

A Fresh Take

Staying ahead of evolving dynamics in the marketplace and our culture

In a League of Their Own

Exploring the Rising Popularity of Women's Sports





Women's sports present significant opportunities for brands to engage valuable audiences

Viewership of women's sports has skyrocketed in recent years, spurred by greater interest, more media coverage, increased competition and 'marketable' star athletes.

Through this growth, women's sports have attracted highly desirable audiences for marketers – delivering both women and men, along with younger segments.

Exposure and coverage continues to expand which provides brands with more opportunities to reach an emotionally engaged audience in a brand safe, live environment that is typically more cost effective and **less saturated than men's sports.**

The momentum and fandom around women's sports is increasing at a record pace



Women's sports have experienced unprecedented momentum over the last few years in media coverage, competition and social buzz

Why do you watch more women's sports than you used to?

% that agree with each statement



41%

There are **more** women's sports being **broadcast**



38%

Women's sports are becoming **more entertaining or competitive**



37%

I have learned more about a specific female athlete(s)



32%

There is **more press** and **attention** around women's sports than there used to be



25%

Women's sports are **being talked about more** on **social media**

This surge in interest has driven demand for more exposure and content across audiences and all levels of fandom

▶ 84% of sports fans are interested in watching women's sports, 51% of which are males

% of respondents who agree with the following statements

	<u>General Population</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Sports Fan</u>	<u>Avid Fan</u>	<u>Casual Fan</u>
'I would like to see more media exposure for women's sport'	50%	51%	48%	60%	66%	57%
'The sports marketplace has a growing appetite for content , ensuring growth and greater success for women's sports'	46%	43%	48%	55%	66%	51%
'Networks, advertisers and other media platforms* have a responsibility to promote the growth of women's sports '	51%	54%	48%	58%	69%	53%

Source: Seton Hall University, *Poll on Women's Sports in America: 'Show Us More and We'll Watch More'*, February 17, 2023. *e.g., streaming, social media, etc.

By aligning with women's sports, brands can specifically tap into the significant attention, value and influence of female consumers

The Purchasing Power of Women



85%

of consumer spending is **controlled** or **influenced** by women*



75%

of discretionary spending will be **owned by women** by 2028



66%

of **consumer wealth** will belong to women in the next decade



~50%

of the U.S. **working population** is made up of women*

(when adjusted for self-employment, women make up the majority)

Source: Bankrate, The rising purchasing power of women: Facts and statistics, January 4, 2023. *TechCrunch, Unlocking the trillion-dollar female economy, May 21, 2023.

Despite the demand for more content, female athletes have continued to grapple with challenges in representation, coverage and compensation

Obstacles faced by female athletes



Lack of representation

Only **16%** of all professional athletes are women



Lack of coverage

Nearly **one-fifth** (18%) of U.S. fans said live airings of women's sports **aren't easily accessible** to them*



Lack of compensation

In professional sports such as basketball, golf, baseball and tennis, the difference in pay between male and females range from **15% to nearly 100%****

Source: Zippia, *Professional Athlete Demographics and Statistics in the U.S.*, June 29, 2023. *Nielsen, *Women's Sports Viewership on the Rise*, July 2023. **Forbes, *Gender Pay Gap Statistics in 2023*, February 27th, 2023.

However, it's an exciting time for women's sports as leagues, publishers and legislatures are working to boost visibility and pay for female athletes

Efforts to elevate women's sports



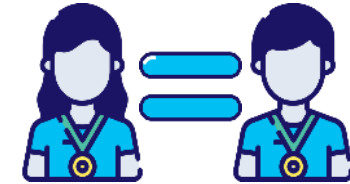
Increasing representation

The WNBA and NWSL both have plans to **expand their number of teams** leading to more opportunities for female athletes



Increasing coverage

Major publishers like ESPN and Warner Bros. Discovery Sports have **invested in more women's sports coverage** leading to an increase in their viewership*



Closing the gender wage gap

The House of Representatives passed a bill in 2022 that ensures **equal compensation** for U.S. women competing in international events**

Source: Sports Business Journal, *NWSL and WNBA have eyes on expansion and the value of cachet*, October 3, 2022. *Digiday, *Publishers like ESPN and agencies are seeing more investment in women's sports coverage*, February 27, 2023. **ESPN, *House of Representatives passes equal pay bill for U.S. women athletes*, December 22, 2022. 'WNBA' – Women's National Basketball Association, 'NWSL' – National Women's Soccer League.

Women's sports are a significant growth engine for multiscreen TV





“For the past few years, women's sports have been on this **incredible growth trajectory**. While still in the growth phase, the buy-in is no longer low. The market is starting to catch up and yesterday's price is not today's.

