

PITCH IMPERFECT

More platforms mean more options — but also more confusion for MLB fans.



On MLB's Opening Day 2026, avid baseball fans found themselves with a bewildering array of platforms and TV channels carrying their favorite teams' games. **Eleven broadcast, cable, and streaming sources are set to carry national MLB games this season**, in addition to another five live streaming TV bundles that carry teams' local market telecasts.

This fragmentation has left many fans [unsure where they can find the games they want to watch](#). In Hub's most recent [Evolution of Sports study](#), **avid MLB fans (35%) were second only to NFL (42%) fans in saying it's become harder to find content about their sport**. And for both MLB and NFL, twice as many avid fans said it has become harder than said it's now easier to find their sport.

And this has many avid MLB fans feeling somewhat adrift, with four in ten strongly agreeing they like having sports available on regular TV and don't want that to change. On the other side, only a quarter of avid and aggregator fans strongly agree that they are excited for more sports content to be available on streaming services instead of just cable. So how are avid, casual, and non-MLB fans dealing with this disruption as they navigate to the sport they love? Hub's latest Evolution of Sports study has some answers.

WHERE TO WATCH MLB IN 2026

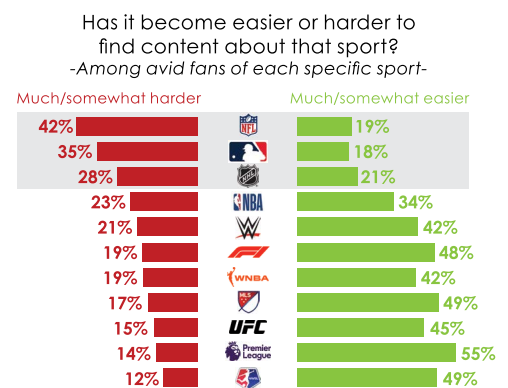
16 platforms across broadcast, cable, streaming, and live TV bundles

Fox/FST	Broadcast TV
NBC	Broadcast TV
ABC	Broadcast TV
ESPN	Cable TV
TBS	Cable TV
NBCSN	Cable TV
MLB Network	Cable TV
Peacock	Streaming
Apple TV+	Streaming
Neflix	Streaming
ESPN/MLB TV	Streaming
YouTube TV	Live TV bundle
Hulu + Live TV	Live TV bundle
Sling	Live TV bundle
Fubo	Live TV bundle
DirectTV Stream	Live TV bundle

Source: Claude April, 2026

MAJOR ESTABLISHED SPORTS ARE WHERE FANS ARE FINDING MORE FRICTION

Sports which have diversified from cable to streaming (like the NFL or MLB) are becoming harder to find. But for fans of second tier or sports based outside the US, the viewing experience is getting easier



Source: Hub Evolution of Sports Wave 5, January 2026 (Base: U.S. Consumers age 13-74)

Here are five things to know about MLB fans:

1. MLB fans are affluent and educated, but not particularly diverse.

The stereotype of MLB's fan base being much older than non-fans was not borne out in the study. They are indeed older, but not overwhelmingly so. **The average age for avid fans is five years older than non-fans, and for casual fans there is only a three-year difference.**

And while avid baseball fans skew decidedly male, MLB casual fans are evenly split by gender.

MLB has experienced a long-term decline in the number of Black players in the league, and that is now reflected in the relatively low number of Black fans. **While two-thirds of MLB fans are white, and another fifth are Hispanic, just over 10% of avid and casual fans are Black.**

MLB is certainly aware of this trend and has tried to address it through [outreach programs](#) aimed at Black fans, but to this point, they are still a relatively small segment of the fan base.

In terms of education and income, **both avid and casual fans are more likely to have Bachelor's or graduate degrees and earn incomes in the \$90K range annually.**

Table 1 displays differences between avid, casual, and non-MLB fans on demographics.

2. Avid MLB fans use more TV services.

Avid MLB fans are the heaviest users of linear and on-demand platforms. Nearly **eight in ten have a MVPD or vMVPD service**, and they average one more SVOD than casual or non-fans. They are also considerably more likely to subscribe to a sports-focused SVOD.

