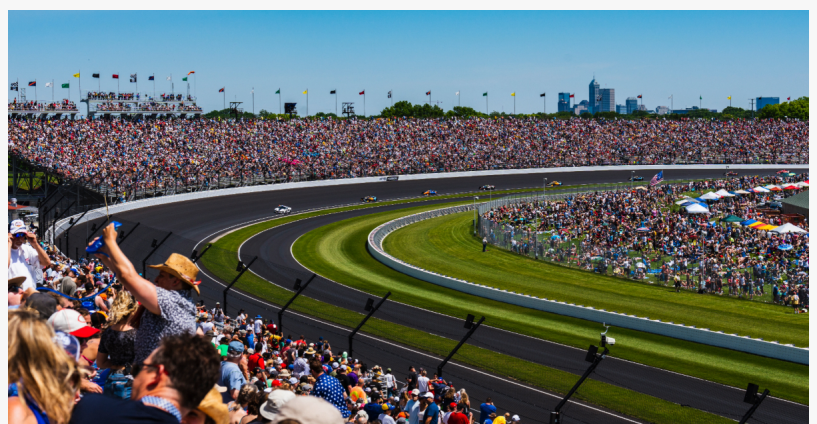


# New Research Finds Indianapolis Has Built the Most Powerful Sports Economy in America

*IU Sports Innovation Institute finds a metro of two million beats New York, Chicago, and Boston in sports concentration and women's executive leadership.*

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, UNITED STATES, June 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ --

INDIANAPOLIS. [A new research study](#) from the Indy Chamber and [the IU Indianapolis Sports Innovation Institute \(SIU\)](#) finds that Indianapolis has built one of the most concentrated and fastest-growing sports economies in the United States, the product of more than four decades of deliberate investment in sport as economic infrastructure rather than spectacle.



A packed Indianapolis Motor Speedway watches IndyCars sweep through a turn during the Indianapolis 500.

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Our sports economy isn't defined by one franchise or event. It's the result of sustained collaboration and long-term investment, building one of the most balanced sports economies in the country.”

*Matt Mindrum, president & CEO of the Indy Chamber*

The report, *The Business of Sport: How Indianapolis Built the Most Powerful Sports Economy in America*, analyzes Indianapolis' sports sector as an economic cluster, benchmarking the region against peer and aspirational U.S. metros across employment concentration, economic output, workforce development, and leadership representation.

Among the report's key findings: Indianapolis ranks among the nation's leading metros in sports employment concentration, with a Location Quotient nearly double the national average.

The region's sports economy demonstrates a level of

specialization that significantly exceeds that of larger markets, including New York, Chicago, and Boston.

Sports-related employment grew 44.3% between 2016 and 2024, while sports-related Gross

Regional Product increased 81.2%. Indianapolis ranks among the nation's top markets for women in executive sports leadership, placing second nationally in a benchmark analysis of professional sports organizations. The region's sports economy is distinguished by its diversity across professional franchises, governing bodies, motorsports, sports technology, event operations, venue management, and adjacent business services.

The pattern stands out for the region's size. A metro of roughly two million outperforms far larger markets on both employment concentration and industry specialization.

"This report quantifies what Indianapolis has spent decades intentionally building," said Matt Mindrum, [President and CEO of the Indy Chamber](#). "Our sports economy is not defined by a single franchise or marquee event. It is the result of sustained civic collaboration, institutional leadership, and long-term investment that has created one of the most balanced and economically impactful sports ecosystems in the country."

The study was developed through a formal research partnership between the Indy Chamber and the IU Indianapolis Sports Innovation Institute, bringing together sport management faculty, applied researchers, graduate students, and economic development leaders to evaluate Indianapolis's sports business ecosystem through a workforce and economic development lens.

"For years, Indianapolis has been recognized nationally as a premier host city for major sporting events," said Dr. Liz Wanless, Director of the Sports Innovation Institute and Associate Professor of Sports Analytics at IU Indianapolis. "In sport, we often talk about leadership representation



Standing at the gates of Lucas Oil Stadium, this monument honors the era that solidified the city's infrastructure for hosting massive, high-revenue economic events.



Facilities like Lucas Oil Stadium fuel Indianapolis's multibillion-dollar sports tourism industry, supporting tens of thousands of local hospitality jobs.

through individual stories or by one organization at a time. What this analysis does is quantify whether opportunity is actually distributed across a city's ecosystem. Indianapolis' performance on broad citywide metrics shows that women's leadership is not just visible here, it is consistent and structurally embedded across the professional sports market."

The findings build on earlier collaborative research examining women's leadership representation across Indianapolis sports organizations and expand the analysis to evaluate the broader business infrastructure powering the region's sports economy.

The report highlights how Indianapolis's competitive advantage extends beyond major events through a network of professional teams, governing bodies, higher education institutions, sports technology companies, motorsports organizations, venue operators, and civic partners working together to support long-term growth.

That model has earned increasing national recognition. In 2026, Sports Business Journal ranked Indianapolis No. 3 among the nation's Best Sports Business Cities, citing the region's concentration of sports organizations, infrastructure investments, event portfolio, and long-term strategic vision.

The findings reinforce what regional leaders have long understood: Indianapolis's sports economy was not built around a single event or organization, but through decades of coordinated investment that transformed sport into a driver of economic growth, workforce development, and national competitiveness.

The full report is available at [www.indychamber.com/indy-partnership/the-business-of-sport/](http://www.indychamber.com/indy-partnership/the-business-of-sport/)

#### About the Indy Chamber

The Indy Chamber serves as a regional voice for progress, uniting business and community to strengthen the Indy region's economy and quality of life. Through bold advocacy, economic development, and small & mid-size business support, we help fuel growth, expand opportunity, and position the region to compete and thrive. Working alongside civic, corporate, and community partners, the Indy Chamber focuses on attracting investment, developing talent pathways, and elevating the Indy region's story. Guided by our core values - Love Indy, Dream Big, and Move Together - we bring leaders together to shape the conditions for growth and build a future where the Indy region leads the Midwest and competes on a global stage.

#### About the IU Indianapolis Sports Innovation Institute

The IU Indianapolis Sports Innovation Institute (SII) advances research and applied learning at the intersection of sport management, data science, and innovation. Through faculty leadership and graduate student engagement, SII partners with industry and civic organizations to produce actionable insights that strengthen the sports ecosystem.

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