


# THE STATE OF SPORTS MEDIA

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## 2024



**CROWD  
REACT  
MEDIA**

A Division of  Harker  
Bos  
Group

*Presentation of research findings  
by Crowd React Media, a division  
of Harker Bos Group*

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# Welcome

*A message from one of the founding partners of Crowd React Media, a division of Harker Bos Group, on this year's State of Sports Media report.*



**SEAN BOS**  
FOUNDING PARTNER

Welcome to the 2024 State of Sports Media report! We've dug into the numbers and, no surprise, the world of sports media is evolving faster than ever. One of the standout shifts this year is the dip in cable TV usage among sports audiences, with more fans turning to streaming platforms to get their fix. It's clear that fans are consuming content across multiple platforms, whether they're catching live games, engaging with fan communities, or staying updated on their favorite sports and teams throughout the year. Sports media isn't just about game day anymore—it's become a non-stop, year-round passion for millions of fans.

Another big takeaway? Consuming news and updates about their favorite sports teams has become an essential part of the day for many fans. Whether it's streaming games, scrolling through social media, or tuning in to talk shows and podcasts, sports fans are hungry for content 24/7. As the lines between live sports, analysis, and fan commentary blur, there's a huge opportunity for media companies to stay agile and connect with these increasingly engaged, always-on audiences. Let's dive in!





# INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

The landscape of sports media in 2024 is characterized by a dynamic interplay of fan engagement, technological innovation, and evolving consumption habits. As sports fans become increasingly active participants in the narratives surrounding their favorite teams, the demand for a continuous stream of content has never been higher. Gone are the days when the offseason meant a lull in coverage; today, fans expect year-round access to news, analysis, and discussions that keep them connected to the sports they love.

This transformation is driven by the rise of digital platforms and social media, which have empowered fans to interact with content and each other in unprecedented ways. With 84% of fans actively following their teams throughout the season and beyond, it's clear that the relationship between fans and media is more intertwined than ever. The expectation for immediate updates and insights has created new opportunities for content creators and sports organizations to engage their audiences.

At the same time, the emergence of streaming services and apps has revolutionized how fans access sports programming. While traditional cable remains a part of the equation, the significant shift toward digital platforms signifies a fundamental change in viewing preferences. Fans are now able to curate their own sports experiences, choosing what, when, and how they consume content.

As the popularity of sports betting continues to rise, it adds another layer to the media landscape. This burgeoning interest not only reshapes the way fans engage with sports but also opens new avenues for content creation and monetization. With nearly half of younger fans tuning into betting-related media, there's a palpable shift toward integrating these discussions into mainstream sports coverage.

In this white paper, we will delve into the state of sports media in 2024, exploring key trends, preferences, and consumption habits that define today's sports fan. By examining the interplay between traditional and digital media, audience engagement, and the evolving role of sports betting, we aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the current landscape and what it means for the future of sports media.

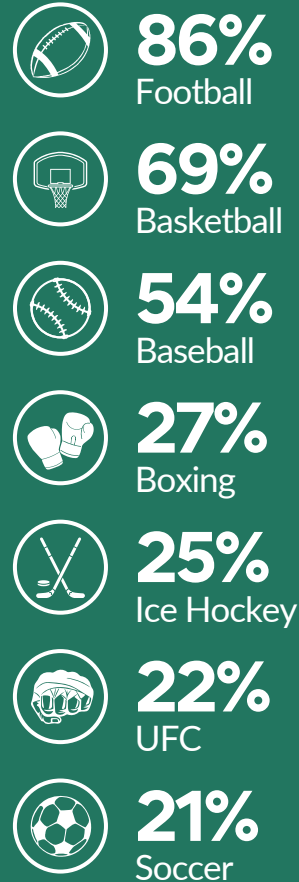
## Trends:

Our analysis revealed that data from the 2023 and 2024 editions of our annual State of Sports Media whitepaper showed a high degree of consistency. However, there were notable exceptions that we will highlight in this year's edition, providing insights into the shifting dynamics within the sports media space.

