

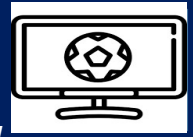


# Patterns of TV Viewership Across Different Sport Leagues

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## Background

### The Importance of TV viewership in Sports

TV viewership numbers are important to the sports industry, especially with various new platforms that can be used to stream sports games.

### A Declining Trend

A notable trend within the sports industry is the overall decline in total TV viewership across major sports. This decline is significant, as it may signal potential issues with the sport product, shifting consumer preferences, or changes in media consumption behavior (Bouma, 2025).

### Why Demographics Matter

Analyzing differences across demographic groups provides valuable insights into audience behavior. Understanding these variations allows sport organizations to more effectively target key consumer segments, sustain viewership, and ultimately maintain revenue streams.

### Purpose of The Study

Examine trends in TV viewership across major sports from 2013-2021, with a particular focus on age-based demographic differences.

## Method

### Data Source:

The secondary data were drawn from the Sport Business Research Network. Specifically, TV viewership data across four major professional sport leagues (NFL, MLB, NBA, and NHL) were obtained from annual records spanning 2013 to 2021.

### Comparing Categories:

Viewers aged 13-17, 18-34, and 35+; and the major leagues of NFL, MLB, NBA, and NHL.

### Analytical Approach:

Using Microsoft Excel and Claude, we conducted a visual comparison of TV viewership trends across the four major professional sport leagues over the nine-year period. The analysis focused on differences across the three age categories, with trends identified based on the average increases or decreases in viewership within each group.

## Sports Viewing in 2013 vs 2021

### Old Way of Watching Sports



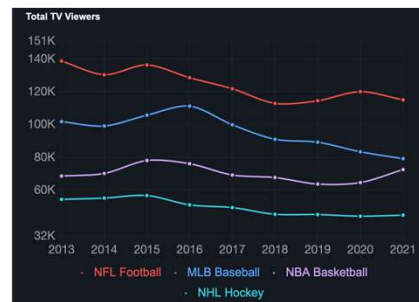
Images Retrieved From Google

### New Way of Watching Sports



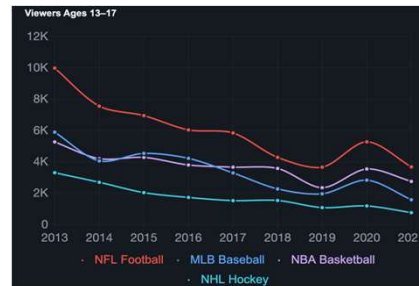
## Graphs

### Total Viewership Between 2013 and 2021

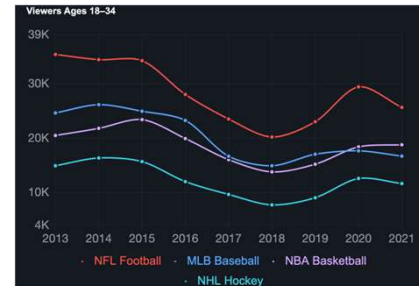


Charts made by Claude AI

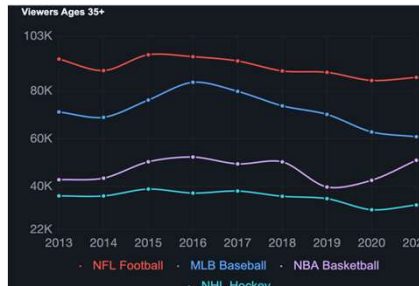
### Viewership for Ages 13-17 Between 2013 and 2021



### Viewership for Ages 18-34 Between 2013 and 2021



### Viewership for Ages 35+ Between 2013 and 2021



## Results

- Overall TV Viewership: Between 2013 and 2021; The NFL saw an average decline of 1.9%; The MLB saw an average decline of 22.3%; The NBA saw an average decline of 5.9%; The NHL saw an average decline of 17.8%.
- **TV Viewership for Ages 13-17:** Between 2013 and 2021; The NFL saw an average decline of 8.62%; The MLB saw an average decline of 11.16%; The NBA saw an average decline of 7.55%; The NHL saw an average decline of 13.23%.
- **TV Viewership for Ages 18-34:** Between 2013 and 2021; The NFL saw an average decline of 1.48%; The MLB saw an average decline of 1.51%; The NBA saw an average decline of 1.58%; The NHL saw an average decline of 0.58%.
- **TV Viewership for Ages 35+:** Between 2013 and 2021; The NFL saw an average increase of 1.14%; The MLB saw an average increase of 1.05%; The NBA saw an average increase of 1.32%; The NHL saw an average increase of 0.93%.

## Discussion

- One notable trend across categories is that 2020 experienced a rebound in viewership for major sports following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This increase may be attributed to social distancing measures, which encouraged higher TV consumption.
- The bubble format during the 2020 season provided fans with opportunities to watch their favorite teams during COVID-19 lockdowns. This approach was beneficial not only for fans but also for leagues.
- Another trend observed among the 13-17 and 18-34 age groups is a decline in TV viewership following 2020. By 2021, a large portion of viewers within these age groups belonged to Gen Z, a cohort often associated with shorter attention spans due to growing up with digital technology. As a result, Gen Z audiences may be less inclined to watch full-length games and instead consume highlights, sports news and related content through platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and ESPN.
- To address this shift, sports leagues, broadcasters, and marketers should explore strategies to better engage younger audiences, particularly those aged 13-17. One approach is to invest in digital content and streaming platforms, as well as social media, to increase engagement.
- Future research could expand the scope to include additional sports, such as women's sports, golf, racing, and collegiate sports, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of viewership trends.