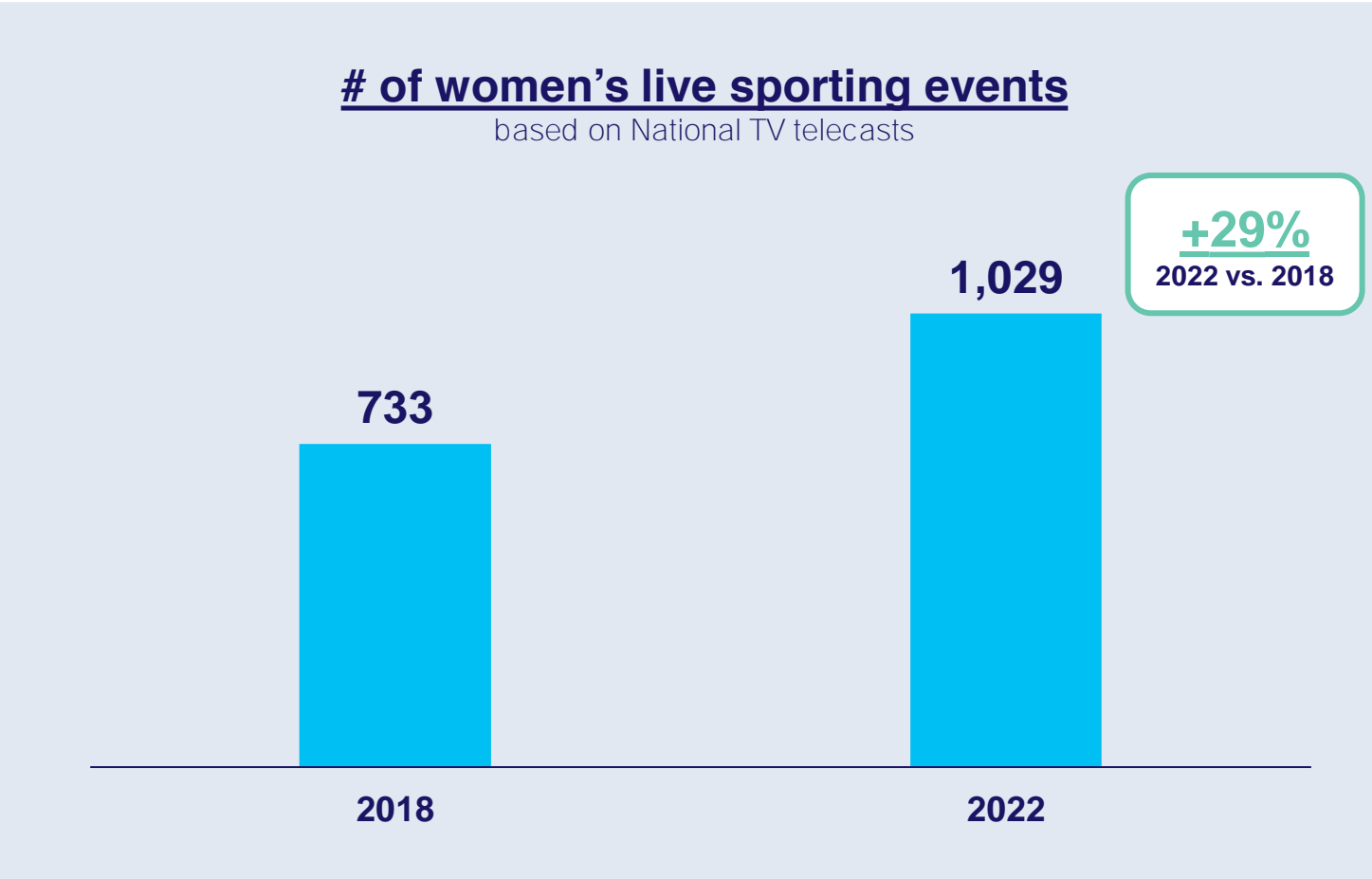
We're seeing that with the Women's World Cup and the snowball impact. **Brands seeing the value and investing**. Media seeing brands investing and wanting part of that. **More visibility means more fans. More fans means more tickets out the door**. It's a cycle. It will only continue to grow and right now we're seeing the phase of growth that takes women's sports to the next level.”

Kelsey Trainor

Founder of 'Invest in Women'

Forbes, *2023 World Cup Puts Growth of Women's Sport on Full Display*, 6/30/2023

There are more women's sporting event TV telecasts airing now than ever before as coverage and exposure broadens due to greater demand



Source: VAB Analysis of Nielsen NPower Ratings Analysis Program report, 2018 & 2022, Total Day, P2+, based on Telecast Count. Ad-supported national cable TV & broadcast TV, includes Spanish language networks; excludes regional sports networks, local broadcast airings and digital airings of sports through MVPD / network TV apps. Reflects live sporting events only.

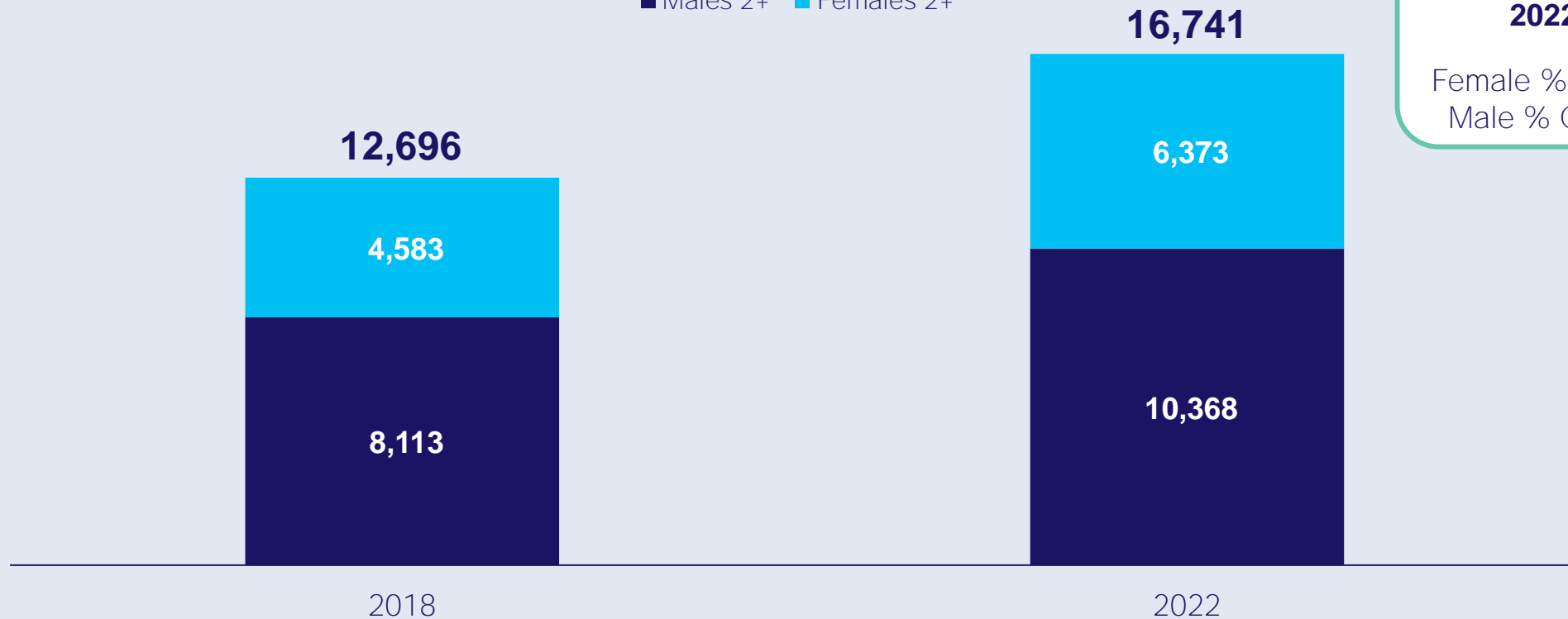
Overall TV viewership of women's sports has grown significantly across audiences, with females outpacing male demographics

