



Report:

# Women's sports & the future of sponsorship



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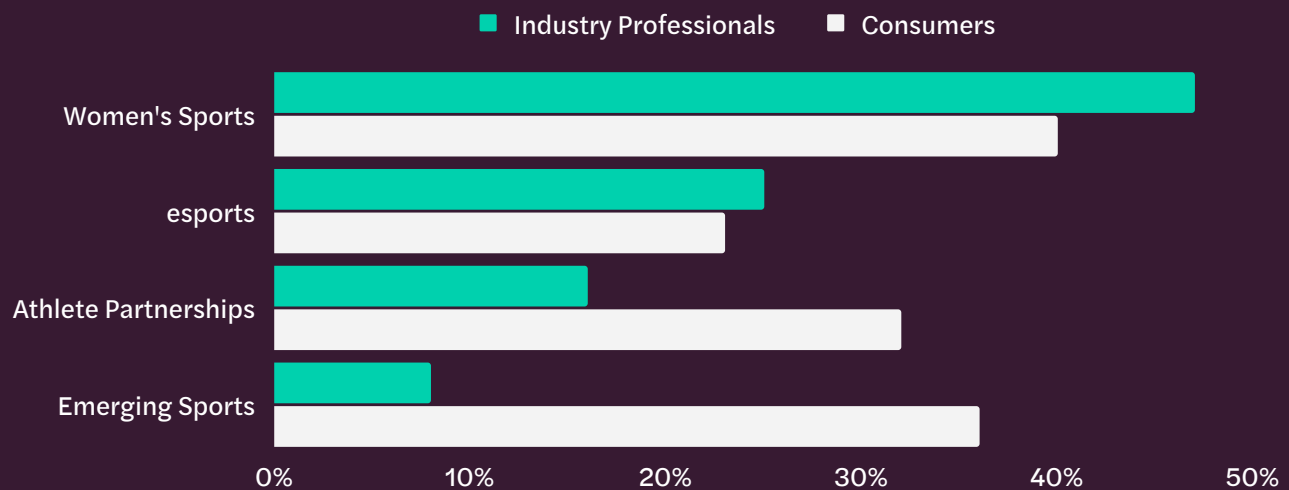
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# Introduction

It's June 2022: Coco Gauff made it into the French Open Finals and graduated high school in the same month; 21-year old Iga Swiatek won Roland Garros and extended her win-streak to 35 matches in a row; Stanford freshman-golfer Rose Zhang signed the first NIL deal with Adidas; Angel City FC is averaging over 19,000 fans per game; and NWBA annual viewership has soared +51% from 2020 to 2021. As the list of milestones grow daily, women's sports continue to thrive around the globe.

Coming off the heels of SponsorPulse's inaugural [State of Sponsorship report](#) - a study conducted to bridge the gap between industry and consumer perspectives - there was one area of universal agreement: the growth potential and desire for continued investment in women's sports.

## Biggest Growth Potential & Would Like to See More Investment



With industry and consumer perspectives aligned, we're confident that the past year's milestones are just the beginning. That's why we're digging deeper to contextualize the opportunity that this category represents through the eyes of the American consumer.

# The women's sports landscape is healthier than ever

The growing consumer interest and popularity in women's sports has been palpable over the past several years. 2021 proved to be a record-breaking year for leagues such as the WNBA and NWSL, both of which hit all-time highs in viewership rates with increased exposure. However, TV viewership is only one part of the story.

Over 70 million Americans engaged with the WNBA and NWSL respectively over the past year. Whether it be streaming online, following socially, buying merchandise or recommending it to others, TV viewership is a drop in the bucket compared to the power and value that these leagues carry.



