

2026 WINTER OLYMPICS MILANO CORTINA

CANADIAN VIEWERSHIP & INSIGHTS REPORT

March 2026



Post Event Report —

MILANO CORTINA 2026 SETS NEW CANADIAN AUDIENCE BENCHMARKS



75%

of Canadians watched at least a minute of the 2026 Olympics games on television.

Source: Numeris TV PPM, Total Canada, Ind. 2+

The most-awaited Milano Cortina Winter Games, held February 6 - February 22, 2026, proved to be a triumph for Canadian broadcasters.

Captivating audiences nationwide, the Winter Games delivered a remarkable surge in viewership.

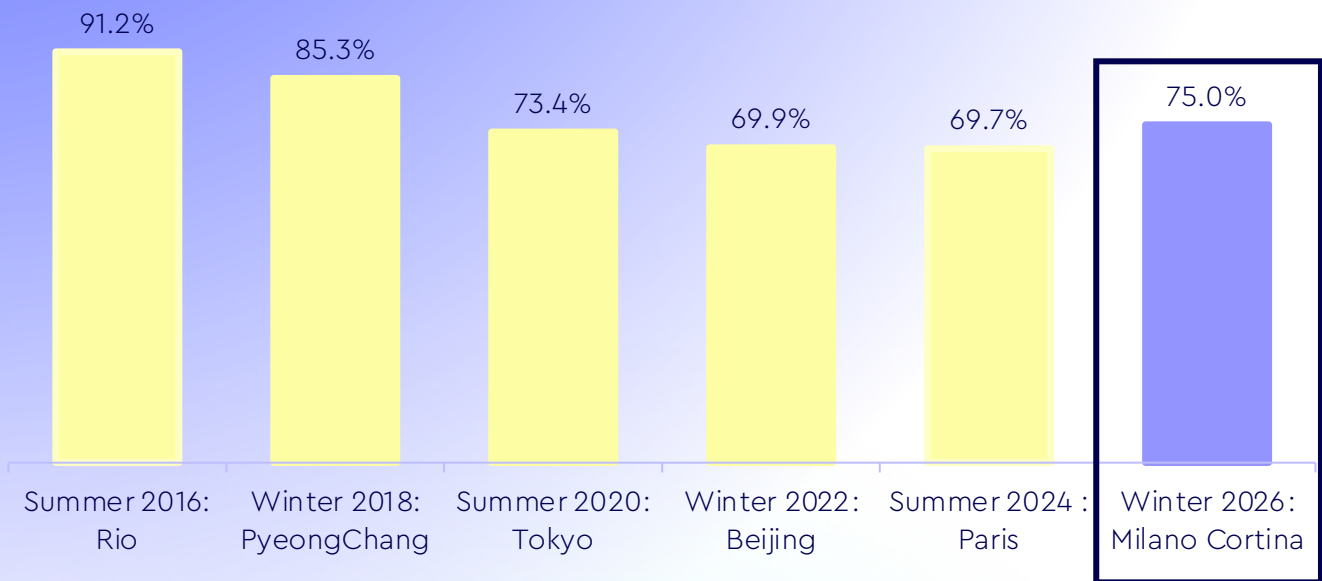
Broadcast across a robust lineup including CBC, SRC, Sportsnet, TSN, and RDS, **the event attracted more Canadian viewers than any of the previous three Olympic Games.**

On **Sunday February 22, 2026** a staggering **19.1 million** Canadians collectively turned their attention to the Games, making it the **most-watched day of the event.**

This national viewership was driven by the magnetic pull of the **men's hockey gold medal game.**

THE OLYMPICS REBOUND FUELING POST-PANDEMIC CONNECTION

% REACH OF OLYMPICS COVERAGE



Source: Numeris TV PPM, Total Canada, Ind. 2+

Following years of pandemic-driven decline, the **Milano Cortina 2026 Games** ignited a powerful audience rebound, hitting 75% reach.

More than just an uptick, this signals a **global hunger for shared spectacles and a return to normalcy** post-COVID.

