

GAME CHANGER: THE POWER OF LATINO FANDOM

**Unpacking the Passion, Influence and Opportunity
of America's Fastest Growing Fan Base**

Powered by Nielsen



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INTRODUCTION

LiS: Latinos in Sports™ is at the forefront of the rapidly growing Latino fanbase, and its massive impact on the American sports industry. As the U.S. Hispanic community now represents 19% of the population, this report highlights the immense opportunities for brands, teams, and leagues to engage with this vibrant and influential demographic.

“Sports are fundamentally important to Culture, Commerce and Community, and Latinos are critically important to Sports.”

– Xavier A. Gutierrez

This study by Latinos in Sports, powered by Nielsen’s comprehensive data and insights, dives deep into the unique characteristics of Hispanic sports fans. It uncovers the passion, digital engagement, and cultural influence that make this audience a key driver in the sports landscape. With major sports and events like the NBA, WNBA, UEFA Finals and Copa America, and the 2024 Olympics placing sports at the center of global attention, this report shines a spotlight on the role Hispanic fans play in shaping the future of the industry.

“Latinos are changing the game, shaping the world of sports through their passionate fandom and avid consumption of all sports, from the NFL to the WNBA. If brands, teams and leagues are not engaging with Latinos in English, as they do in Spanish, they’re sitting on the sidelines.”

– Pedro Guerrero

GAME CHANGING TAKEAWAYS

1

UNMATCHED ENTHUSIASM

Latino fans exhibit significantly higher levels of passion across major sports leagues, including NFL, MLS, WNBA.

- Hispanics are 39% more likely to be avid MLS fans and 31% more likely to be avid WNBA fans.

2

NOTABLY YOUNGER

Latino sports fans are considerably younger than the general fan population. This represents the future of sports fandom and offers a longer timeline for brands and leagues to build lasting relationships.

- A striking 72% of Latino fans are Gen Z or Millennial, compared to just 50% of U.S. sports fans overall.

3

DIGITAL FIRST

Hispanic sports fans are highly engaged across digital platforms, with a strong preference for consuming sports content online.

- Latino fans are 38% more likely to use TikTok for sports news and consumption
- Latinos fans are 9% more likely to follow sports on social than they were the previous year, and in some cases this is even greater:
 - 22% more likely for MLS
 - 13% more likely for NHL

4

CULTURE, NOT LANGUAGE

Rapid growth of English-dominant Hispanic fandom is changing the game for media and marketers.

- 15% year-over-year growth in MLS fandom from English-dominant Latinos (2023 - 2024)
- 9% year-over-year growth in bilingual NFL fans (2023 - 2024)

5

FROM FANDOM TO REVENUE

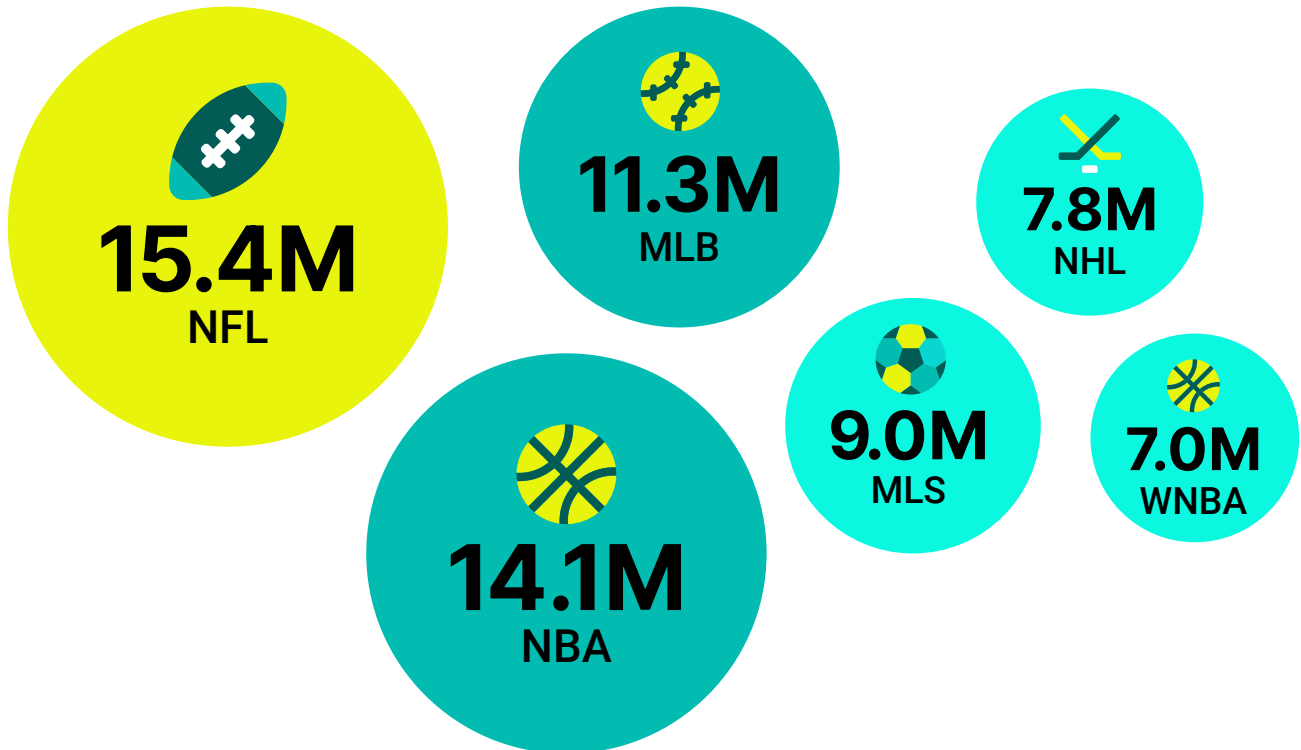
Latino fan engagement directly correlates to increased viewership and revenue generation for teams, leagues, and advertisers.

- Latino fans are 11% more likely to purchase a brand after experiencing a sponsor message
- Latino fans are 20% more likely to engage in live-betting while watching a sporting event
- Latino sports fans are 39% more likely than the general population to recommend a company that sponsors an event or sport they follow.

THE PASSIONATE LATINO SPORTS FAN

Size of fandom by league

Number of U.S. Hispanics with high level of interest (July 2023 - June 2024)



Unmatched enthusiasm across major leagues

Hispanic fans exhibit significantly higher levels of passion across major sports leagues, such as MLS, WNBA, and NFL, compared to the general U.S. population. For instance, Hispanic fans are 39% more likely to be avid MLS fans and 31% more likely to be avid WNBA fans.