► In 2022, the audience composition was **62% male** and **38% female** (vs. 64% and 36% respectively in 2018)

Total time spent viewing women's live sporting events

in millions of minutes

■ Males 2+ ■ Females 2+



+32%

2022 vs. 2018

Female % Change: +39%

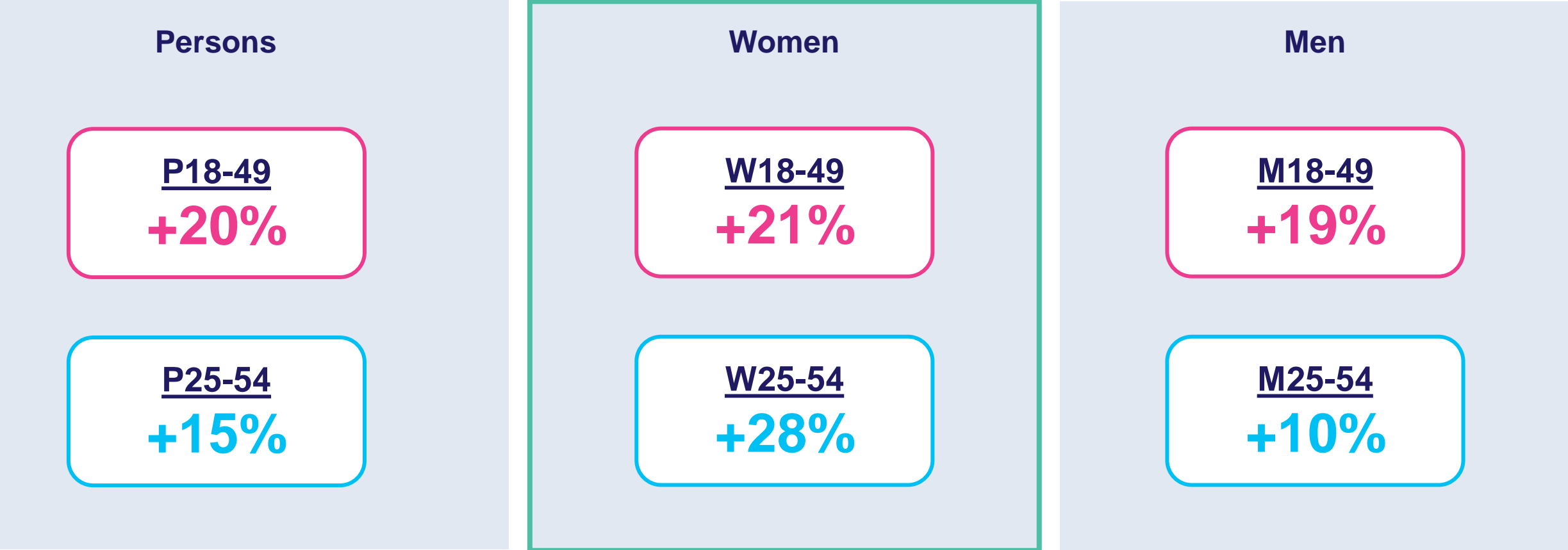
Male % Change: +28%

Source: VAB analysis of Nielsen NPower R&F Program Report, 2018 & 2022, Total Day, Live+SD, males 2+, females 2+, persons 2+. Ad-supported national cable TV & broadcast TV, includes Spanish language networks; excludes regional sports networks, local broadcast airings and digital airings of sports through MVPD / network TV apps. Reflects live sporting events only.

Women's sports have proven to be highly effective at reaching valuable consumer segments, especially women

% change in total time spent viewing women's live sporting events

2022 vs. 2018



Source: VAB analysis of Nielsen NPower R&F Program Report, 2018 & 2022, Total Day, Live+SD. Ad-supported national cable TV & broadcast TV, includes Spanish language networks; excludes regional sports networks, local broadcast airings and digital airings of sports through MVPD / network TV apps. Reflects live sporting events only.

