

## White Paper

# A Summary of the Sports Economy in Las Vegas

May 2023

### Key Takeaways:

- Current total professional sport seating capacity in Las Vegas is 285,173.
- There are 39 significant annual sporting events or tournaments planned in Las Vegas through 2024.<sup>1</sup>
- The ratio of sports and recreation instruction employment in Las Vegas to total employment is lower compared to the rest of the country, suggesting unfulfilled demand.
- CBER estimates that sporting events in Las Vegas generated \$1.845 billion in direct output from out-of-town visitors in fiscal year 2022.
- We share three case studies on how the expansion of sports in Las Vegas has positively impacted marketing, golf, and youth female sporting activities.
- CBER conservatively forecasts that performing arts, spectator sports, and related industries employment will grow by 12.4 percent or 2,944 permanent jobs from 2022 to 2030.

### Authors:

**Andrew Woods**, Director, UNLV Center for Business and Economic Research

**Dr. Nancy Lough**, Director of Education, UNLV Sports Innovation

**Dr. Stephen M. Miller**, Research Director, UNLV Center for Business and Economic Research

**Dr. John Mercer**, Director of Research, UNLV Sports Innovation

**Jinju Lee**, Deputy Research Director, UNLV Center for Business and Economic Research

**Coby Carner**, Graduate Research Assistant, UNLV Sports Innovation

**Zachary Allen**, Graduate Assistant, UNLV Center for Business and Economic Research

## I. The Las Vegas Sports Economy Today

The metropolitan area of Las Vegas, Nevada is home to more than 2.3 million people and attracts more than 40 million visitors annually. A top travel and leisure destination that accounts for half of the world’s ten largest hotels and boasts more guest accommodations than any other U.S. city.<sup>2</sup> Despite its international acclaim as a tourist destination, until recently Las Vegas went without a professional sports team. In the last decade, Las Vegas welcomed and became the home to three major league sports teams—Las Vegas Raiders (NFL), Vegas Golden Knights (NHL), and Las Vegas Aces (WNBA)—and six minor league sports teams—Las Vegas Aviators (MiLB), Las Vegas Lights FC (USL), Henderson Silver Knights (AHL), Las Vegas Desert Dogs (NLL), Ignite (NBA G-League), and Vegas Knight Hawks (IFL), and a major sport organization, The Ultimate Fighting Champion. Moreover, the city has added four large sports venues (Allegiant Stadium, Las Vegas Ballpark, T-Mobile Arena, and The Dollar Loan Center) in less than six years.

**Figure 1. Existing Main Sporting Facilities in Las Vegas as of April 23, 2023**

Facility	Year Opened	Typical Capacity
Las Vegas Motor Speedway (LVMS) Superspeedway	1996	72,000
Allegiant Stadium	2020	65,000
The Strip at LVMS	2000	22,000
T-Mobile Arena	2016	20,000
Thomas & Mack Center	1983	18,000
MGM Grand Garden Aren	1993	16,000
Michelob Ultra Arena	1998	12,000
Las Vegas Ballpark	2019	10,000
Orleans Arena	2003	9,500
Cashman Field	1983	9,334
Dirt Track at LVMS	1996	8,200
Dollar Loan Center	2022	5,567
Bullring at LVMS	1985	5,400
South Point Arena & Equestrian Center	2006	4,600
Cox Pavilion	2001	3,372
CORE Arena at The Plaza	2018	3,000
City National Arena	2017	1,200
<b>Total Seating Capacity</b>		<b>285,173</b>

Source: Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority; Wikipedia; The Southern Nevada Sports & Entertainment Outlook (Applied Analysis, 2018)

**Figure 2. Planned and Proposed Facilities in Las Vegas as of January 1st,**

Planned Facilities	Location
Madison Square Garden Sphere	Sands Avenue and Koval Lane
Formula 1 Headquarters/Paddock Club	Harmon Avenue and Koval Lane
Oak View Group Casino & NBA Arena	Las Vegas Blvd and Blue Diamond
WNBA Aces 80,000 sq. foot practice facility	West Henderson next to Raiders HQ
Indoor community sports facility	Former Fiesta Henderson site
Proposed Facilities	Location
MLS Stadium next to new OVG site	Las Vegas Blvd and Warm Springs
Oakland A's Major League Baseball Stadium	Rio Casino site
All Net Resort and Arena	Between Sahara and Fontainebleau

Sources: Bloomberg, 8 News Now, Sports Business Journal, Review Journal, Yogonet, Fox 5 Vegas

