



U.S. WOMEN'S SPORTS 2025: GIVE THE FANS WHAT THEY WANT

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For those who follow women's sports, the last 12 months have been wild. Record-setting viewership across multiple sports. A hypeworthy Olympic and Paralympic storytelling cycle. Surging new leagues. Fiercely contested franchise bids. Sizzling team valuations. Some days it feels like it's *literally all happening*, and the numbers reflect that frenzy. In late 2023 Deloitte predicted that global women's sports revenue would smash through the \$1 billion barrier in 2024; when all was said and done, their \$1.28B projection was short by a cool \$600 million (and time will tell if their \$2.35B forecast for 2025 proves similarly conservative).

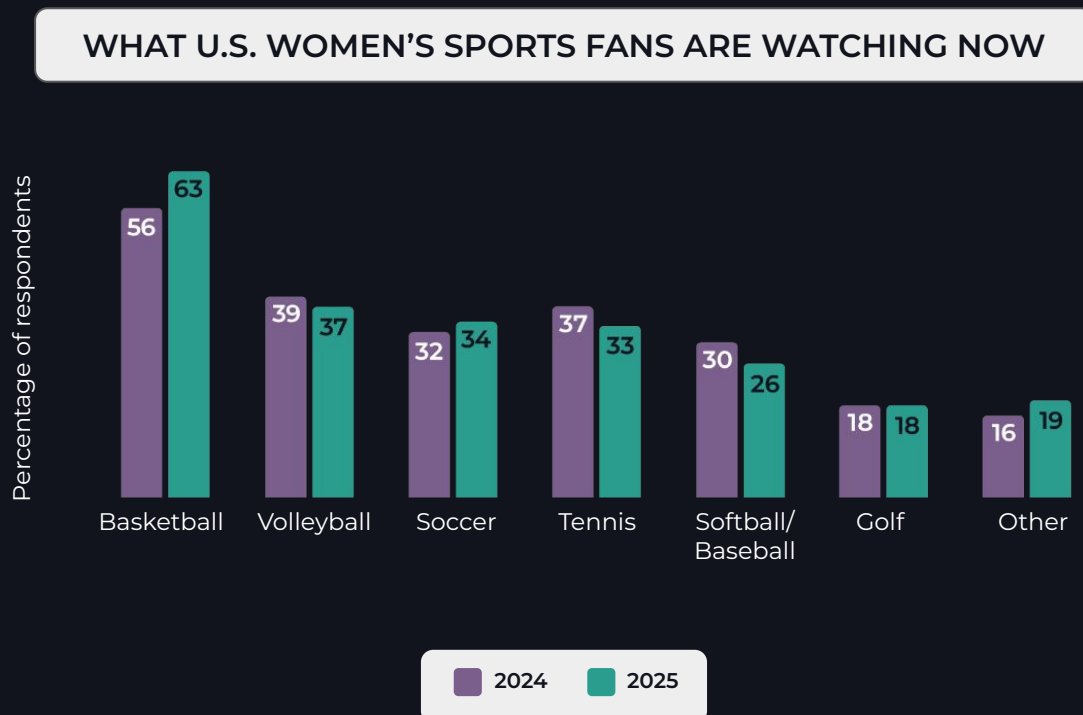
For marketers and sponsorship teams following along, this acceleration presents incredible opportunity, but also creates a strategic dilemma. Given the many 'ways to play', how can brands tap into the massive momentum of women's sports in the most impactful way?

At Parity we think constantly about this dilemma and we spend our days helping clients forge winning strategies. Following our 2024 research on international women's sports fandom in partnership with SurveyMonkey, we narrowed our focus to the U.S. and asked more pointed commercial questions. This resulting report shows where US audiences are one year on from our original study, but also dives into new areas such as how trust in women athletes is deepening, which industry categories are leaving the strongest impression as sponsors, and what kind of involvement fans actually want to see from brands that participate. Our goal: to provide practical inputs to brands actively exploring partnerships in women's sports. We hope you find it useful.