Fandom definition: Top 2 Box, those with a level 4 or 5 interest in the sport on a 5-point scale

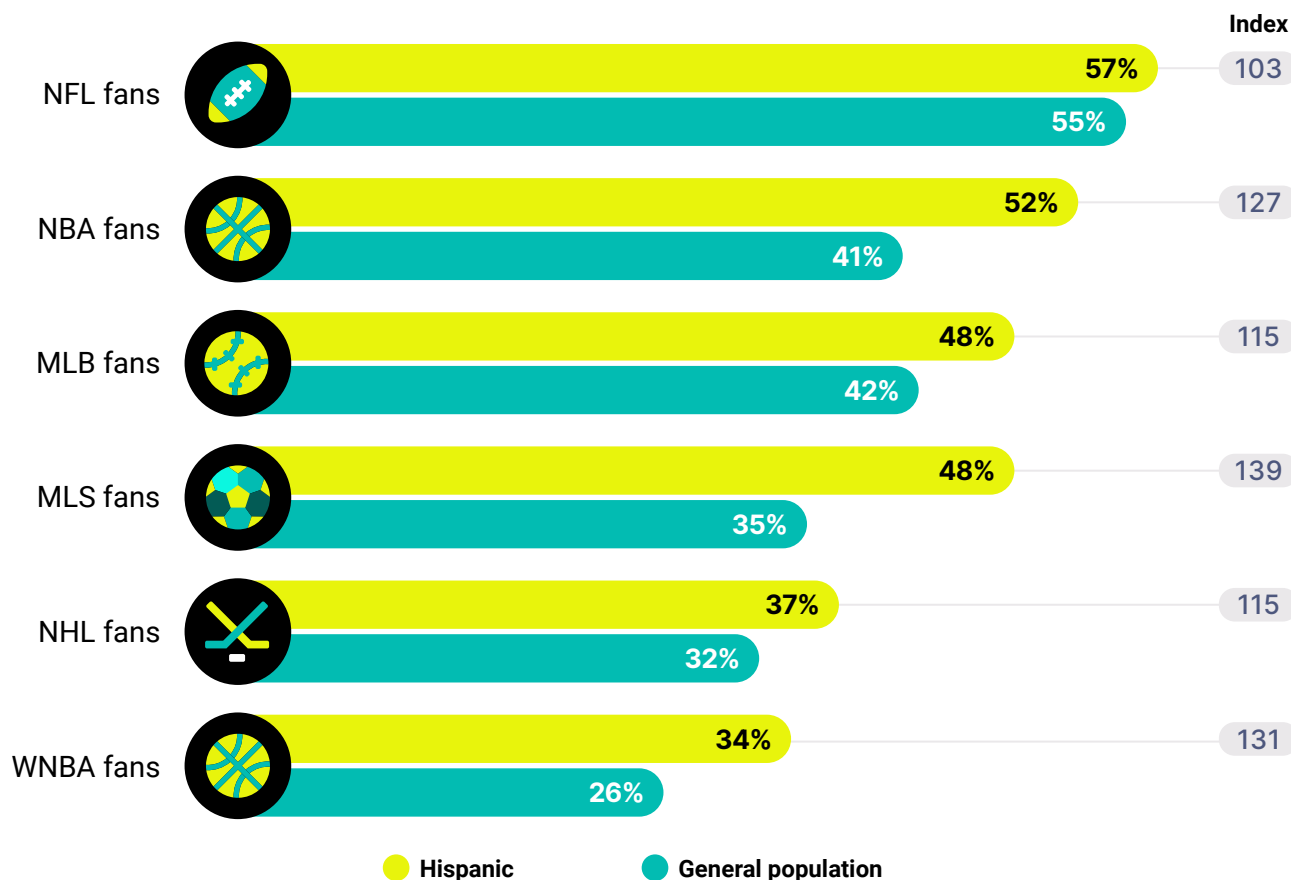
Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, July 2023 - June 2024

NOT JUST FANS, SUPERFANS!

Sports are omnipresent in today's culture, however the below data outlines how much Latino sports fans are the ones at the center of the action. Across each of the six major leagues examined, Latino fans are more passionate than non-Latino sports fans.

Comparative passion across sports

U.S. Hispanics vs. general population (July 2023 - June 2024)



Hispanics have higher levels of passion for major league sports than the U.S. general population.

Fandom definition: Top 2 Box, those with a level 4 or 5 interest in the sport on a 5-point scale

Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, July 2023 - June 2024

WHY PASSION MATTERS: THE IMPACT ON VIEWERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT



Looking at the WNBA for example, it's evident that Latino sports fans are a key force behind the impressive growth. Beyond the countless examples of increased engagement across all aspects of the WNBA—such as record-breaking attendance and viewership in the first half of the season—it's evident that this is more than a moment. Latino fans are part of the burgeoning fanship that is impacting the sports landscape. Fandom serves as the first domino, leading to increased viewership and ultimately shifts in brand perception.

This growing passion among WNBA fans is bringing more viewers to the screen and delivering substantial returns for brands. According to [a recent Nielsen study](#), WNBA fans are 18% more likely to discuss a brand with friends and family and 1.8 times more likely to visit a brand's website. For brands, staying ahead of the curve means connecting with Latino WNBA fans and tailoring messaging to resonate with this influential audience.

With the anticipation that 2024 will be the year the global women's sports industry finally breaks the \$1 billion barrier, it's evident that this passion is at the forefront of this 10-figure landmark.



Impact on viewership and revenue

This passionate fanbase translates into tangible benefits for the sports industry. Their higher engagement levels directly contribute to increased viewership ratings and, subsequently, greater revenue opportunities for brands and teams. Tapping into this passion is crucial for those looking to maximize their impact in the sports sector.

