

# WOMEN'S SPORTS: How Fans are Viewing and Engaging

Women's sports consumption has increased at a faster rate (**50%** over last 12 months) than men's sports (**39%**)

# WOMEN'S SPORTS: A LOOK AT THE LANDSCAPE

Women's sports viewership is continuing to rise with record-breaking in-person and broadcast events making it evident that this is not just a moment, it's a movement. Networks like ESPN and Paramount are developing deals to bring more women's sports to homes and screens. Social platforms like Snapchat are tapping into the excitement by developing AR features exclusively for women's competitions. And advertisers are taking note.

## Women's Sports Are A Growing Opportunity For Advertisers

With viewership growth ramping up and more opportunities being presented to get in front of fans of women's sports (FOWS), more brands are diving in.



Brands like **Coca-Cola**, **Morgan Stanley** and **Ally** are shifting their marketing budgets, identifying **women's sports** as a **growth opportunity** to reach new audiences and buyers, as well as a brand enhancement opportunity, to be seen as a supporter of women's sports.

## ABOUT OUR RESEARCH

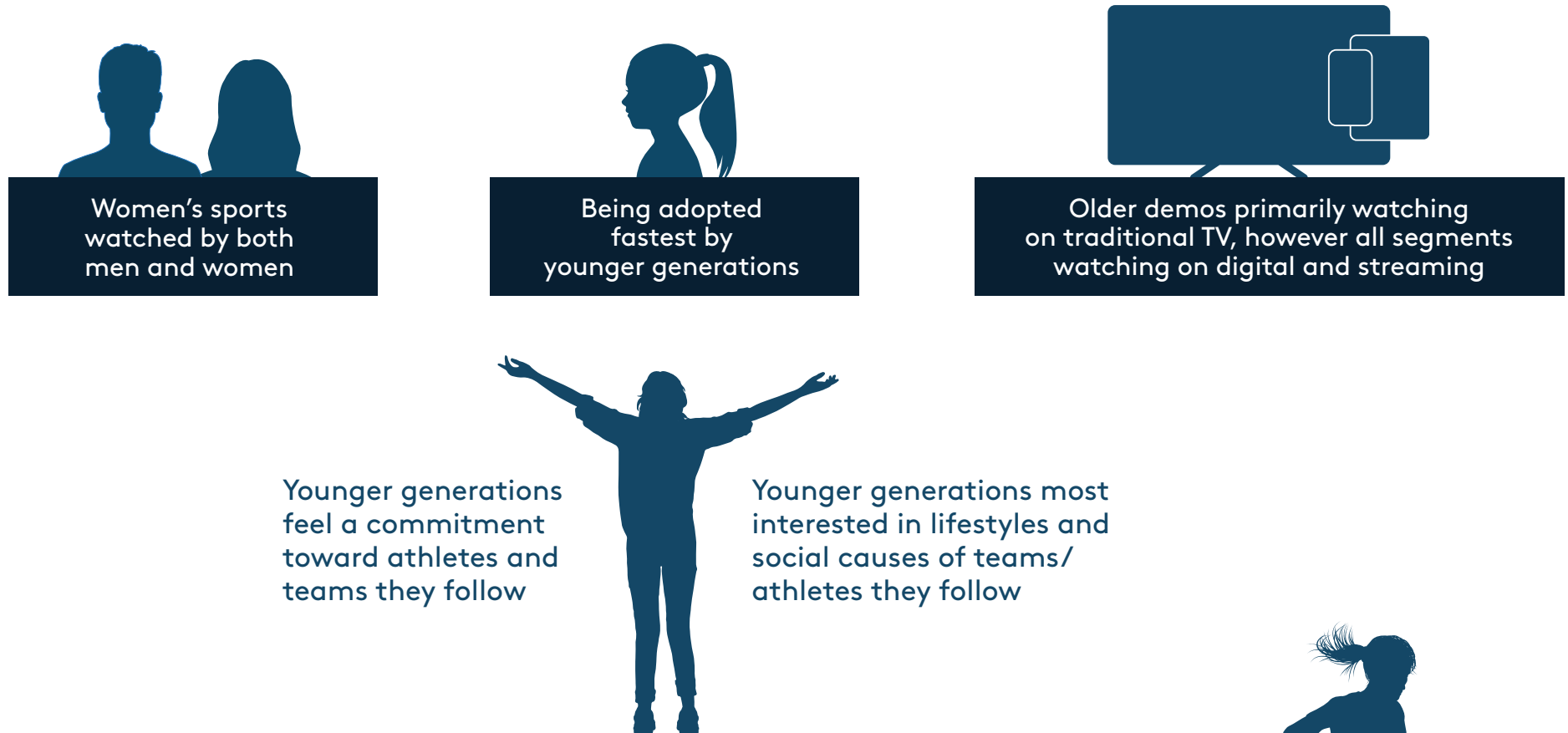
Rain the Growth Agency conducted an online quantitative survey leveraging proprietary research tool, MindReader™, to further marketers' understanding of the women's sports fan profile and what fandom really means in this space.