U.S. Women's Sports Fans: What They're Watching Now

Basketball extends its lead while others stay strong

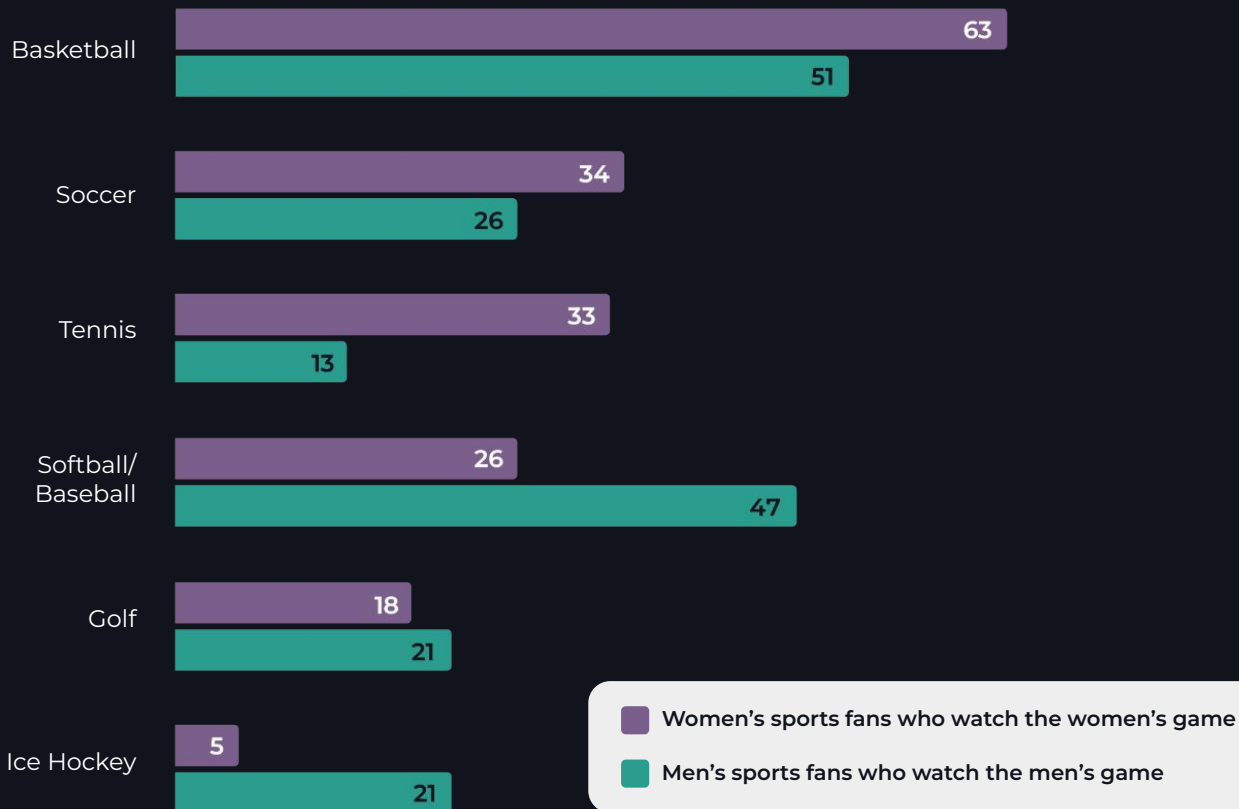
For brands considering potential entry points into U.S. women's sports, basketball continues to offer unmatched reach and popularity. While most women's sports maintained roughly the same share of viewership among women's sports fans since our last report, women's basketball extended its already commanding lead, with almost two-thirds of U.S. women's sports fans now saying they are fans.



Between compelling plotlines, personalities and playing standards across the WNBA and now Unrivaled's 3x3 league, we foresee further upside ahead. What might full potential look like? For comparative purposes we asked U.S. men's sports fans to share what they're watching. American Football topped the charts, with 72% saying they watch - setting a benchmark for women's hoops in future years.

With 63% now tuning in, women's basketball attracts a greater share of women's sports fans than men's basketball enjoys among men's sports fans (51%). We also saw a significantly higher share of fandom for women's soccer and women's tennis than for the men's equivalents among male sports fans. The opposite pattern is true in sports with newer pro women's leagues: baseball/ softball and hockey see much higher traction among men's sports fans than among women's sports fans. As Athletes Unlimited's new softball league launches with strategic investment from MLB and as the PWHL continues to gain traction, we expect fandom to keep growing for the next wave of professional women's sports, giving brands the opportunity to get involved early and stand out as that growth continues.

WHAT U.S. SPORTS FANS ARE WATCHING RIGHT NOW (%)

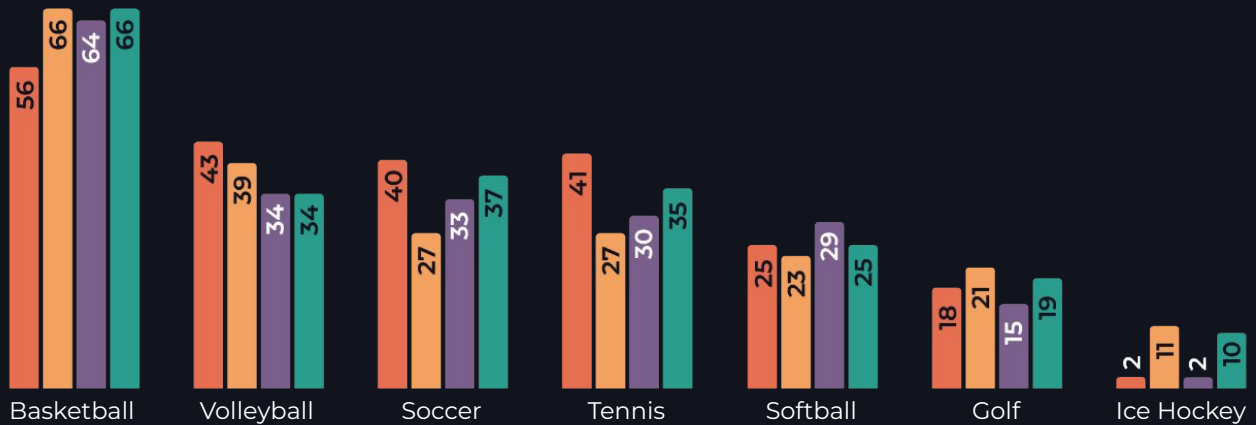


Regional teams hold sway

This year we analyzed women's sports fan responses by region and found reasonable consistency, with a few notable variations.