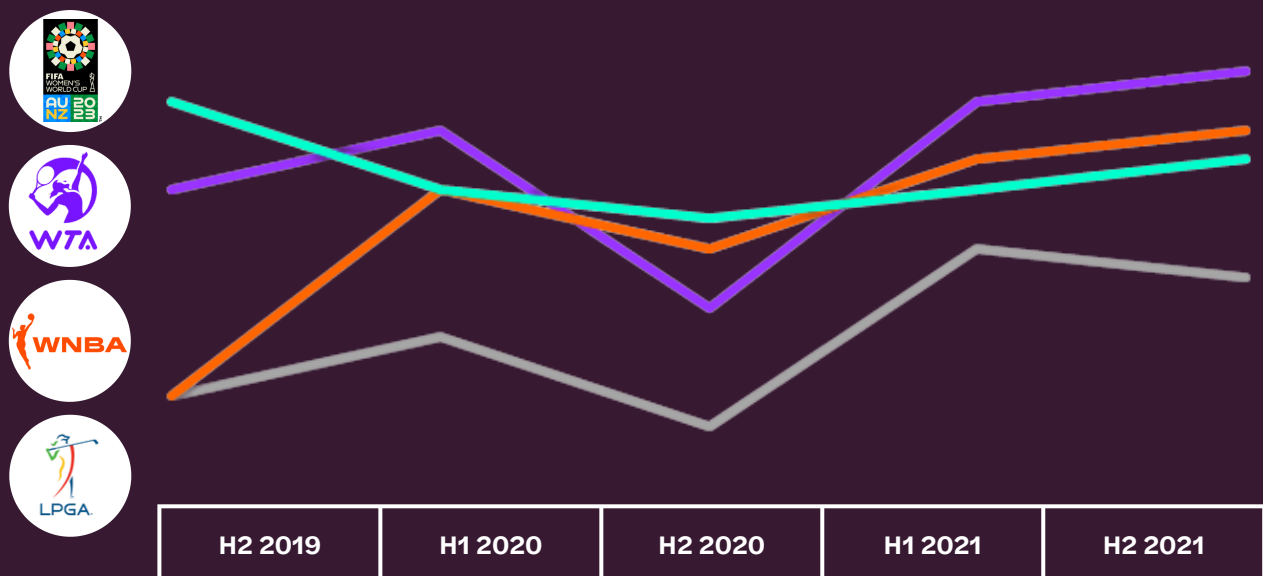
A property comparison confirms that many women's sport properties have similar (and in some cases, greater) levels of overall marketability than some major male properties - something that brands often look for. Properties such as the FIFA Women's World Cup, WNBA and Women's Tennis Association (WTA) are comparable to the likes of the PGA Tour, Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP), Formula 1, and the Rose Bowl, just to name a few.

# It's a game of momentum, and it's building

Momentum is swinging in the right direction, but a look back at levels of engagement across key sport properties provides greater context to the growth we're witnessing. In summer 2019, with the US Women's National Soccer Team capturing the FIFA Women's World Cup in France, there was a clear hierarchy where it outpaced other major women's sport properties.

Since that time, engagement with the quadrennial tournament has softened, while we've seen significant gains across the WTA, WNBA and Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA). Increased broadcast exposure, new social content platforms and the rise of stars across all of these leagues have played a significant role in driving gains. The exciting news, we're nowhere near the ceiling yet.

Engagement Trended 2019 to 2021 - USA



Engagement = Watch on TV, Watch Online, Follow events / updates / news, Follow on social, Buy / wear merchandise, Attend events, or Recommend.



While increases have been observed across the board for all women's sport properties, a two year comparison on engagement growth reveals that the WNBA is the fastest growing women's sport property in America.

### 2 Year Property Engagement Growth, USA

Property Name	2019	2021	2 Year Difference
WNBA	28%	37%	+9%
LPGA	26%	34%	+8%
WTA	33%	39%	+6%
FIFA Women's World Cup	30%	36%	+6%
IIHF World Women's Championship	28%	32%	+4%
Premier Hockey Federation	29%*	33%	+4%

\*Premier Hockey Federation was previously tracked as the National Women's Hockey League before it rebranded in 2021.