The largest addition to the Las Vegas sports economy was the completion of Allegiant Stadium in July 2020 with a seating capacity of 65,000, costing \$1.9 billion (Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> To date, it is the second most expensive NFL stadium built in the United States. Its completion brought the first professional National Football League (NFL) team to the local economy, the Las Vegas Raiders. The Raiders' relocation to Las Vegas has made it the ninth most valuable NFL franchise in 2022 with the highest ticket revenue of \$78 million in the league and the highest average ticket price on the secondary market (\$691).<sup>4</sup> The team's value has increased by 76 percent over the past three years since the relocation from Oakland, California growing from \$2.9 billion in 2019 to \$5.1 billion in 2022.<sup>5</sup> In addition to hosting the Raiders, the venue is used for large concerts and events such as for the 4 back-to-back weekend shows by Korean Boy Band BTS on April 8, 9, 15th and 16th, 2022 which drew around 200,000 attendees.<sup>6</sup> In total the stadium hosted 107 events drawing nearly 1.7 million attendees in 2022 according to the Las Vegas Stadium Authority.<sup>7</sup>

Another major addition to the Las Vegas sports economy is T-Mobile Arena, which opened in 2016. It is a \$375 million multi-purpose facility, seating 20,000 sports fans, including Las Vegas' first major professional sports team, the National Hockey League's (NHL) Vegas Golden Knights. The arena supports a wide range of world-class sporting events, including the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), boxing, basketball, bull riding, as well as top-name concerts and award shows. The \$150 million Las Vegas Ballpark opened in 2019 with a capacity of 12,000 and is home to the Las Vegas Aviators Minor League Baseball Team (MiLB). The Dollar Loan Center in Henderson was completed in March 2022, costing \$70 million and becoming the newest addition to the local sports economy. With a capacity of

3 Singh, 2023.; 4 Alvarado, 2022.; 5 Forbes, 2022.; 6 Kaufman, 2022;  
7 Las Vegas Stadium Authority, 2023.

around 5,500, it is home to the American Hockey League (AHL) Henderson Silver Knights, National Basketball Association G-League Ignite, and the Indoor Football League's Vegas Knight Hawks.<sup>8</sup> Collectively, these new facilities added a total of 104,000 seats to the city's entertainment venues and generated an additional \$1.5 million in annual ticket sales.<sup>9</sup>

According to data from the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA), 41 sponsored sporting events took place in fiscal year 2022 (July 2021 to June 2022) that drew nearly 1.8 million spectators or around 5.1 percent of total visitors to Las Vegas.<sup>10</sup> The increase in professional sports in Las Vegas has also spilled over into the world of collegiate sports. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has selected Las Vegas as the host for nine postseason events and championships in Divisions I, II, and III sports, in a mixture of Men's and Women's Basketball, Golf, Hockey, Soccer, and Bowling championships to be held from academic years 2022-23 through 2025-26.<sup>11</sup> According to LVCVA data analyzed by the Sports Business Journal, between 2015 and 2019, just over 3 million visitors from outside of North America came to Las Vegas. Of those international visitors, 13.1 percent said they were interested in or were going to a sporting event.<sup>12</sup>

In March 2022, Liberty Media announced that Formula 1 would hold a Saturday night grand prix race on the Las Vegas Strip on November 19, 2023. According to LVCVA, the event is expected to generate 400,000 hotel room nights. Moreover, the LVCVA will spend more than \$19.5 million in fees and other costs over the three-year contract for races in November 2023, 2024, and 2025 (i.e., \$6.5 million per year) and along with commitments from the County on road upgrades.<sup>13</sup> The route will be more iconic than that of the 1981 route (the only previous F1 race held in Las Vegas), passing through significant Las Vegas strip landmarks. F1 has gained substantial viewership since Liberty Media Corp. bought the organization for \$4.4 billion. U.S. viewership grew 28 percent to 1.21 million average TV viewers in 2022, setting a new record after increasing by 56 percent in 2021 to 949,000 average viewers.<sup>13</sup> The Formula 1 event is expected to blow by previously large multi day entertainment events by ticketed spectators such the Grateful Dead's farewell gig in Las Vegas in 1995, which attracted 125,533 ticketed and non-ticketed spectators, and the Electric Daisy Carnival.<sup>15</sup>

MGM Resorts International, the primary bidder, obtained the rights to host the 2026 Division I Men's Frozen Four and the 2023 Division I Men's Basketball Regionals at T-Mobile Arena. The 2023 NCAA National Collegiate Women's Bowling Championship will also be held at the South Point Hotel Casino & Spa, which is roughly 15 minutes from the Strip. MGM, Caesars, and Wynn Resorts also played a significant role in luring the F1 race to Las Vegas for the Grand Prix which will be hosted on the weekend of November 17th.

The LVCVA, Southern Nevada's official destination marketing organization, anticipates spending \$90 million on advertising and marketing in fiscal year 2022–2023—an increase of 10% from the prior year's budget. The aim is to increase revenue for the 390 hotels with a combined capacity of 168,393 rooms, which is expected to bring substantial tax revenue from Las Vegas' 13.38 percent lodging tax and boost the overall local economy. This

<sup>8</sup> Anderson, 2022.; <sup>9</sup> Broughton, 2022.; <sup>10</sup> Bagger 2023.;  
<sup>11</sup> Visitlasvegas.com, 2020.; <sup>12</sup> Sports Business Journal, 2022.;; <sup>13</sup> Snel, 2022.;  
<sup>14</sup> Hall, 2022.; <sup>15</sup> Weatherford, 2015.

