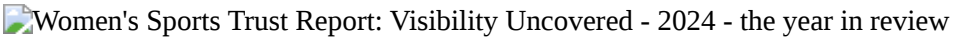
Women's Sports Trust Report: Visibility Uncovered - 2024 - the year in review

Theme:
Voice & Visibility



Co-authored by Women's Sports Trust

Domestic sport and interest in female athletes experience continued growth

London, UK, 6th February Women's sport in the UK, excluding global tournaments*, achieved its most-watched year ever in 2024, with an impressive 44.7 million viewers tuning in, surpassing the previous record of 37.6 million in 2022, according to the latest Women's Sport Trust report, with broadcast insight and data from Futures Sport & Entertainment.

While 2024 marked a new record for viewers of domestic women's sport, overall figures, including global tournaments such as Football and Cricket World Cups, show that 2023 still tops the charts with 46.7 million viewers, compared to 45.2 million in 2024.

A significant factor influencing viewing figures was the absence of the Lionesses in international competition, which impacted both total viewing hours and average viewing time per viewer. Total viewing hours for women's sport dropped from 383 million in 2023 to 164 million in 2024 and average viewing time per person decreased from 10 hours 7 minutes in 2023 to 5 hours 47 minutes. However, compared to 2021 – the last year England's women did not compete in a major women's football tournament – this still represents an increase of two hours in average viewing time per person.

When including coverage of women's only events at the Paris Olympics and Paralympics, total viewing hours across all channels for women's sport in 2024 saw a significant increase, rising to 564 million. The total number of viewers who watched two hours or more of women's sport coverage also reached a new high, with 22.9 million viewers – surpassing the previous best of 21.7 million in 2022. Additionally, despite coverage hours for all women's sport on key channels remaining at 8%, 15% of sports viewing hours on key channels were for women's sport, up from 10% in 2023.

In 2024, Sky (including Sky Sports and Sky Showcase) provided 61% of coverage hours and 34% of viewing hours for women's sport, with Free To Air viewing on BBC (37%) and ITV (24%) accounting for the majority of viewing hours.

CEO at Women's Sport Trust, Tammy Parlour MBE, said: "The continued growth of domestic women's sport is a powerful indicator that fan engagement, sponsorship opportunities, and media coverage are on the rise. Although viewing time per person fell due to the absence of the Lionesses in an international football tournament, the fact that it remains significantly higher than in 2021 shows that the women's sport ecosystem is thriving, even outside major football events."

Digital Growth Continues to Soar
Growth is also happening on digital platforms with leading leagues and federations experiencing remarkable engagement across YouTube, TikTok and Instagram.

In 2024, the WTA Tour garnered 71 million views on YouTube, while the WNBA led the charge for TikTok views (361 million) and Instagram engagements (90 million).

Chelsea WFC achieved a global milestone, amassing a staggering 167 million TikTok views—more than any other women's sports team on a dedicated women's only TikTok account worldwide. This success comes despite their account being launched only a year ago.

Women's Sport Trust's research also highlights the powerful influence of female athletes on social media. When combining the cumulative Instagram engagements from clubs and their players, 35% of total engagements across the WSL came from player accounts, significantly higher than the 27% engagement rate seen in the Premier League across four leading clubs. This demonstrates the growing importance of athletes within marketing plans.

Globally, female athletes also continue to dominate the digital space. In 2024, female athletes accounted for 61% of all TikTok views among the world's 50 most marketable athletes, as listed by SportsPro.

The elite UK athlete with the most TikTok views in 2024 was BMX rider and Olympian Charlotte Worthington, while the Nielsen sisters, athletics stars Lina and Laviai, featured in the top five alongside Mary Earps and Ella Toone. Meanwhile, Lucy Bronze had more Instagram engagements than any other WSL player in 2024.

Parlour concluded: "With a thrilling year ahead for both UK domestic and global women's sporting events, there are a range of growth areas for women's sport to target in 2025. This includes new competition structures supported by enhanced broadcast coverage and innovative distribution models, converting men's sports fans, building women's only sport audiences and better engaging youth audiences and ethnically diverse viewers. Essential to plans will be creating targeted strategies to expand fan bases across multiple demographic groups and ensure broader representation in viewers."

The Women’s Sport Trust report, made available for free from the Women’s Sport Trust website, also covers the global rise of women’s sport attendances and the growth opportunities for women’s sport in 2025.

-ENDS-

Notes to editors:
*Global tournaments refer to Football World Cup, Football Euros, Cricket World Cup, T20 World Cup, Rugby World Cup, Rugby League World Cup and Netball World Cup.

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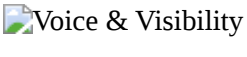

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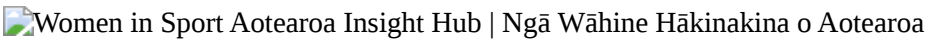
Close panel 

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