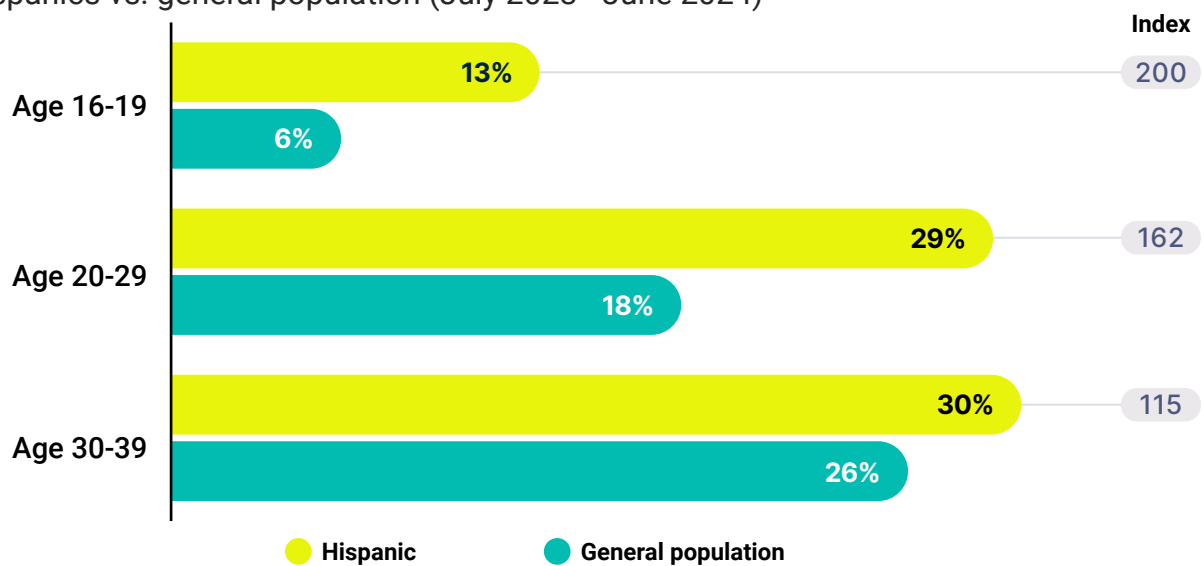
YOUTHFUL AND DIGITAL-FIRST: THE NEW FACE OF SPORTS FANDOM

As recently outlined in our [Webinar with Google & WNBA](#), the younger, engaged consumer is often the driving force behind a shift in league fandom and overall perception. Latino sports fans interact across social media at a higher rate than the average U.S. sports fan, and they also skew younger. The epicenter of growth for any sport is the younger fanbase and given the high saturation of Gen Z and Millennials, this is the market to reach.

Hispanic sports fans are on average 10 years younger than all sports fans, allowing for longer engagement over time and an opportunity to build out your brand awareness.

Demographic overview

U.S. Hispanics vs. general population (July 2023 - June 2024)



Hispanic sports fans are notably younger than the general sports fan population.

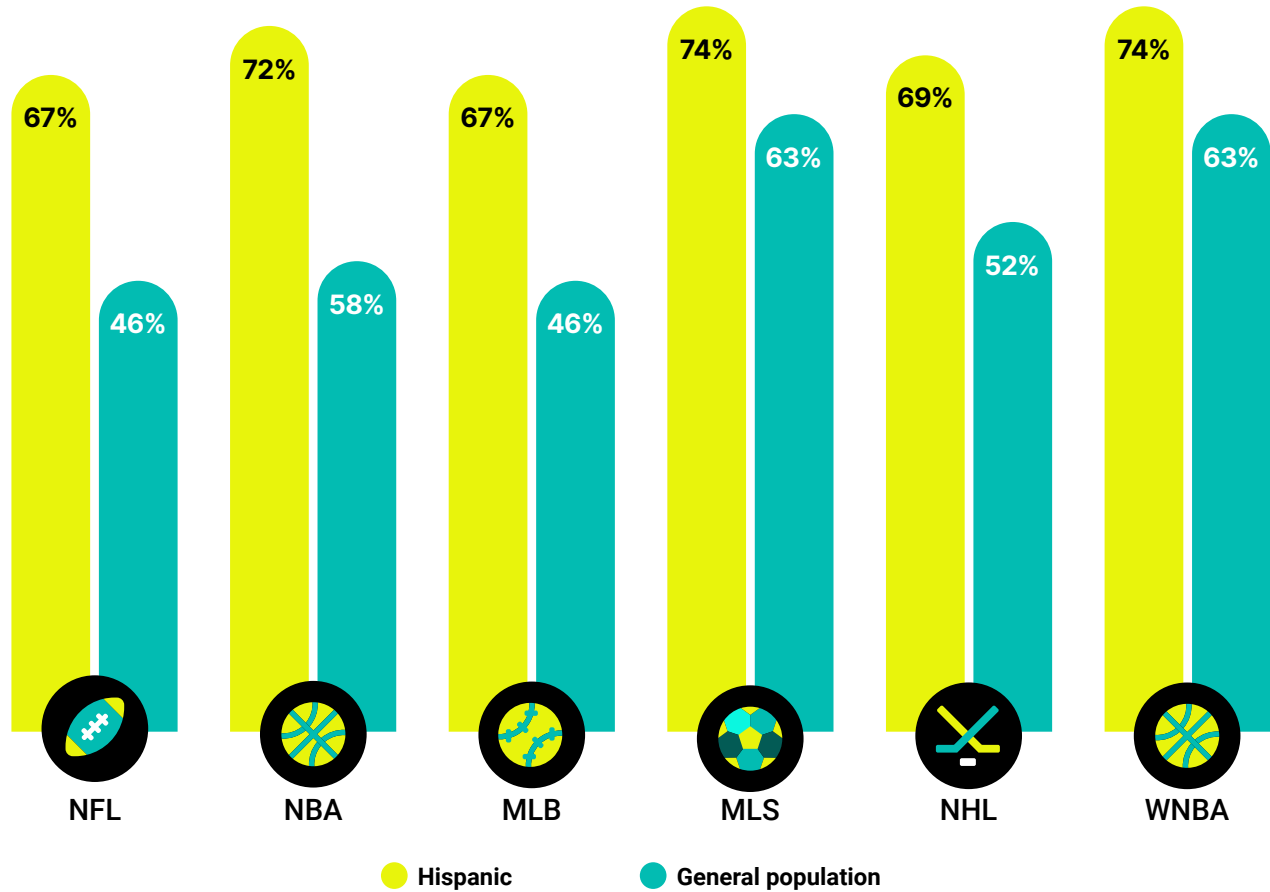
A striking 72% of Latino sports fans are part of Gen Z or Millennials, compared to just 50% of U.S. sports fans overall. This represents the future of sports fandom and offers a longer timeline for brands and leagues to build lasting relationships.



Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, July 2023 - June 2024

Percentage of fans by league who are ages 16-39

U.S. Hispanics vs. general population (July 2023 - June 2024)



Look across each sport league on a given night, and teams will be incentivizing younger fans to come to the ballpark, interact on social media, or engage with their brand in a unique manner. The game has changed, and the key to long-term success for each league is rooted in engagement at a young age. For many years, the question has been how to reach the younger sports fan? Looking at the above chart, it's clear that this question needs to be asked again, except with the young, Latino sports fan at the forefront of everyone's mind.