**Figure 3. Major Annual Sporting Events in Las Vegas (2023-2024)**

Event	Date	Location
East-West Shrine Bowl	February 2, 2023	Allegiant Stadium
Pro Bowl Games	February 5, 2023	Allegiant Stadium
<b>Pac-12 Women's Basketball Tournament</b>	March 1-5, 2023	Michelob ULTRA Arena
<b>WCC Men's and Women's Basketball Tournament</b>	March 2-7, 2023	Orleans Arena
<b>NASCAR Cup Series: Pennzoil 400</b>	March 5, 2023	Las Vegas Motor Speedway
<b>Mountain West Men's and Women's Basketball Championships</b>	March 5-11, 2023	Thomas & Mack Center
<b>WAC Men's and Women's Basketball Tournament</b>	March 6-11, 2023	Michelob ULTRA Arena, Orleans Arena
<b>Big West Men's and Women's Basketball Championships</b>	March 7-11, 2023	Dollar Loan Center
<b>Pac-12 Men's Basketball Tournament</b>	March 8-11, 2023	T-Mobile Arena
NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Regionals	March 23-25, 2023	T-Mobile Arena
NIT Tournament Championships	March 28-30, 2023	Orleans Arena
National Collegiate Women's Bowling Final	April 14-15, 2023	South Point Hotel
<b>NHRA Four-Wide Nationals</b>	April 14-16, 2023	Las Vegas Motor Speedway
NCAA Division I Men's Golf Regional	May 15-17, 2023	Bear's Best Las Vegas
<b>UFC International Fight Week</b>	July 3-9, 2023	Las Vegas Convention Center, T-Mobile Arena, Resorts World
<b>PGA Shriners Children's Open</b>	October 9-15, 2023	TPC Summerlin
<b>NASCAR Cup Series: South Point 400</b>	October 15, 2023	Las Vegas Motor Speedway
<b>PBR Team Series Championship</b>	October 20-22, 2023	T-Mobile Arena
<b>Formula 1 Las Vegas Grand Prix</b>	November 16-18, 2023	Las Vegas Strip
National Finals Rodeo	December 7-16, 2023	Thomas & Mack Center
Super Bowl LVIII	February 11, 2024	Allegiant Stadium
NCAA Division III Men's Golf Championships	May 2024	Boulder Creek Golf Club, The Legacy Golf Club
NCAA Division I Women's Golf Regional	May 6-8, 2024	Spanish Trail Country Club
NCAA Division III Men's and Women's Soccer Championships	December 2024	Peter Johann Soccer Field

**Bold** denotes yearly recurring event in Las Vegas

Sources: NCAA, Sports Business Journal, Vegasshows.US

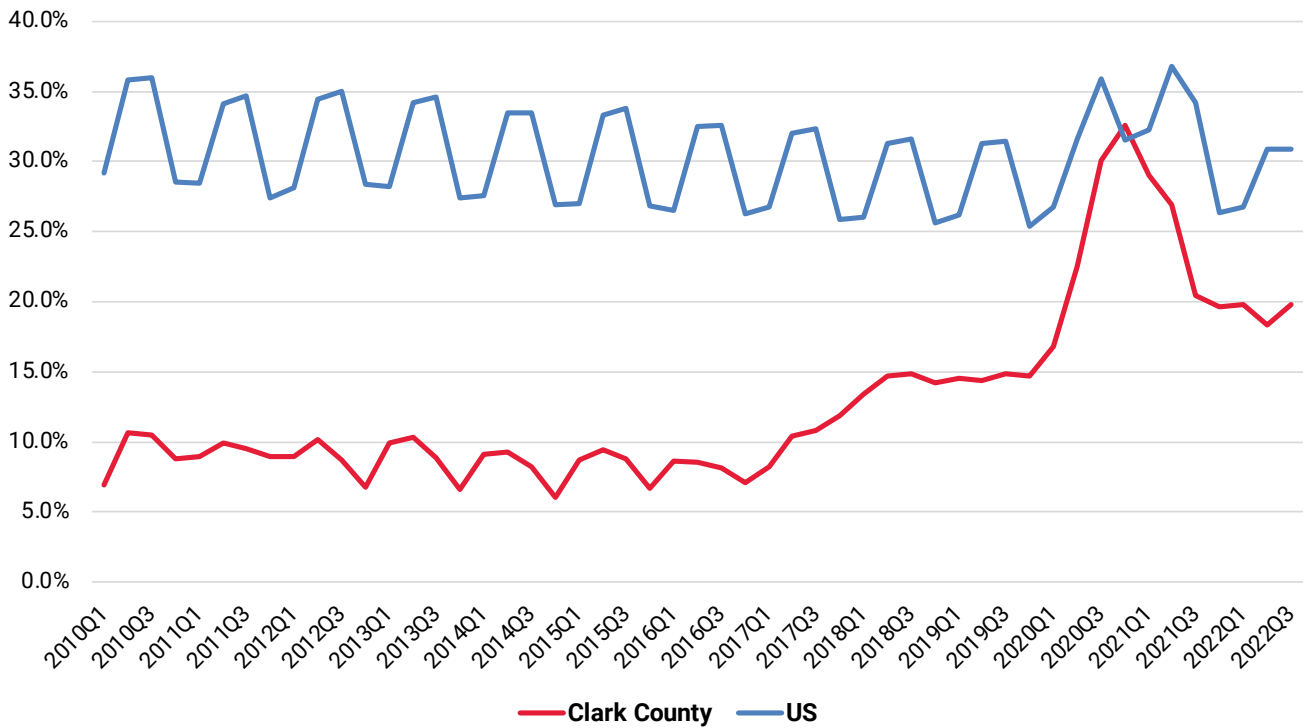
increase in spending will be key to securing future sporting contracts in conjunction with UNLV and local hospitality brands like MGM such as the aforementioned NCAA events, Super Bowl LVIII in February 2024, and continuing contracts for the 2021 Concacaf Gold Cup Finals; 2022 NHL All-Star Game; 2022 NFL Draft, NFL Pro Bowl, 2021 and 2023 WNBA All Star Game, and the Pac-12, Mountain West, Big West, West Coast, and Western Athletic Conference basketball championships.

