tracker, the most comprehensive database of sports broadcasting data in the world. It contains verified information on over 30,000 deals, gathered and contextualised by a team of investigative journalists.

2024: The Year Sports Dominated American TV

The year 2024 confirmed the dominance of sports in American entertainment, with the NFL leading the charge in prime-time television ratings. An astounding 75 of the top 100 broadcasts were sporting events, underscoring a nationwide enthusiasm for live sports. The highlight of the year was undoubtedly Super Bowl LVIII, which became the most-watched television event in U.S. history.

The duel between the Kansas City Chiefs and the San Francisco 49ers captivated an enormous audience. An average of 120 million viewers tuned in to watch the Chiefs secure their second consecutive Lombardi Trophy, with over 123 million watching across all platforms. This marked a significant milestone for the NFL, reinforcing its status as America's favorite sport.

NFL events filled the charts, with 45 broadcasts making the list. The only non-sporting telecast in the top 12 was a presidential debate, which collected about 20 million views. Events like the Oscars and editions of CBS' 60 Minutes trailed far behind sports offerings.

Baseball made a noteworthy return to prime-time viewing as well. All five games of the World Series featuring a classic matchup between the Los Angeles Dodgers and New York Yankees drew significant interest. This resurgence was a positive sign for Major League Baseball as it seeks to reclaim a larger share of the viewing audience.

In a shift for NCAA sports, the Women's Basketball Championship made the top 100, while the Men's Championship did not. The success of standout players like Caitlin Clark and Angel Reese helped elevate the women's game, drawing in viewers eager to see their performances.

Viewers also showed strong support for the 2024 Paris Olympics, with 19 broadcasts gaining entry into the exclusive top 100. The NBA maintained its relevance too, with four out of five Finals games featured in the rankings.

The NBA's future looks promising with a new 11-year broadcasting agreement. This will see the league's games distributed among multiple networks, including NBC, ESPN,

ABC, Amazon Prime, and others. NBC emerged as a significant player, boosting its ranking by securing many primetime slots.

The landscape of sports broadcasting is evolving, and 2024 illustrated that the appetite for live sports remains robust. As networks vie for viewer attention, the excitement surrounding sporting events is unlikely to diminish anytime soon.

ESPN Digital Dominates U.S. Sports Media Landscape

For the 25th consecutive month, ESPN Digital has dominated the US Sports Category.

Recent data from Comscore confirmed that 175.1 million unique fans engaged with ESPN's digital content in March 2024, accounting for more than two-thirds of all U.S. adults. This figure highlights ESPN's overall dominance in sports media across multiple platforms, including ESPN.com, the ESPN app, social media, YouTube and more.


The integration of real-time sports updates and in-depth analysis has appeared to work wonders with its audience, particularly during peak sports seasons. As digital consumption patterns evolve, ESPN's continued investment in technology and content innovation seems poised to keep it at the helm of sports media.


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NFL Dominates TV Viewership: Here's How They Compare to MLB, NHL, NBA, US Open and Other Sports

Nothing even comes close to the viewership of NFL games. Below is a list of recent sports viewership numbers from the NHL, MLB, WNBA, NBA, Formula 1, U.S. Open, Indy 500, UFL and Premier League.


For comparison, for the 2022-23 NFL season, Monday Night Football on ESPN averaged **17.1 million viewers**; Thursday Night Football on Prime Video averaged **11.8 million viewers**; Sunday Night Football on NBC averaged **21.4 million viewers**; FOX averaged **19 million viewers**; CBS averaged **19.3 million viewers**. Even the 2022 FIFA World Cup didn't come close to the NFL.

 ABC's Game 5 coverage of the NBA Championship final averaged 12.2 million viewers and peaked with 13.2 million viewers. The average audience for **NBA Finals** Game 3 on ABC and ESPN averaged **11.4 million viewers**, peaking at 13.9 million viewers.


 The 108th **Indianapolis 500** averaged a Total Audience Delivery (TAD) of **5.3 million viewers** across NBC, Peacock, and NBC Sports digital platforms and peaked at 6.46 million viewers.


 The 2024 **NHL Eastern Conference Final** (Game 6) on ESPN averaged **3 million viewers** peaking at 3.7 million. The series averaged 2.3 million viewers; through 41 Stanley Cup Playoff games, viewership averaged 1.4 million.


 The second round broadcast of the **U.S. Open** on NBC and Peacock produced a Total Audience Delivery (TAD) of **2.38 million viewers** and peaked with nearly 3 million viewers.


 The UEFA European Championship Group Stage match on June 16 on FOX peaked at 2.2 million viewers.


 ESPN's Sunday Night **Baseball** coverage of the Boston Red Sox and New York Yankees on June 16 averaged **2.07 viewers**.

 **Formula 1 Canadian Grand Prix** on ABC had the largest live television audience on record, with an average of **1.8 million viewers** and a peak of 1.97 million viewers. The Miami Grand Prix in early May set the all-time F1 record for a live telecast with 3.1 million average viewers.


