

THE NEW FOOTBALL VIEWER IN MENA

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What the World Cup 2026
Reveals About the Future
of Sports Streaming

23 July 2026

INTRODUCTION

The World Cup 2026 has presented audiences across the Middle East and North Africa with a unique viewing challenge. Hosted across the United States, Canada and Mexico, many of the tournament's most important fixtures have taken place late at night or in the early hours of the morning across MENA.

Yet these demanding kick-off times have not weakened the region's passion for football.

Research conducted by Ipsos across Morocco, Jordan, Egypt and the UAE during the second and third weeks of the tournament shows that the World Cup viewers have adapted by becoming more selective, increasingly streaming-led and highly connected across social media. Audiences are protecting the matches that matter most, using highlights and replays to remain informed and engaging with football conversations before, during and after the live broadcast.

Observed viewing data from TOD by beIN supports this picture and takes it further.

Across the tournament, TOD by beIN audiences did not merely sample football content. They watched live matches at appointment-viewing scale, spent more time with the matches carrying the greatest stakes, moved between mobile devices and connected TVs, and increasingly selected premium viewing formats such as 4K.

TOD by beIN observed:

- Live viewing remained the dominant mode of consumption, with 88% of the full tournament audience watching live. Live reach rose from 83% during the group stage to 97% during the knockouts, showing that audiences increasingly prioritised realtime viewing as the stakes rose.
- Catch-up viewing played a complementary role but was concentrated in the group stage. Approximately 25% of group-stage viewers used on-demand viewing, compared with only 7% during the knockout rounds, a decline of 18 percentage points once elimination football began. These figures represent overlapping reach, so viewers may appear in both live and VOD groups.
- Knockout fixtures significantly outperformed group-stage matches. They delivered 77% more unique viewers per match.
- Arab-team fixtures generated a measurable audience premium within each stage. Fixtures involving Arab nations attracted 30% more unique viewers than comparable non-Arab fixtures during the group stage and 21% more during the knockouts.
- Fans demonstrated deeper viewing commitment as the tournament progressed. Average minutes watched per viewer increased by 52% in the knockout rounds, from approximately 91 minutes during the group stage to 138 minutes.
- Highlights complemented rather than replaced live viewing. The highlights viewing on TOD recorded 86% weighted completion.
- Mobile devices and televisions emerged as the two core viewing surfaces. Mobile phones reached 77% of the tournament audience, while televisions reached 63%. Desktop reached 19%, tablets 18% and set-top boxes 16%. Because these device groups overlap, the data indicates that viewers moved between screens rather than selecting only one device.

INTRODUCTION

- Premium-quality streaming became a mainstream behaviour, with 87% of the World Cup audience base accessed matches in 4K.
- Market identity produced distinct patterns of engagement. Egypt's national-team affinity indexed at 143, while Jordan produced the strongest home-team affinity score in the study at 249. Morocco also showed regional affinity towards Algeria at 108, while the UAE's leading teams were tightly clustered between 106 and 111, supporting its positioning as the most internationally balanced market.
- Streaming behaviour became more intentional as the tournament progressed. Although Ipsos found that 54% of UAE viewers and 42% of Jordanian viewers watched fewer matches than in 2022, TOD observed 77% higher average knockout reach and 52% more minutes watched per viewer. This indicates concentration around consequential fixtures rather than declining tournament interest.

Together, the survey and platform data reveal a new MENA football viewer: emotionally invested but increasingly selective, committed to live sport but flexible about the screen used to access it, and engaged in an experience that extends far beyond the match itself.

LIVE FOOTBALL STILL COMES FIRST

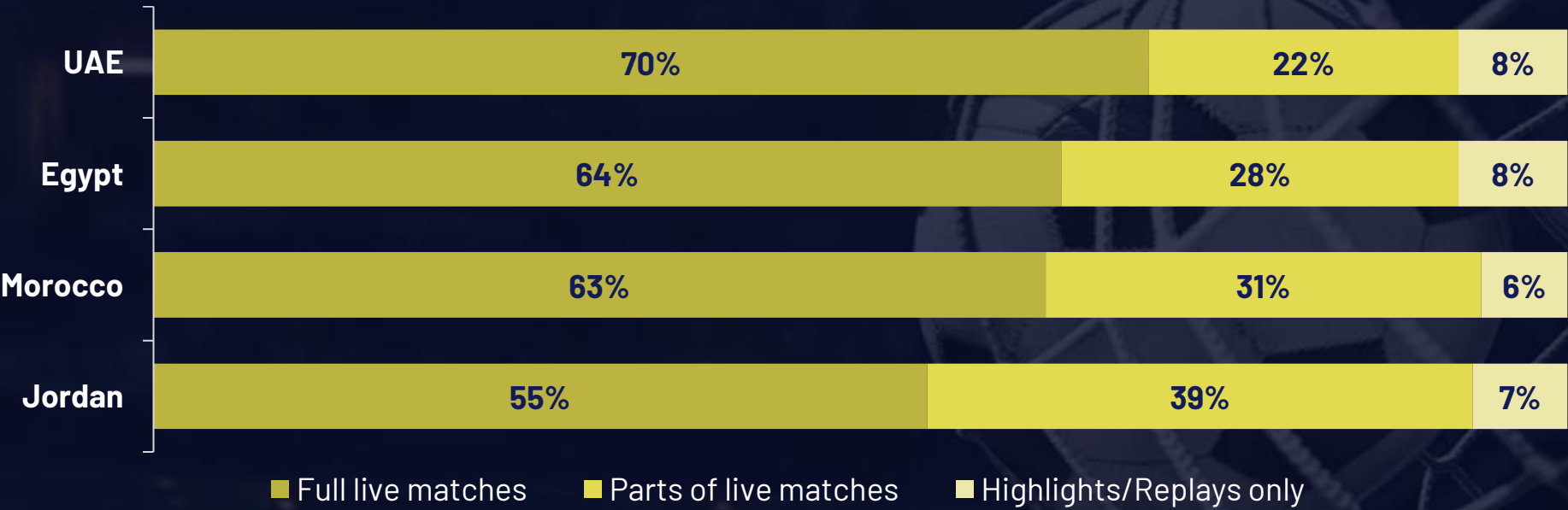
Ipsos found that live football remains at the centre of the World Cup experience.

In Morocco, 63% of respondents said they watched full matches live, compared with 64% in Egypt and 55% in Jordan. In the UAE, 70% of Local and Arab respondents watched full matches live, while a further 22% watched parts of live matches. Across all four markets, only approximately 6-8% of the core local and Arab audiences relied exclusively on highlights or replays.

LIVE MATCHES REMAIN THE PREFERRED WAY TO EXPERIENCE THE WORLD CUP 2026

Among World Cup viewers, most watched full matches live, while highlights and replays primarily complemented live viewing.

How World Cup viewers watched matches



Source: Ipsos, Audience data from quantitative survey in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, and UAE, World Cup 2026 weeks 2 & 3

Across the full tournament, TOD by beIN's observed behaviour reinforces this finding.

Live viewing reached the overwhelming majority of the platform's World Cup audience and became even more dominant during the knockout rounds. This shows that live matches continued to attract large audiences watching at the same time, particularly when the sporting stakes were highest.

The experience may now be delivered through a streaming platform, but the fundamental appeal of live sport remains unchanged. Fans still want to experience the decisive goal, the unexpected result and the final whistle at the same moment as everyone else.