## II. Sports Employment in Clark County

Major Sports teams have helped boost the local economy not only by bringing additional visitors to the local economy, but also by creating new valuable jobs in sports education and other spectator sports. The Golden Knights' successful debut and the Raiders' decision to move to the Valley has sharply increased sports and related activities, investment, and employment over the past 5 years despite the COVID-19 recession.

Figure 4 below shows the ratio of spectator sports employment compared to performing arts, spectator sports, and related industries employment. The share of spectator sports em-

**Figure 4. Ratio of Spectator Sports Employment (NAICS 7112) to the Performing Arts, Spectator Sports, and Related Industries Employment**



**Note: We only included private employment for the U.S. estimates.**

Sources: DETR; BLS; CBER

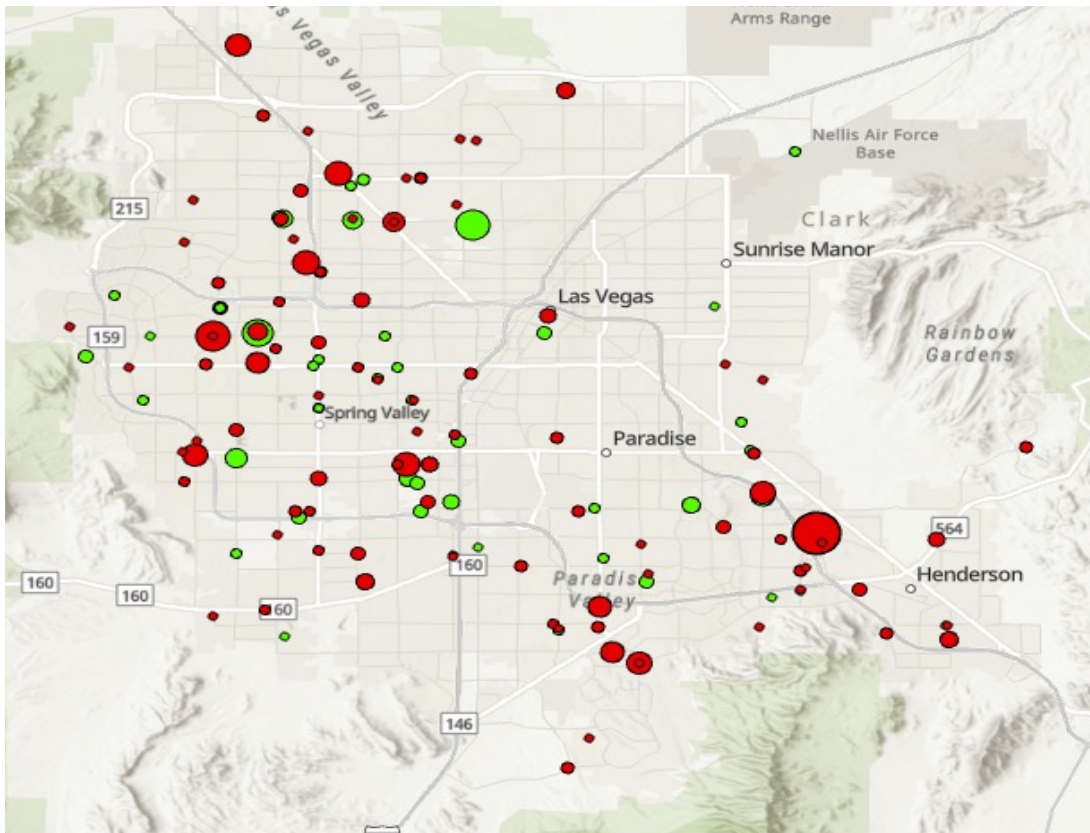
ployment soared in 2017, remained flat in 2018 and the first half of 2019, and, once again, had a substantial jump in the last half of 2019 and early 2020. In 2017, Golden Knights debuted, and the Raiders decided to move to Las Vegas. In 2019, the Aviators received increased attention with their new stadium, Las Vegas Ballpark. In early 2020, the Raiders relocated to Las Vegas and the Golden Knights announced a new minor-league franchise, the Henderson Silver Knights.