- The West didn't *quite* look like the rest of the country, with slightly lower women's basketball following and the other top sports like volleyball, soccer, and tennis noticeably higher. We expect basketball to pick up with the Golden State Valkyries' WNBA launch this season.
- Hockey clearly enjoys a much stronger following in the Northeast and Midwest, a reflection of the PWHL's initial footprint - which makes the recent announcement of two expansion teams in western North America (Seattle and Vancouver, Canada) all the more timely. Who knows, perhaps the South will be due a team next.

WOMEN'S SPORTS VIEWERSHIP BY REGION (%)




West Midwest South Northeast

New leagues hit the ground running

In line with what women's sports fans say they're watching, the most popular women's sports league by far is the WNBA with 51% of U.S. women's sports fans self-identifying as fans. The Women's Tennis Association (WTA), National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) and the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) are clustered together next, with 19-20% of women's sports fans saying they are fans. These entities have all been around for a while, unlike the remaining leagues we asked about. Encouragingly, the newer leagues already seem to be gaining traction among women's sports fans.

WOMEN'S SPORTS FANDOM BY LEAGUE/ASSOCIATION

Old Guard

League/ Association	Inaugural Season	% of women's sports fans who watch	Strongest fandom pockets	U.S. expansion teams
LPGA <i>Ladies Professional Golf Association</i>	1950	19%	Even distribution	
WTA <i>Women's Tennis Association</i>	1973	20%	Northeast West	
WNBA <i>Women's National Basketball Association</i>	1997	51%	Midwest	
NWSL <i>National Women's Soccer League</i>	2013	19%	Northeast West	  

New Guard

PVF <i>Professional Volleyball Federation</i>	2024	15%	West Midwest	
PWHL <i>Professional Women's Hockey League</i>	2024	4%	Northeast Midwest	
USL Super League <i>United Soccer League</i>	2024	13%	South West	
LOVB <i>League One Volleyball</i>	2025	10%	Midwest South	
Unrivaled <i>3x3 Basketball</i>	2025	8%	South Midwest West	



Pro Women Athletes: More Widely Trusted Than Ever

Our latest research shows that **the influence and credibility of professional women athletes now extends well beyond women's sports fans.** For those looking to build authentic brand partnerships - which we hope is all of you - here's some encouraging news:

The percentage of respondents who trust that a woman athlete believes in the products she promotes has grown across multiple cohorts in the last 12 months.

In fact, **this trust factor grew fastest among men who watch women's sports (+8 percentage points vs. last year), those who watch women's sports daily or weekly (+6 percentage points), and those who say they never watch women's sports.** 58% of these 'never-watchers' said they trust that women athletes believe in the products they promote - a full 6 percentage points higher than last year.

Given sustained high and rising levels of trust across multiple consumer cohorts, forging partnerships with women athletes is an increasingly smart bet to engage key audiences, build credibility, and cultivate brand love.

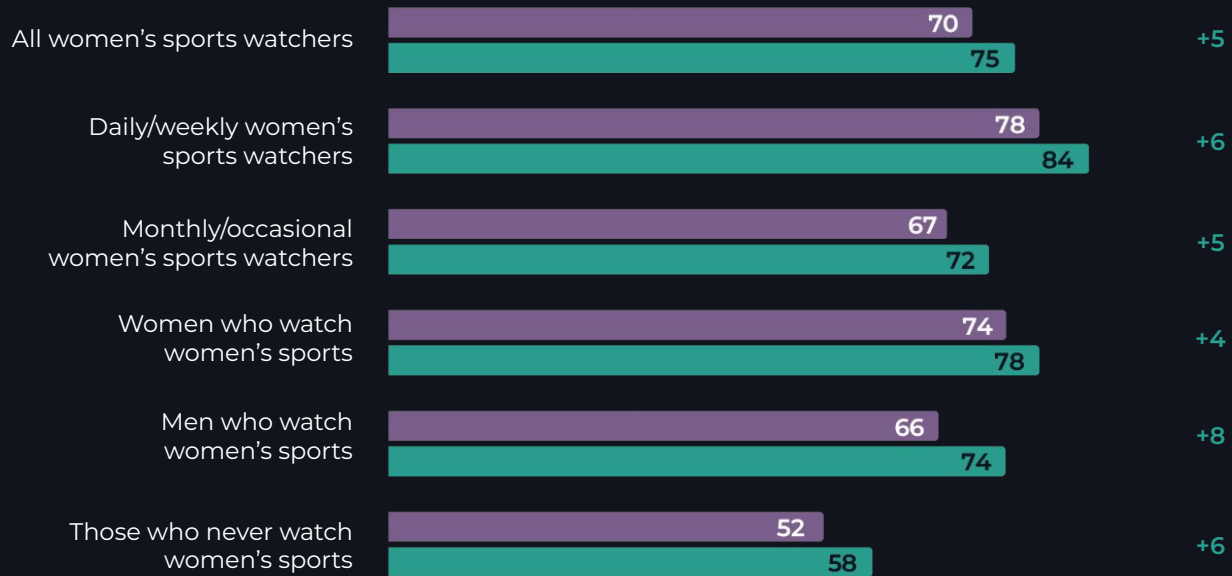
PERCENT WHO TRUST THAT WOMEN ATHLETES BELIEVE IN THE PRODUCTS THEY PROMOTE

All sports fans

Percentage point increase



By viewing habits









2024 2025


Women's Sports Sponsorships: Opportunity by Brand Category


When we asked our respondents which brand categories they're aware sponsor women's sports, three categories emerge in a class of their own across almost all respondent cohorts: Apparel, Food & Beverage, and Health & Beauty.