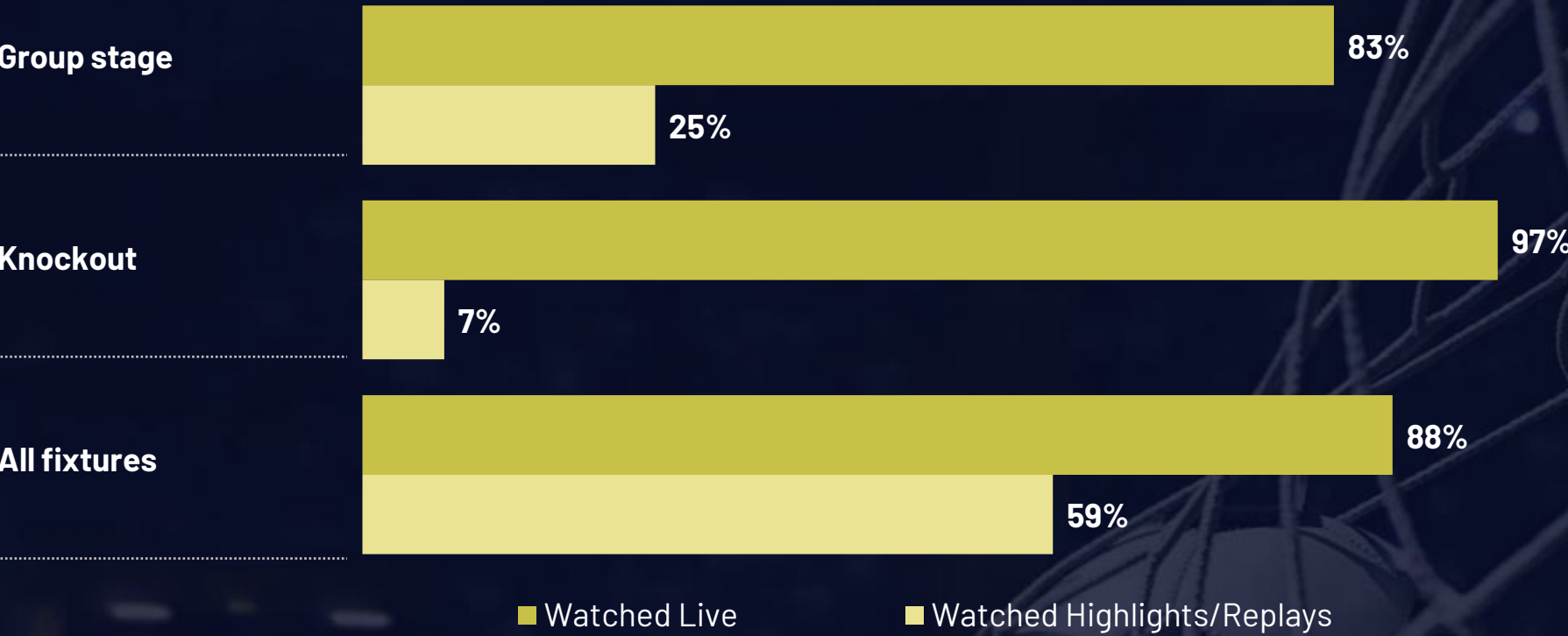
What has changed is the infrastructure around that live experience.

Viewers can begin a match on a television, continue on a mobile device, return to a connected screen or catch up through highlights when the schedule becomes impractical. Streaming has not weakened live football, it has made it more adaptable.

THE BIGGEST MATCHES BRING FANS BACK TO LIVE VIEWING

World Cup viewers may catch up on earlier fixtures, but decisive matches continue to bring audiences together in real time.

Live and catch-up viewing by tournament stage on TOD by beIN



Source: TOD by beIN, Platform data, World Cup 2026

SELECTIVITY IS CONCENTRATION, NOT WITHDRAWAL

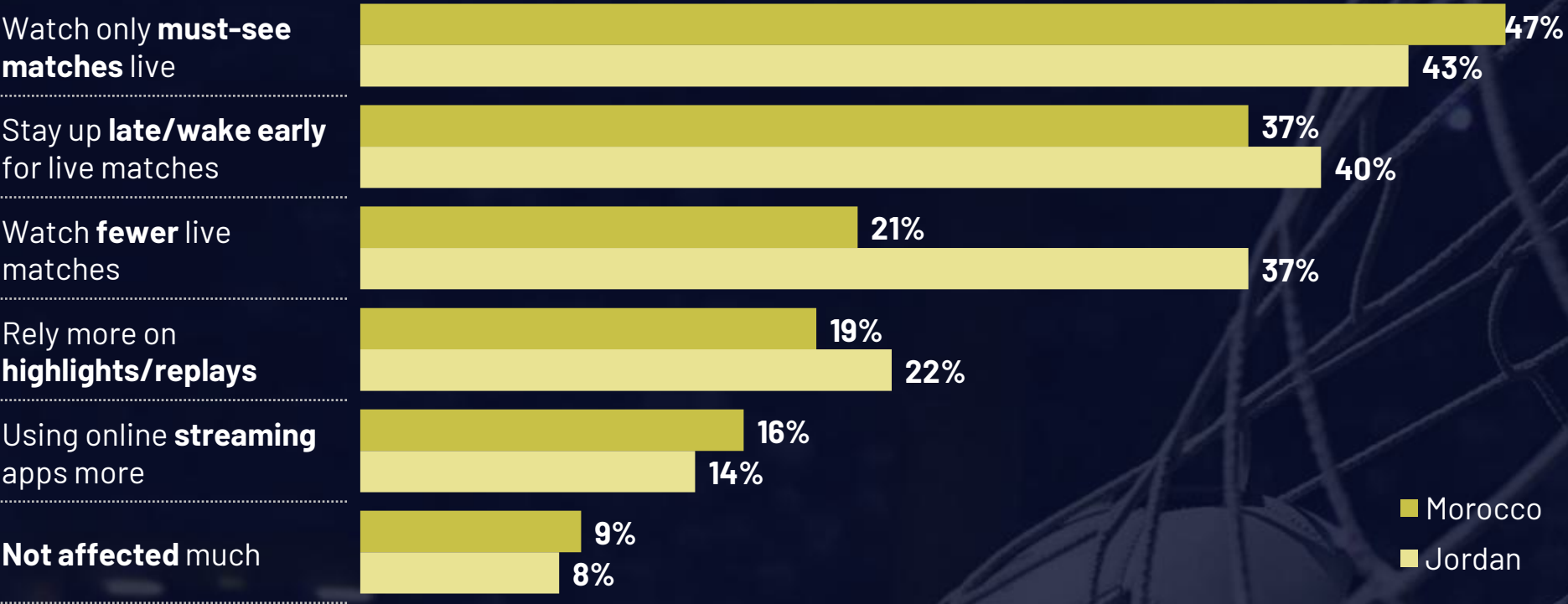
The demanding tournament schedule has made audiences more selective.

Ipsos found that 47% of Moroccan viewers and 43% of Jordanian viewers were choosing to watch only the tournament's biggest matches live. In Jordan, 42% said they were watching fewer matches overall than during the World Cup Qatar 2022, while 37% said they were watching fewer games live. The UAE shows an even sharper concentration effect: 54% of Local and Arab World Cup viewers watched fewer matches than in 2022, yet 37% said they were staying up late or waking early for matches more often.