# SPORTS PREFERENCES



## Top Sports



## FOOTBALL STAYS TOP DOG IN AMERICA

86% of sports fans are watching or paying attention to American Football. It is the dominant sport. It is so dominant that it is a major factor in cord/cutting rates and premium streaming revenue. When the NFL moves, so does the rest of the industry. Basketball and Baseball come in second and third respectively (69% and 54%). America's so-called 'Sport of the future', Soccer, is watched by a fifth of sports fans, ostensibly gaining in popularity from Messi's arrival in the MLS and NBC/Peacock's coverage of the English Premier League.

# SPORTS CONSUMPTION



## TRENDS

**16%**

of sports fans consume 8 hours or more of sports content per day, up 4% from 2023.

## TOTAL TIME

Nearly half of sports fans consume at least 4 hours of sports-related content per day. Notably, 3 in 5 of the younger demo 18-39 consume at least 4 hours of sports media per day.

**46%**

consume 4+ hours of sports content per day

**62%**

of 18-39 year olds consume 4+ hours of sports content per day

## OLDER DEMOS

However, sports media consumption among the older demographic (60+) flags in comparison to younger demographics. They tend to consume around an hour or so of sports content per day (72%).

**72%**

of 60+ year olds consume around 1 hour of sports content per day



# VIEWERSHIP

## TRENDS

**+5pts**

52% of sports fans consume sports content every day, up 5% from 2023.

Half of sports fans watch sports content every day (52%). This is true for all ages. The rate of sports content viewership every day hovers around half for all major age demographics. However, gender differences do still exist. Around 3 in 5 Male sports fans watch sports every day, compared to 2 in 5 for female fans. This gap closes when looking at weekly sports viewership, which is equal for both genders.

## STREAMING WINNING THE BATTLE FOR EYES

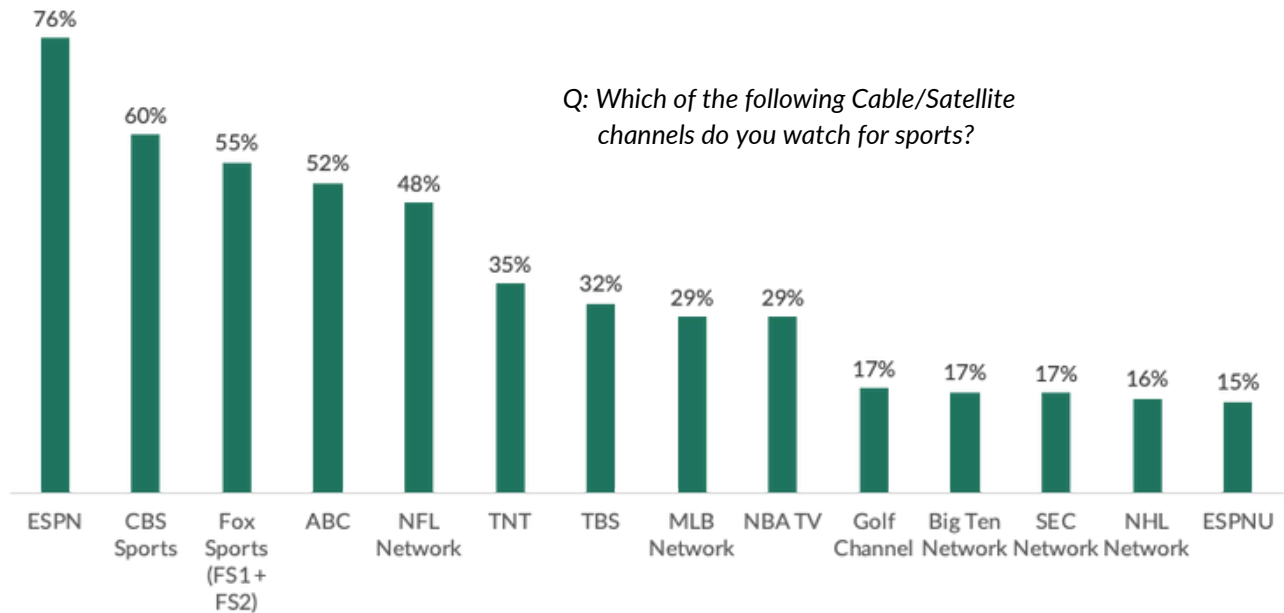
Streaming is king when it comes to watching sporting events, highlights, and programming. Streaming is steady from where it was a year ago (73%). However, Cable/Satellite is down 11 points from where it was in 2023 (now 49%). This is not to say that this is the death rattle for Cable/Satellite. It is still a viable medium with half of sports fans using it to watch sports programming. Although it must be conceded that the medium is declining in overall usage for sports programming. The blackouts arising from disputes between Disney and major carriers like DirecTV and Spectrum potentially pushed some audiences towards making the cut.