KEY CATEGORY TAKEAWAYS

Category	Key Takeaway	Awareness of women's sports sponsorships	% more likely to purchase from category sponsor	Examples we love
 APPAREL	Long-term investment is paying off	55%		Rakuten's game day fashion-focused partnership with the Golden State Valkyries
 FOOD & BEVERAGE	Gender-balanced awareness and appetite, pun intended	33%		Minnesota Pork Board, Hormel, and First Watch celebrating silver medal Olympic synchro divers Kassidy Cook and Sarah Bacon (#Cooknbacon)
 HEALTH & BEAUTY	Newer category with strong momentum is seeing exciting traction	32%		IPSY Cosmetics creating content with Paralympic hopefuls packing for Paris

 All sports fans

 Women's sports fans

 Women who watch women's sports

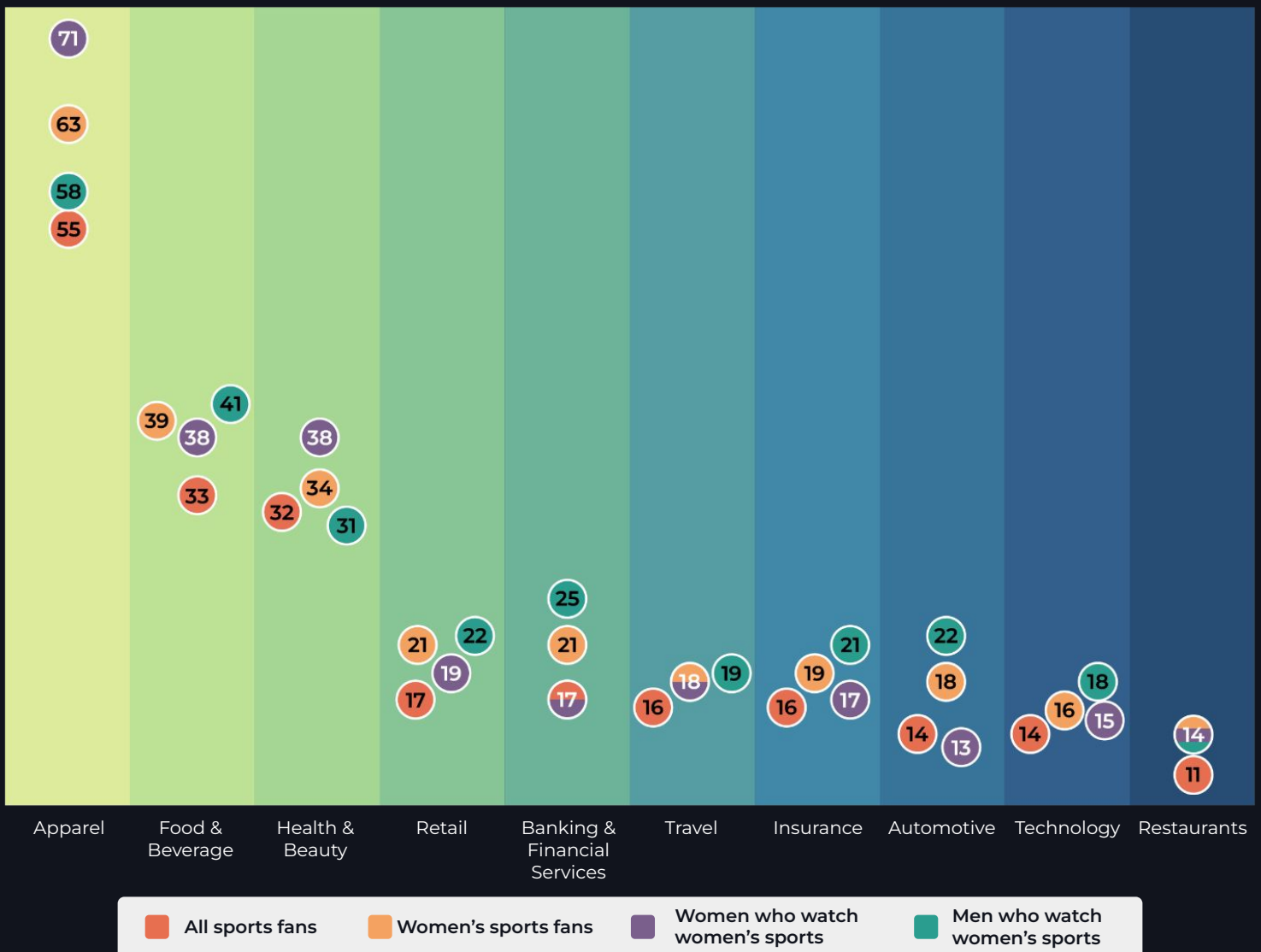
 Daily/weekly women's sports watchers

Fan awareness

When it comes to fan awareness of categories sponsoring women's sports, Apparel stands high above the rest. Open-ended responses suggest that Nike, and to a lesser extent brands like New Balance, Lululemon and Athleta, drive heightened awareness of category involvement. (This survey was in the field roughly two months after Super Bowl LIX, and people were still buzzing about Nike's "You can't win, so win" commercial.)