Due to these sports teams, Las Vegas' spectator sports employment in areas such as athletic coaching, front offices, and retail shops experienced a less severe decline compared to overall performing arts, spectator sports, and related industries employment during the COVID-19 recession. In 2020, the ratio increased sharply to 32.6 percent, surpassing the level of the U.S. average in 2020Q4. Clark County Spectator employment experienced a slight decline of 0.5 percent in 2020, while the United States saw a much more significant drop of 38.6 percent during the pandemic. The performing arts, spectator sports, and related industries employment showed a smaller decrease of 30.8 percent due to the strong employment in spectator sports compared to the 35.4 percent decrease for the United States. Despite an increase in sports-related businesses and employment, the overall employment share is still lower at 19.8 percent compared to 26.9 percent for the United States in 2022Q1, indicating there may be unfulfilled demand for sport related employment and establishments in Las Vegas.

Among spectator sports employment (NAICS 7112), sports-teams-and-clubs' employment (NAICS 711211) in Las Vegas soared by 1,930.5 percent from 59 jobs in 2010Q1 to 1,198 jobs in 2022Q3 with a 12,815.7 percent gain in total wages over the same period. Other spectator sports employment (NAICS 711219) also increased substantially in Las Vegas by 710.5 percent from 19 jobs in 2010Q1 to 154 jobs in 2022Q3, benefitting from major and minor league sports teams. Other spectator sports employment in Clark County hit their highest level of 217 in 2019Q4. During the same period, the United States experienced 116.3 and 4.3 percent growth, respectively, for sports teams and clubs and other spectator sports employment. Spectator sports employment does not include employment in stadium facilities such as T-Mobile Arena and Allegiant Stadium. Event facilities employees are under a separate category as Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports, and Similar Events with Facilities (NAICS 711310). In 2022Q3, 949 employees worked in facilities for performing arts, sports, and similar events in Clark County, which grew by 461.5 percent from 2010Q1.

Thanks to locals' increasing interest in sporting events, employment in sports and recreation instruction has more than doubled from 314 jobs in 2010Q1 to 733 jobs in 2022Q3 (See Figure 5 on the next page). Figure 6 (see page 9) exhibits year-over-year sports and recreation instruction employment growth for Clark County and the United States. Note that Clark County had substantially higher growth in employment between 2017Q1 and 2018Q3, thanks to the emergence of major and minor league sports teams: Vegas Golden Knights (2017), Las Vegas Aces (2018), and Las Vegas Lights FC (2018), etc. Clark County also had smaller declines and higher gains from 2020Q1 to 2022Q1 as more teams were created or relocated to the Greater Las Vegas area.

**Figure 5. Clark County Sports and Recreation Instruction Employment: 2010Q1 vs. 2022Q3**



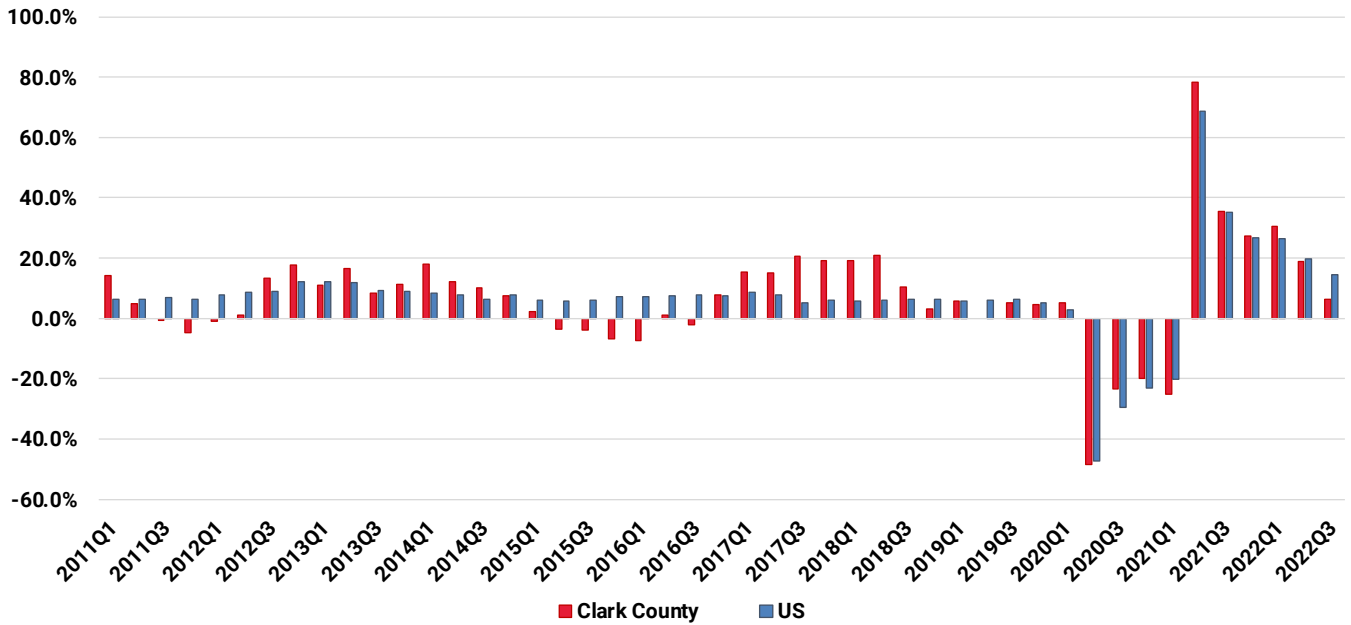
**Note: The dots represent sports and recreation instruction establishments between Q1 2010 (green) and Q3 2022 (red). The sizes of the dots represent each establishment's employment size.**

