

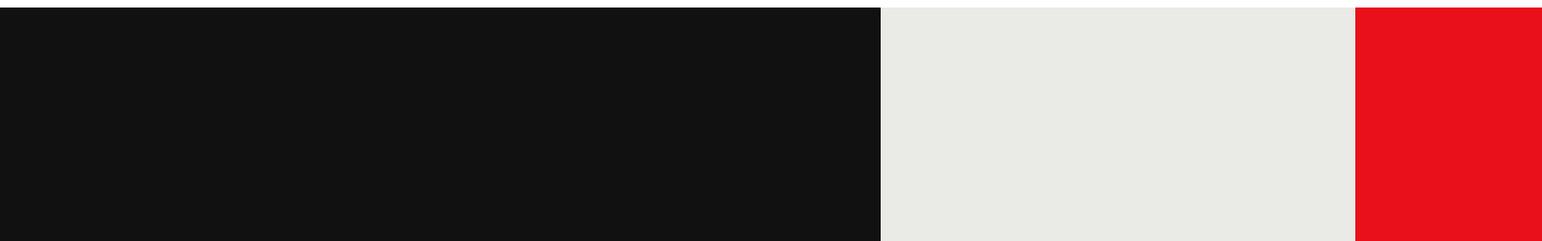
YouTube will stream 15 MLB games, further fracturing live sports

Article



The news: YouTube has [renewed](#) a deal with the **MLB** to stream 15 regular-season games beginning in May, making it the latest digital video service to enter the [scramble for live sports](#) streaming rights.

More on this: YouTube often goes unmentioned in the whirlwind of exclusivity deals and M&A that's dominated the streaming industry lately, but it's still one of the most-watched video

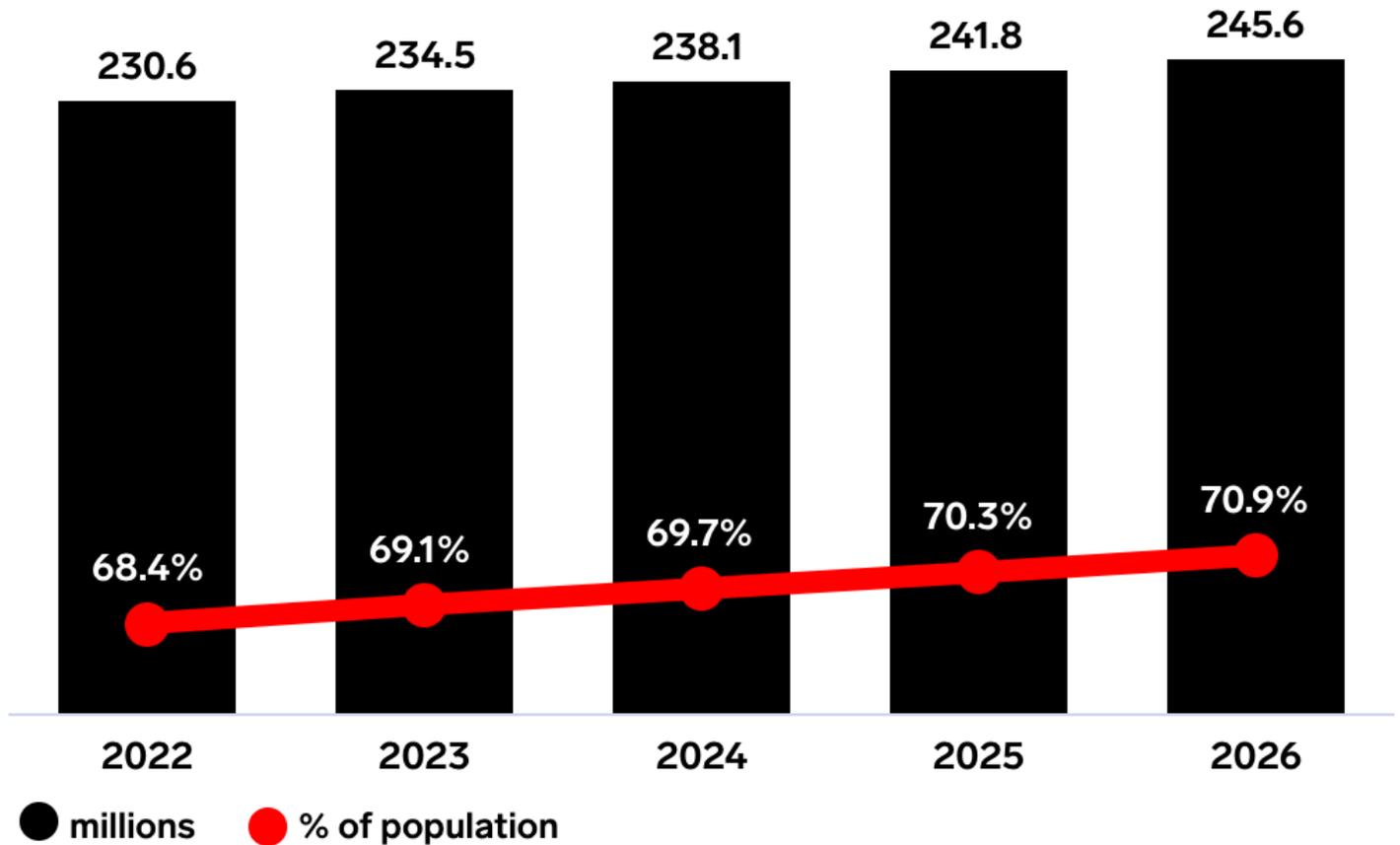


services out there.

- As the market tightens, streaming services have raced to expand content offerings, launch new channels, and do everything they can to draw subscribers. **Disney** has started bringing shows like “**Dancing With the Stars**” exclusively to **Disney+**, **Netflix** and others have doubled down on foreign-language content including animation, and the **Warner Bros. Discovery merger** will soon bring some of film’s biggest franchises to **HBO Max**.
- But while the streaming war between these mostly subscription-based services commands attention, YouTube is still one of their biggest competitors. Teens spend as much of their time with digital video watching YouTube (30%) as Netflix (30%), per a recent Piper Sandler survey.
- We expect US YouTube viewers to reach **230.6 million** this year and **245.6 million** by 2026—though subscribers to its YouTube Premium service lag far behind Netflix and other major streaming services at just 35.7 million.

YouTube Viewers

US, 2022-2026



Source: eMarketer, February 2022

eMarketer | InsiderIntelligence.com

Trouble for consumers: The race to claim exclusive sports streaming rights has led some sports leagues to become increasingly fractured across services, which could lead to consumer discontent down the line.

- It makes sense for the MLB, which is dealing with declining viewership, to shop around streaming rights to several platforms in the hopes of seeing which drives the most new viewers. But if you're a die-hard MLB fan, that means you now have to have an **Apple TV Plus**, **Amazon Prime Video**, and **Peacock** subscription in addition to other broadcasting services to

watch every game in the season. YouTube is offering its 15 games for free, but there's no guarantee it won't eventually paywall access.

- That can be a frustrating experience for consumers who already feel that the streaming market is too congested. Over half of US consumers have said they want a [streaming bundle](#), and as sports leagues and more content continues to fragment across services, that sentiment may only grow.

Looking forward: YouTube can't be ignored as a streaming competitor. It's not only one of the most-used social media and digital video platforms, but is also free from the production and M&A costs of its competitors thanks to its user-generated content and the recent shutdown of its [Originals](#) program.