The momentum behind women's sports has driven significant TV audience increases and fueled new viewership records for leagues and event series

*“The Women’s World Cup would be the largest standalone women’s sporting event in the world, reaching an estimated **2 billion people** and **1.5 million spectators**”*

AdAge, *FIFA Women’s World Cup Marketing – Everything Brands Need to Know*
7/5/2023

Forbes November 28th, 2022

The Fastest-Growing Audiences On TV Are For Women’s Sports

THE ATHLETIC April 11th, 2023

2023 WNBA Draft draws largest viewership since 2004: Why were the numbers so high?

The New York Times April 3rd, 2023

N.C.A.A. Women’s Tournament Shatters Ratings Record in Final



November 18th, 2022

LPGA TOUR ANNOUNCES RECORD-BREAKING 2023 SCHEDULE

THE ATHLETIC September 6th, 2022

Serena Williams’ final match at US Open sets ESPN tennis viewership record

SP

October 20th, 2023

2023 WNBA Finals nets highest TV viewership in 20 years on ESPN
Each game averaged 728k viewers and audiences increased by 36% on last year’s finals.

FRONT OFFICE SPORTS June 2nd, 2022

D-I Lacrosse Championship Sets Latest Women’s Viewership Milestone

yahoo/sports September 13th, 2023

Coco Gauff’s US Open victory draws record 3.4M viewers, 1.1M more than Novak Djokovic’s win



August 6th, 2023

Women’s World Cup attendance record exceeded in last 16

AXIOS

March 31st, 2023

NCAA women’s March Madness breaks records



September 14th, 2023

Nebraska Volleyball Made History On ESPN Tuesday Night
ESPN says that Nebraska’s 3-1 win over Stanford drew 466,000 viewers. That’s a new record for a regular-season volleyball match on ESPN platforms.

yahoo/sports

August 11th, 2021

Women set new viewership record at Tokyo Olympics

In fact, TV viewership for women's sports signature events is far outpacing the increases seen by comparable men's sporting events

Women's sports YoY TV viewership growth in high-profile events



+453%

YoY

(vs. +15% YOY for the
MLS Cup final)



+171%

YoY

(vs. +25% YOY for the
men's NBA finals)



+81%

YoY

(vs. +18% YOY for the
men's tournament)

Source: SambaTV, *Women's Sports Are On the Rise, Creating Game-Changing Opportunities for Advertisers*, 2022.

Growth in TV viewing creates a greater buzz factor among passionate fans which elevates exposure across social media platforms as well

During the 2022 WNBA season...



1. Across all WNBA social media handles, **186 million video views** were recorded – a **YoY increase of 36%**



2. Website traffic to WNBA.com **nearly doubled** in terms of **unique visitors**, **total visits** and **page views**



3. On digital media, **10.3 million video views** of the 2023 WNBA Draft were recorded, with the event attracting the largest online audience in the event's history - a **+141% YoY increase**

WNBA Twitter / X Followers*

Per month (000)

+23%
vs. 2020



Source: Sportradar, *Women's Basketball is booming – but is your platform equipped for the WNBA's big return?*, 2023. *Statista, WNBA Twitter Followers, 2023.

Increased exposure has turned female athletes into mainstream stars, many of whom also rank high in overall marketability across all sports

▶ Although only 16% of professional athletes are female, **53% of the top 15 marketable athletes are female** (8 out of 15)*

Top 10 marketable female athletes



Source: SportsProMedia, *The Most Marketable Athletes of 2022, 2023*. Marketability is scaled on their **brand strength, audience and reach**, and **economics**. *Top marketable athletes ranking is based on SportsPro and Northstar's 'Marketability Score', which is made up of 3 components that are added together to generate an overall score: brand strength, audience & reach, economics. Athletes considered were active during the evaluation period (12/1/21-7/31/22) in one of the 24 sports analyzed.

The growth in **women's sports** has created more opportunities for marketers to align with engaged audiences



More ad impressions in women's sports means more opportunities for brands to connect with passionate audiences in engaging live content

► In 2022, the advertising impressions skew was **64% male** and **36% female** (vs. 67% and 33% respectively in 2018)



Women's Live Sporting Events: Total TV IMPs (equivalized)

