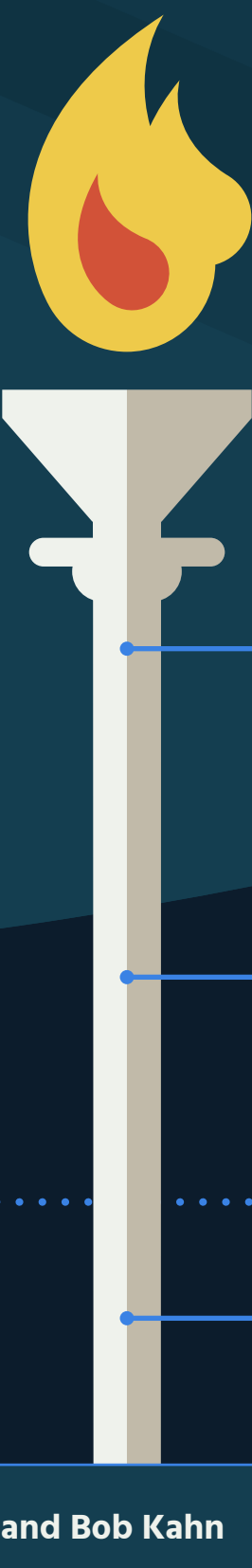


The Olympics & the Internet: A Timeline

The Olympic Games and the Internet are both global unifiers. They bring people together across countries and continents, making our world feel a little smaller. It's no surprise the way we've interacted with the Olympics has changed since the Internet became widely available.

Explore how the evolutions of the Olympics and the Internet have overlapped and aligned over the past century.



1970s

TCP/IP protocol was written by Vint Cerf and Bob Kahn

1936 Berlin – First Televised Olympics
Only 162,000 people who were in close proximity to the stadium were able to watch.

1960 Rome – First Global Televised Broadcast of the Olympics

1972 Munich Olympics

1976 Montreal Olympics

1990s

1990 3 million people connected to the Internet (only 0.5% of the world's population) and the World Wide Web was invented by Tim Berners-Lee while at CERN

1991 First website created by Time Berners-Lee at CERN

10 websites online

1992 Barcelona Olympics

25 million people connected to the Internet with over 2,200 websites online

1994 Lillehammer Olympics

77 million people connected to the Internet

1996 Atlanta – First Olympics to Have a Website

The first Olympic Games website was created in 1995, ahead of the 1996 games in Atlanta. It was a central hub for updates on sporting events, with hundreds of photos uploaded daily and tickets to events being sold.

Source: <https://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/blog/games-of-the-digital-age/>

147 million people connected to the Internet

1998 Nagano Olympics

2000s

361 million people connected to the Internet

2000 Sydney – First Accessible Olympic Website

Source: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/business-case/archive/socog-case-study>

631 million people connected to the Internet

2002 Salt Lake City – .com Journalists Given Access to the Olympics

After being shut out of the 2000 events, Net journalists fought for the same level of access that other media outlets were given. The Internet was a new medium for sports coverage, merging printed word with video, so new guidelines needed to be created to adapt to the future of sports coverage.

Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2000/TECH/computing/08/21/net.olympics.idg/index.html>

900 million people connected to the Internet

2004 Athens – First Olympics Broadcast Online

The BBC and other European networks offered live and on-demand video coverage of events. However, viewers outside the networks' regions were blocked from viewing the broadcasts.

Source: <https://www.wired.com/2004/08/net-the-web-games-begin/>

1.1 billion people connected to the Internet

2006 Torino – Olympics Offer Mobile Video Coverage and HD Live Streams

Broadcasters utilized satellite and digital platforms to offer high-definition live streams online and video coverage on mobile for the first time.

Source: <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/new-technologies-in-broadcasting-the-games>

2007 When the iPhone was released in June, the mobile phone industry had a reset on what mobile device capabilities could be. Unlike ever before, smartphones made the Internet easily accessible for users on the move. The new environments in which the Internet could be accessed shifted how users used the Internet altogether.