Table 1	Avid	Casual	Non-Fan
Male	61%^^	49% [^]	35%
Female	39%	51% [^]	63%^^
Avg. Age	45.6^^	44.0 [^]	41.0
White	63% [^]	64% [^]	55%
Black	12%	11%	20%^^
Hispanic	18%	18%	17%
Bachelor's Degree	32%^^	27% [^]	22%
Graduate/Prof. Degree	18% [^]	19% [^]	14%
Average Income (000s)	\$94.3 [^]	\$89.7 [^]	\$75.2

[^]significantly greater at 95% confidence

^^significantly greater than two at 95% confidence

Source: Hub Evolution of Sports Wave 5, January 2026 (Base: U.S. Consumers age 13-74)

Half of all three groups use a service aggregator like Amazon

Prime, Roku, or YouTube, with avid fans slightly higher than casual and non-fans.

Table 2 displays differences between avid, casual, and non-MLB fans on media usage.

3. Avid MLB fans are more likely to be fans of other sports — especially the major men’s leagues.

Across the board, avid MLB fans are more likely to be fans of all professional sports than casual or non-fans. That’s especially true for the other major North American men’s leagues – NFL, NBA, and NHL.

Table 2	Avid	Casual	Non-Fan
MVPD /vMVPD sub	79%^^	67%^	61%
VOD (MVPD) 1+/wk	44%^^	31%	31%
Avg. # SVODs	5.3^^	4.4	4.3
Sports SVOD sub	42%^^	26%^	22%
Use a subscription aggregator	54%^^	48%	49%

^significantly greater at 95% confidence
 ^^significantly greater than two at 95% confidence
 Source: Hub Evolution of Sports Wave 5, January 2026 (Base: U.S. Consumers age 13-74)

Table 3 displays differences between avid, casual, and non-MLB fans on sports fandom.

4. MLB fans who use service aggregators use more platforms — but they churn more often.

Just over half of all MLB fans (avid and casual) use an aggregator (like Amazon Prime, Roku, or YouTube) to organize their SVOD subscriptions, on par with all sports fans. And MLB fans who use an aggregator have significantly more SVOD subscriptions than those who don’t (6.3 SVODs to 3.4).

Table 3	Avid	Casual	Non-Fan
NFL	91%^^	86%^	66%
NBA	71%^^	60%^	45%
NHL	56%^^	42%^	22%
WNBA	41%^^	30%^	24%
MLS	40%^^	26%^	21%
UFC	38%^^	31%^	26%
WWE	35%^^	28%	25%
F1	34%^^	24%^	20%
EPL	32%^^	20%	18%
NWSL	25%^^	18%^	13%

^significantly greater at 95% confidence
 ^^significantly greater than two at 95% confidence
 Source: Hub Evolution of Sports Wave 5, January 2026 (Base: U.S. Consumers age 13-74)

With access to so many more services, **MLB fans using an aggregator are much more likely to watch sports on an SVOD. But they are more likely to watch on cable or FAST as well.**

And the good news for SVODs is that half of these MLB fans with aggregated services have subscribed specifically to watch a sport. The downside, of course, is the ease of cancellation with an aggregator — **twice as many of those fans canceled a service after a sports season ended** compared to those who don't use one.

Table 4 displays differences between MLB fans who use an aggregator and those who do not on service use and cancellations.