LATE KICK-OFFS CONCENTRATED VIEWING AROUND THE BIGGEST MATCHES

Rather than reducing engagement, North American match timings encouraged audiences in Morocco and Jordan to focus on the fixtures that mattered most.

How timings affected viewing in Morocco and Jordan



Source: Ipsos, Audience data from quantitative survey in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, and UAE, World Cup 2026 weeks 2 & 3

Taken alone, these findings could suggest a reduction in tournament engagement.

TOD by beIN’s data provides a more nuanced interpretation.

Knockout fixtures outperformed group-stage games across the major behavioural measures that matter most:

- Significantly stronger audience concentration than group-stage fixtures
- Substantially more time spent per viewer than during the group stage
- A sharper live-viewing pattern, with catch-up behaviour falling away once elimination football began

The audience was not abandoning the tournament. It was concentrating its time and attention around moments of greater sporting and emotional consequence. In the UAE, 59% said the importance of the match, particularly knockouts and finals, would make them more likely to watch late-night fixtures live.

This is reinforced by match-level behaviour on TOD by beIN: late-stage fixtures and Arab-team matches repeatedly rose to the top of the platform's performance rankings, even when the schedule was challenging.

The strongest interpretation is therefore not that fans have “cut back”, but that they have become more intentional.

They may watch fewer neutral fixtures, but when an Arab nation, a favourite team or a marquee player is involved, audiences continue to show up in force, regardless of the hour.

As fixtures moved from group stage to knockouts, live viewing intensified and catch-up behaviour declined, proving that fans were willing to adapt their routines when the match became must-watch.

ARAB-NATION PRIDE IS AN AUDIENCE MULTIPLIER

The unprecedented participation of Arab nations has been one of the defining forces behind regional interest in the World Cup 2026.

In Morocco, 94% of Ipsos World Cup viewers said the national team’s performance was important to their tournament interest, including 62% who described it as their main reason for watching. More than three-quarters believed Moroccan supporters were more emotionally invested than they had been in 2022. In Jordan, 87% said the participation of Arab teams was essential or very important to their interest in the tournament.

TOD by beIN’s platform data translates this stated emotional attachment into measurable viewing behaviour. Arab-team fixtures outperformed comparable non-Arab fixtures within both the group stage and the knockouts. The strongest Arab-team fixture became one of the tournament’s leading matches on TOD by beIN, while several of the platform’s top-performing fixtures involved Arab nations. Egypt and Morocco fixtures were especially strong examples of how national-team interest translated into platform behaviour.

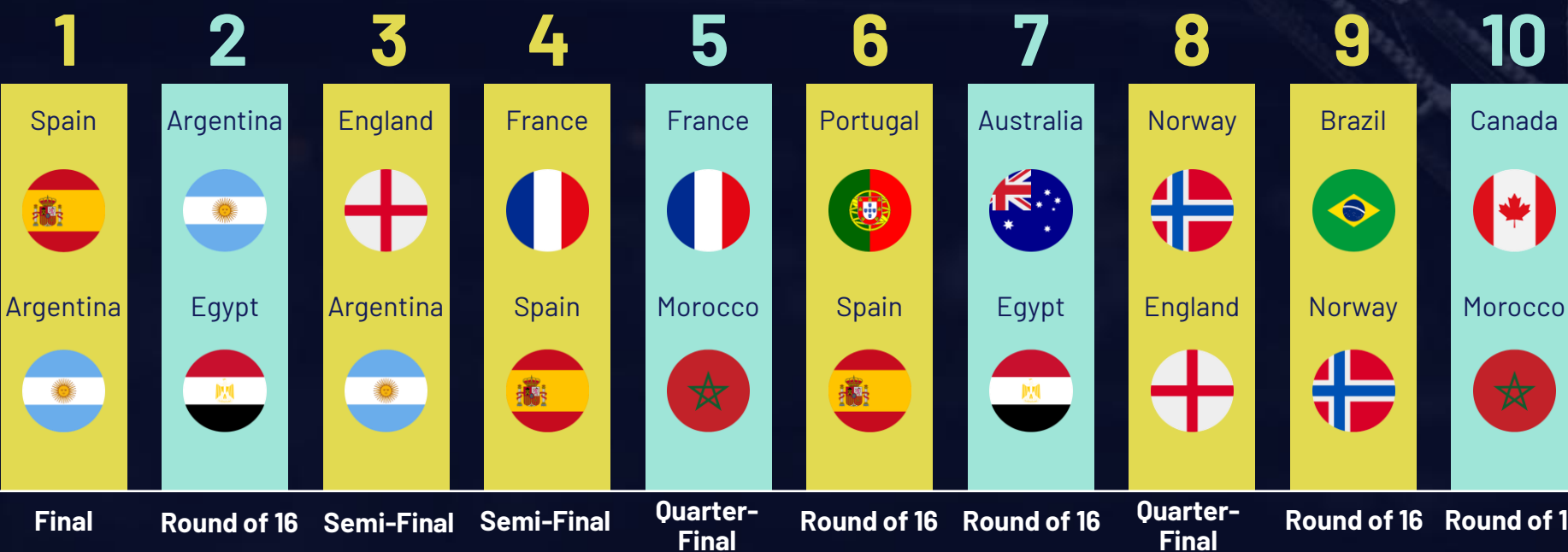
- 1. Argentina vs Egypt finished as the second most-watched match of the tournament, while France vs Morocco ranked within TOD by beIN’s top five fixtures overall. Four of the platform’s ten most-watched matches featured Arab nations, showing that regional identity remained a major driver even alongside the tournament’s biggest global fixtures.
- 2. Egypt and Algeria related highlights also remained a strong content signal, reinforcing the link between national pride and post-match engagement. Argentina vs Egypt and Argentina vs Algeria ranked among TOD by beIN’s top three YouTube highlights.

These results show that national and regional identity do more than generate positive sentiment. They materially affect reach, viewing intensity, content consumption and the commercial value of individual fixtures. For broadcasters, streaming platforms and partners, Arab-team participation creates a clear opportunity to build market-specific content, creator collaborations, fan experiences and promotional activity around the moments most likely to mobilise audiences.

ARAB-TEAM REPRESENTATION PROVED TO BE A POWERFUL AUDIENCE DRIVER

Matches involving Egypt and Morocco ranked among most-watched the World Cup 2026 fixtures on TOD by beIN

Top 10 most-watched World Cup 2026 matches on TOD by beIN



Source: TOD by beIN, Platform data, World Cup 2026



STREAMING IS FINDING THE ROUTE TO THE BIG SCREEN

Ipsos found that streaming-platform use had increased since the World Cup Qatar 2022 among:

- 55% of Egyptian viewers
- 46% of Moroccan viewers
- 45% of Jordanian viewers

The device data is equally important. The UAE adds a useful distinction: overall streaming-app use was mixed but connected-TV streaming gained ground among Local and Arab viewers, showing that the biggest screen in the home is increasingly being reached through digital access.

In Morocco, streaming-led devices accounted for approximately 68% of primary viewing when connected TVs and mobile devices were combined, compared with around 32% for traditional television reception.