Source: <https://race.com/blog/the-history-of-the-internet-timeline/>

1.4 billion people connected to the Internet

2008 Beijing – Olympics Offer Watching the Games Both Live and On-demand

Thousands of hours of on-demand and live coverage were available for viewers on NBCOlympics.com. Previously, US viewers could only access clips from major events, but for the first time, everything from preliminary games to finals would be made available online.

Source: <https://www.cnet.com/culture/2008-olympics-the-digital-games/>

2010s

1.97 billion people connected to the Internet

2010 Vancouver Olympics

2.4 billion people connected to the Internet

2012 London – First Olympics to Have a Mobile App

The official London Games and broadcasters, like NBC and BBC, created Olympics apps for the first time to bring the events to where viewers are—on their phones. Photos, videos, and event recaps were all available through apps to give fans the ability to personalize their Olympics experience.

Source: <https://www.cnet.com/tech/mobile/follow-the-2012-olympic-games-on-your-ios-or-android-phone/>

3 billion connected
Smartphones became the primary tool for accessing the Internet worldwide. For the first time, mobile Internet use surpassed desktop use, underscoring the need for mobile-friendly experiences.

Source: <https://race.com/blog/the-history-of-the-internet-timeline/>

2014 Sochi – “The Viral Games”

Social media and technology gave Olympians and journalists a new way to connect with their friends, families, and followers at home. When day-to-day activities went viral (like an athlete getting locked in a bathroom), fans got a new insight into life in the Olympic village.

Source: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/olympics/sochi/2014/02/10/sochi-russia-social-media-winter-olympic-games/5381185/>

2015 The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) upheld net neutrality, preventing service providers from giving preferential treatment to certain websites or services. This critical decision ensured that Internet traffic in the US would be treated equally and that the Internet would remain an open and free platform.



Source: <https://race.com/blog/the-history-of-the-internet-timeline/>

3.42 billion people connected to the Internet

2016 Rio – Total Olympic Games Broadcast Content Viewed Online Was Over Double London 2012

Source: <https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/Games/Summer-Games/Games-Rio-2016-Olympic-Games/Media-Guide-for-Rio-2016/Global-Broadcast-and-Audience-Report-Rio-2016.pdf>

4.02 billion people connected
The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) imposed new, strict rules for how personal data is collected, stored, and processed online. This regulation was huge for increasing individuals' control over their privacy and had a global impact as companies around the world had to adhere to the new standards.

Source: <https://race.com/blog/the-history-of-the-internet-timeline/>

2018 Pyeongchang – Cyber Attack on the Opening Ceremony

A cyberattack caused Internet disruptions during the opening ceremony of the games in Pyeongchang. Internet access, telecasts, broadcaster drones, and the official Pyeongchang games website were all impacted.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/12/technology/winter-olympic-games-hack.html>

2020s

4.85 billion people connected to the Internet

2020 Tokyo – The Remote Olympic Games

Due to the global pandemic, the events in Tokyo could not be attended by the general public. This increased the reliance on the Internet to let fans connect with Olympians and experience the games from home. Millions of people sent “virtual cheers” through the Tokyo 2020 app and digital platforms, and social media generated billions of engagements with Olympics-related content.

Source: <https://www.tuintl.com/hub/2021/08/tokyo-olympics-the-most-connected-games-ever/>

5.3 billion people connected to the Internet

2022 Beijing – Most Digitally Engaged Olympic Winter Games

“Beijing 2022 was the most digitally engaged Olympic Winter Games in history.” – IOC President Thomas Bach.

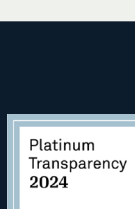
The official Olympics social media handles generated over 3.2 billion engagements on social media and attracted over 11 million new followers.

Source: <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/olympic-winter-games-beijing-2022-watched-by-more-than-2-billion-people>

About the Internet Society

For over 30 years, the Internet Society has been working toward an Internet for everyone. As a global charitable organization, we work with our community of over 100,000 like-minded people and partners who understand that the Internet is a critical resource that people should have access to and that we must protect. We understand the value that the Internet brings because we were founded by the people who helped build it.

Learn more at internetsociety.org/about



The Internet Society is a U.S. 501(c)(3) charity (EIN 54-1650477) with a multi-year top 4-star ranking from Charity Navigator.