Sources: DETR; CBER

Despite the large increase in sports and recreation instruction employment, the level still remains below the U.S. average (see Figure 7 on the next page). That is, the ratio of private sports and recreation instruction employment (NAICS 611620) to total private employment stayed around 0.07 percent compared to 0.11 percent for the United States. The Orlando MSA, whose economy is also largely dependent on the leisure and hospitality sector, reported a slightly higher ratio of 0.09 percent in 2020 compared to the Las Vegas MSA. The ratio of private sports and recreation instruction employment to private education employment, however, indicated that Las Vegas has a larger share of sports and recreation instructors among all educators with 5.5 percent in 2020 compared to 4.5 and 5.3 percent, respectively, for the United States and Orlando (see Figure 8 on page 10). This occurs because Las Vegas has a substantially lower share of private education employment, as only 1.2 percent of total private employment in Las Vegas works for the private education sector compared to 2.4 and 1.7 percent for nationwide and Orlando, respectively (see Figure 9 on page 10).



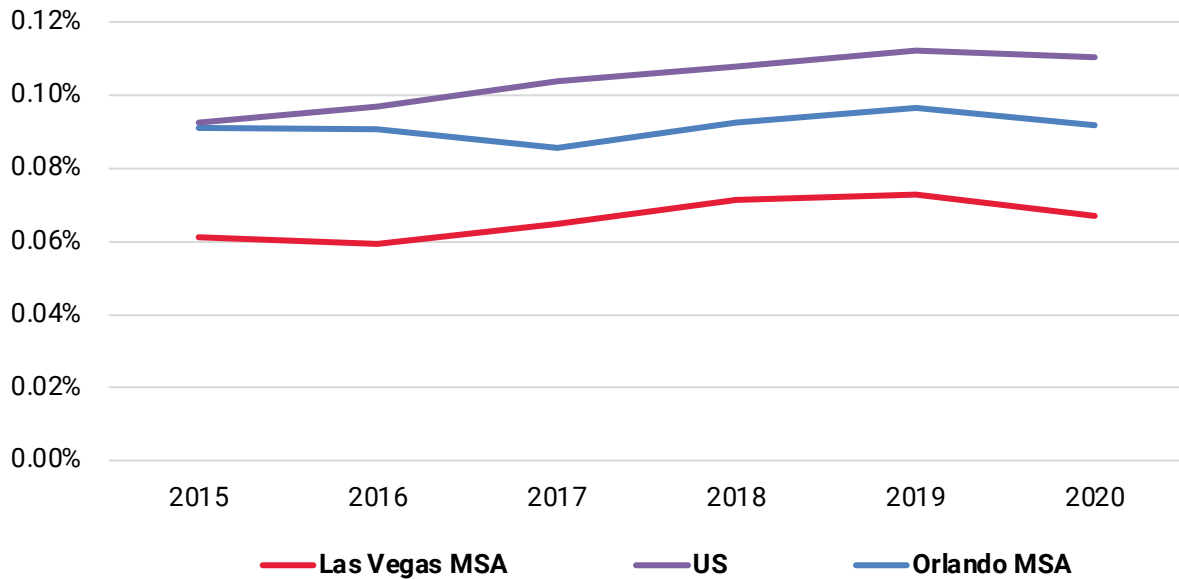
**Figure 6. Sports and Recreation Instruction Year-Over-Year Employment Growth: Clark County vs. US**



Note: We only included private employment for the U.S. estimates.