 The **WNBA** game of the Indiana Fever versus the Chicago Sky averaged **1.53 million viewers** on ESPN, with viewership peaking at 2.19 million.


 The NCAA Division I **Softball Women's College World Series** Finals on ESPN drew **1.9 million viewers** and peaked at 2.5 million, making it the most-watched Game 1 on record.

 The UEFA European Championship Group Stage match on June 16 on FOX peaked at 2.2 million viewers

 Over Memorial Day Weekend, ION, CBS and NBA TV set viewership records for **WNBA** broadcasts, with **724,000 viewers**, peaking at 981,000.

 The final round of the U.S. Women's Open on NBC had 943,000 viewers.

 CBS carried a **WNBA** game between the NY Liberty and the Minnesota Lynx, which drew **704,000 viewers**, the highest viewership for a WNBA game on CBS.

 The **UFL** game between the D.C. Defenders and the San Antonio Brahmas on FOX averaged **684,000 viewers**, peaking at 1.3 million viewers.

⚽ For the **Premier League** 2023-24 season, Peacock averaged a Total Audience Delivery of **546,000 viewers** per TV match. The Championship averaged a Total Audience Delivery of 2.9 million viewers across all TV and streaming platforms in English and Spanish.

Which are the main sports watched on American television?

When it comes to sports that captivate American television audiences, there are several main contenders that stand out.

Here are the main sports watched on American television:

Football (NFL): Dominates TV with its huge fan base and thrilling games.

Basketball (NBA): Excites viewers with fast-paced action and top talent from around the world.

Baseball (MLB): Holds a special place in American culture as "America's pastime" and features the iconic World Series.

Soccer (MLS): Gaining popularity on TV, fueled by its global appeal and growing youth interest.

Other sports like ice hockey (NHL), golf (PGA Tour), and auto racing (NASCAR) also have dedicated viewership.

The Last Arena: How Sports Are Shaping the Future of Media—A Look Ahead to Super Bowl LIX

If you consider presidential politics a sporting contest, it's worth noting that sports dominated television in 2024, accounting for 97 of the 100 most-watched programs last year. The other three spots were occupied by the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the awards ceremonies for the Oscars and Grammys. And as always, the Super Bowl—the crown jewel of sports media—lorded over the landscape of American TV, drawing in at least twice as many viewers as anything else. It will do so again on Sunday when Kansas City and Philadelphia face off in Super Bowl LIX.

Sportico's annual rankings show that only 16 political programs landed among the top 100 broadcasts, barely making a dent in actual sports' near-monopoly. In 2023, without a presidential election to attract attention, the NFL alone accounted for 93 of the 100 most-watched programs (compared to 72 in 2024). For context, network hit sitcoms like *Cheers*, *Seinfeld*, and *Friends*—or dramas like *E.R.* and *Law & Order*—easily drew in 25 million viewers when they first aired, regularly outperforming even major sporting events. Nowadays, not a single scripted drama or sitcom—once television's dominant force—makes the top 100 most-watched shows list. There's more high-quality scripted TV than ever, but the audience is far more fragmented, choosing to watch on their own time. I only recently watched *Breaking Bad*, and it was as compelling to me as it was when it first aired a decade ago.

But nobody's going to stream the 2014 Super Bowl, the 2012 presidential debates, or the Academy Awards from years past. These events demand to be watched live, together in the moment, and that's what makes them so desirable to advertisers. In a world where mass simultaneous audiences are harder to come by, these events still reign supreme.

There's nothing novel about the Super Bowl claiming its singular place atop the hierarchy of attention-gathering events on American screens and in American life. It held this spot for half a century, including long stretches that can be described as the golden age for non-sports network television fare. But as we gear up for Sunday's game where the Chiefs and Eagles will battle it out while the *Don Drapers* will fight to land the top ad spots, it's worth recognizing how the NFL has conquered our collective attention every single week, not just on Super Bowl Sunday.

We're witnessing what I describe to my students as the "sportification" of media: Increasingly, sport seems to be both the focus and the driving force behind media. To understand why sports—especially football—are such a vital pillar in upholding the traditional mass media landscape, it's also important to grasp why the value of most things associated with popular professional sports (player contracts, new stadiums, franchise ownership, sponsorship deals, media rights, and those Super Bowl commercials we are about to watch) continue to rise at a stratospheric pace.

Live sports are more crucial than ever to the continued viability—and survival—of both broadcast TV and cable networks. The NFL's 2021 blockbuster set of media rights deals, amounting to \$111 billion over 11 years, guarantee that major American networks like CBS and NBC remain culturally relevant, no matter the fate of the rest of its programming. The sheer scale of their NFL audience ensures that these institutions will remain vital for the foreseeable future.