Nearly **1,000** U.S. adults aged **18-74** participated in the survey who said they engaged in **women's** or **men's sports content**.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Increasing interest in women's sports across all generations



## Brand engagement opportunities among all generational segments

FOWS looking for more than sports-related content from teams/ athletes they follow

Brand-led and athlete-led promotion opportunities abound

FOWS more likely to purchase from brands associated with women's teams/ female athletes



# WOMEN'S SPORTS FANS ARE AFFLUENT AND EDUCATED

## Fans of Womens' Sports' (FOWS) Profile

**58%**

of FOWS have a college/associates degree or higher

**37%**

have a household income of \$100K+

**83%**

reside in urban or suburban environments

**62%**

are married

**73%**

live in households with two or more people

**48%**

identify as Democrats, with 30% identifying as Republicans

	Follow men's and women's sports	Follow only women's sports
White/Caucasian	76%	53%
Hispanic or Latino	16%	31%
Black/African American	12%	18%
Asian or Pacific Islander	5%	8%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	6%
Other	5%	14%
Prefer not to answer	0%	1%

**75%**

are Caucasians with high concentrations of Hispanic and African-American audiences that follow only women's sports vs. men's and women's sports

*Note: Respondents were asked separately if they are of Hispanic or Latino origin/descent, therefore may have selected more than one ethnicity.*

## WHAT SPORTS ARE FANS WATCHING?

Whether sitting down to watch a game or following their favorite athletes on social media, viewers across all generations are engaging with women's sports. **Younger generations are interested in creating a connection and community with the teams and athletes they follow and are showing interest in more than just their skillset.** They want to know what brands they endorse, what social causes they support, and what their lifestyle looks like off the field.

This represents an opportunity for **brands to engage with athletes and integrate their products** into the day-to-day activities of female competitors.

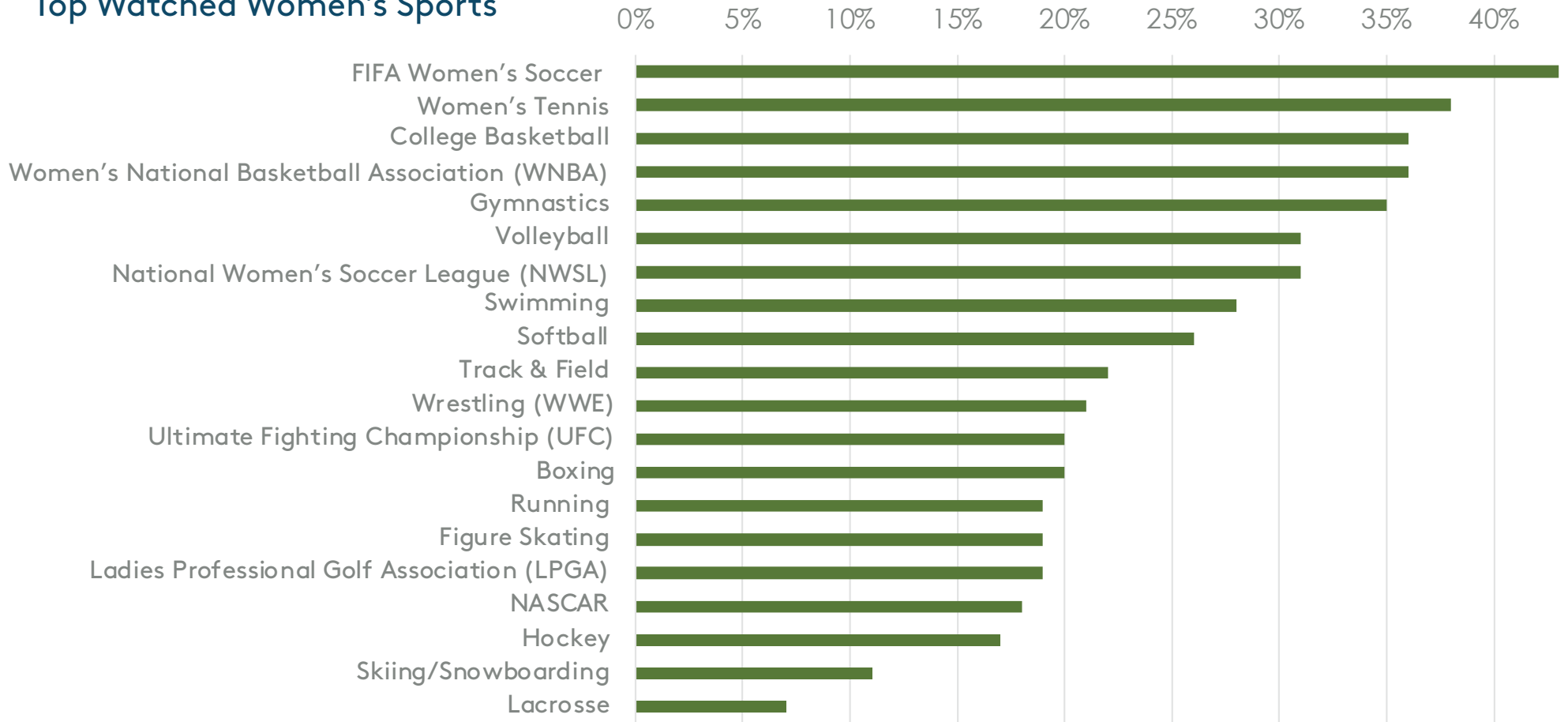
Given that the women's sports ad market is still relatively underutilized, they also have an opportunity to connect their brand to women's sports, creating a link to new and engaged audiences.