in millions

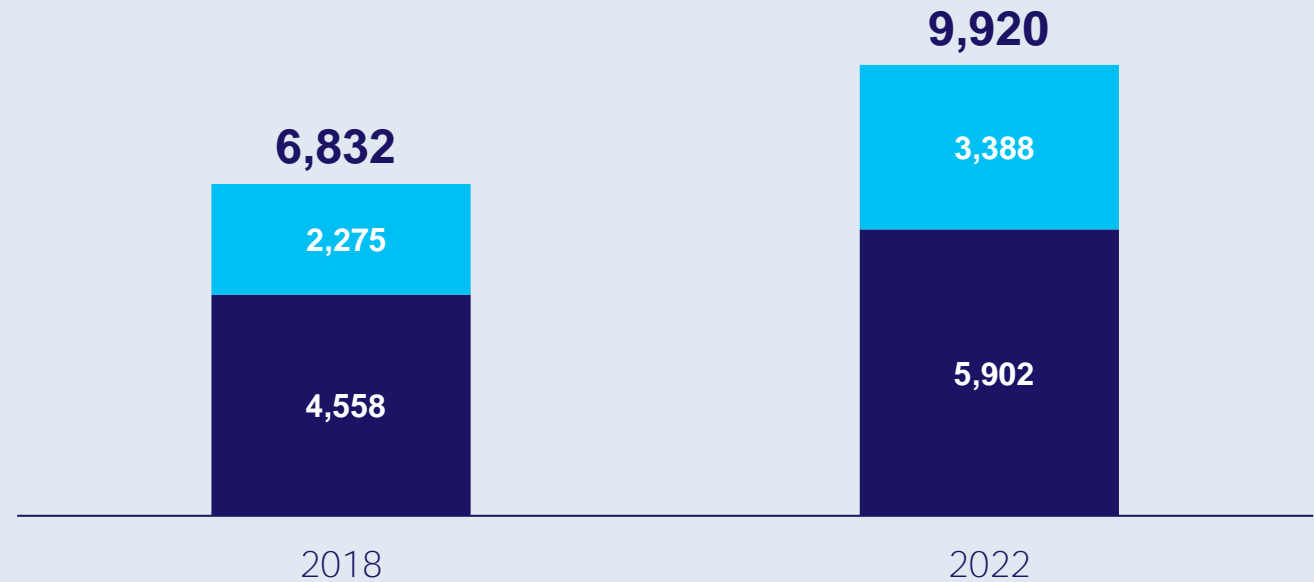
■ Males 12+ ■ Females 12+

+36%

2022 vs. 2018

Female % Change: +49%

Male % Change: +29%



Source: VAB analysis of Nielsen Ad Intel report, 2018 & 2022, Total Day, Live+SD, males 12+, females 12+, persons 12+; excludes promos and PSAs. Reflects national cable TV, Spanish language cable TV, broadcast TV, Spanish language broadcast TV, spot TV, syndicated TV (excludes regional sports networks); based on calendar years. Reflects live sporting events only.

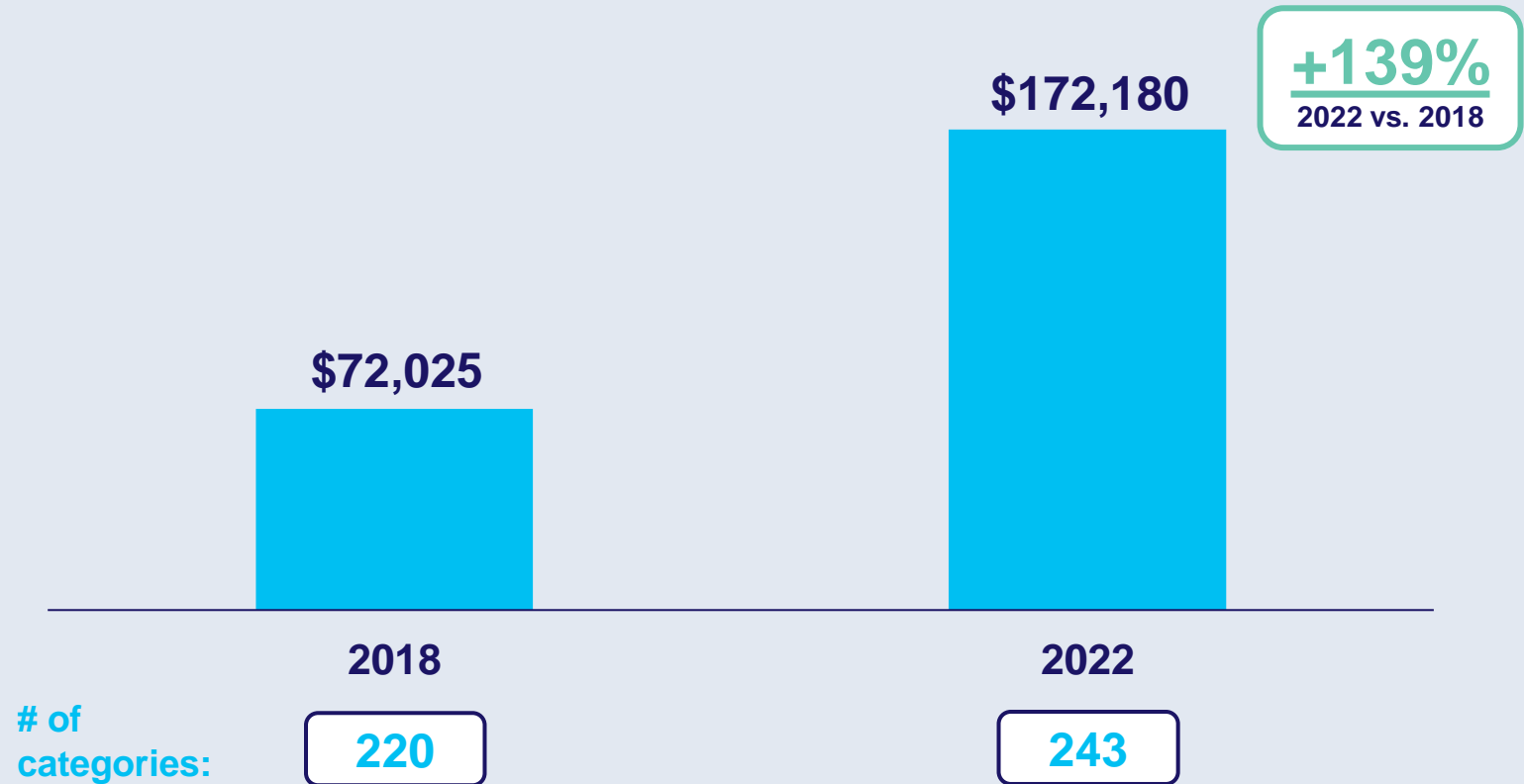
Advertiser buy-in has surged across women's sports with TV ad dollars more than doubling over the last several years

▶ Advertisers in categories like restaurants, professional services, insurance and auto were seen leading the charge in 2022 investments



Total TV advertiser spend for women's live sporting events

in millions



Source: VAB analysis of Nielsen Ad Intel report, 2018 & 2022, Total Day, Live+SD. Based on Nielsen-defined "subcategory" product. Reflects national cable TV, Spanish language cable TV, broadcast TV, Spanish language broadcast TV, spot TV, syndicated TV; based on calendar years. Reflects live sporting events only.