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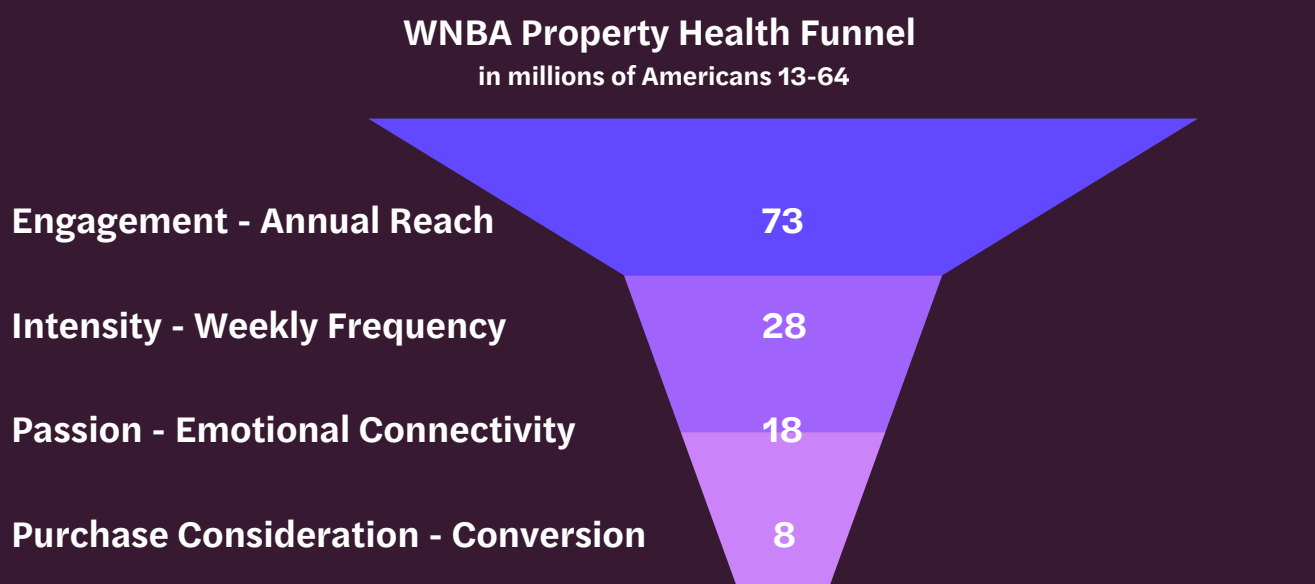
# The fastest growing property: spotlight on the WNBA

With engagement growing at a rapid rate, and no signs of slowing down, the WNBA is a golden opportunity for brands investing in sponsorship. Let's break down the consumer opportunity by the numbers.

The WNBA engages more than 73 million consumers every year, providing brands with a significant reach opportunity that extends well beyond just broadcast. Of that engaged base, over 28 million do so on a weekly basis, offering strong frequency to breakthrough with fans.

With 18 million of them stating they're passionate about the league, the fan base cares deeply, marking a unique opportunity for brands to build an emotional connection. Looking for conversion? Well, 8 million people state that they're more likely to purchase the products and / or services of brands that sponsor the WNBA.

The consumer opportunity is there, it's significant and it's only growing.



So, who are the most engaged consumers with the WNBA that are driving its overall reach? Well, it may come as a surprise to some, but the most highly engaged demographics are males across all age breaks.

The data speaks for itself and quickly dispells any myth that 'men don't like women's sport', they certainly do.

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### Most Engaged Demographics with WNBA - USA

Demographic	Engagement	Difference vs. Total Population
Total Population	36%	--
25-39 year old, Males	52%	+16%
19-24 year old, Males	48%	+12%
13-18 year old, Males	46%	+10%
40-49 year old, Males	42%	+6%

Engagement = Watch on TV, Watch Online, Follow events / updates / news, Follow on social, Buy / wear merchandise, Attend events, or Recommend.

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# How big is the gap between male and female sports leagues?

Before we get into side-by-side comparisons across male and female sport leagues, it's important to consider the intention. The intent is to provide context on the growth opportunity that exists if the industry continues to give consumers what they want, while encouraging a dialogue on the levels of investment being made by brands, pay being offered by properties and the general equity across sport.