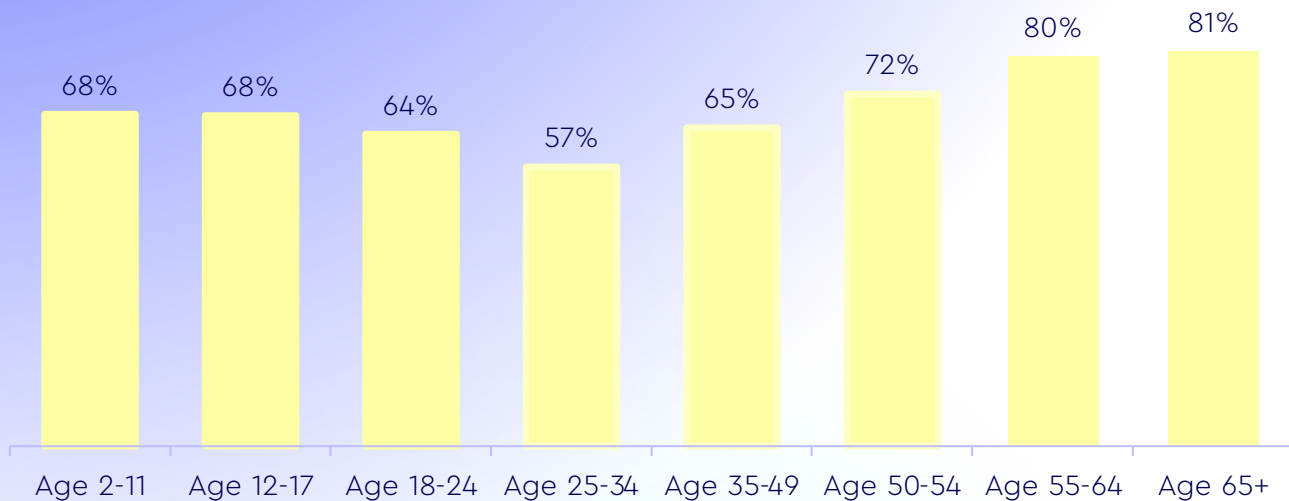
For broadcasters and brands, this is a significant opportunity to **re-engage audiences** who understandably disengaged amidst the COVID era's chaos and disruption.

However, mere presence won't suffice. Sustaining this awakened enthusiasm is paramount. **Success now hinges on amplifying the compelling human stories and emotional connections audiences crave**, transforming passive viewership into an immersive and impactful experience.

OLYMPICS' CROSS-GENERATIONAL POWER

SHARED MOMENTS, AMPLIFIED BRAND CONNECTIONS

% REACH BY AUDIENCE – MILANO CORTINA WINTER OLYMPICS 2026



Source: Numeris TV PPM, Total Canada, Ind. 2+

For brands and marketers, the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Games unveiled a goldmine of opportunity. Its exceptional reach data unequivocally affirms the Olympics as an unparalleled platform for captivating audiences across all demographics.

Unrivalled Platform for Brand Awareness: Beyond mere numbers, the event demonstrated an exceptional ability to unite the nation. With a remarkable 75% reach across the 2+ population and 70% among adults (18+), the event was a 'National Experience'. As an indispensable platform, the Olympics amplifies its value for campaigns seeking broad brand awareness, impactful product launches, or swift market dominance.

Targeting Key Decision-Makers: Commanding an impressive 70% reach among 18+ household decision-makers, solidifies the Olympics' position as an invaluable environment for advertisers to connect with any adult demographic.

Cultivating Future Olympians: A significant 68% reach with the 2-11 and 12-17 age groups actively cultivates sustained Olympic interest and nurtures tomorrow's potential athletes. For family-oriented brands, this presents a crucial opportunity to champion positive, aspirational values at a foundational stage.

FROM SUSTAINED MOMENTUM TO A RECORD-SHATTERING CLOSE

DAILY REACH (000s) - MILANO CORTINA WINTER OLYMPICS 2026



Source: Numeris TV PPM, Total Canada, Ind. 2+

Milano Cortina 2026 successfully built and maintained audience momentum from start to finish, **achieving its highest daily engagement (~19,000) and overall audience penetration (~45%)** by the event's conclusion on February 22, 2026. This strong upward trend, driven by key final events and closing ceremonies, suggests the Games' capacity to captivate and sustain audience engagement throughout its duration, culminating in a highly successful wrap-up.

While Canada broadly tuned in for the Olympic ceremonies (33% Opening, 22% Closing), **Québec**, however, displayed significantly higher engagement. **With 47.5% watching the Opening and 37.8% the Closing**, its residents proved to be the Games' biggest supporters.

THE 'SOCIAL' DIALOGUE

FROM ENTHUSIASM TO DEMAND FOR EQUITY

Canadians embraced the Milano Cortina Winter Olympics, sparking 6 million engagements focused on national pride and Team Canada support.

Beyond Gold Medals
Canadians Were Inspired
by Human Stories

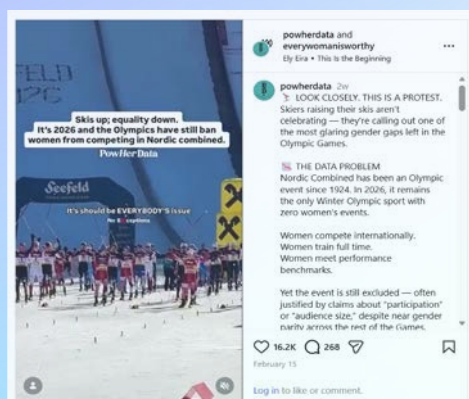
Canadians connected more deeply with athletes who revealed vulnerabilities, whose relatable stories transcended mere medal counts and final scores.