**Soccer, tennis** and **basketball** are the top women's sports watched, with competitions like **gymnastics** and **volleyball** also bringing in large audiences.



# WHAT SPORTS ARE FANS WATCHING?

## Top Watched Women's Sports



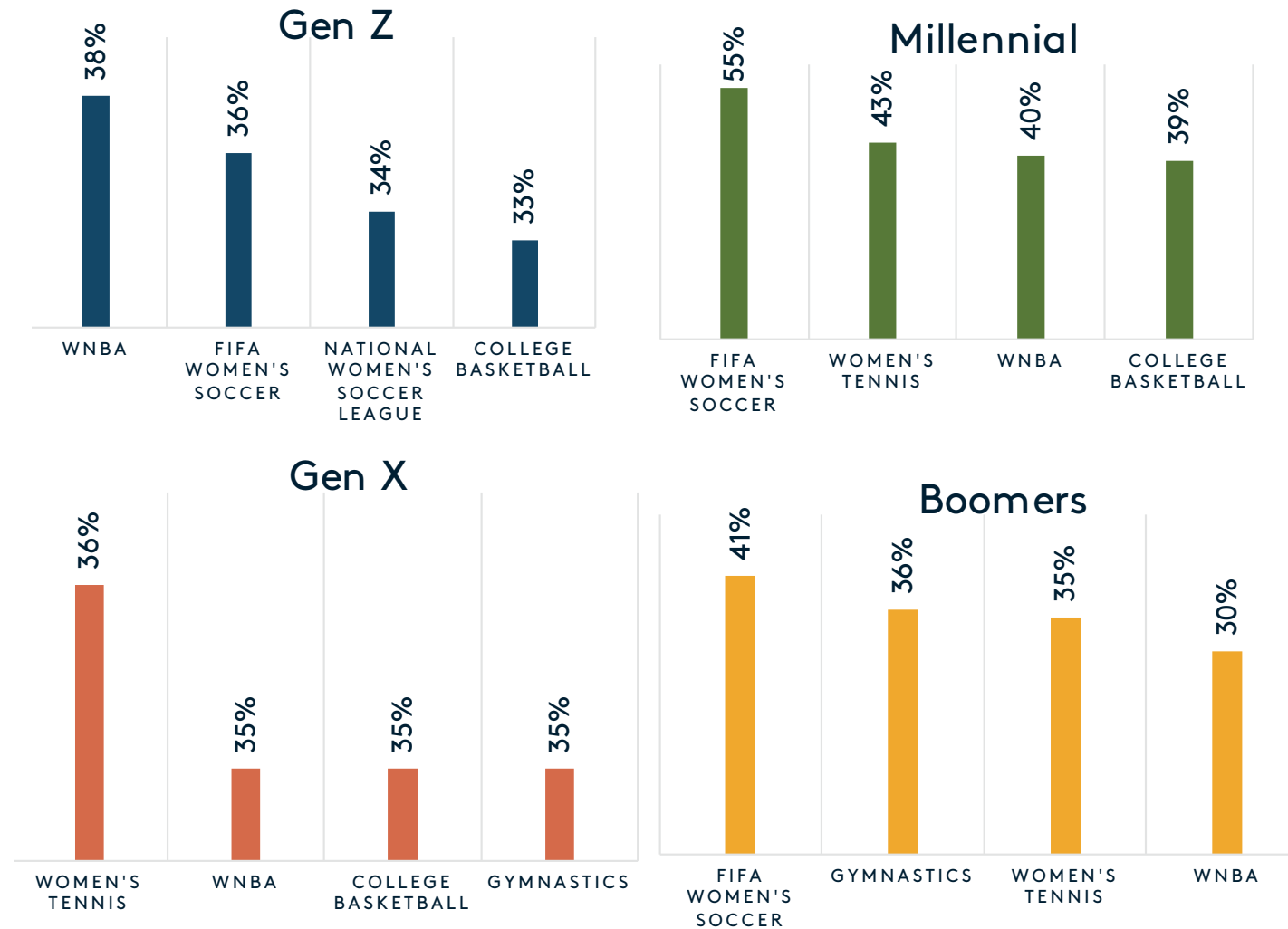
Q: In the last 12 months, which of the following women's sports leagues/events have you watched, listened to, or attended?  
Please select all that apply.