Women who watch women's sports are even more aware of sponsors in Apparel (71% vs. 58% of men who watch women's sports) and Health & Beauty (38% of women vs. 31% of men). On the other hand, men who watch women's sports are more likely than women watchers to be aware of sponsorship by Restaurants (41% vs 38%), Banking & Financial Services (25% vs 17%), and Automotive companies (22% vs 13%).

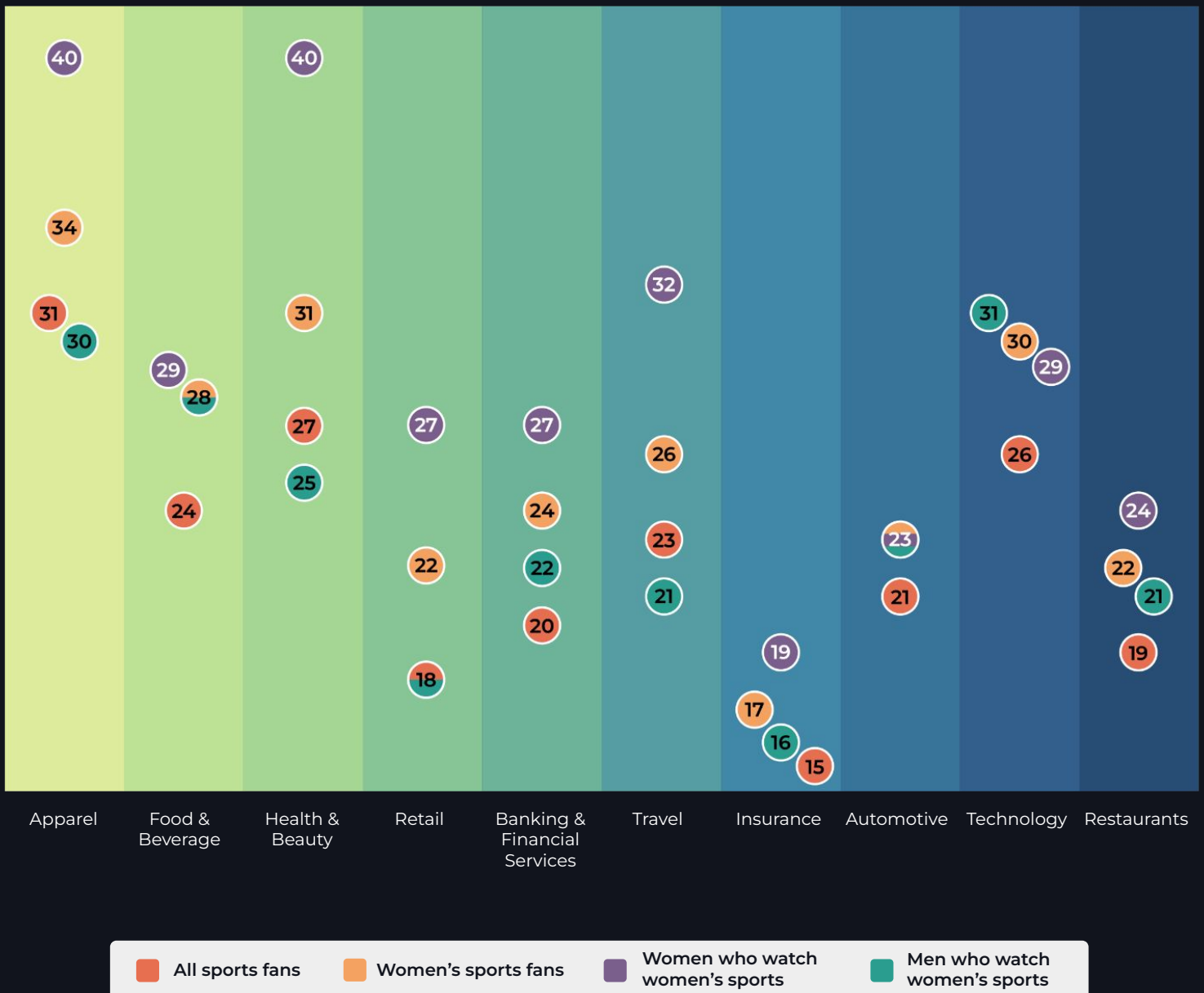
WOMEN'S SPORTS SPONSORSHIP AWARENESS ACROSS CATEGORIES (%)



Future appetite

We also asked which categories people are most interested in seeing sponsor women's sports. While Apparel, Food & Beverage and Health & Beauty again score highly across all audiences, women who watch women's sports also have strong appetite to see Travel, Technology, Retail, and Banking & Financial Services as sponsors, while men who watch women's sports are relatively more excited about Technology and Automotive sponsors.