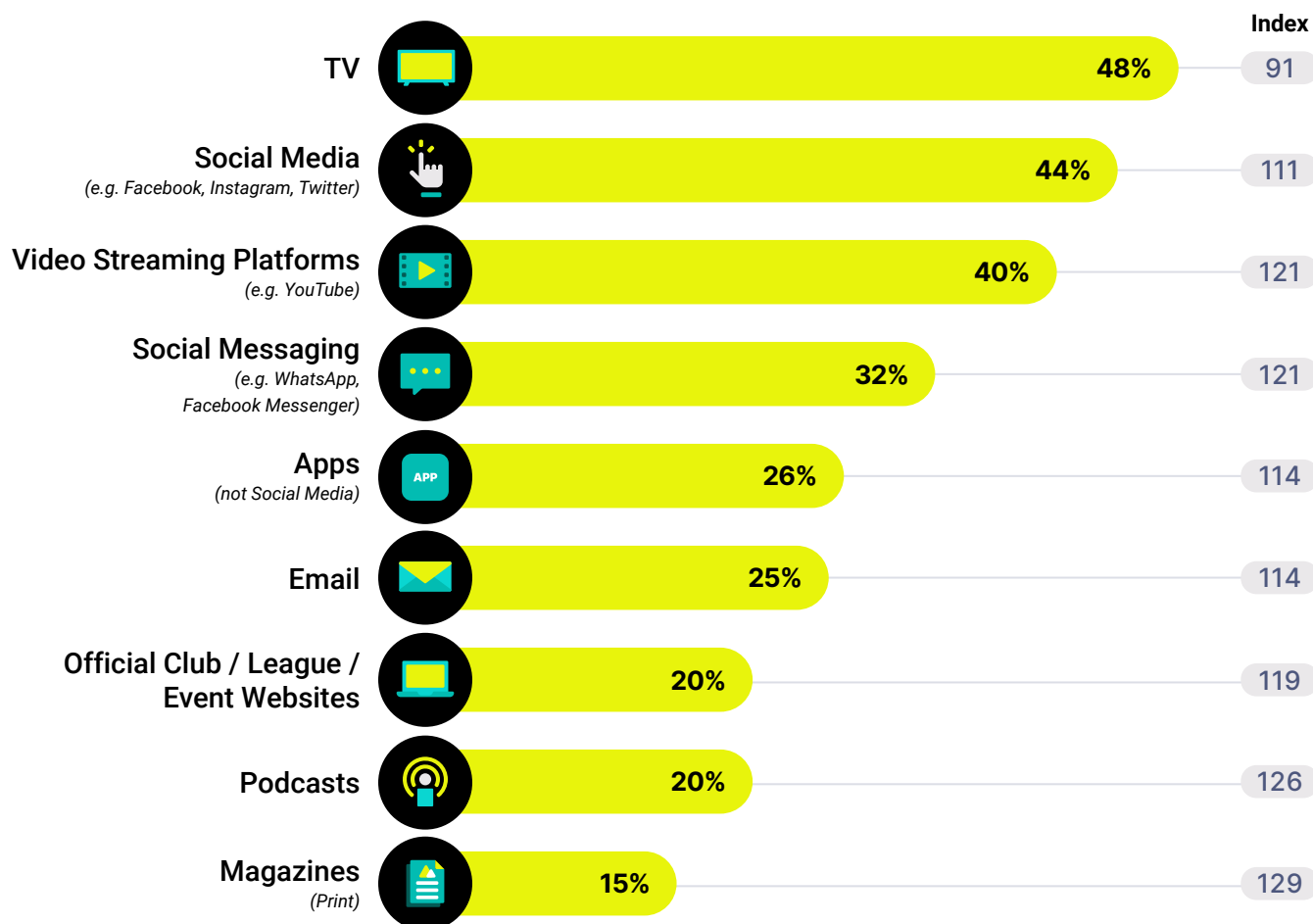
Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, July 2023 - June 2024

The way sports fans consume content has been changing for quite some time, and the way sports is being distributed is amidst a monumental shift. Look no further than the success of the NFL's Playoff game on Peacock, NFL Christmas Day on Netflix, Apple's deal with the MLS, and the recent NBA & WNBA Media Rights deal, bringing on Amazon as a partner. As quoted by NBA Commissioner Adam Silver during 2024 All Star Weekend, "our young fans turn first to their phones and not to a television when they want to watch a program."^{*}

As brands and media entities alike strive to stay in front of an engaged, young audience, the below insights outline how Latinos sports fans are a key demographic that these brands will need to tap into to stay in front of their core fans. The below trends emphasize the differentiators of the modern sports fan, who is often younger and seeking out content in a fast, direct manner. This further supports our previous findings that **nearly half (46%) of younger fans expressed a preference for watching sport on smartphones or tablets.**

Media used for sports consumption

U.S. Hispanics (July 2023 - June 2024) indexed to general population



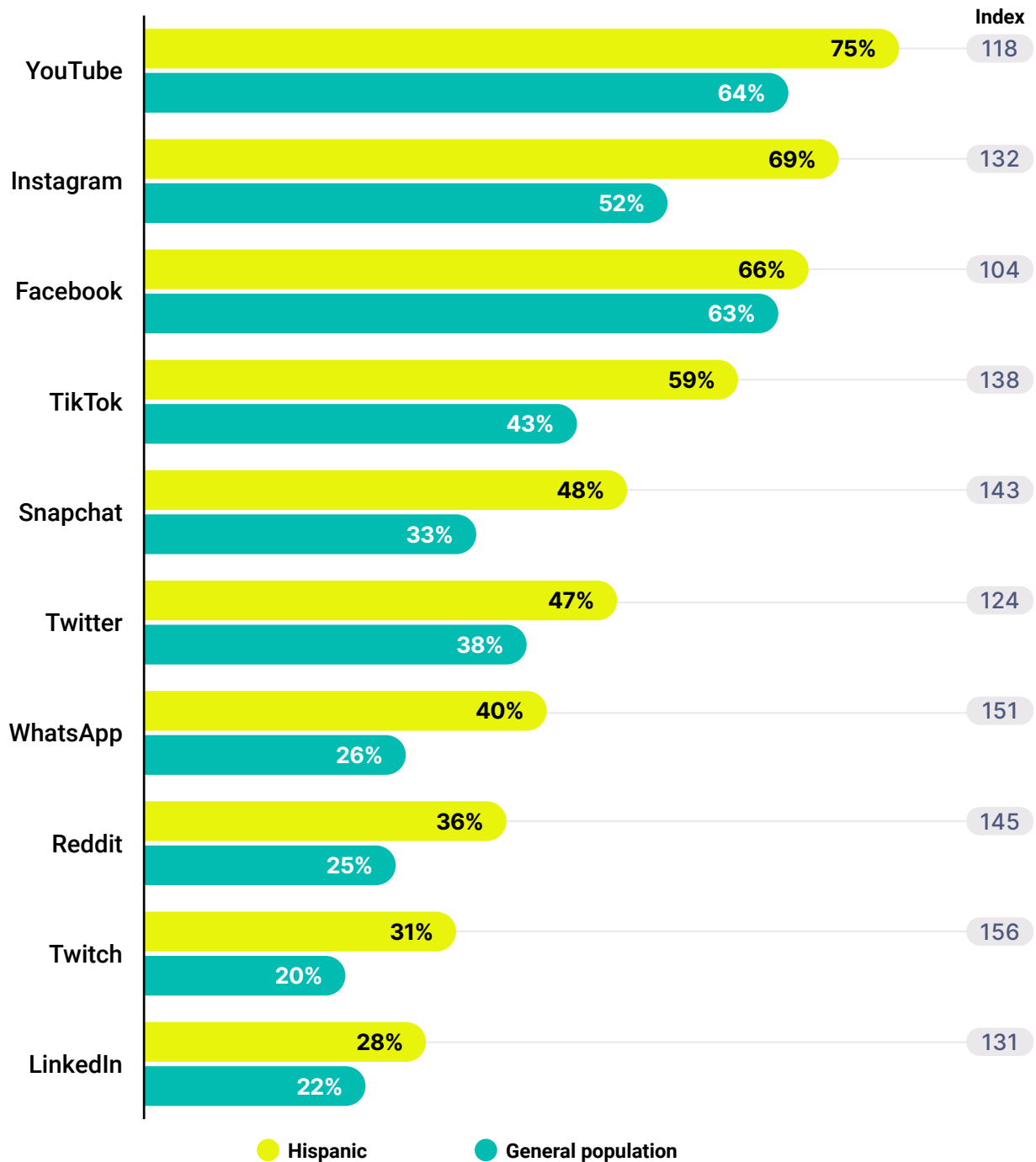
Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, July 2023 - June 2024