Note: This data may be slightly skewed given the survey was administered during the FIFA Women's World Cup.

# WHAT SPORTS ARE FANS WATCHING?

Women's **soccer** and the **WNBA** are pervasively viewed across **all generational segments**, while **NCAA basketball** is popular among **Gen Z** and **Millennials**. Women's **tennis** and **gymnastics** are top sports to watch among **older generations**. While not in the top four, **LPGA golf** is a notably popular sport for **Boomers**.

## Women's Sports: What They Watch by Generation



Q: In the last 12 months, which of the following women's sports leagues/events have you watched, listened to, or attended? Please select all that apply.



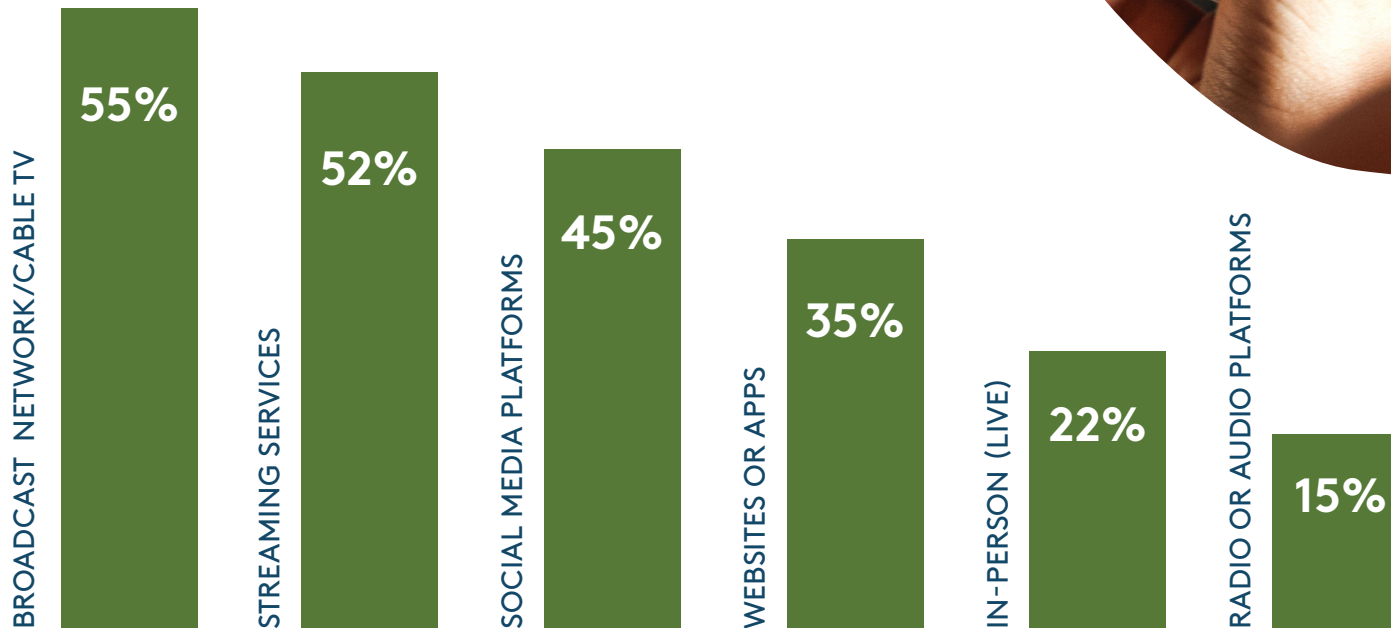
# WOMEN'S SPORTS MEDIA CONSUMPTION TRENDS

With more major competitions being shown during primetime viewing hours, **linear TV** remains the **primary outlet for watching women's sports**, with **streaming** and **social media** closely following.