WOMEN'S SPORTS SPONSORSHIP APPETITE ACROSS CATEGORIES (%)

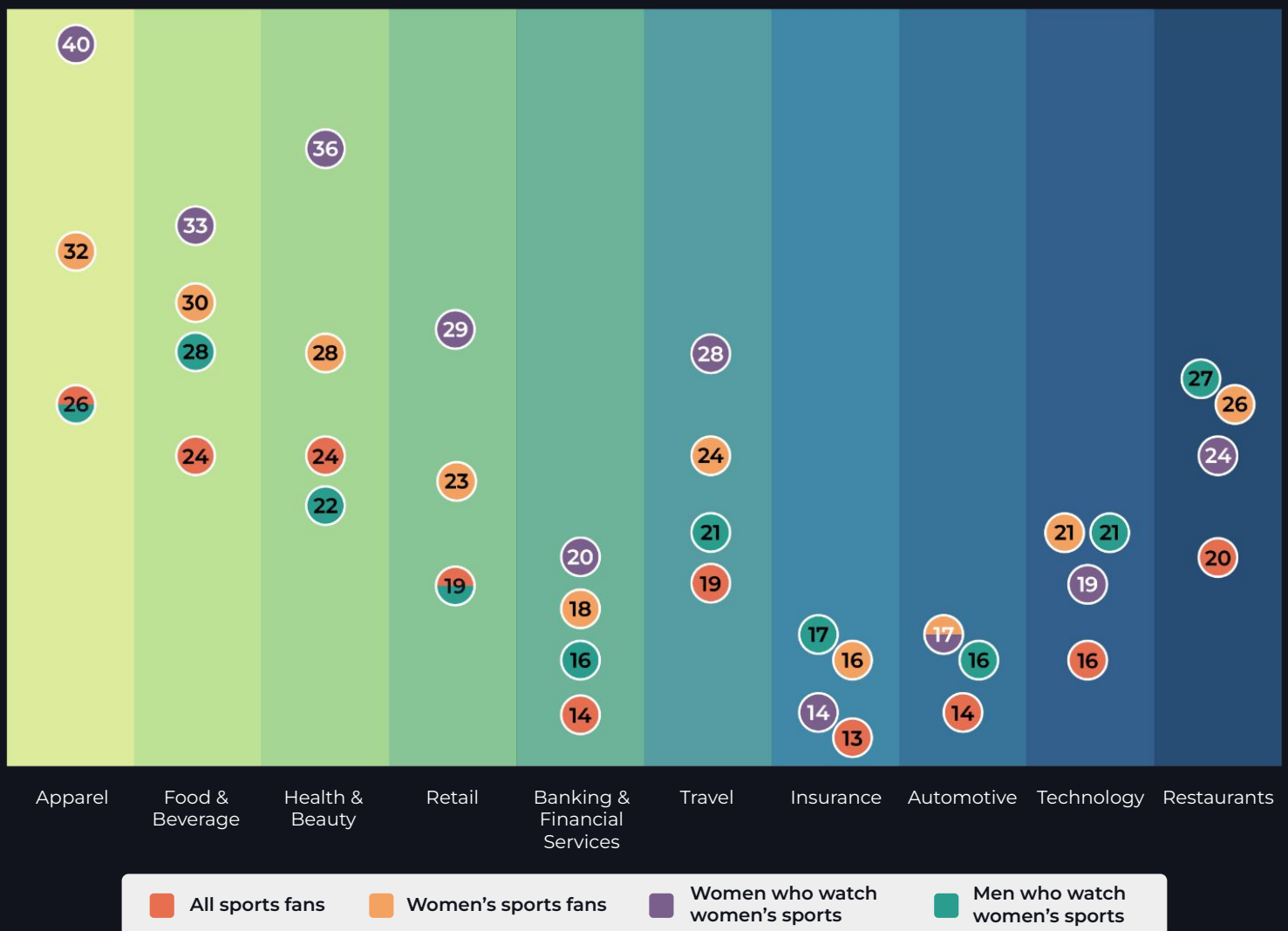


Impact on likelihood to purchase

Here's why all of this matters: sponsorship awareness has a clear bearing on consumer purchase decisions. If we look across all categories, on average 19% or one in five sports fans say that sponsorship of women's sports makes them more likely to consider purchasing from that category. The average rises to 24% of women's sports fans, roughly one in four.

For women watching women's sports, impact on likelihood to purchase is highest for sponsors in Apparel (40%), Health & Beauty (36%), Food & Beverage (33%), and Retail (29%). Men watching women's sports seem most swayed by their stomachs: 28% say they're more likely to consider purchasing from Food & Beverage sponsors while 27% are more likely to consider purchasing from Restaurant sponsors.

WOMEN'S SPORTS SPONSORSHIP IMPACT ON LIKELIHOOD TO PURCHASE (%)



A high jumper is captured in mid-air, performing a Fosbury Flop over a bar. The athlete is upside down, with their back to the ground and legs tucked. They are wearing a blue and white striped singlet and white shorts. Their long hair is trailing behind them. The background is a blurred stadium with spectators. A large blue rounded rectangle is overlaid on the image, containing white and yellow text.