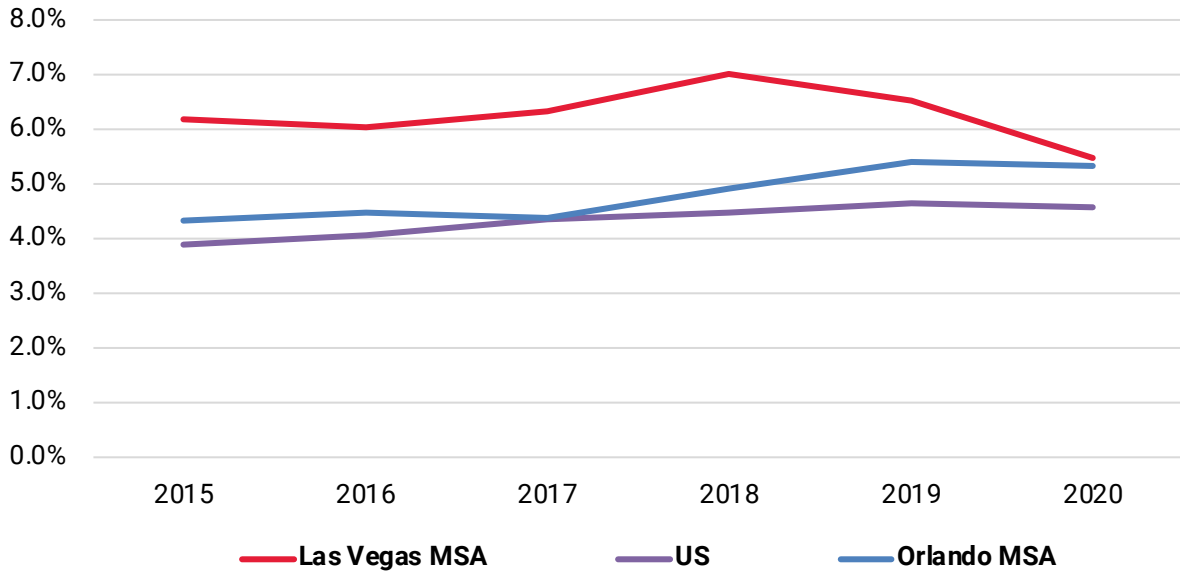
Sources: DETR; BLS; CBER

**Figure 7. Ratio of Private Sports and Recreation Instruction Employment to Total Private Employment**



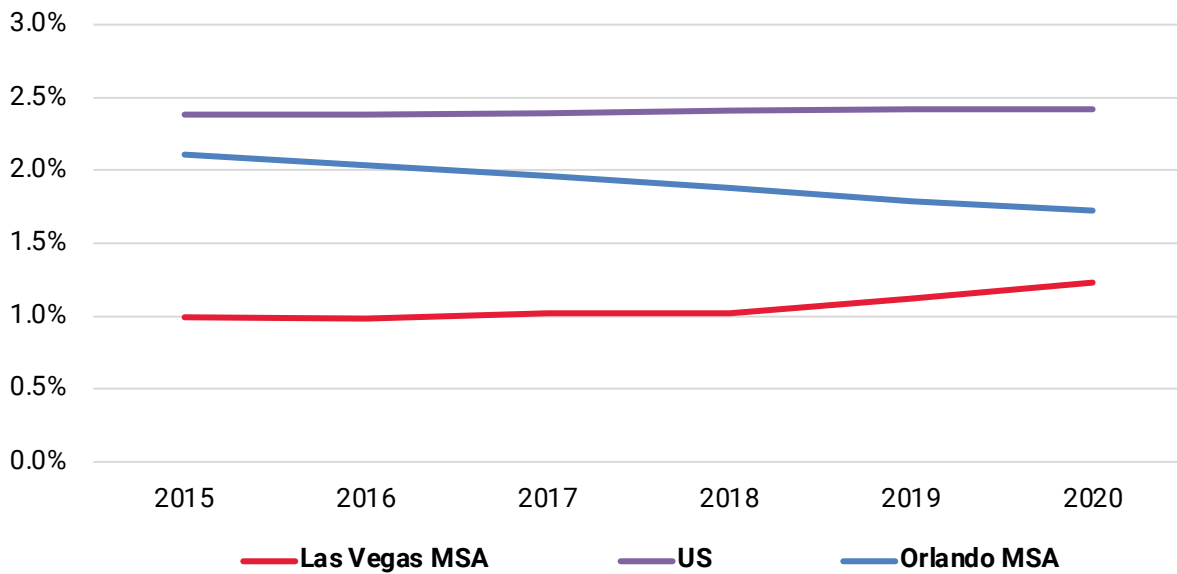
Sources: County Business Patterns (CBP), US Census; QCEW, BLS; CBER

**Figure 8. Ratio of Private Sports and Recreation Education to Private Education Employment**



Sources: County Business Patterns (CBP), US Census; QCEW, BLS; CBER

**Figure 9. Ratio of Private Education Employment to Total Private Employment**



Sources: County Business Patterns (CBP), US Census; QCEW, BLS; CBERsus; QCEW, BLS; CBER

## ***Economic Impact of Sporting Events Visitors in Clark County:***

Hosting major and minor league sporting events has attracted numerous visitors that increases sales by local businesses. According to data from the LVCVA, they sponsored 41 sporting events that hosted more than 1.8 million attendees in fiscal year 2022.<sup>16</sup> According to the U.S. Travel Association, sports travelers spend 3.9 nights with a party size of 3.2 people, slightly more than the average leisure traveler.<sup>17</sup>