It's important to note that women's sports media is being consumed **across many screens**, providing brands with opportunities to **target fans across mediums**.

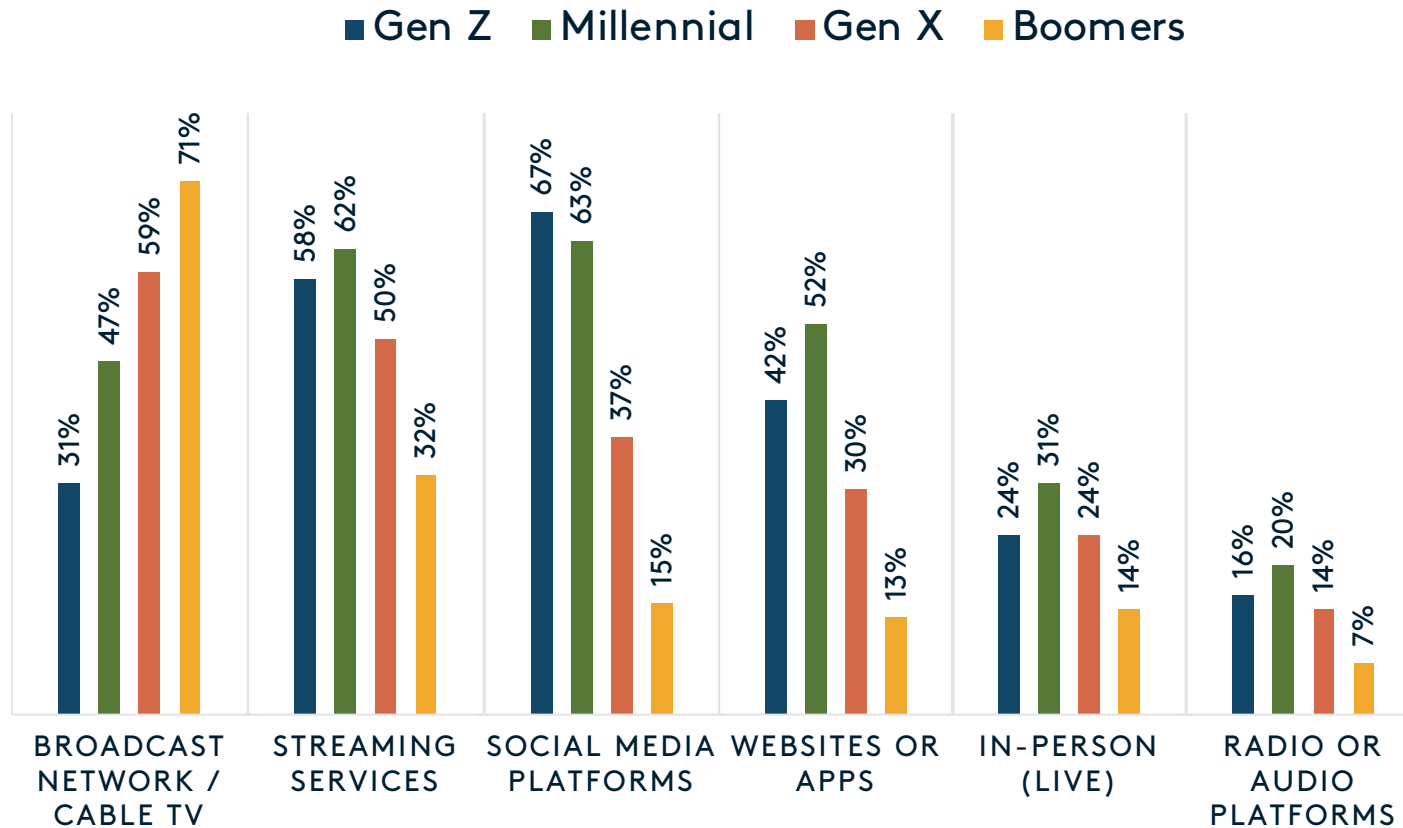


## Women's Sports: How They Watch



Q: How do you generally watch and consume women's sports content? Please select all that apply.

# WOMEN'S SPORTS MEDIA CONSUMPTION TRENDS



Q: How do you generally watch and consume women's sports content? Please select all that apply.

The majority of Boomers and Gen X are viewing women's sports via **linear TV**, with Gen Z and Millennials opting for **streaming services, websites** and **social media** for viewing.