What Fans Want From Brands Entering Women's Sports

Our research findings support Parity's thesis:

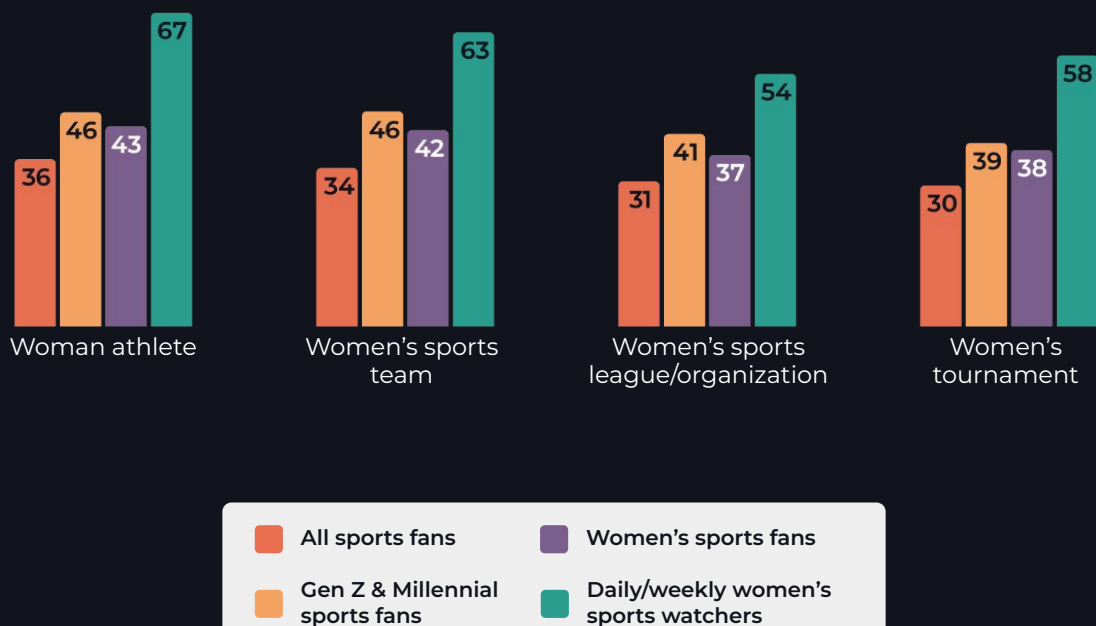
The optimal women's sports portfolio for any brand combines sponsorship of assets (whether a league, a team, or a tournament) AND partnerships with professional women athletes.

By working directly with the athletes themselves, brands can **boost audience trust, lean into organic storytelling opportunities, and achieve greater activation flexibility.**

Athlete partnerships prove slightly more influential than all other sponsorship options across all the cohorts we surveyed. We also noted the following:

- Younger people who watch sports exhibit a greater likelihood to purchase from women's sports sponsors. Nearly half of Gen Z and Millennial sport watchers are more likely to purchase from a brand that sponsors a woman athlete (46%) or team (46%), compared to all sports fans (36% for athlete, 34% for team). Brands looking to engage younger audiences should lean into partnerships with women athletes.
- Those who watch women's sports daily or weekly are dramatically more likely to say their purchase decisions are influenced by sponsorships. Two-thirds (67%) say they are more likely to purchase from a brand that sponsors a woman athlete. Hardcore women's sports fans take notice and will reward sponsors that step up.

HOW SPONSORSHIP TYPES INCREASE LIKELIHOOD TO PURCHASE (%)



We also asked those who watch women's sports what would make them most likely to engage with a brand sponsor. The answers that bubbled to the top: cause-driven campaigns (36%) and products designed in partnership with women athletes (36%). Cause-driven campaigns resonated most strongly with men who watch women's sports, while women watchers seem most passionate about the potential for brands to build and design products in collaboration with women athletes.

EFFECTIVENESS OF ACTIVATIONS IN DRIVING ENGAGEMENT AMONG WOMEN'S SPORTS FANS (%)



Note: respondents could select up to three answers

When we pan out and look more broadly at what all sports fans want:

- 40% of women who watch *any* sports say product collaborations with women athletes make them likelier to consider purchasing from a brand sponsoring women's sports.
- 31% of men who watch *any* sports say cause-driven campaigns make them likelier to consider purchasing from a brand sponsoring women's sports.

Factoring in generational preferences, our recommendations for how brands can most effectively get involved in women's sports are as follows.

How Brands Can Effectively Engage Sports Fans Through Women's Sports

TO ENGAGE...

Gen Z and Millennial sports fans

Gen X sports fans

Baby Boomer + sports fans

LEVERAGE...

- #1 Social media contests/ giveaways
- #2 Product collaborations

- #1 Product collaborations
- #2 Cause-driven campaigns

- #1 Cause-driven campaigns
- #2 Product collaborations

The Full-Funnel Impact of Sponsoring Women's Sports

Sports fans broadly say they are more likely to purchase from women's sports sponsors across a wide range of categories, but will they follow through? Good news: 1 in 5 women's sports fans have already put their money where their mouth is - and loyalty and buying signals from women who watch women's sports are stronger at every stage of the funnel.

