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Engaging U.S. soccer fans ahead of FIFA World Cup 2026™

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Soccer fandom in the U.S. is gaining momentum in anticipation of the 2026 FIFA World Cup™. And with this growing audience, brand sponsors and advertisers need to understand who these fans are and how they're engaging to capitalize on this rising popularity.

The tournament is set to significantly boost soccer's popularity, with 37% of the general population expecting their interest in the sport to increase over the next 18 months.¹ Currently, 74% of dedicated current World Cup fans also foresee their interest growing even further. But most notably, Hispanic communities and younger audiences are leading the way in driving soccer's over popularity and engagement.²

A new generation of fans



76% of soccer fans in the U.S. are Millennials or Gen Z.



42% of Gen Z and 50% of millennials anticipate higher engagement with soccer in the next 18 months.



Gen Z and Millennial World Cup fans are 37% and 39% more likely to attend the games than the general population.



72% of all Hispanic sports fans are Gen Z or Millennials, compared to 50% of U.S. sports fans overall.

Hispanic fans are driving popularity



40% of the U.S. Hispanic population report an expected increase in their interest in the World Cup.



47% of the U.S. Hispanic population report an expected increase in their interest in the World Cup.



Hispanic fans are 87% more likely to say they have watched a World Cup qualifier match in the past 12 months.



Hispanic individuals are 30% more likely than the total population to be avid Major League Soccer (MLS) fans.

Source: Nielsen Fan Insights April-June 2025; Nielsen 2025 Hispanic CIO Report; Scarborough USA+ 2025 Release 1 Total Jan 2024-May 2025

Nielsen

Where to engage with fans

There's a significant opportunity for in-person engagement and localized activations with 25% of World Cup fans planning to attend the games.³ Fans attending games in host cities also intend to engage in a variety of activities beyond just the matches themselves, indicating an interest in a broader festival atmosphere and exploring local culture and attractions.

How fans are planning to spend their time at the World Cup



34%
plan to attend entertainment such as concerts surrounding the event



33%
aim to interact with the broader city where the game is being held



32%
planning to visit fan zones to interact with fellow fans



29%
of attendees intend to participate in a tailgate



26%
plan to engage with brand activations and sponsored experiences

Source: Nielsen Fan Insights April-June 2025

Nielsen

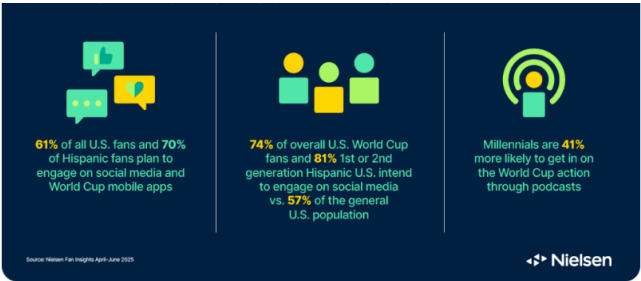
This data highlights a strong inclination among U.S. World Cup fans to immerse themselves fully in the event, both inside and outside the stadiums.

And for those not attending the games, 67% of U.S. World Cup fans and 30% of the U.S. general population plan on watching full games, further underscoring significant engagement opportunities outside of the in person action.⁴

Connecting on digital platforms

World Cup fans will be highly engaged online

There's a high propensity for digital engagement surrounding the World Cup.

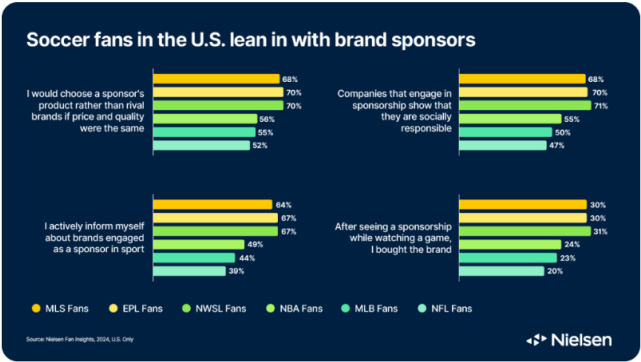


What fans are interested in

Similarly to in-person attendees for the games, World Cup fans in general demonstrate a strong inclination towards cultural experiences.

A significant 71% are interested in attending music concerts, compared to just 57% of the general population.⁵ This interest is even more pronounced among Hispanic World Cup fans, with 76% expressing interest in live music.⁶ Similarly, 69% of World Cup fans are interested in arts and culture (vs. 52% general population), a figure that jumps to 78% for Hispanic World Cup fans, indicating a strong overall overindex compared to the general population in both areas.⁷ Hispanic fans also show a strong interest in team merchandise as they are more than two times as likely to have purchased Major League Soccer or team gear in the past 12 months than the total U.S. population.⁸

It's also important for brands to know perceptions and attitudes of their fans—and U.S. soccer fans are leaning in. Soccer fans overall, compared with NBA, MLB and NFL fans, are more responsive to choosing brand sponsored products, care more about social engagement, stay informed about brand sponsors and buy more sponsored products after watching a game.



- There's also several standout areas for what U.S.-based World Cup fans are interested in compared to the general population.
- Investment** — Overall U.S. World Cup fans are 78% more likely to be interested in cryptocurrency and 55% more likely to be interested in stocks.
 - Social themes** — 52% of World Cup fans and 63% of Hispanic fans are more likely to be interested in social causes and themes.
 - Entertainment** — 38% of World Cup fans and 49% of Hispanic fans are more likely to be interested in video games or mobile games.⁹

Prepare to kick off 2026

The soccer fandom in the U.S. is buzzing, bringing passion and excitement as the FIFA World Cup 2026™ draws closer in June 2026. Do you have a plan in place to take advantage of this momentous cultural moment? Get advanced insight data into the soccer fandom to get ahead of the game with our [2026 Soccer Fan Insights](#).

For more soccer and sports sponsorship trends, our [2025 Global Sports Report](#) and [2025 Hispanic DIS Report](#) have further soccer trends and insights to support your brand strategies ahead of the big tournament and beyond.

Notes:
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 Nielsen Fan Insights (April-June 2025)
⁸ Scarborough USA+ 2025 Release 1 Total (Jan 2024-May 2025)

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