# ENGAGING WITH FOWS

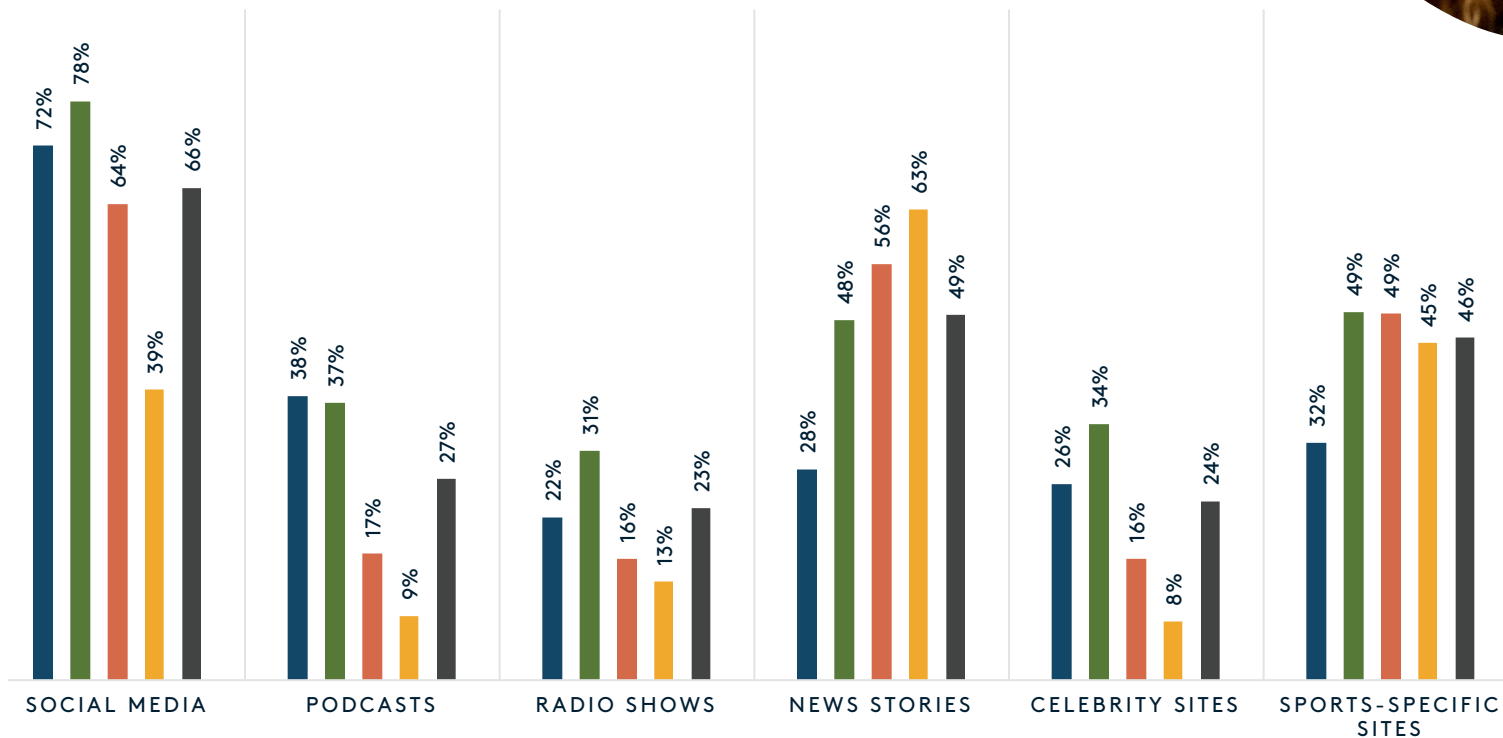
Regardless of generational segment, being a women's sports fan makes the majority of this audience feel connected to a larger entity. Whether forming a bond with an individual athlete or a specific team, that connection point creates opportunities for brands and athletes alike to communicate with—and influence—their fanbase. Furthering this point of connection and relationship building, Gen Z and Millennial audiences are also interested in knowing more about female athletes off the field.

When it comes to following athletes and teams in the media, the **older generations** prefer more **traditional methods** such as news stories and sport-specific sites to get their information. **Younger generations** vastly prefer to get their information via **social media** and are more likely to engage with **podcasts** and **celebrity sites** to obtain additional details on the athletes and teams they follow.