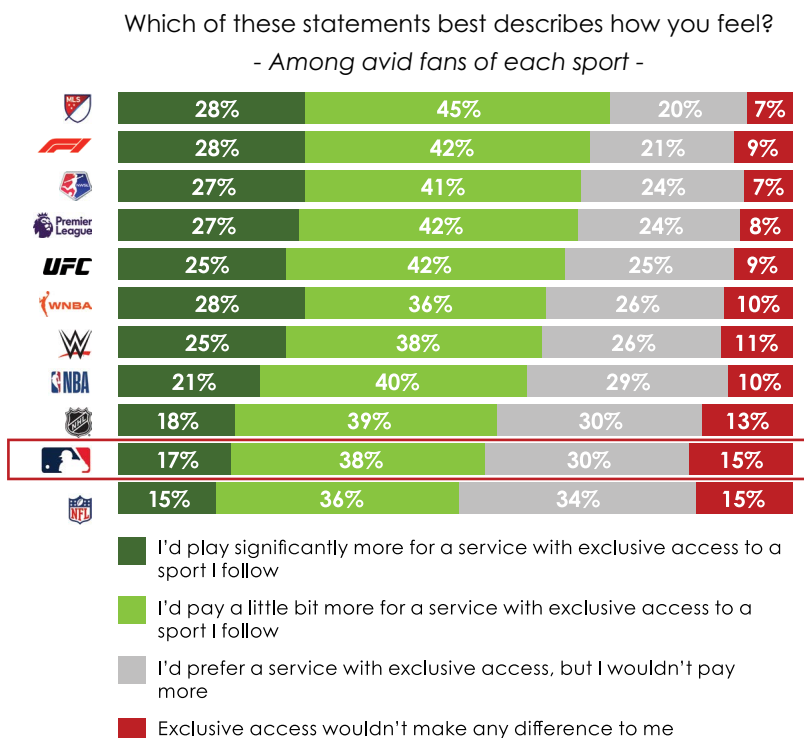
5. A majority of avid MLB fans would pay for exclusive content rights — but that's considerably less than fans of other sports.

A clear majority of avid MLB fans would pay at least a little more for exclusive baseball content. But among the professional sports listed, MLB came in next-to-last, ahead of only the NFL. The top of the list is dominated by sports like soccer and auto racing, which in the U.S. can be considered more niche than the mainstream sports at the bottom of the list.

Table 4	Aggregator	No Aggregator
Use an SVOD to watch sports	89% [^]	64%
Watch sports on cable	79% [^]	68%
Watch sports on broadcast	71%	72%
Use a FAST to watch sports	23% [^]	8%
Subscribed to watch a sport	51% [^]	24%
Cancelled a streaming service at the end of a sports season	35% [^]	18%

[^]significantly greater at 95% confidence
Source: Hub Evolution of Sports Wave 5, January 2026 (Base: U.S. Consumers age 13-74)

THE MAJORITY OF AVID FANS OF ALL SPORTS WOULD PAY AT LEAST A LITTLE MORE FOR EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS



Source: Hub Evolution of Sports Wave 5, January 2026 (Base: U.S. Consumers age 13-74)

And for MLB, the sheer volume of 162 games in a season likely makes incremental access at additional cost less attractive.

But on a positive note, **61% of MLB fans with an aggregator would pay for exclusive baseball content** (vs. 31% among those without).

What does this mean for MLB and its fans?

Finding MLB content won't get easier, but subscribing to and canceling services to watch it will become easier. Fans longing for the good old days when MLB games were on cable or broadcast TV only are not going to see a return to those times. There are too many opportunities for the league to generate revenue on streaming services like Apple TV and Netflix, as well as through its own MLB.TV/ESPN partnership.

But one bright spot, especially for avid fans who use a video aggregator, **is that adding and dropping an SVOD to watch baseball remains virtually frictionless.** As long as fans know where they can find the games, they can subscribe for as long or as short a term as they please.

For MLB, the opportunities for TV and streaming revenue have never been better. They are on four streaming platforms already, and that's without Amazon Prime in the mix. And the timing could not be better for the league, as many of its teams have seen their local telecast deals with the FanDuel Sports Network [collapse](#).

The challenge for MLB is marketing all its streaming partners to fans who say it's harder than it used to be to find the games. That task is compounded by the relatively low number of avid fans (compared to other sports) who will pay more for exclusive access. In a sport with a wealth of games every season, fans will need to be convinced of the value proposition of paying for access to even more games. Adding to that is the looming [threat of a work stoppage](#) in 2027. MLB may be entering treacherous times as it works to maintain its place among the major sports leagues.

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