Fueled by demand, the entire ecosystem of media publishers, distributors, leagues and advertisers are partnering to broaden coverage further

Sampling of recent efforts to increase visibility of women's sports

ESPN PRESS ROOM

February 8th, 2023

ESPN Swings for the Fences with Regular Season Softball Schedule Featuring Nearly 3,000 Matchups

Forbes

June 30th, 2023

2023 World Cup Puts Growth Of Women's Sport On Full Display

EVOLVE

November 7th, 2022

Women athletes now have their own sports network

Forbes

April 7th, 2022

Popularity Of Women's Sports Surges Approaching 50th Anniversary Of Title IX

ESPN PRESS ROOM

April 5th, 2023

ESPN Platforms Set Unparalleled Records with NCAA Division I Women's Basketball

This year, 15 sponsors and nearly 100 advertisers activated during the championship, up from 14 and 22, respectively, a year ago.

ESPN

May 13th, 2023

NFL strives to bolster girls' flag football across all levels

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

April 24th, 2023

The Audience for Women's Sports Is Surging. Richer Media Deals Could Follow.

The NCAA women's basketball tournament, Women's World Cup and others seek to turn rising ratings into much bigger broadcast fees.

BOARDROOM

February 21st, 2023

Ally & Disney Team Up to Boost Exposure for Women's Sports

Broadcasting+Cable

May 17th, 2023

Roku Launches Central Destination to Stream Women's Sports Content

SHACKNEWS

July 13th, 2023

EA Sports FC 24 brings male & female athletes together in Ultimate Team

As EA prepares its first soccer title without the FIFA branding, it's also making big moves to bring male and female pro players together in the largest Ultimate Team pool yet.

AP

June 19th, 2021

Women's college sports get boost in TV ratings, visibility

HSFA

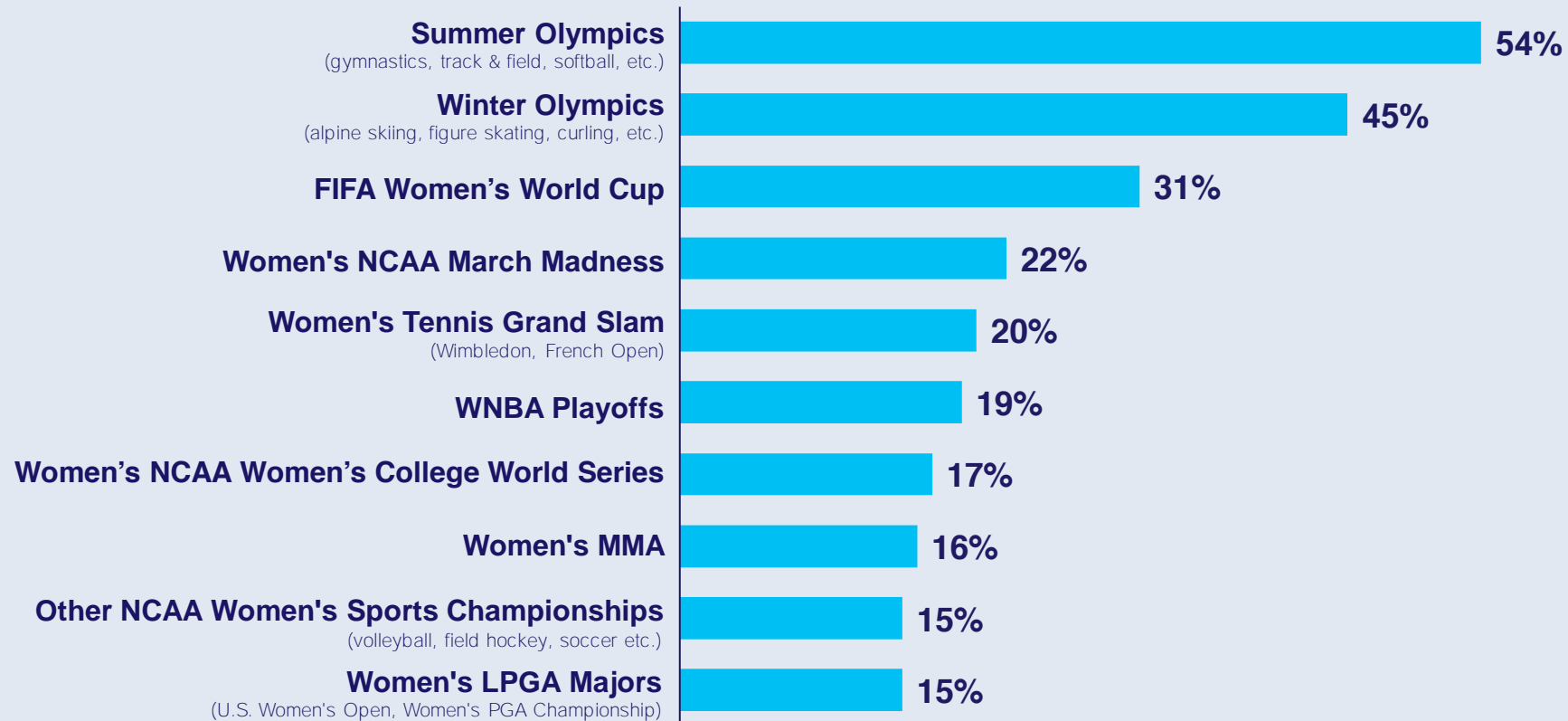
February 1st, 2023

New York Jets continue to grow Girls' Flag High School Football in New Jersey and New York

Viewers have a range of interests and are tuning into a variety of women's sporting events across both linear TV and streaming platforms