More surprising is the degree to which live sport has also come to be seen as indispensable to digital streaming services—the same disruptive new digital purveyors of video content that were once dismissive of sports programming. Amazon Prime is now streaming Thursday Night Football games; YouTube TV took over the NFL Sunday Ticket from DirectTV; and just this past Christmas, Netflix premiered two NFL games, with Beyoncé performing at halftime. Apple TV+ is also getting into the live sports game, streaming Major League Soccer and some Major League Baseball games. And, as a devoted Arsenal supporter, I am all too painfully aware of this shift: To watch my team, I have to subscribe to multiple streaming platforms like Peacock, ESPN+, and Paramount+—services I wouldn't have otherwise subscribed to but have become a necessity for me and other sports fans.

"The reality is, there are no other forms of recurring entertainment—except for sport—that command our collective attention at a set time and date."

There is a long tradition of new mass media platforms leveraging sports content to cement themselves in the cultural landscape. From radio's first live broadcast of a 1921 boxing match, to ESPN's pivotal role in driving the rise of cable TV, to Fox's successful bid for NFL rights in 1993, sport has long been the gateway to media dominance. Streaming services, following suit, are now making their own significant plays in live sports programming.

These matches made in sports media heaven have often been blessed by public policy, such as by the federal Sports Broadcasting Act of 1961, which allowed leagues to negotiate TV contracts for all its teams without violating antitrust laws.

This Sunday's Super Bowl will be the NFL's latest celebration of its hegemonic control over U.S. television. Looking ahead, the league desperately needs to extend its overseas reach if it ever wants to attain the global status of the English Premier League, or even that of other American cultural icons like Taylor Swift. Nearly two-thirds of Swift's Eras Tour concerts were held outside the United States at a time when 70 percent of the Super Bowl's total TV audience remains domestic. That is why the NFL is eager to increase the number of its games played abroad, and why it wants to partner with Netflix and its 301 million subscribers in more than 190 countries.

Media's growing appetite for valuable sports content is boosting other established sports, as evidenced by the NBA's latest round of lavish media rights deals and Netflix's acquisition of the U.S. streaming rights to the next two FIFA Women's World Cups. That appetite is also driving investment into new sports and new leagues. Just last month, a new women's professional volleyball league kicked off, joining the rapidly growing landscape of new sports leagues, such as basketball's Unrivaled, the much-anticipated women's 3-on-3 league featuring WNBA stars.

The sportification of media isn't a passing trend. It's not a bubble that will burst even if we all return to the days of dropping everything at nine on Thursdays to gather around the TV for Friends or Seinfeld. The reality is, there are no other forms of recurring entertainment—except for sport—that command our collective attention at a set time and date. This convening power to gather an audience in real-time is only going to become more valuable over time as our attention increasingly becomes the world's most coveted resource.

As we prepare for Super Bowl LIX, it's a good time to remember that the game's appeal extends far beyond the action on the field. It's a marker of just how far sport has come, and how it continues to shape the media landscape and therefore our culture—one touchdown, and one ad spot, at a time.

Go Chiefs!

2024 NFL TV Ratings Fall 2%, Still Dominate TV Landscape

After a very big 2023, the NFL retreated slightly in its domestic audiences during the regular season.

The NFL finished its 2024 regular season with somewhat diminished domestic viewership, but the league still reinforced its status as by far the biggest entity in U.S. broadcasting, regardless of genre.

The league averaged 17.5 million viewers per game across all networks, down 2.2% from a year ago. While a slight decrease from last year's 7% viewership bump to 17.9 million, the 2024 numbers were far above any other programming, sports or otherwise, and the league's overall media presence expanded with a critical new rights partner.

More broadly, streaming had an accelerating role in the NFL's audience in 2024, with Amazon posting by far the biggest year-over-year increase of any rights holder, the major arrival of Netflix to live NFL games, and the broadcast networks getting larger-than-ever percentages of their pro football audiences from digital platforms.

Among the individual network results:

Amazon: The streamer registered an 11% year-over-year increase to an average of 13.2 million for its Thursday Night Football coverage, rising to 13% when also including its Black Friday game.

ESPN: The Disney-owned outlet posted its second-best season in 24 years of airing Monday Night Football, averaging 15 million viewers when including all 22 of its linear NFL games, including last weekend's Saturday doubleheader involving AFC North teams. The figure is down by about 14%, but also shows how much of an outlier last year's average of 17.4 million was. The 2023 season included 19 MNF simulcasts or exclusives on ABC, fueled in large part by actors' and writers' strikes in Hollywood that

suspended production of entertainment content. This year's simulcast count boosted at midseason, will reach 17 when including this Monday's wild-card game.

Fox: The network averaged 18.4 million for all of its NFL coverage, down 3%. Its late Sunday afternoon America's Game of the Week coverage led all league broadcast windows with an average of 23.9 million, also down 3%. Fox NFL Sunday also finished as the most-watched pregame show for the 31st straight year.

NBC: Sunday Night Football averaged 21.6 million viewers in total audience delivery, up 1% from 2023 and fueled in part by huge games to start and end the season. SNF's digital audience between NBC's own Peacock and NBCSports.com, as well as NFL Digital properties, rose 38% from last year to an average of 2.2 million per game.

Netflix: Making its live NFL debut on Christmas, the world's largest streaming service averaged more than 24 million viewers for a high-profile doubleheader.