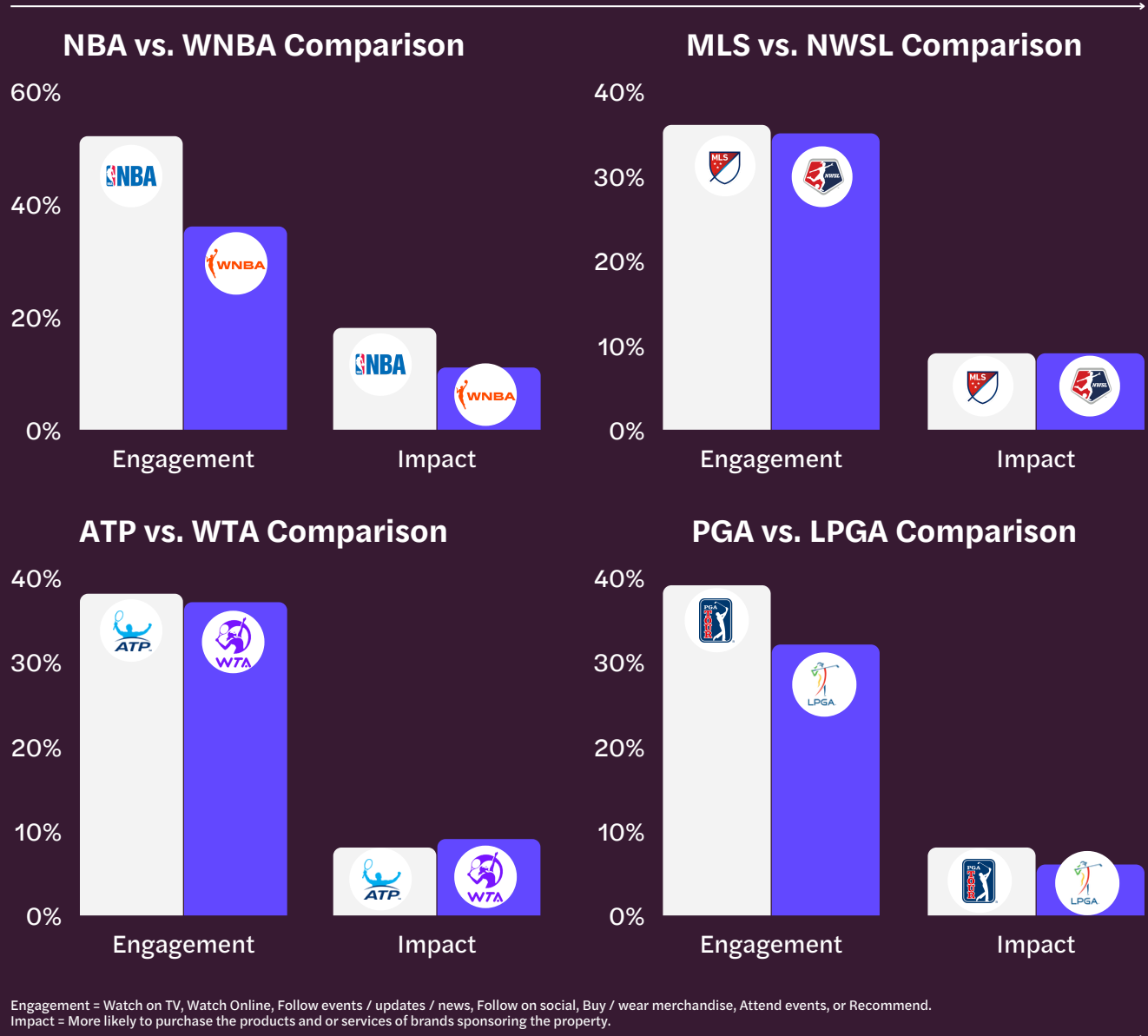
As brands search high and low for opportunities to get in early and make a lasting impact, the results below speak for themselves: women's sports are growing at a faster rate and have significantly more room for growth.

## 2 Year Opportunity Score Growth - USA

Property Name	2019	2020	2021	2 Year Difference
WNBA	10	17	18	+8
WTA	13	16	18	+5
LPGA	7	10	12	+5
NHL	22	24	25	+3
MLB	37	37	35	-2
NFL	58	55	55	-3

SponsorPulse's Opportunity Score accounts for all key behavioral, emotional and impact metrics to identify top sponsorship opportunities.

A side-by-side property comparison of 1) reach and 2) impact potential highlights that the gap between leagues is generally low and in some cases non-existent. Now, consider the impact of continued growth in media exposure, greater sponsor involvement, expansion of new teams and new markets, and this snapshot stands to change significantly.



# Closing thoughts

Women's sport properties have been historically neglected when it comes to sponsorship investment. This fast-growing category is ready to finally get their fair share of media exposure and sponsorship revenue, with unprecedented growth potential and an appetite for more among industry professionals and consumers alike.

Today, there are ample opportunities for investment across women's sport. Understanding when and how to capitalize on these emerging trends begins with an unbiased understanding of your customer.

Want to learn more? Visit [www.sponsorpulse.com](http://www.sponsorpulse.com) to get in touch or to book a demo of the SponsorPulse Insights Platform.



## About State of Sponsorship 2022 Report

Following the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, the sponsorship industry is making a comeback. On the surface, our industry is healthy, and while the external factors have been impossible to ignore, the time has come for the industry to look within.

In this report, we bring to light the good, the bad and the unknown, to help sponsorship industry pros understand which trends are here to stay and how we can leverage consumer opinion to foster greater transparency. Read more at [www.stateofsponsorship.com](http://www.stateofsponsorship.com).

## About SponsorPulse

We help properties, brands and agencies cut through the noise of the sponsorship industry. We rely on consumer insight to bridge the gap between industry challenges and consumer perspectives. We focus on bringing transparency, accessibility and actionability to the industry. Learn more at [www.sponsorpulse.com](http://www.sponsorpulse.com).