% of those who watch the following women's sports events on TV or streaming

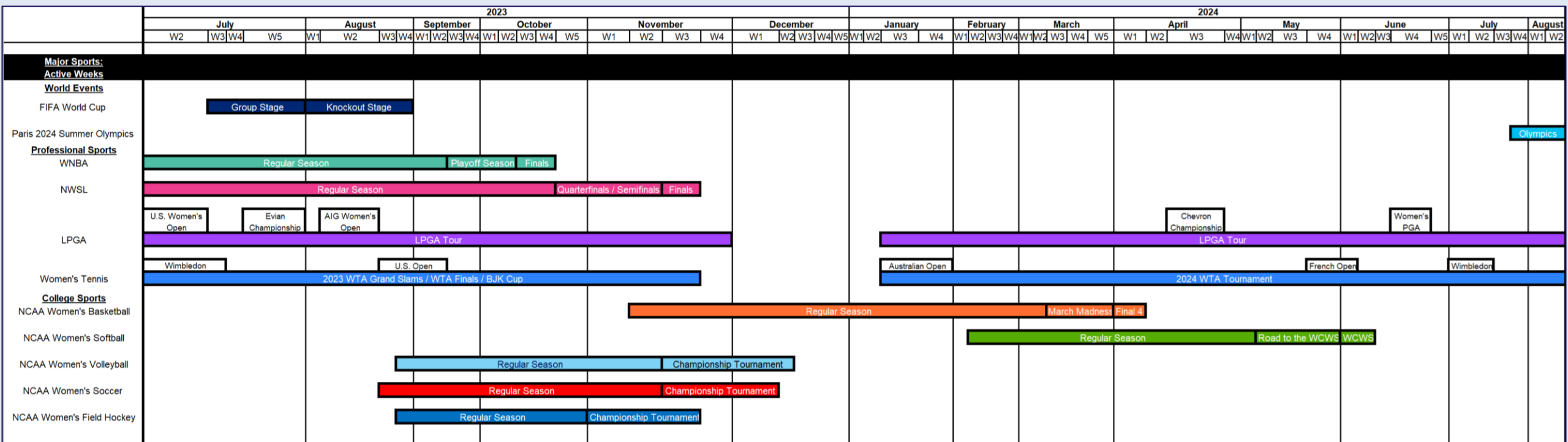
% of sports viewers (P18-54)



Source: VAB custom research fielded by Hub Entertainment Research as part of the 2023 *Monetizing Video* report. Data sourced from Hub's survey of 1,602 consumers, self-identified active sports viewers (TV or streaming) ages 18-54 who meet the following criteria: watch at least one hour of TV / week, have broadband access. Data collected June 2023. VAB1: Do you watch the following women's sport events on TV or streaming? Male and Female cuts.

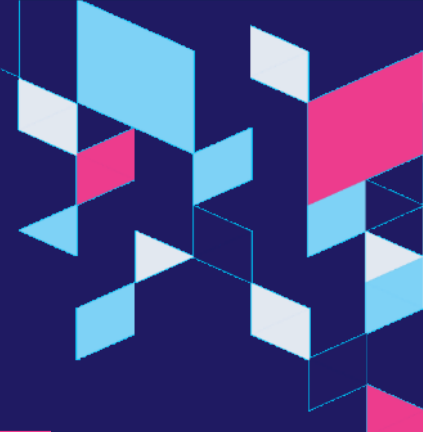
Marketers can reach engaged audiences by aligning with various women's sports leagues and signature events throughout the year

A 14-month calendar of select sports leagues, post-season tournaments and major events



By forming strategic partnerships and aligning relevant messaging, brands can boost engagement and drive purchase intent





“Brands that **seize the momentum** of the Women’s World Cup and its growing popularity are **poised to reap the greatest rewards**. If they can get the partnerships right, there is an **opportunity to reach new audiences** that are engaging with the sport for the first time whilst aligning themselves with sports influencers to develop a highly symbiotic relationship.”

Becky Owen

Chief Marketing & Innovation Officer, Billion Dollar Boy
WARC, *Women’s World Cup players boost Instagram following*, 8/23/2023

By aligning relevant messaging with a high-profile women's sports event, Buick effectively increased consideration among invested sports fans

In March 2022, Buick launched their 'See Her Greatness' campaign to align with the NCAA Women's March Madness. This campaign features creative that highlights the disparity female athletes face, having only 10% of media coverage despite making up almost half of all athletes and showcases Buick's commitment to raising that percentage.

Results: The campaign highly over indexed the average ad attention for the brand and has garnered the third highest attention score of all Buick ads that ran within the same timeline.

'See Her Greatness' spot - \$2.9 MM

Airings Throughout 24 days: 3/12/2022-4/4/2022

52 Airings / 157 MM HH IMPs

Business Outcomes

Attention Index: 120

Viewers completed watching this ad 20% more than an average ad aired in this same media placement context.

Brand Attention Ranking: #3

Ad ranked #3 in viewer attention among 21 Buick ads that aired between 3/12/2022-4/4/2022.

OVER 40%
OF ATHLETES ARE WOMEN,

BUT THEY GET LESS THAN
10% OF THE MEDIA COVERAGE.

BUICK IS COMMITTED TO
RAISING THAT PERCENTAGE.



click banner above images to watch spot

Source: VAB analysis of iSpot.tv TV occurrence data and attention analytics, time period: 3/12/2022-4/4/2022, estimated media spend. Impressions represent US TV HHs and include activity within measured national broadcast and cable TV linear, national time-shifted, local, VOD and OTT. Attention scoring is based on national aired impressions viewed live/same day and played from the beginning. Interruptions = changing the channel, skipping the ad (via DVR), turning off the TV device or pulling up the programming guide.

