

NFL opens the floodgates to streaming in new rights deals

Article

The NFL will put more football on streaming platforms than ever before with a new slew of rights deals for 11 seasons starting in 2023. These include its first streaming-exclusive rights deal ever, with Amazon.

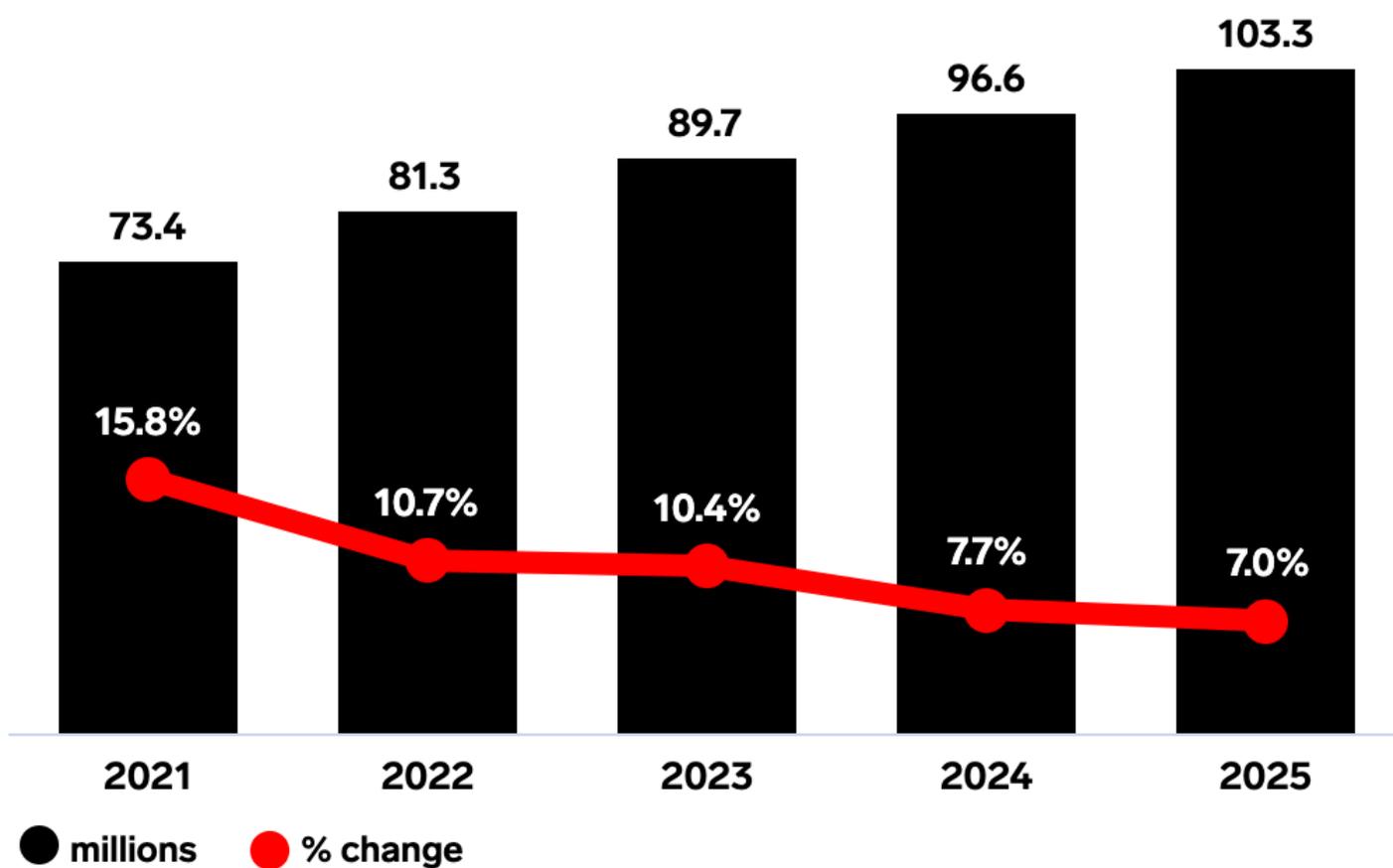
Here's a breakdown of the deals:

- **Amazon Prime Video** will exclusively host the Thursday Night Football package of games. This is the first time that Amazon will hold the package exclusively, after Fox didn't renew its deal for the games—in the past three years, Amazon has only held digital-exclusive rights.
- **CBS** will stream all Sunday afternoon NFL and AFC games on **Paramount+**. CBS will be able to continue with its alternate programming such as the Nickelodeon playoff game, which debuted this year and was simulcast on CBS All Access.
- **Fox** will feature condensed versions of NFC Sunday afternoon games and other ancillary programming on **Tubi**. In a press release, Fox **stated** the NFL experience on Tubi will include condensed games, which likely means they will not include the Super Bowl. Notably, across these deals, Tubi is the only free, ad-supported streaming service that will distribute NFL programming.
- **ESPN+** will simulcast all of ESPN's Monday night football games, as well as two Super Bowl games to which ABC has acquired rights. Don't forget that ESPN+ is now bundled with Hulu, so bundle subscribers will likely be able to access that content through Hulu.
- **NBCUniversal** will **simulcast** all Sunday night football games on **Peacock**, which will also have exclusive feeds for select NFL games, but it's not yet clear if those will include Super Bowl games.
- The NFL Sunday Ticket package is still tied up in a deal with **DirecTV** but could land on a streaming service after that agreement expires next year.

The NFL minting an 11-year deal at such a transitional time in media reads like an attempt to prolong the dominance of linear TV. NFL programming, including the Super Bowl, is still a powerhouse for networks and advertisers, but it seems hard to believe that streaming platforms won't have caught up to traditional TV a decade from now, particularly as cord-cutting continues apace. (We estimate that the number of US cord-cutters will increase by **15.8%** this year to 73.4 million.) Sports rights deals tend to be long-term—**ranging** anywhere from six to 11 years—but in a time of rapid change and increasing interest in sports streaming, these deals do seem like an attempt to keep TV networks relevant for the next decade and beyond.

Cord-Cutters

US, 2021-2025



Source: eMarketer, February 2021

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The availability of these games could potentially help streaming services in their quest for more ad dollars. Sports content consistently brings in viewership from loyal fans, and platforms like Peacock have already **declared** their intent to charge linear TV-level pricing for streaming slots. Additionally, as audience demand grows, media companies will no doubt push to enhance the streaming elements of their deals—whether it’s through exclusivity, social media integration, or access to additional streaming content—which could potentially justify higher ad prices.