## Where Fans Follow Female Athletes

■ Gen Z ■ Millennial ■ Gen X ■ Boomers ■ ALL

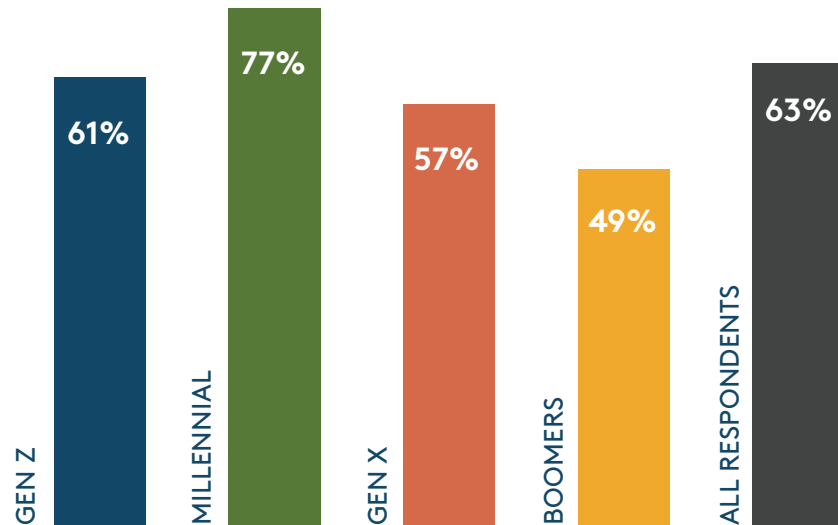


Q: In what ways do you follow women's teams or female athletes in the media? Please select all that apply.

# ENGAGING WITH FOWS

Millennials have typically been avid social media users since they were in college, following friends and family members to stay connected. Many have recently evolved their social media use to include **following celebrities, influencers and athletes on Instagram and TikTok** which has shaped how they learn about new products and causes important to who they follow.

## I Am Interested in the Lifestyles of the Female Athletes I Follow



Q: How much do you agree with the following statement about women's sports?  
"I am interested in the lifestyles of female athletes I follow." (Respondents who selected "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" represented in chart).



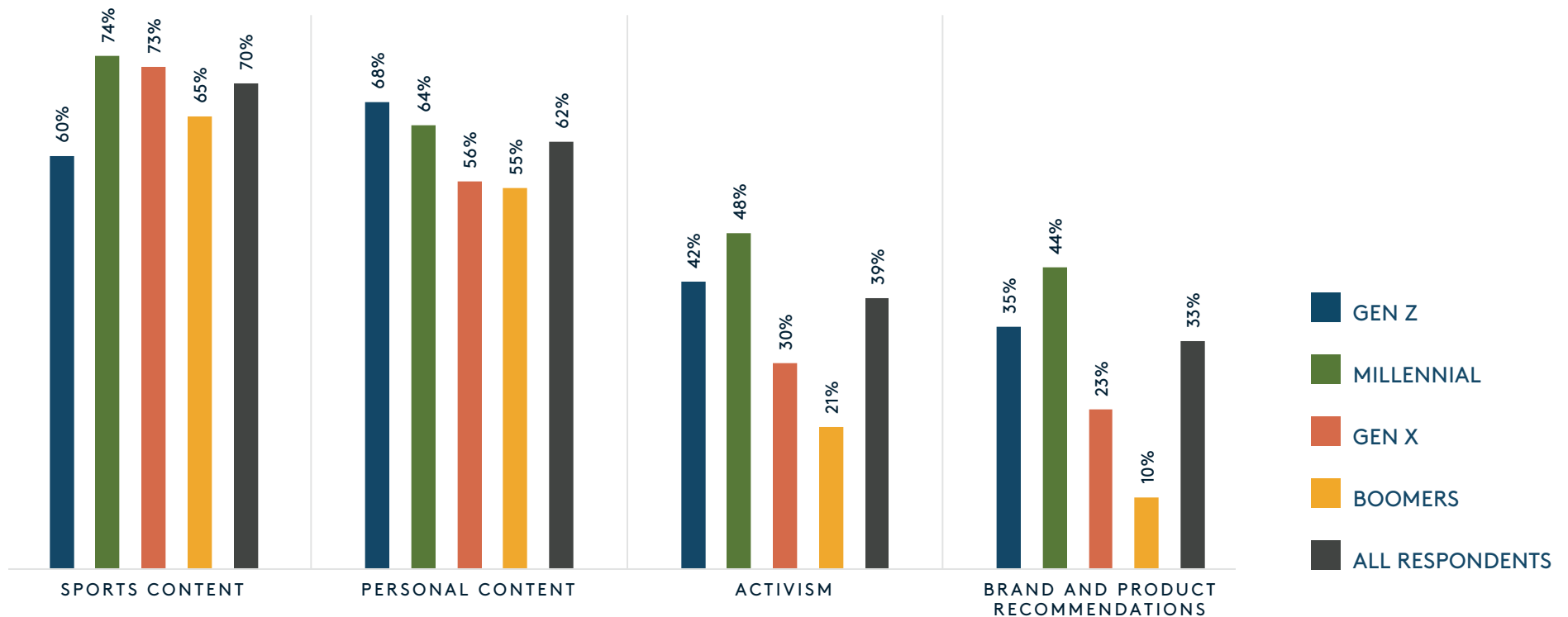
# ENGAGING WITH FOWS

The content fans are looking for from female athletes they follow does not vary significantly based on generational age.

