

# Rugby World Cup 2023 was the most viewed rugby event of all time

The growth in men's Rugby World Cup viewership is a testimony to the tournament's popularity and relevance in a highly competitive global entertainment market.



Source: <https://springboks.rugby>

Rugby World Cup 2023 in France was the most-viewed rugby event of all time, further cementing its record-breaking legacy.

France 2023 achieved 1.33 billion viewing hours (VH) across all programming on linear and non-linear broadcast, making it 30% more viewed than England 2015 as the last RWC in the northern hemisphere (1.01bn VH) and 19% more viewed than Japan 2019 (1.11bn VH).

The growth in men's Rugby World Cup viewership is a testimony to the tournament's popularity and relevance in a highly competitive global entertainment market. Host, France recorded the highest viewership worldwide with 481m VH despite the national team's exit at the quarter-finals stage.



#RWC2023 final attracts 10.9 million unique live viewers

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Eight of the 11 markets surveyed saw strong viewership growth since 2015 despite a general decline in linear TV globally and an accrued competition in the entertainment offering. The United Kingdom's viewership came close to breaking the 2015 record (361m) when England hosted RWC 2015 which is an impressive result considering overall linear TV viewership in the UK was down by 27% over the same period.

Growing viewership has also been observed in rugby's emerging markets like Germany (15.2m VH), Italy (16.1m VH) and USA (11.1m VH) where rugby's popularity is soaring with a + 27, +70 and +136% respectively vs. RWC 2015.

The RWC final between South Africa and New Zealand achieved the highest viewing hours of any match globally, with 94m VH, followed by the France vs. South Africa quarter-final with 69m VH.

### **A sporting spectacle accessible worldwide**

True to its ambition to make rugby relevant and accessible for all, World Rugby teamed up with free-to-air broadcast partners in most markets to showcase the best of rugby to as many fans as possible. France 2023's global viewership came at 85% from free-to-air TV.

All top 10 performing channels are free-to-air with TF1 and ITV 1 the outstanding performers in European markets, garnering 322m and 295m viewing hours respectively. French giant TF1 have already renewed their long-standing partnership with World Rugby and will broadcast the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 in England (22 August – 27 September 2025).

ITV X, the streaming platform from the British broadcaster, is the 8th most viewed channel of RWC2023, with 27m VH. It confirms a global trend towards streaming services with 70m VH coming from online players. France 2023 was also made available on the international federation's OTT platform RugbyPass TV for markets where not all matches would otherwise have been available for fans, attracting 350,000 subscribers and 1.7 million users during the tournament.

### **Japan 2019 legacy and time zone impact**

As RWC 2019 broke new ground with the first Rugby World Cup ever organised in Asia, its legacy is still very alive. Japan ranks as the country with the third most viewership for RWC 2023, cumulating 175.9m VH over the seven weeks.

While this represents a decrease from 2019 when Japan hosted the competition, the 2023 viewership figures represent a 221% increase from England 2015, showcasing the lasting impact of a home Rugby World Cup and the growth of rugby in the region.

Despite an unfavourable time zone with two pool fixtures in the middle of the night, 86% of Japanese viewership came from live programming, demonstrating the huge appetite for the sport in one of its most significant markets. Japan had the most viewed matches of any domestic broadcaster, with two national team group games (v Argentina and v Samoa) each achieving 33m viewing hours thanks to more accessible kick-off times at 19:45.

World Rugby CEO Alan Gilpin said: "Rugby World Cup 2023 has been a fantastic tournament on and off the field. We are delighted to see that the thrilling spectacle millions enjoyed in France captured the hearts of millions more worldwide.

"As our sport continues to grow and break new markets, we will continue to work with our broadcast partners to enhance the viewing experience, especially for new audiences, helping us achieve our vision of making rugby a global sport for all."

The reporting of Rugby World Cup 2023 broadcast audiences was conducted by Futures Sport+Entertainment, a member of Interpublic Group and a research agency that combines existing data sources and proprietary tools with customised research and knowledge to advise the world's most famous federations, leagues and clubs.

The reporting of Rugby World Cup viewership combines audiences from all audited TV channels worldwide, made available by the ratings agency in each territory, with the modelling of audiences for unaudited channels. This modelling took into account population size and subscription figures, as well as the popularity of rugby in each country, including by match, day of week and stage of tournament.

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