* Source: NBA.com, 2024

Latino sports fans are not only younger than the average U.S. sports fan, they also are interacting across social media at a much higher rate. The below data outlines some fascinating insights, with Latino sports fans 38% more likely than non-Latino sports fans to use TikTok for sports news and consumption.

Social media used for sports consumption


U.S. Hispanics vs. general population (July 2023 - June 2024)



Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, July 2023 - June 2024

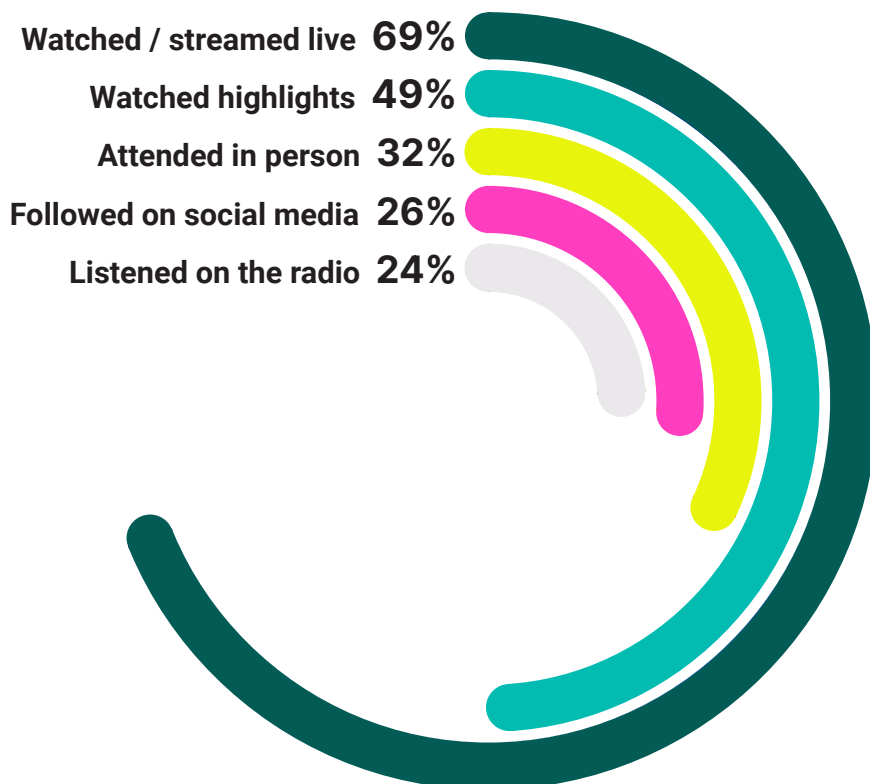
As seen by the below chart, there are many ways for fans to consume and experience sports. Latino sports fans mirror the average U.S. fan in a majority of their consumption being through watching or streaming the game live. However, across each of the major leagues there are interesting behaviors that underpin some of the below data points.

- Latino sports fans are 9% more likely to follow sports on social media than they were the previous year.
- NHL Latino sports fans are 13% more likely to follow the NHL on social media than they were the previous year.
- Of the 5 core forms of engagement, every single league saw growth in at least 4 out of 5 categories amongst Latino sports fans year over year.

Latino sports fans are
 **22%**
more likely
to follow the MLS on social media than they were in the prior year.

Ways of experiencing the major leagues

U.S. Hispanics (July 2023 - June 2024)



Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, July 2023 - June 2024

SOURCE OF FANDOM

Throughout the past couple of years, sports are increasingly gaining TV screen time outside of live competitions. While there's no denying the attraction of live sports, there is now clear evidence here with the Latino population that one of the keys to attracting new fans might be rooted in the power of compelling, documentary-style storytelling. This is a trend that has been happening over the last couple of years, as outlined in a previous study around [Drive to Survive, with the documentary driving more than 360,000 new fans to the sport](#). In addition, this data supports the trend that was [highlighted in 2022](#), with a younger, Hispanic population contributing to the increased viewership.

Latino sports fans are **23% more likely** to start following a sport after watching a documentary / film about the sport.



Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, July 2023 - June 2024

THE RISE OF ENGLISH-DOMINANT AND BILINGUAL FANS

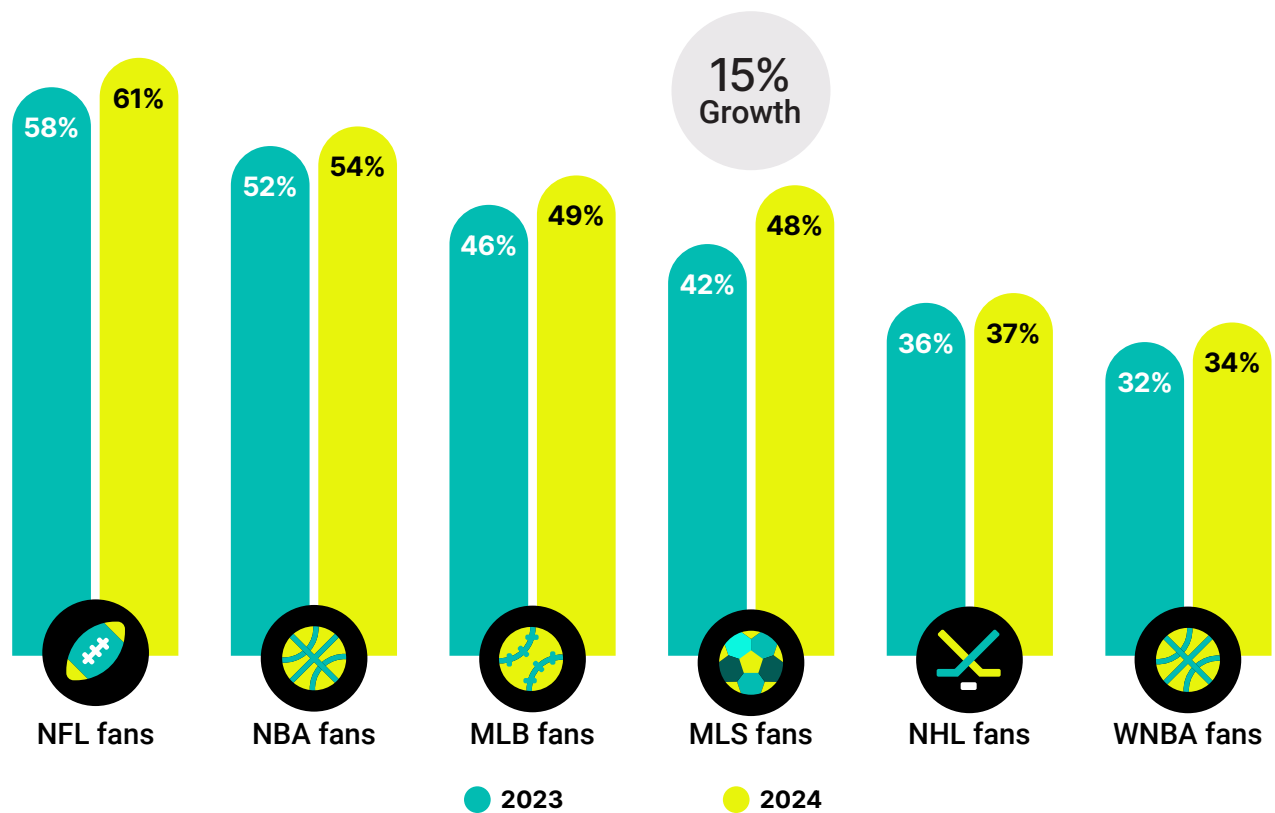


Avidity translates to engagement

This heightened passion isn't just about cheering from the sidelines. Latino fans are more likely to engage with the sports they love—whether it's through social media, attending games, or consuming related content. Their enthusiasm drives deeper involvement, which in turn amplifies their influence within the sports community.

Year-over-year trends amongst English-dominant speakers

English-dominant U.S. Hispanics (July 2023 vs. June 2024)



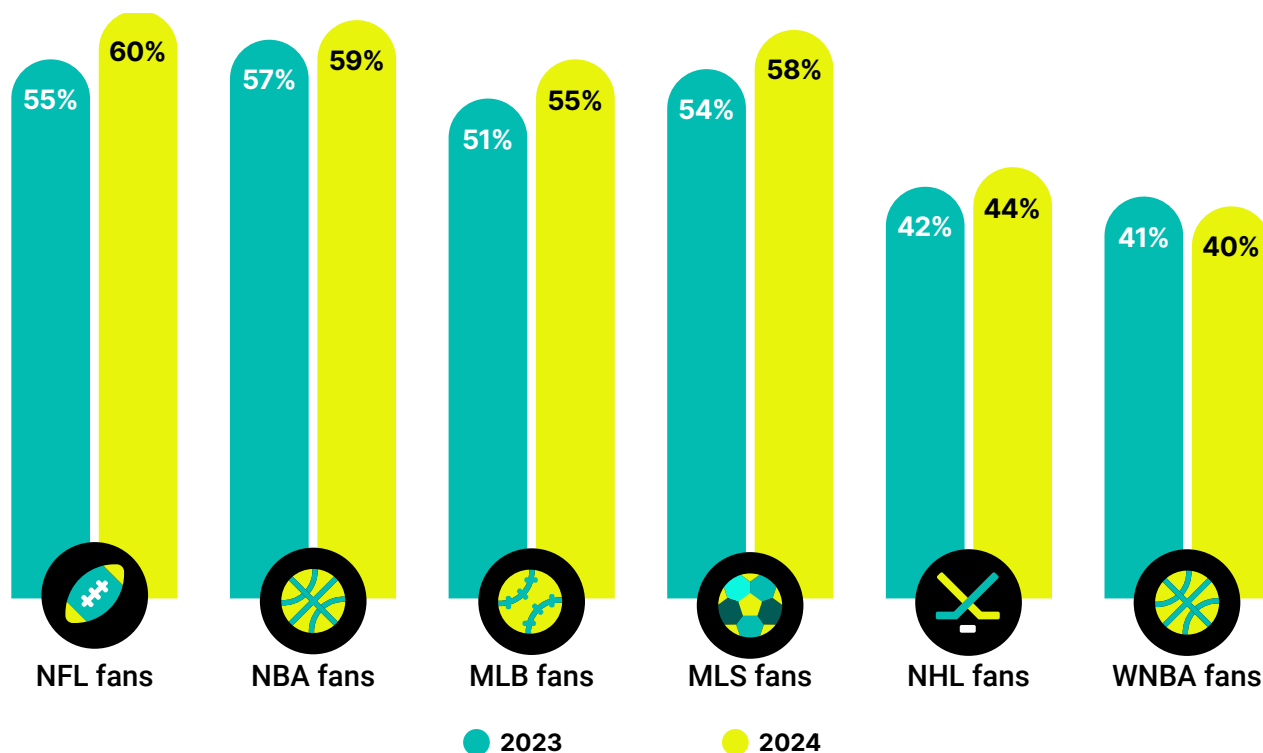
Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, July 2023 - June 2024

To provide an example of where leagues are winning in engaging these fans, the MLS and MLB are great examples. The MLS is experiencing a 15% YoY growth, and that trend is only expected to continue with initiatives such as [Adidas announcement this summer](#), with the MLS celebrating Hispanic culture's rich history and vibrant style through pre-match jerseys for Leagues Cup.

MLB is recently making inroads in furthering the growth we see here, with an announcement just last month partnering with TelevisaUnivision on a multi-year agreement. [The agreement expands the reach to this market immensely](#), and there's no better example of this than with Game 1 of the 2024 World Series being broadcast on Univision. This will be the first time in the U.S. that fans will be able to watch the World Series on an over-the-air Spanish-language broadcast network. In the MLB, Hispanic players make up more than 30% of the league, and the long-standing prioritization of reaching the Latino sports fan is paying off.