### Real World Example

“My in-laws specifically cut the cord because Spectrum wasn’t showing the UGA game one weekend... They switched to YouTubeTV” – Sean Bos, Founding Partner

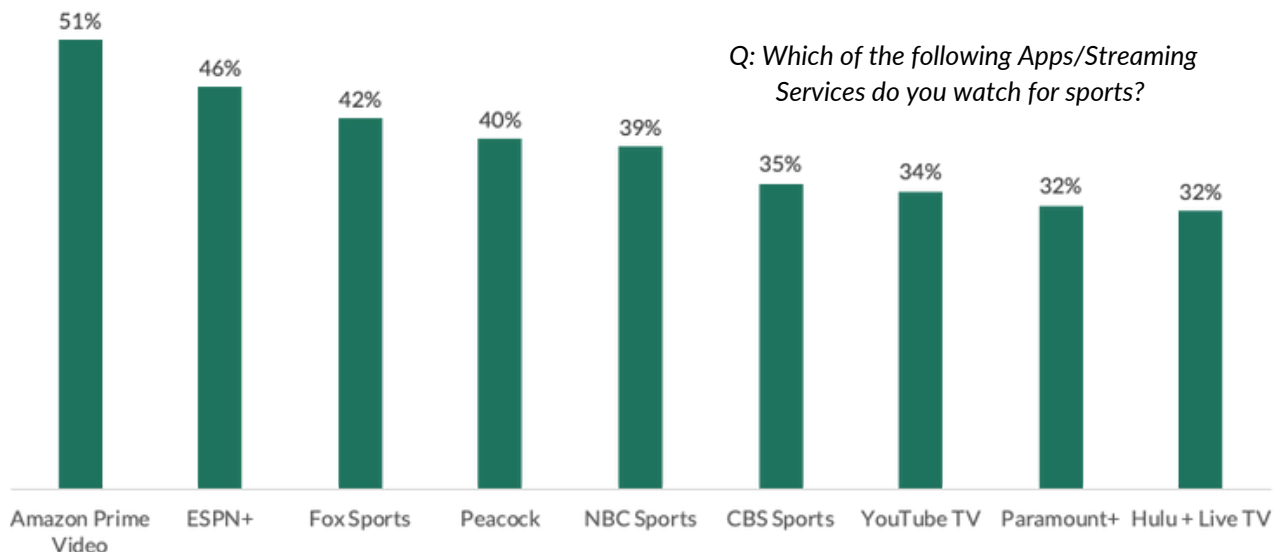


# CABLE/SATELLITE CHANNELS



ESPN is in the driver's seat when it comes to cable/Satellite. It will be interesting to revisit these metrics in a year's time – The Disney+ app will have onboarded the 24/7 ESPN network well before this time next year.

# APPS/STREAMING SERVICES



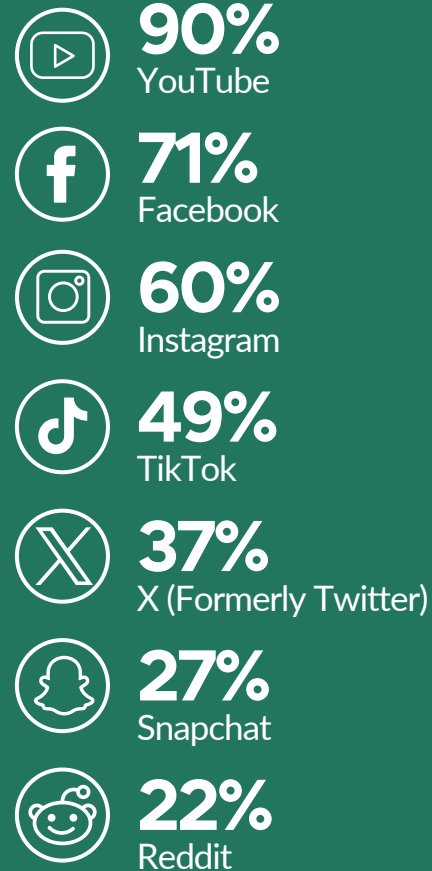
Amazon has created a one-stop-shop for its sports vertical with a smattering of league-specific broadcast packages to purchase (NFL, NBA, MLB). Its (relatively) recent acquisition of NFL's Thursday Night Football makes the streaming giant a must-have subscription for any serious football fan.