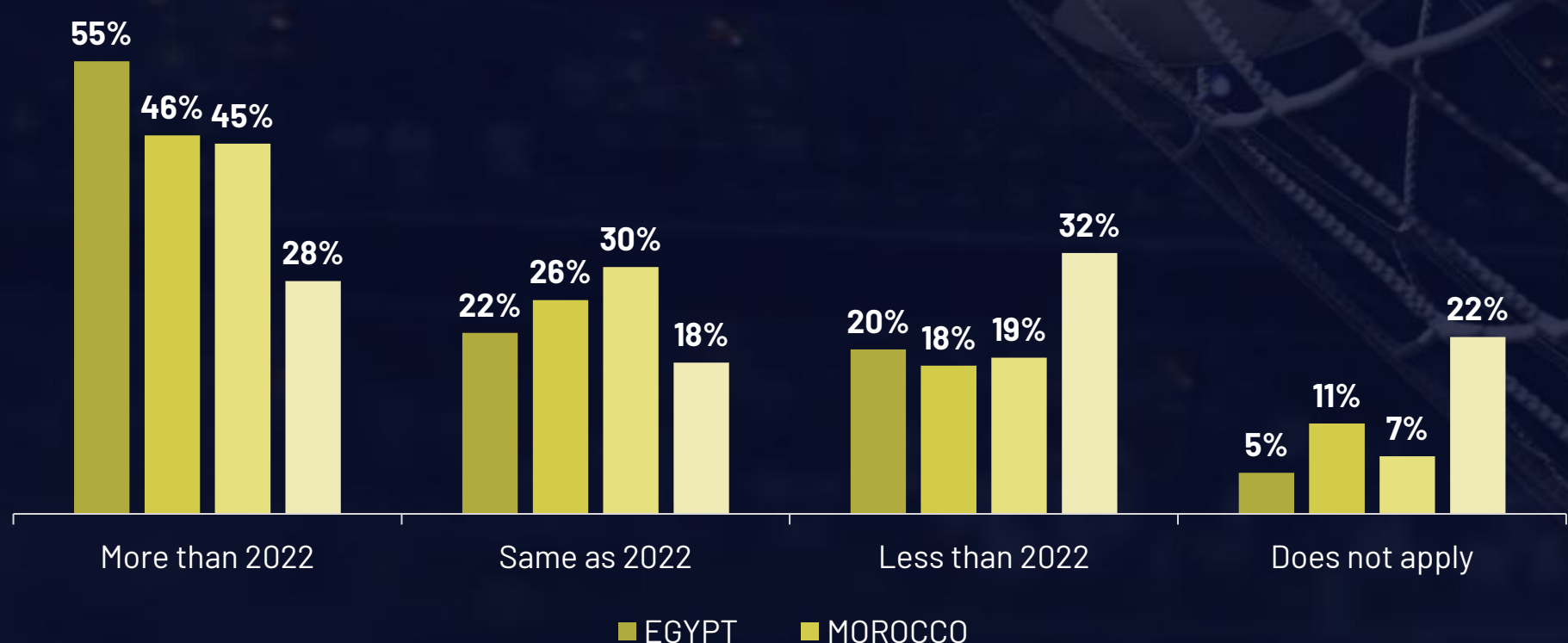
In Jordan, the equivalent split was approximately 71% streaming-led viewing against 29% traditional television viewing. In the UAE, 30% of Local and Arab viewers primarily streamed at home on their television and 22% used a mobile or tablet, while only 8% primarily watched through a traditional television receiver.

This does not mean the television screen is disappearing. It means the way content reaches that screen is changing.

STREAMING CONTINUES TO RESHAPE HOW FANS WATCH THE WORLD CUP

Compared with the World Cup Qatar 2022, streaming usage increased across most markets, reflecting the continued evolution of live sports viewing in MENA.

How streaming usage has changed since the World Cup Qatar 2022



Source: Ipsos, Audience data from quantitative survey in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, and UAE, World Cup 2026 weeks 2 & 3

TOD by beIN's observed data reinforces this transition, with 77% of viewers using a mobile phone at some point during the tournament and 63% also viewing through a television. This suggests that the future of sports streaming is not television versus mobile. It is a connected journey in which viewers expect to continue the same match experience across devices, depending on where they are, who they are watching with and how important the fixture feels.

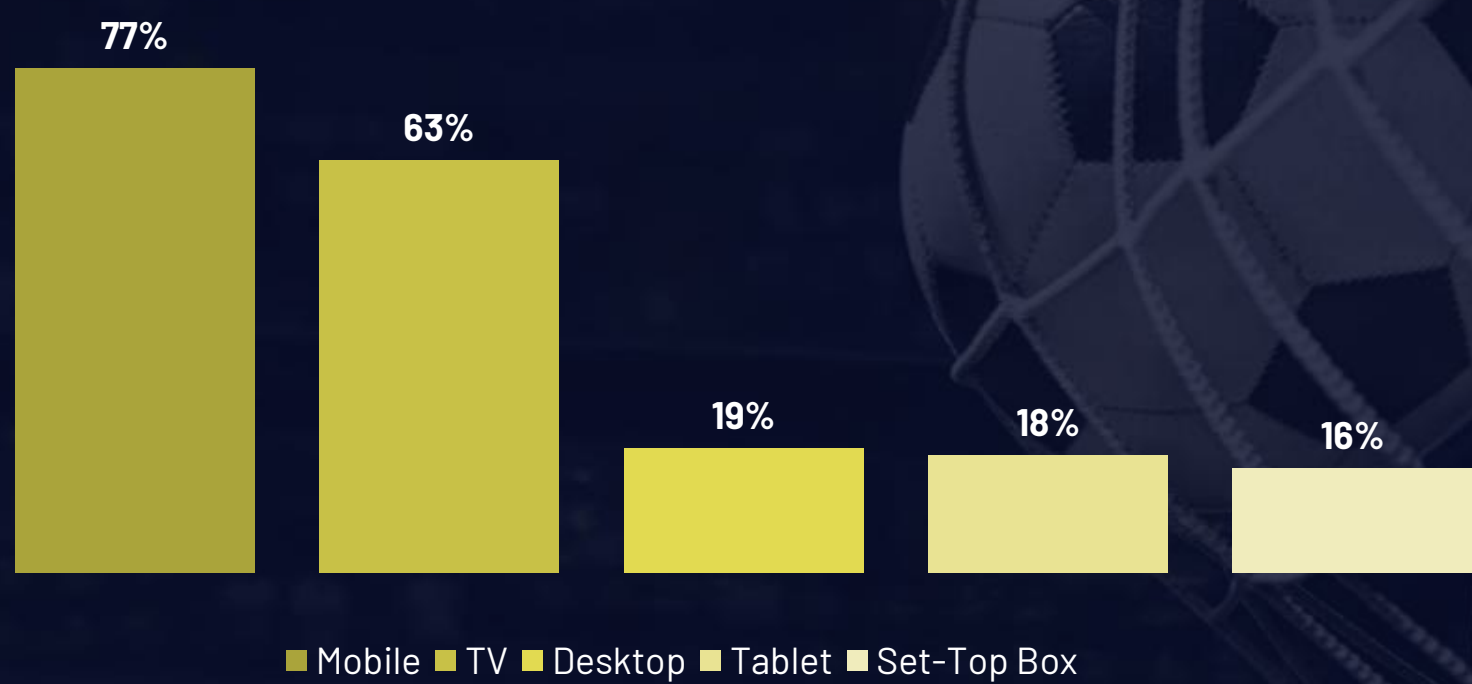
This is particularly visible in Jordan, where 69% of Ipsos World Cup viewers said they watched matches with family, the highest figure among the surveyed markets. The country also had the highest intention to consider streaming platforms for future sports events, at 72%. The UAE follows the same direction, with 55% of Local and Arab viewers saying they are more likely to use streaming platforms for future sports tournaments.