The Push for Fairness:
Athlete Rights &
Women's Sports

Canadians did not shy away from raising concerns about the Olympics' operational integrity, athlete welfare, and systemic fairness, specifically highlighting controversial rules and gender inequality.

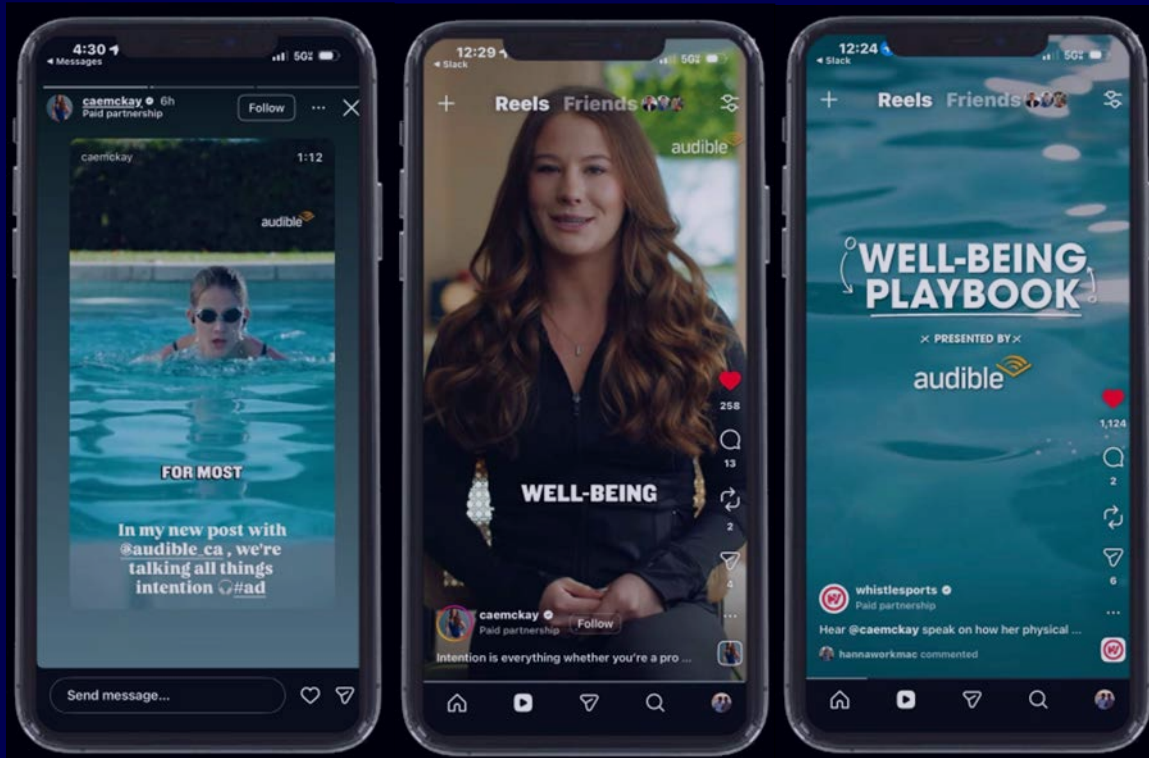
Athletes as Influencers
and Artist
Collaborations

Brands strategically cultivated authentic Olympic engagement either by directly integrating products with sponsored athletes and their merchandise, or by indirectly capturing cultural relevance through organic influencer and artist collaborations.



Source: Infegy Starscape, Canada, A18+, Period: 2/1/2026 – 2/28/2026

AUDIBLE'S CLEVER PLAY AND HOW WE CREATED IMPACT WITHOUT SPONSORSHIP



AUDIBLE'S 'WELLNESS PLAYBOOK'

What was the idea?

Audible and WPP Media Canada collaborated with Team Whistle and Canadian Olympic champion Caeli McKay to launch 'The Wellness Playbook.' This social-first content series, strategically timed with the Winter Olympics, positioned Audible as a leading resource for personal growth by showcasing McKay's post-competition journey encompassing mental, physical, financial, and relational well-being.

Who did we target?

Wellness-minded adults aged 25-44, including podcast listeners and those interested in health, personal growth, and financial well-being.