# SOCIAL MEDIA'S ROLE



## Top Socials for Sports



## YOUTUBE IS UBIQUITOUS

If there is a constant among our State of Media reports (Spanish-language, Sports Media, and the signature State of Media), it is that YouTube's ubiquity of use makes it the undisputed content king. Virtually everyone watches YouTube for one reason or another. In the case of the sports fan, it is a content-rich hub for professional and fan-generated content, highlight packages, podcasts, and the events themselves. The rich algorithm can also introduce new viewers to radio stations, tv stations, and podcasts. By putting some of your material on YouTube, you can then introduce new listeners/viewers to your outside content.

## THERE IS NO OFFSEASON

Most sports fans are posting and commenting about sports. Whether it is furiously scapegoating a specific coach or a player in defeat on social media or basking in the reflected glory of your team after a victory, posting/commenting on social media is standard activity among sports fans. In the past, there was radio silence during the offseason. Now, there is constant noise and chatter on the socials throughout the year rife with speculation, intrigue, anticipation, and schadenfreude.

### TRENDS - Posting

**+5pts**

TikTok (35%) and YouTube (51%) are up for posting about sports fans, up 5% from 2023.

**-17pts**

X (32%) is way down for posting, decreasing 17% from 2023.

# READING ABOUT SPORTS



## HIGHLY LITERATE JOCKS

Sports fans are highly literate with 89% reporting that they read about sports/sports news.

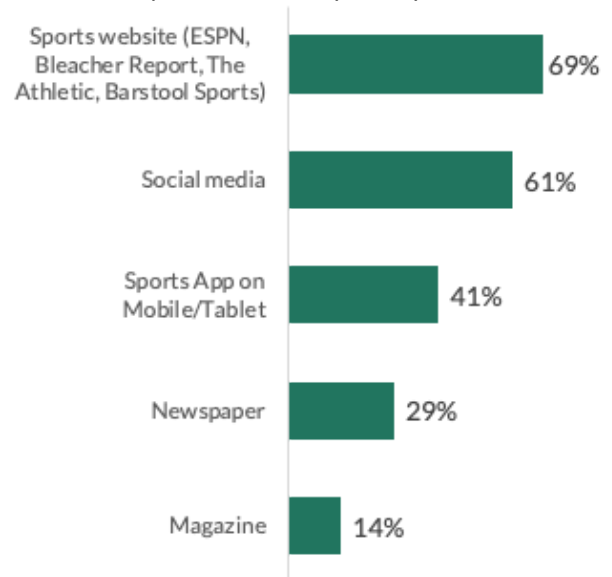
**89%**

of sports fans read about sports/sports news

## NEWS SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

There are a stable of websites that sports fans regularly visit to get their fix on the job or in their idle moments. It must be noted, however, that 61% of sports fans are reading about sports/sports news on social media. This rate of sports news consumption on social media chimes with national news consumption trends where most audiences are getting their news primarily via social media.

*Q: How do you read about sports/sports news?*



# SPORTS AUDIO

The majority of sports fans (59%) are listening to audio-based sports programming. This type of programming ranges from commentary and analysis, to play-by-play and the classic sports talk show.

## YOUNGER AUDIENCES ARE AUDIO OBSESSED

The younger demos (Ages 18-39) prove to be consummate audio consumers as 67% state they listen to sports programming. This is consistent with national listenership trends among younger demographics - they are audio-obsessed.