Jordan therefore demonstrates an important evolution: streaming can preserve, rather than disrupt, collective family viewing. The technology changes, but the social ritual remains.

FOOTBALL STREAMING HAS BECOME A MULTI-DEVICE EXPERIENCE

World Cup viewers increasingly move between mobile and TV, choosing the screen that best fits the moment.

Devices used to watch the World Cup 2026 on TOD by beIN



Source: TOD by beIN, Platform data, World Cup 2026

HIGH COMPLETION SHOWS THAT ATTENTION HAS NOT DISAPPEARED

Digital audiences are often assumed to be distracted, impatient and unwilling to engage with long-form content. The World Cup behaviour recorded on TOD by beIN challenges that assumption.

TOD by beIN's full-tournament data shows that audience engagement intensified as the tournament progressed. Knockout fixtures generated 77% higher audience reach than the group stage and were accompanied by longer viewing sessions, demonstrating that fans concentrated their attention around the tournament's defining moments. At the same time, live viewing became increasingly dominant, while catch-up viewing declined as the stakes increased.

This suggests that audiences are not choosing between long-form and short-form football consumption. They are using each format for a different purpose.

Live matches serve the fixtures carrying the greatest sporting or emotional importance. Highlights serve overnight games, neutral matches and viewers who need to catch up quickly the following morning.

The future sports platform must therefore support multiple modes of attention:

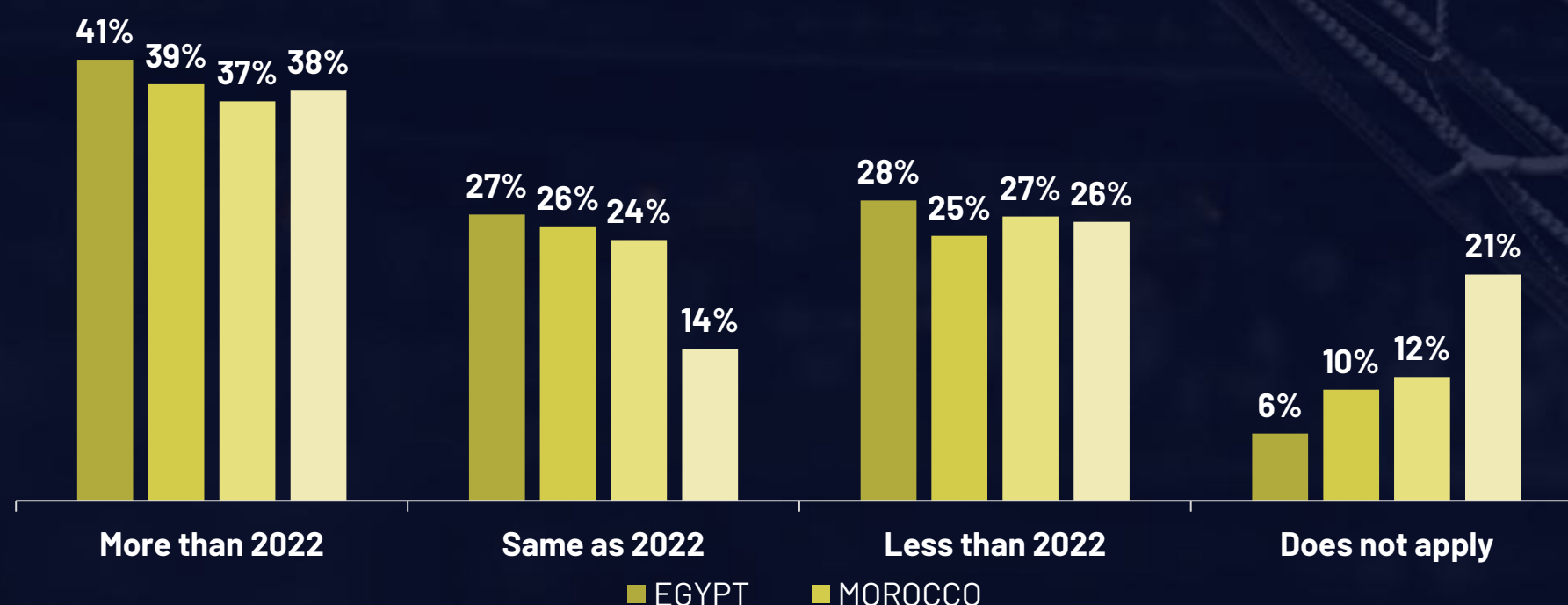
- Full live viewing for must-watch matches
- Short highlights for rapid catch-up
- Replays for time-shifted viewing
- Mobile access for audiences away from the television
- Connected-TV experiences for shared and premium viewing
- Social content for reactions, conversation and discovery

Flexibility is not a substitute for live viewing. It is what allows live viewing to remain relevant within increasingly complex daily routines.

HIGHLIGHTS HAVE BECOME AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE WORLD CUP EXPERIENCE

Compared with the World Cup Qatar 2022, more fans relied on highlights and replays to complement their live viewing.

Highlights and replays compared with the World Cup 2022 in Qatar



4K IS MOVING TOWARDS THE MAINSTREAM

4K viewing was not limited to a niche audience. The TOD by beIN data shows that 87% of the World Cup audience accessed matches in 4K, confirming that premium picture quality has become part of the expected experience for major live sports. This matters particularly for football, where clarity, motion, stadium atmosphere and the ability to follow play across a wide field contribute directly to enjoyment.

As more audiences access sport through smart televisions and high-speed home connections, the distinction between traditional broadcast quality and internet-delivered quality will become less meaningful.

Streaming services will increasingly be judged not simply on whether they can deliver a live match, but on whether they can provide a reliable, intuitive and premium experience across different devices, network conditions and household setups.

FOOTBALL HAS BECOME A MULTI-SCREEN SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

The Ipsos research also shows that the World Cup engagement no longer begins and ends with the live broadcast. Among World Cup viewers in Egypt:

- 62% discussed or followed football on Facebook
- 53% used YouTube
- 47% used Instagram
- 46% used TikTok
- 78% said creators, influencers and online football commentators were an important part of their tournament experience

Goals and highlights remained the most popular content format, but audiences also consumed fan reactions, memorable player moments, Arab-team content and football humour.

This creates a second-screen economy around the match.

Fans watch the live action while messaging family, checking reactions, viewing creator commentary, sharing memes and revisiting key moments. When a match ends, the conversation continues through clips, analysis and fan-generated content.

Egypt illustrates this behaviour most clearly. Argentina versus Egypt became one of the strongest Arab-team fixtures on TOD by beIN, while the country's large and highly social football audience extended the fixture's relevance well beyond the live stream.

For sports platforms, this means that content strategy cannot be confined to match transmission. The complete experience must include:

- Pre-match anticipation
- Live storytelling
- Real-time social interaction
- Rapid highlight publishing
- Creator and commentator participation
- Post-match reactions
- Humour and culturally relevant fan content

FOOTBALL CONVERSATIONS NOW EXTEND BEYOND THE LIVE MATCH

In Egypt, fans keep the World Cup conversation going across social platforms before, during and after every match.