WHEN A BRAND INVESTS IN WOMEN'S SPORTS (%)

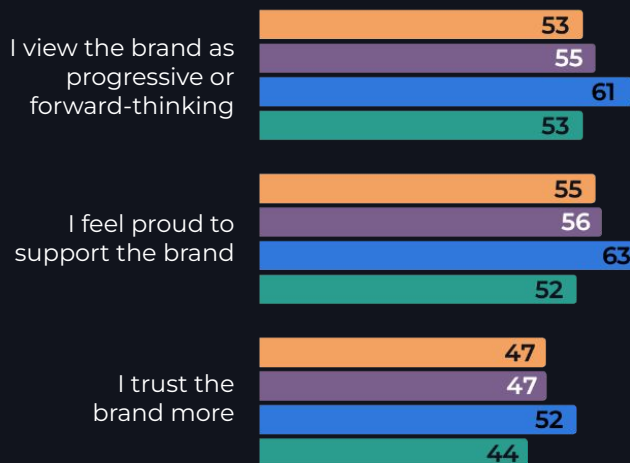
Awareness



It starts with sowing the seeds

The majority of respondents across cohorts agree that when a brand invests in women's sports, it boosts their awareness of that brand.

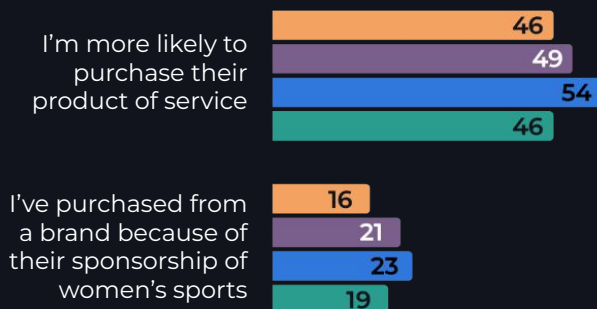
Affinity



Brands are using women's sports marketing to drive real emotional engagement

Brands that sponsor women's sports are more often seen as progressive or forward-thinking. Gen Z and Millennial sports fans and women's sports fans say they are proud to support brands that invest in women's sports. And over half of women who watch women's sports say that they trust brands more when they sponsor.

Conversion



Fans are starting to take action

Almost half of women's sports fans (including 54% of women who watch) say they are likely to purchase from brands that are backing women's sports. And roughly one in five confirm that they've already purchased because of a brand's sponsorship support. Given many brands are still beginning their women's sports journey, this bodes well for future sponsor returns.



PARTING THOUGHTS

We began this report by reflecting on a wild 12 months in women's professional sports, and as we approach mid-2025 we see no signs of slowdown. While brand investment dollars continue to be concentrated in a handful of sports - witness the WNBA tipping off its season with a record 45 official sponsors - we see growing appetite from brands to think outside the box and find new ways to grow their business through women's sports.

In summary, here are **three key implications from our research**.

1. **Professional women athletes are more trusted than ever by the majority of U.S. sports fans - even those who never watch women's sports.** And the type of sponsorship fans are most likely to get excited about is partnership with the athletes themselves. As your brand explores new pathways to meaningful customer engagement via women's sports, consider an athlete-driven approach.
2. **There's so much opportunity for brand storytelling in women's sports.** Fans want more than a 'logo slap' - they show interest in a variety of activation types, from cause-driven campaigns to product collaborations with women athletes and social media contests. Think about tailoring your approach based on high-priority audiences.
3. **Women's sports fans are paying attention to which categories are sponsoring women's sports, and one in five have already purchased products and services because of that support.** We believe these fans, especially those who watch frequently, will continue to vote with their wallets. While Apparel, Food & Beverage, and Health & Beauty are breaking through most prominently right now, we are still so early in the evolution of women's sports sponsorship, making this an excellent time for a wide range of category sponsors to dive in.

At Parity we have the privilege of working with 1,100+ pro women athletes who play 85 sports. We firmly believe there's a brand "out there" for every athlete, as well as athletes that are ideal for every brand. We hope our research provides marketing and sponsorship teams, and the agencies that support them, with ample reasons to accelerate their exploration of the women's sports landscape. Ultimately, many factors will go into determining your optimal women's sports strategy: budget, values alignment, audience relevance, product affinity, storytelling potential, and so much more. We're here to help.

METHODOLOGY

This poll was conducted in partnership with SurveyMonkey April 8-11, 2025 among a national sample of 2,385 U.S. adults 18+. Respondents for this survey were selected from the more than 2 million people who take surveys on the SurveyMonkey platform each day. The modeled error estimate for this survey is plus or minus 2.0 percentage points. Data were weighted for age, race, sex, education, and geography using the Census Bureau's American Community Survey to reflect the demographic composition of the United States.

Special thanks to our friends at SurveyMonkey for their ongoing support of our research initiatives.

ABOUT PARITY

Parity is the leading platform for professional women athlete partnerships. With a mission to close the gender income gap in sports and beyond, Parity connects brands with a diverse network of **more than 1,100 women athletes from 85 sports**. Through sponsorship activations, content collaborations, and strategic advisory, Parity helps brands **authentically engage the most trusted voices in sports today**. For more information, visit www.paritynow.co, request a [consultation](#), or follow us on [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