## SPORTS RADIO WINS

Demonstrating the resilience of traditional broadcast media, Sports Fans are primarily consuming sports programming via AM/FM radio (56%). This might come as a surprise given the prominence of podcast/YouTube-based media entities like 'New Heights', 'The Pat McAfee Show', and 'The Herd with Colin Cowherd', but a smaller 35% are listening to podcasts. AM/FM Radio still retains a sizable share of sports fans' attentions, as audiences are regularly tuning in.



### TRENDS

## -4pts

59% of sports fans listen to sports programming, down 4% from 2023.

# SPORTS BETTING

More than half (56%) of sports fans have placed bets on sporting events at some point in the past. Of those, 71% are still actively betting on sports, meaning that just over one-third of all sports fans are currently involved in sports betting.

Among the younger demographic (ages 18-39), two-thirds (67%) have bet on sports at least once in their lifetime. Of those bettors, 83% are actively placing bets, which means over half (55%) of all sports fans in this age group are currently betting. This number is expected to increase in future State of Sports Media reports.

It's clear that the surge in sports betting ads and the growing availability of mobile apps and programs dedicated to betting odds have driven exponential growth in the sports gambling industry in recent years.

**39%**

actively bet on sports

**55%**

of 18-39 year olds actively bet on sports

## SPORTS BETTING AUDIO

Approximately one-third of sports fans listen to radio or podcasts focused on sports betting and odds. Among 18-39-year-olds, nearly half (46%) are tuning into audio content about sports betting, indicating a remarkable level of market penetration. It's safe to say that integrating sports betting content into any sports media platform is a solid strategy.

## PLACING BETS

Sports betting websites and apps are the most popular methods for placing bets on sporting events. A significant portion of bettors—about one-third—also place bets with friends, coworkers, or acquaintances, while another third make their bets in traditional casinos.





# CONCLUSIONS

The 2024 State of Sports Media reveals a sports landscape that is more dynamic and interconnected than ever before. Fans no longer engage solely during game days—they're involved year-round, consuming content through multiple channels. With 84% of fans paying close attention to their favorite teams during both regular seasons and playoffs, and 83% actively following sports news, the media environment has evolved into a 24/7 ecosystem driven by demand for constant updates and interactions.

This unrelenting appetite for sports content is underscored by several emerging trends. The decline in traditional cable viewership, offset by a rise in streaming, demonstrates the shift in how sports fans access and consume media. With nearly half of sports fans now streaming content via smart TVs or devices, the on-demand model is reshaping sports consumption, giving fans more control over what they watch and when they watch it. Cable still holds a significant share but is under pressure as younger demographics favor flexible, digital-first platforms.

Social media and fan-driven content are also playing a crucial role in this transformation. Fans are no longer passive recipients but active participants, engaging in discussions, speculations, and debates across platforms like YouTube and TikTok. The continuous dialogue, once confined to the regular season, now extends deep into the offseason, thanks to fan-generated media and social channels that keep speculation and analysis alive.

The rise of sports betting adds a new dimension to fan engagement, with over half of younger fans betting on sports and seeking out content related to betting odds and strategies. This growing trend offers fresh opportunities for media companies to create betting-related programming and capitalize on this highly engaged audience.

In short, the modern sports fan is deeply immersed in a multifaceted media environment that blends live sports, analysis, social media interaction, and betting. The challenge for media companies will be to stay agile, innovate continuously, and cater to an increasingly fragmented but highly engaged audience. Those who can adapt will not only meet the current demands but also shape the future of sports media for years to come.

Thank you for reading the 2024 State of Sports Media Report, brought to you by Crowd React Media, a division of Harker Bos Group.

We specialize in custom research solutions tailored to fit any budget, whether you're a sports TV or radio station, podcast, or media platform. Our insights are designed to help you maximize audience engagement and grow your reach in the rapidly evolving sports media landscape.

We'd love to hear your feedback on our second annual report! Let's chat about how we can support your organization's research needs. Reach out today at [CrowdReactMedia.com](https://www.CrowdReactMedia.com) or email Sean Bos directly at [sean@crowdreactmedia.com](mailto:sean@crowdreactmedia.com) to start the conversation.