Where Football fans followed World Cup conversations in Egypt



62%
Facebook



53%
YouTube



47%
Instagram



46%
TikTok



30%
WhatsApp



13%
Telegram



11%
X (Twitter)

Source: Ipsos, Audience data from quantitative survey in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, and UAE, World Cup 2026 weeks 2 & 3

TOD by beIN's owned social channels showed the same shift in observed behaviour.

Across Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube and X, the five-profile network grew from approximately 1.50 million followers before the tournament to 4.45 million by 19 July, effectively tripling its audience base. During the 1 June to 20 July reporting window alone, the channels added 2.82 million net followers and generated 4.05 billion impressions, 3.07 billion video views and 81.7 million engagements, at a blended engagement rate of 1.9%.

Different platforms played distinct but complementary roles. TikTok acted as the reach engine, delivering 1.28 billion video views, while Facebook generated 34.2 million engagements, making it the strongest engagement anchor. Instagram sustained the highest publishing cadence, with 2,038 posts, while YouTube converted interest into deeper consumption, generating 8.45 million watch hours across the channel. Together, these figures show that football discovery, conversation and retention took place across a connected social ecosystem rather than through one dominant platform.

Highlights and Arab-team content were among the clearest measurable content drivers.

The World Cup 2026 Full Highlights playlist on YouTube alone (data on 19 July 2026) generated 66.4 million views and 7.39 million watch hours. Arab-team fixtures were also strongly represented among the top-performing YouTube videos: Argentina versus Egypt ranked first with 2.83 million views, Argentina versus Algeria ranked third with 1.9 million views. This reinforces the same identity-led behaviour seen in TOD by beIN's platform data, showing that national and regional interest continued well beyond the live match.

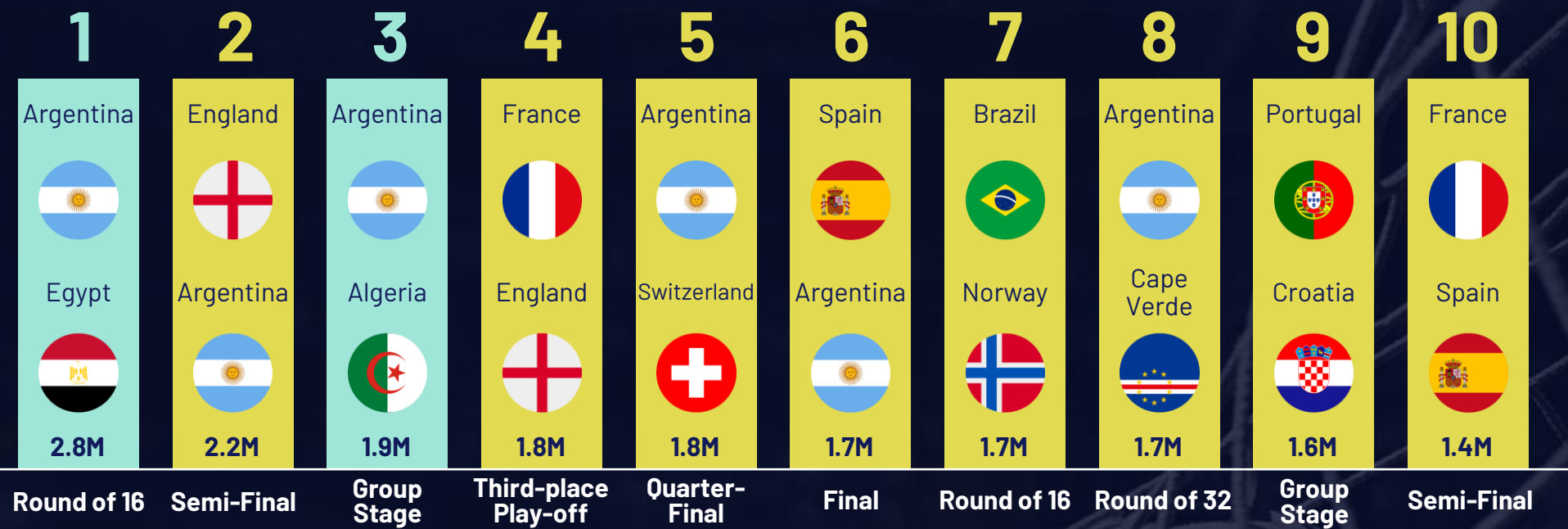
The social media performance from TOD by beIN complements the Ipsos finding that fans were not only watching matches live, but continuing the experience through highlights, short-form video and platform-led conversation. Because memes, fan reactions and creator collaborations were not tagged as distinct categories in the current export, they should be discussed as part of the wider content ecosystem rather than reported with separate performance numbers.

The match remains the central product, but the surrounding conversation determines how far and how long that product travels.

HIGHLIGHTS HAVE BECOME A POWERFUL EXTENSION OF THE LIVE EXPERIENCE

With 66.4 million YouTube views, highlights helped keep fans engaged while Arab-team matches ranked among the most-watched clips.

Top 10 most-watched World Cup 2026 highlights on TOD by beIN YouTube channel



Source: TOD by beIN, Platform data, World Cup 2026

THE LANGUAGE OF VIEWING IS MORE FLUID THAN EXPECTED

The tournament was strongly driven by Arab-nation pride, but TOD by beIN's interface-language data reveals that emotional identity does not necessarily determine the platform language audiences use.

- UAE: English-led, with Arabic playing a secondary role
- Egypt: Arabic led and English preferred
- Jordan: Arabic led, but highly bilingual
- Morocco: Arabic, French and English usage

Because viewers could switch between interface languages, mid match: it points to a bilingual and, in Morocco's case, trilingual audience.

Nevertheless, the directional finding is important.

MENA sports audiences cannot be understood through a simple Arabic-versus-English division. Morocco has a distinctive trilingual profile, Jordan demonstrates highly bilingual family viewing, Egypt combines Arab-team passion with Arab led commentary, and the UAE is the most English-led of the surveyed markets.