Bilingualism and fandom

Bilingual U.S. Hispanics (July 2023 vs. June 2024)



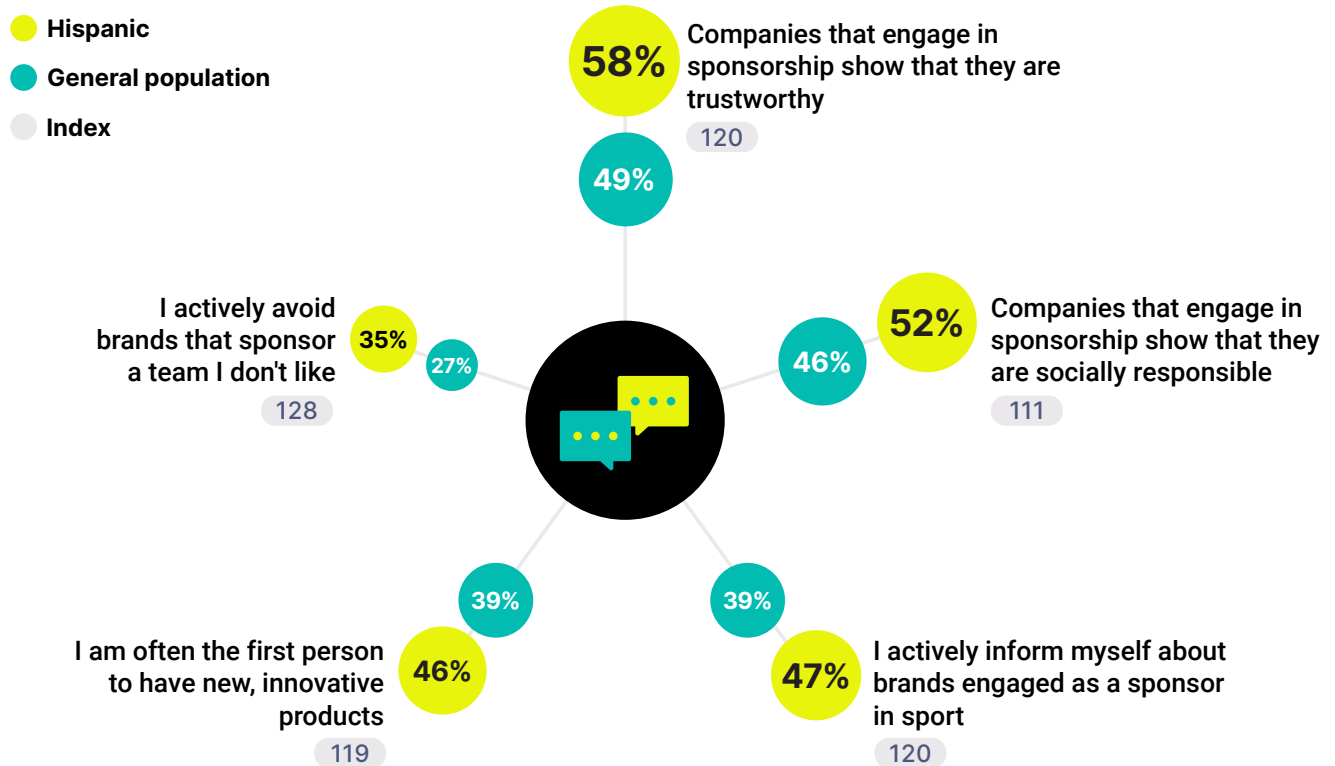
Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, July 2023 - June 2024


SPONSORSHIP AND BRAND LOYALTY AMONG LATINO FANS

Brands are constantly pushing to reach the target consumer, and it's evident that reaching Latino sports fans will allow for brands' messaging and initiatives to stick with this market. Across the world, we have previously noted that sponsorships drove [an average 10% lift in purchase intent amongst the exposed fanbase](#), and that is apparent here with Latino sports fans 11% more likely than the average U.S. sports fan to buy the brand after seeing a sponsorship while watching a game in-person or on TV.

Agreement with sponsorship statements

Percent strongly or somewhat agree, U.S. Hispanics vs. general population (July 2023 - June 2024)

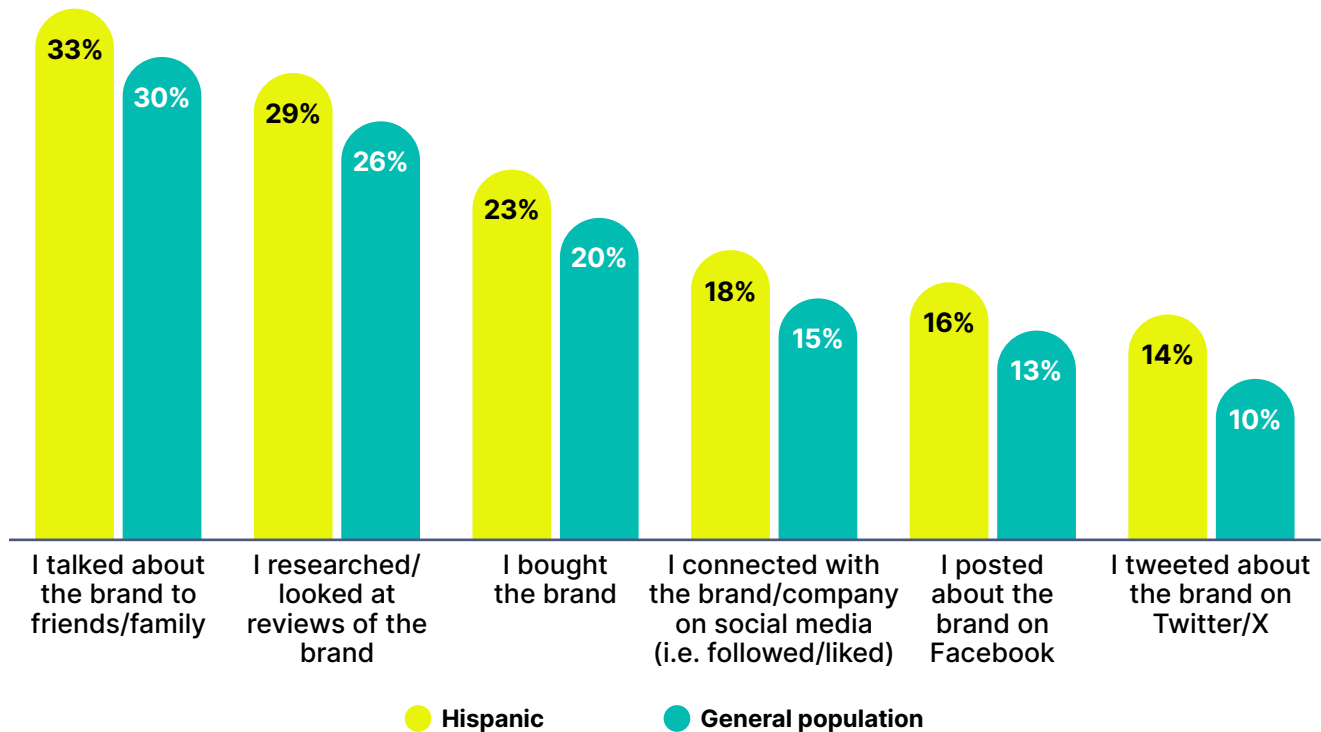


 Latino sports fans are **39% more likely** than the general population to recommend a company if it were to sponsor and event or sport they follow.

Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, July 2023 - June 2024

Actions taken after seeing a sponsorship while watching a game / event in-person or on TV

U.S. Hispanics vs. general population (July 2023 - June 2024)

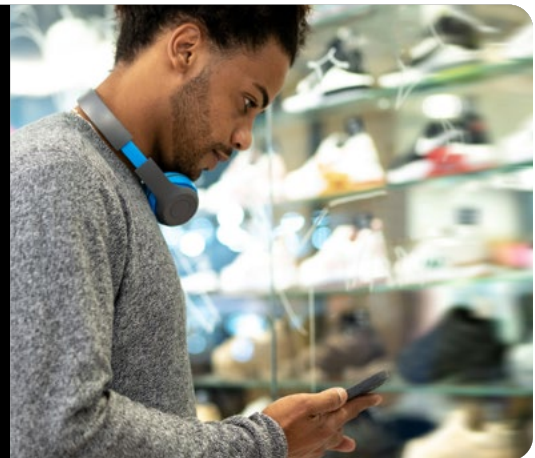


As seen in our previous studies within this space, a [1-point gain in brand metrics](#) such as awareness and consideration drives a 1% increase in sales, emphasizing the power of this highly engaged group.

Latino sports fans are



11% more likely
than the average U.S. sports fan to buy
the brand after seeing a sponsorship
while watching a game.

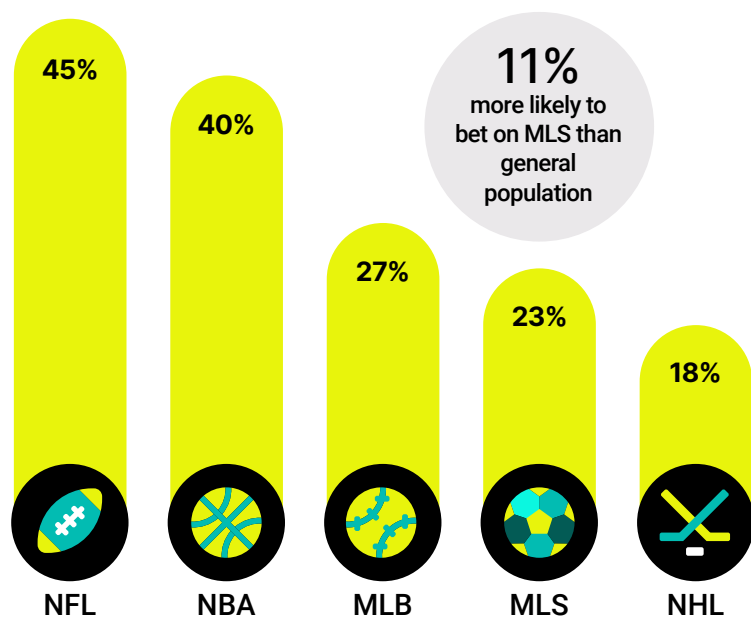


Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, July 2023 - June 2024

THE GROWING LANDSCAPE OF SPORTS BETTING AND FANTASY SPORTS

Past year, leagues placed bets on among U.S. Hispanic sports fans

July 2023 - June 2024



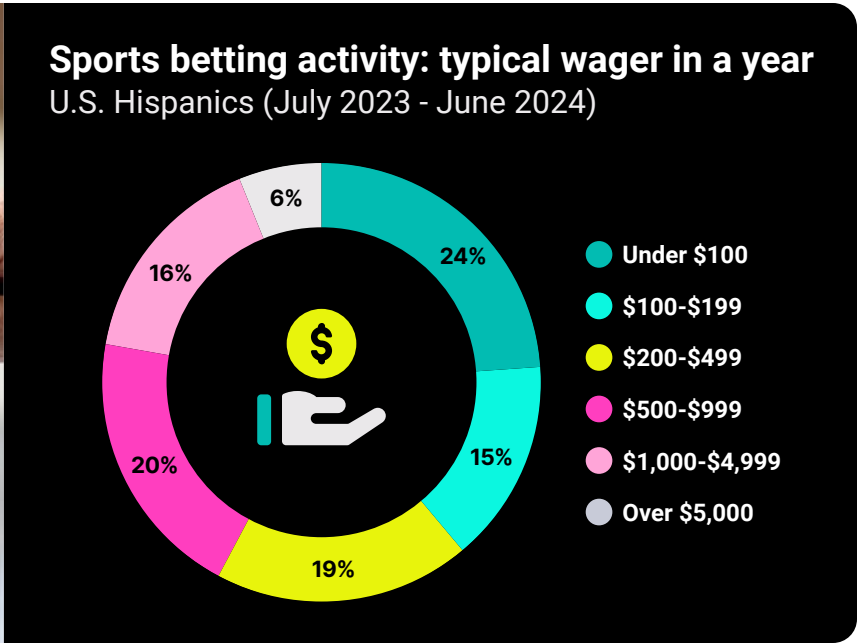
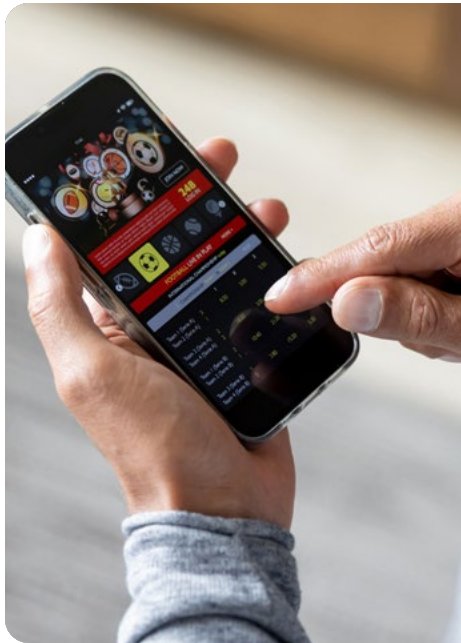
Latino sports fans are **20% more likely** to be live betting on the sport while watching sports.

Areas of interest

U.S. Hispanics vs. general population (July 2023 - June 2024)

	U.S. Hispanics	General population	Index
Sports betting	41%	34%	122
Seasonal fantasy sports	38%	31%	123
Daily / weekly fantasy sports	38%	30%	125




Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, July 2023 - June 2024



There is a commonality to the way brands are often reaching sports fans, which is a full-scale initiative that goes far beyond the TV glass. Advertising, sponsorship, and brand engagement are often geared towards the fan who is scrolling social media, or engaging in daily fantasy while watching a sporting event, and it's evident any initiative needs to have the ever-engaged Latino sports fan in mind.

Activities done regularly while watching sports

U.S. Hispanics vs. general population (July 2023 - June 2024)

	U.S. Hispanics	General population	Index
 Use social media platforms	43%	39%	111
 Order food delivery	32%	25%	130
 Live betting on the sport	19%	15%	120

Source: Nielsen Fan Insights, July 2023 - June 2024

Sources

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Acknowledgements

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About Latinos in Sports

LiS:™ Latinos in Sports is a new multitiered platform designed to showcase the positive contributions of Latinos in the business of sports through highly curated convenings, content, career resources, and comunidad for current and aspiring executives in the global sports industry.