The majority of survey respondents across all segments are looking for sports and personal content from the athletes and teams they follow in the media, however; younger generations are more open to **activism, brand** and **product recommendations** than older generations.

For brands, this provides an opportunity to collaborate with female athletes that share their values and whose interests align with their products to help amplify their message to a wide and engaged audience. It's important to include athletes in the creative process to enable telling an authentic story that resonates with their followers, and then build a strategy that will meet media reach goals.

## What Content Do Fans Look For



Q: Why do you follow a particular female athlete(s) in the media? Please select all that apply.

# IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES FOR BRANDS

**71%**

of Millennials are more likely to purchase products from brands promoted by female athletes they follow

**74%**

of Millennials, 64% of Gen Z and 55% of Gen X agree that they are more likely to purchase from a brand that promotes women's sports

## BRAND IMPACT

**63%**

of FOWS across generations are interested in the causes that female athletes support

**71%**

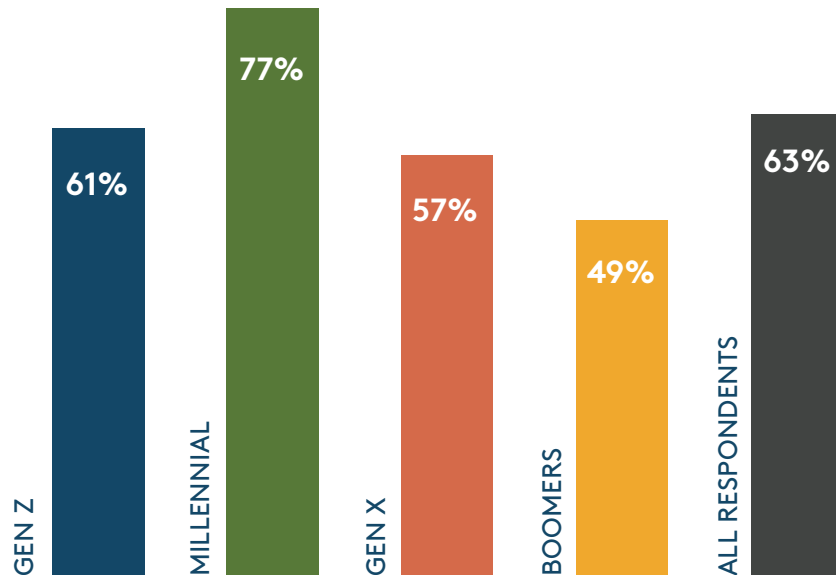
of FOWS across generations agree that brands that partner with women's teams show their commitment to the advancement of women's sports

# ENGAGING WITH FOWS

The majority of Gen Z, Millennial and Gen X audiences are **interested in the causes female athletes support**, as well as nearly half of the Boomer audience. **Purpose-driven brands** can benefit **by aligning with athletes** who support the **same causes they support**.

## Fans That Are Interested in the Causes Female Athletes Support

■ Gen Z ■ Millennial ■ Gen X ■ Boomers ■ All Respondents



Q: How much do you agree with the following statement? I am interested in the causes that female athletes support. (Respondents who selected "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" represented in chart).

# THE TIME TO INVEST IN WOMEN'S SPORTS IS NOW

**The data speaks for itself.** So if you're a brand looking to test into or spend a larger portion of your marketing budget on this growing audience, how do you get started?

For performance marketers, testing into a women's sports or female athlete content opportunity to prove your investment will work may be the most logical first step. Regardless of your budget, Rain the Growth Agency can partner with you to develop a holistic plan to not only prove viability in this space for your brand, but also plan for the next level of scale. Brands can follow a simple formula for exploring opportunities:

1. **Align your brand with a sport, athlete or team that your audience will resonate with.**
2. **Discover and tell a compelling, authentic story that directly connects your message with the opportunity.**
3. **Amplify your story with the right media mix.**
4. **Align the seasonality of your brand to that of the sport, to maximize performance.**
5. **Use data to track and optimize your campaigns.**

An integrated media and creative partner can help you navigate the evolving landscape of women's sports so your brand can efficiently join this movement. Rain the Growth Agency's dedicated practice area, HypeHer, helps identify media and content opportunities and helps brands capitalize on the meteoric rise in viewership of women's sports and female athletes' social influence at a relatively low cost of entry. With more than 25 years of proven performance marketing success, we align female athlete content opportunities with effective high-reach women's sports programming.

**Ready to learn more? Contact us at [HypeHer@rainforgrowth.com](mailto:HypeHer@rainforgrowth.com).**