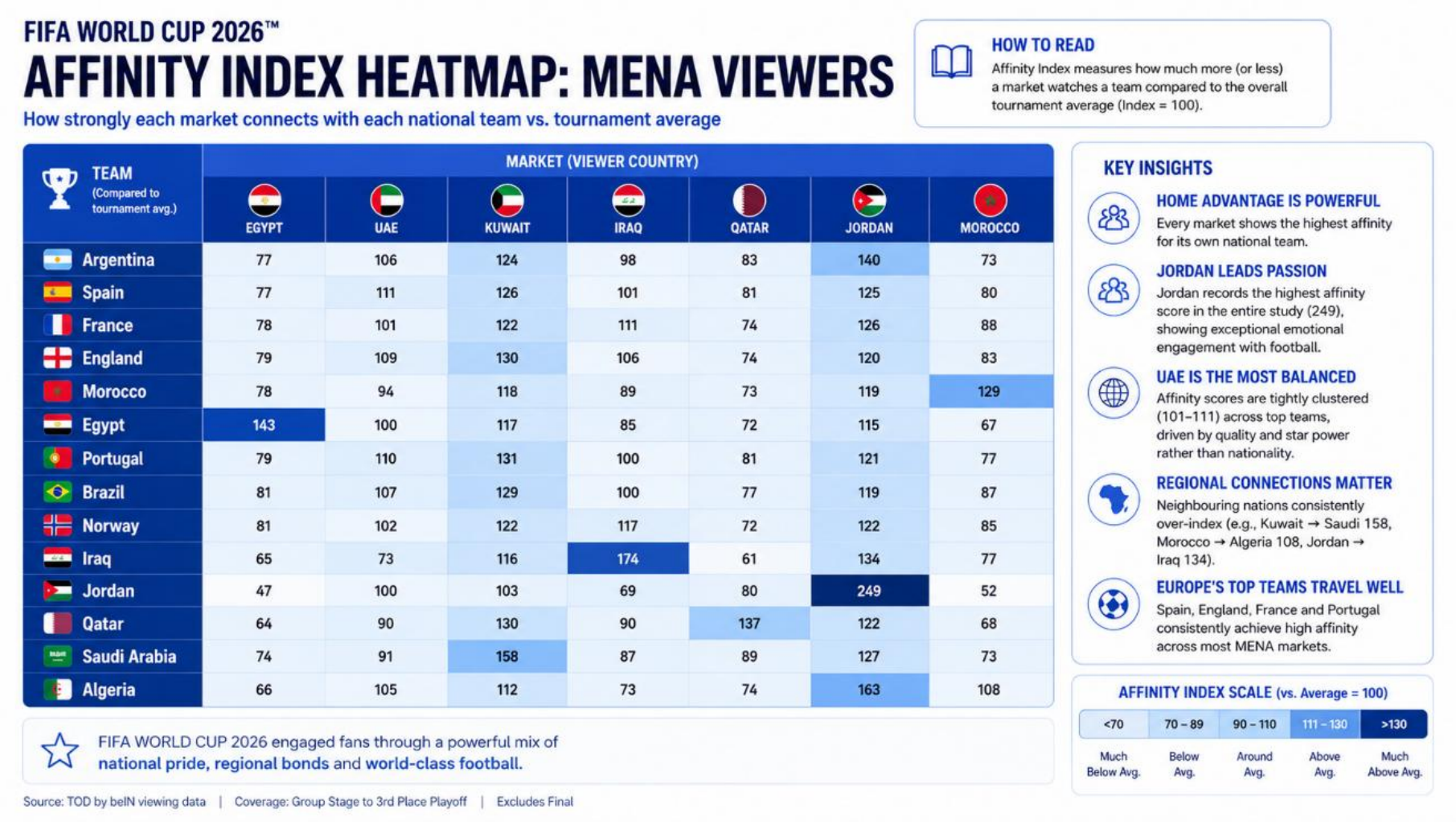
The implication is not that Arabic content is becoming less important. It is that language preference is contextual, fluid and shaped by market, household composition, platform habits and individual viewing behaviour.

Streaming platforms are uniquely positioned to respond because they can offer different language interfaces, feeds and content journeys within the same service.

The strongest new test comes from Arab-team fixtures: regional pride clearly influences which match is watched, but it barely changes the language used to access the platform. The future of localisation will therefore be based on choice rather than assumption.

TOD BY BEIN AFFINITY INDEX: A MARKET LENS ON FOOTBALL PASSION

To complement the Ipsos survey, TOD by beIN analysed the World Cup 2026 viewing behaviour through a market affinity index. This provides an observed behavioural layer to the survey by showing how strongly each viewer market connected with each national team compared with the tournament average.



Source: TOD by beIN, Platform data, World Cup 2026, Excludes Final

Market affinity signals and behavioural conclusions:

MARKET	STRONGEST AFFINITY SIGNALS	BEHAVIOURAL CONCLUSION
Egypt	Egypt: 143 Brazil: 81 Norway: 81 England: 79 Portugal: 79 Argentina: 77 Spain: 77	Highly nationalistic, but broadly football-positive. Egypt massively outperforms for its own team, while audiences remain relatively balanced across Europe's elite and South America's giants once Egypt is removed.
UAE	Spain: 111 Portugal: 110 England: 109 Brazil: 107 Argentina: 106	The most balanced market. Affinity varies very little between the world's biggest teams, suggesting viewers are driven more by quality, star power and premium fixtures than nationality.
Kuwait	Saudi Arabia: 158 Portugal: 131 England: 130 Qatar: 130 Brazil: 129 Spain: 126 Argentina: 124	Regional identity with premium football appeal. Saudi Arabia receives a major boost, while European football brands consistently over-index, indicating sophisticated football consumption.
Iraq	Iraq: 174 Norway: 117 France: 111 England: 106	Home team dominates. Iraq produces the strongest national affinity in the dataset. Outside Iraq, viewers respond selectively to group narratives and Europe's strongest teams.
Qatar	Qatar: 137 Saudi Arabia: 89 Argentina: 83 Spain: 81 Portugal: 81	Region-first behaviour. Qatar strongly backs its own team, then neighbouring Gulf nations. International teams generate comparatively lower affinity than elsewhere in MENA.
Jordan	Jordan: 249 Algeria: 163 Argentina: 140 Iraq: 134 Saudi Arabia: 127 France: 126 Spain: 125	The most emotionally engaged market. Jordan over-indexes for its own team, regional teams and major football nations, making it one of the tournament's most passionate football audiences.
Morocco	Morocco: 129 Algeria: 108 France: 88 Brazil: 87 Norway: 85	Maghreb-first viewing. Morocco strongly supports its own team and neighbouring Algeria, while France remains the strongest European draw.

FOUR MARKETS, FOUR EXPRESSIONS OF THE MENA FAN

Morocco: National Pride and Trilingual Engagement

Morocco represents the tournament's strongest national-pride story.

With 94% saying the national team mattered to their interest, the connection between the Atlas Lions and tournament engagement was unmistakable. Morocco's run continued to generate some of TOD by beIN's strongest Arab-team moments, with both Morocco fixtures and Morocco-related highlights reinforcing the country's national-pride story.

The market also displays a distinctive language profile, with English-led interface usage supported by meaningful Arabic and French consumption, creating a trilingual audience.

For Morocco, the opportunity lies in combining national-team storytelling, premium live viewing, rapid highlights, public celebration and multilingual content.

TOD by beIN Affinity Index lens: Morocco was strongly home-team led, with Morocco matches indexing at 129, meaning they reached the Moroccan TOD audience roughly 29% more strongly than the MENA norm for those same fixtures. The market also showed a distinct Maghreb spillover, with Algeria indexing at 108. At the same time, most global teams under-indexed relative to other MENA markets, including France at 88, Brazil at 87, Norway at 85, England at 83, Spain at 80, Portugal at 77 and Argentina at 73. This suggests Morocco on TOD was national-team driven, supported by Maghreb affinity and selectively engaged with the biggest global fixtures.

Jordan: Family-First and Bilingual

Jordan is the clearest family-viewing market.

Ipsos found that 69% watched with family, while 87% regarded Arab-team participation as essential or very important. It was also the market most open to using streaming for future sports events.

TOD by beIN's data shows that Jordan is highly English language friendly at interface level, while also being one of the most bilingual surveyed markets, highlighting that Jordanian viewers move fluidly between languages.