How did we reach them? Paid Social Media

How is success measured? An uptick in views, engagement, & brand consideration

See the full story [here](#)

HUMAN STORIES BEYOND THE SCOREBOARD

**BREAKING BARRIERS.
EMBRACING VULNERABILITY.
CHAMPIONING INCLUSIVITY.**



For decades, the Olympic Games were defined by the roar of the crowd, the glint of gold, and the final score. However, the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics unveiled a richer, more profound narrative: **the indelible power of human stories that resonated far beyond the scoreboard.**

This shift was particularly evident in the groundbreaking achievements of women athletes. They not only dominated medal counts but also shattered long-standing barriers, defied age, and celebrated diverse identities.

From **Megan Oldham's** historic free ski gold to **Elana Meyers'** inspiring bobsled medal at 41, and **Alysa Liu's** return to American figure skating gold, these were not merely statistics. Instead, they were powerful narratives of grit, determination, and the relentless pursuit of excellence against all odds.



Amber Glenn's presence as the first openly LGBTQ+ women's singles skater on Team USA further enriched this narrative, powerfully celebrating authenticity and representation on the world stage. Collectively, these stories transcended national pride, becoming universal anthems of empowerment.

A STRATEGIC BRAND PLATFORM

Kevin Johnson, CEO
WPP Media Canada



The Winter Olympics consistently ranks as a premier global event. Its significant cultural draw is evident, with engagement metrics often exceeding other major sporting spectacles, even **surpassing the FIFA World Cup by 8%** (SponsorPulse 2025). This global competition showcases peak human endeavor within a distinct cultural setting.

For brands, the Olympics present an engagement model fundamentally different from other tentpole events. Unlike the Super Bowl, which often champions entertainment and celebrity, the **Games offer a powerful path to emotional connection**. Brands align with powerful narratives: individual performance, national pride, and the athlete's relentless pursuit of excellence. This environment is ideal for brand building, and sponsorships lend significant credibility and authenticity – a fact validated by 11 of the 15 brands with major Committee (COC) sponsorship.

In an era emphasizing immediate sales performance, the Olympics remain a crucial space where **brands prioritize long-term business health**. Top Canadian spenders, including OLG, Sobeys, and Air Canada, demonstrate this clearly. Their campaigns feature minimal performance messaging, opting instead to communicate brand purpose and illustrate how their products contribute to a human story.

A consistent theme **across many brand campaigns is supporting Canadian amateur athletes on their journey to the world stage**. This enduring commitment gains heightened importance, particularly given the funding shortfall cited by the COC in April 2024 and reiterated by many since. Notably, among brands with significant CBC partnerships, nine integrated athletes (often multiple athletes) into their creative and narrative.



TRENDS & OBSERVATIONS

Kevin Johnson, CEO
WPP Media Canada



Real-time Engagement Drives Brand Narratives

The Olympics deliver 17 days of non-stop action, raw emotion, and global conversation. Brands that actively jump into that conversation – contributing to the fan experience in real-time – don't just engage consumers; they shape and amplify their own story. Take these examples:

- **Corona:** They had variations of their 'golden moments' creative ready, featuring footage of athletes celebrating gold medal wins – a quick, relevant tie-in that landed perfectly.
- **Air Canada:** They famously responded to a public request from friends of Seth Jarvis (popularized during the Four Nations Cup), pivoting their beach vacation offer to an Italian one. That's agility, connecting directly with a cultural moment.
- **Samsung:** As an IOC sponsor, Samsung built real-time content generation directly into the medal ceremonies. Every medalist captured a podium selfie on a Galaxy Z Flip7, instantly distributed across athlete and media channels – that's owning the moment.



Elevate Impact: Beyond Media, Brand, and KPIs

Major cultural moments like the Olympics aren't just marketing opportunities; they're platforms for integrated campaigns and activation across all business functions. Air Canada is a prime example: supporting the COC not only fuels their 'Fly the Flag' consumer campaign but, crucially, instills deep pride and purpose among their employees and throughout the entire organization. It's about driving a shared purpose, not just sales.

The Olympics: Where Brands Truly Show Their Heart

The Olympics aren't just about medals; they're where brands can truly live their values. Lululemon is a strong example: while their Team Canada outfits grabbed attention, it was their "BE HUMAN" philosophy, championing fairness and growth, that embodied the Olympic spirit. They designed gear with all athletes in mind, ensuring both Olympians and Paralympians were fully supported. This level of genuine commitment speaks volumes more than any ad ever could.



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WPP Media empowers brands to win by building upon a foundation of deep audience intelligence; strategic relevance, and innovative media ecosystems.

Our expert audience intelligence team delves deep to understand your target consumers inside and out. This granular insight is critical for strategically planning and effectively engaging them, especially for high-stakes events like the Olympic Games, ensuring your message drives measurable impact.

Connect with your WPP Media Partner Lead to discover how our data-driven strategies and media innovation can build your brand and drive intelligent growth.