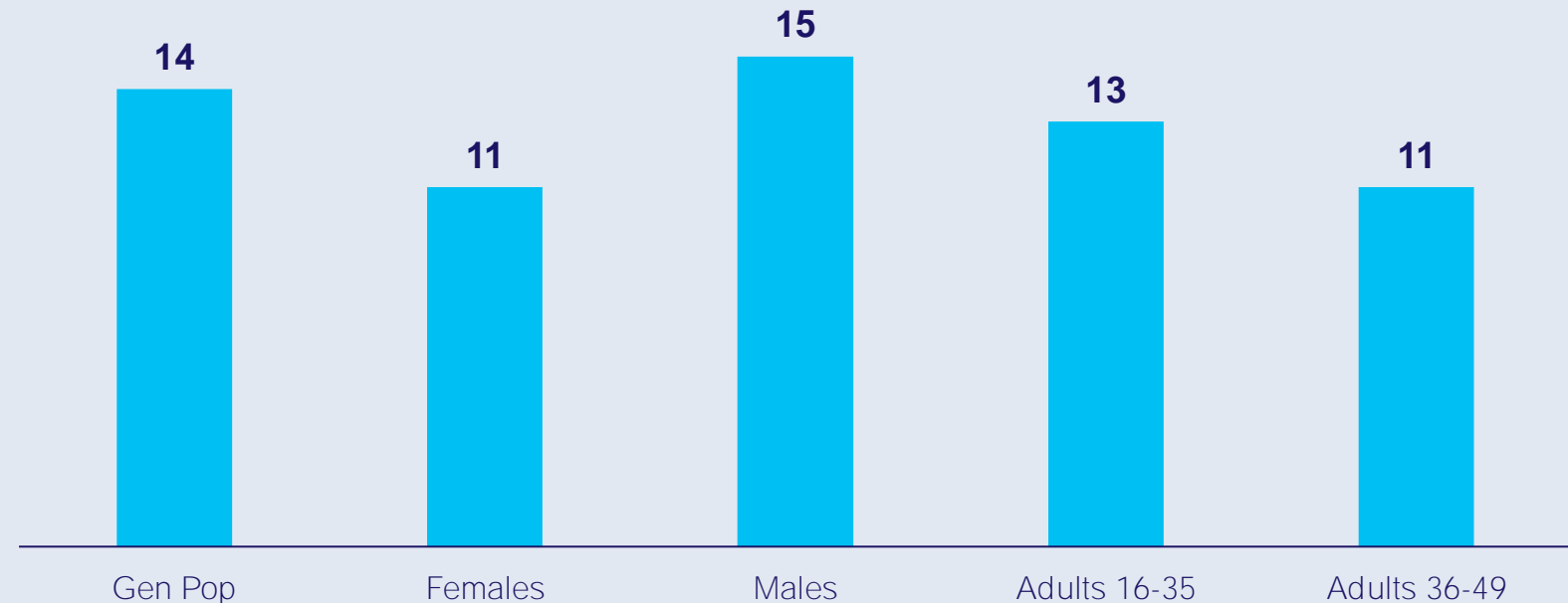
As seen by recent successes of FIFA Women's World Cup ads, women's sports campaigns drive lower funnel outcomes like purchase intent



According to System1's Test Your Ad platform, the FIFA Women's World Cup's top ranked ads have **outperformed** the top ads in the previous men's World Cup in their ability to **drive market share growth** by measuring viewers' **emotional responses to creative**.

Consideration Impact of Unilever's Degree FIFA Women's World Cup Ad: Made You Look*

Top 2 box purchase / visit intent



How to read: Across the gen pop audience (adults 16+), the 30-second spot drew a +14-point advantage in purchase / visit intent over the one-year personal care video ad average.

Source: MediaPost, *Women's FIFA Ads Outpull Men's Tournament's On Impact Ratings*, 8/14/23. *iSpot, *Video Ads That Won the Women's World Cup 2023*, August 16, 2023.

Key Marketer Takeaways

- ▶ **Women's sports is a** great opportunity to reach an emotionally engaged audience in a brand safe, live environment that provides similar **advertiser benefits as men's sports but at a** lower cost and greater ability to stand out due to less ad saturation
- ▶ Campaigns that associate with female athletes, teams or leagues enable brands to effectively distinguish themselves among passionate fans while demonstrating their ability to drive outcomes like increased purchase intent

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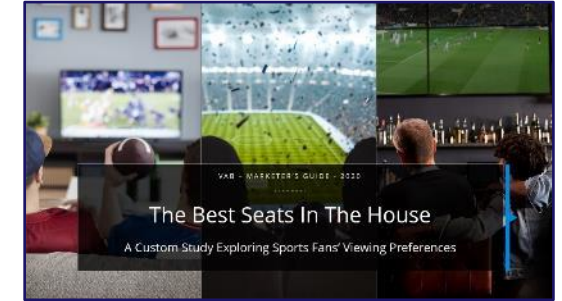
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The Best Seats In The House
Recreating The Gameday Sports Experience At Home



The Best Seats In the House
A Custom Study Exploring Sports Fans' Viewing Preferences



Setting the Stage
15 Streaming Trends That Will Impact Marketing Plans in 2023



How can my brand leverage the strength of the rising Latina consumer through video?

VAB Members, brand marketers and agencies get free and immediate access to VAB's content library. Get access at [theVAB.com](https://thevab.com)

About VAB

VAB plays a dual role in the video advertising industry. We are leading the change to bring about a more innovative and transparent marketplace. We also provide the insights and thought leadership that enables marketers to develop business-driving marketing strategies.

Drawing on our marketing expertise, we **simplify** the complexities in our industry and **discover** new insights that **transform** the way marketers look at their media strategy.



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