Here, streaming succeeds by enabling the household experience: flexible access, big-screen viewing, Arabic and English choice and content built around Arab-team solidarity.

TOD by beIN Affinity Index lens: Jordan recorded the highest and broadest affinity profile in the study. The strongest signals were Jordan at 249, Algeria at 163, Argentina at 140, Iraq at 134, Saudi Arabia at 127, France at 126 and Spain at 125. This makes Jordan the clearest example of home-team passion extending into Arab solidarity and wider tournament loyalty. On TOD, Jordan behaved not only as a national-team market, but as one of the most emotionally engaged football audiences across the tournament.

Egypt: Scale, Social Conversation and Live Pull

Egypt combines substantial live-viewing demand with a highly active second-screen culture.

Argentina versus Egypt became the strongest Arab-team fixture on TOD by beIN. Meanwhile, Ipsos showed that Egyptian fans move fluidly between Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and TikTok, with creators and online football commentators playing a major role in the experience.

The opportunity in Egypt is therefore both live and social: major match audiences supported by creator content, fan reactions, humour, rapid highlights and always-on football conversation.

TOD by beIN Affinity Index lens: Egypt delivered a highly concentrated national-team signal, with Egypt indexing at 143. Once Egypt was removed, the market was more selective in relative terms, with Brazil and Norway at 81, England and Portugal at 79, and Argentina and Spain at 77. This does not mean global teams lacked scale in Egypt. It means that, relative to the size of the available TOD audience, Egypt-team fixtures were the strongest driver of attention. The key opportunity is to convert that national-team scale into a more persistent global football audience after Egypt exits the tournament.

UAE: Premium, Convenient and English-Led

The UAE represents a premium, cosmopolitan and convenience-oriented home-viewing market.

Ipsos data shows that UAE audiences are highly selective but remain committed to major live moments. Among Local and Arab viewers, 70% watched full matches live and only 8% relied on highlights or replays alone.

Although 54% watched fewer matches than in 2022, 37% stayed up late or woke up early for matches more often, and 59% said the importance of knockout matches and finals would make them more likely to watch live.

The viewing setup is strongly digital and home led. Online streaming at home on a TV was the most common setup (30%), followed by group viewing at home with friends or family (23%) and mobile viewing (22%). Smaller shares primarily watched in cafés, restaurants or hotel lounges (12%), on a traditional TV channel using a TV receiver (8%), or through highlights and social media (6%).

Convenience also forms part of the experience. Among Local and Arab viewers for whom food delivery was relevant, approximately 61% ordered the same amount or more than during the World Cup Qatar 2022. The UAE also produced the strongest response to TOD by beIN's Talabat partnership, accounting for 33% of all voucher redemptions.

TOD by beIN's data further shows that the UAE was the most English-led of the surveyed markets at interface level. Together, these findings position the UAE as a premium, cosmopolitan and convenience-oriented market where connected TV, mobile access, home viewing and lifestyle partnerships work together.

Looking ahead, 55% of Local and Arab viewers said they were more likely to use streaming platforms for future sports tournaments. The UAE story therefore aligns with the wider regional shift, but its strongest signal is not indiscriminate growth in viewing. It is the concentration of attention around important matches, delivered through flexible, high-quality and predominantly digital viewing environments.

TOD by beIN Affinity Index lens: The UAE was the most balanced market in the affinity analysis. Leading international teams were tightly clustered, suggesting that UAE viewers were driven more by quality, star power and premium fixtures than by one dominant national narrative.

WHAT THE FINDINGS MEAN FOR SPORTS STREAMING

The combined findings point towards several priorities for the next generation of sports platforms.

Live must remain the foundation

Despite fragmented attention and difficult schedules, audiences still gather for the matches that carry the greatest meaning. Streaming platforms must continue to deliver reliability, low friction and quality at peak concurrency.

Flexibility must surround the live match

Fans require highlights, replays, mobile continuity and time-shifted access, not because live sport is becoming irrelevant, but because these tools help audiences remain connected when watching every game live is impossible.

The big screen and mobile screen must work together

The future is not television versus mobile. A single viewer may use both during the same match. Sports services must support seamless movement across devices and viewing situations.

Premium quality is becoming expected

With a meaningful share of viewers accessing 4K, streaming quality is increasingly part of the core proposition. Resolution, stability and interface quality influence how audiences judge the overall value of a service.

Localisation must offer genuine choice

Language preferences vary substantially between markets and even within individual viewing sessions. Platforms must serve Arabic, English and relevant local-language needs without making rigid assumptions about how audiences prefer to access and navigate the experience.

Content must continue beyond the whistle

Highlights, creators, fan reactions, humour and social conversation now form part of the sports product. Platforms must think like broadcasters, publishers, technology companies and community builders at the same time.

Market strategies must reflect different motivations

MENA does not contain one uniform football audience. Morocco is activated by national pride and Maghreb spillover, Jordan by family, Arab solidarity and broad tournament loyalty, Egypt by national-team scale and selective global engagement, and the UAE by balanced premium viewing and international diversity. The wider TOD by beIN affinity signals also show Kuwait as a GCC and global-football powerhouse, Iraq as home-team dominant and Qatar as locally relevant and region-first.

Regional scale must therefore be supported by market-level relevance.

CONCLUSION: MEETING FANS WHEREVER THE MATCH FINDS THEM

The World Cup 2026 demonstrates that the evolution of sports viewing is not a story of live football being replaced.

It is a story of live football being rebuilt around the viewer.

Across MENA, fans have shown that they will adapt their routines, stay awake, wake up early and protect the fixtures that matter most. They will gather with family around a connected TV, continue watching on a mobile device, catch up through a near-complete highlight, switch interface languages and join a social conversation that continues long after the final whistle.

TOD by beIN's observed data shows the scale of this transformation without needing to rely on absolute viewership counts: live viewing dominated, knockouts concentrated attention, catch-up collapsed around must-watch fixtures, 4K became a meaningful quality signal, and Arab-team fixtures continued to overperform within their competitive stage.

The Affinity Index adds a further layer to this picture by showing that engagement is not uniform across the region. Viewers respond differently to home teams, neighbouring nations, global stars, group-stage storylines and premium fixtures, making market-level relevance essential to the future of sports streaming.

The central lesson for sports streaming is clear. Audiences should not be expected to adapt themselves to a single screen, schedule, language or viewing format. The platform must adapt to them.

The services that lead the next era of sports consumption will be those that preserve the emotion and immediacy of live competition while giving every fan the freedom to experience it in the way that suits their life: on the screen of their choice, in the language they prefer, at the quality they expect and with the flexibility to move between live matches, highlights, replays and social conversation.

The future of sports streaming will not be defined simply by putting more matches online. It will be defined by how effectively platforms meet fans wherever they are, and ensure that, however they choose to watch, they never feel far from the action.

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

The audience insights are based on quantitative research conducted by Ipsos among national representative samples of individuals aged 15 and above, during the second and third weeks of the World Cup 2026 in UAE, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco. Respondents had watched full live matches, parts of live matches, or tournament highlights and replays.

TOD by beIN platform findings are based on observed viewing behaviour during the World Cup 2026. Device, live and on-demand measurements may include overlapping audiences because individual viewers could use more than one device, format or viewing mode.

Social-media results cover TOD by beIN's owned Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube and X channels during the stated reporting period. Public YouTube view counts are time-sensitive and should carry an "as of" date.