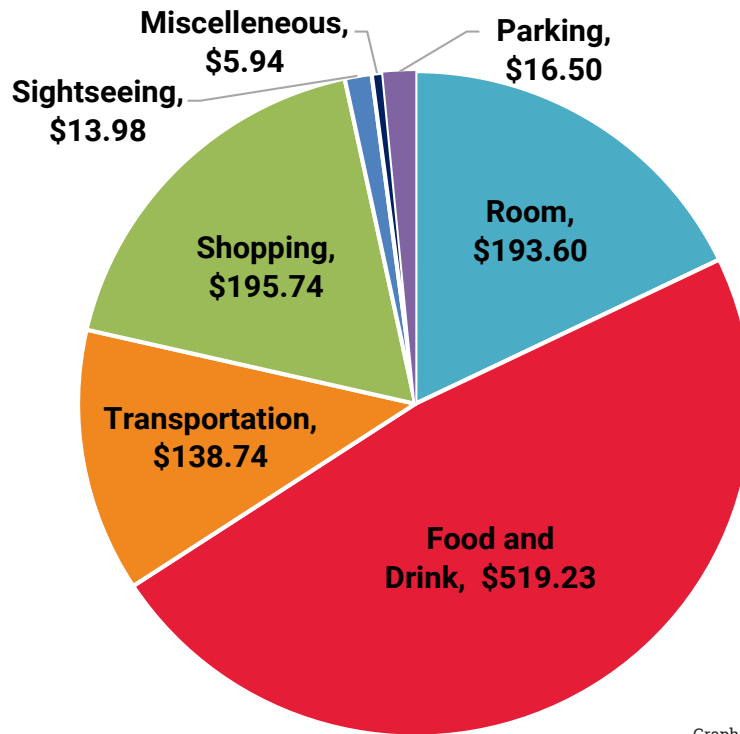
Assuming 50 percent of the 1.8 million attendees come from out-of-town, then 900 thousand attendees visited from out-of-town and approximately 22,000 out-of-town visitors or 6,860 parties per sporting event. The average daily room rate for FY2022 was \$158.85 for Las Vegas,<sup>18</sup> meaning that these 22,000 visitors spent about \$4.25 million (6,563\*158.85\*3.9) for rooms. That is we estimate, on average, \$568,613 in room tax collected per sporting event.

In addition, we estimate that, on average, a visitor spent about \$1,084 based on LVCVA's survey data on visitor spending patterns (Figure 10). This does not include any gambling and ticket purchases for shows/entertainment and sporting events, indicating that the actual average can be larger than \$1,084. We adjusted per-visitor spending by using the 2022 inflation rate of 8.0 percent as FY2022 is from July 2021 to June 2022, assuming that half of the out-of-town visitors visited during 2021. The inflation-adjusted per-visitor spending is estimated to be \$1,048 in FY2022. As 22,000 visitors were estimated from outside Clark County, these visitors were estimated to spend a total of \$23.1 million per sporting event in FY2022. As a result, we estimate that a sporting event in FY2022 generated, on average, \$45 million in direct economic output from out of town visitors, for a total of \$1.845 billion.

According to the 2022 Las Vegas Visitor Study, six percent of all visitors sampled reported attending a sporting event, with 3 percent of visitors sampled responding that their main reason for visiting Las Vegas was to attend a sporting event. This was slightly higher for repeat visitors, 4 percent of whom responded that it was their main reason for visiting compared to 1 percent for first time visitors.<sup>19</sup> Among all visitors, the average spent on sporting events doubled from 2019 to 2022, from \$7.03 to \$15.81. This is similar to trends in 2022 for food and beverage, shopping, local transportation, and live entertainment/concerts. For those who visited and reported spending money, average trip expenditures was \$271.58, the third highest category after shows/entertainment (\$309.76) and food and beverage (\$527.13).<sup>20</sup> This seems to indicate that sports as a draw for visitors is growing, especially for repeat visitors.

<sup>16</sup> LVCVA, 2023; <sup>17</sup> US Travel Association, 2019.; <sup>18</sup> CBER calculated by using the room night occupied and average room rates from July 2021 to June 2022, provided by LVCV.; <sup>19</sup> Heart+Mind Strategies, 2023. pages 9, 28.; <sup>20</sup> Heart+Mind Strategies, 2023. pages 25, 26.

**Figure 10. Estimated Spending per Visitor Excluding Ticket Sales and Gambling Employment**



Graphic Sources: US Travel Association; LVCVA; CBER

### III. Tales From the Turf

#### *Professional Sports Impact on the Las Vegas Marketing Industry*

With the rise of professional sports in Las Vegas over the past decade, a subsequent shift has occurred in how some marketing dollars are spent attracting visitors to Las Vegas. The local marketing industry has responded by creating new sub-genres, programming, and marketing techniques to reach both locals and visitors. While it's yet to be determined if growth in sports has created new marketing and media firms, established firms have seen increased business opportunities, along with new revenue streams, which translates into more jobs.

In an interview with R&R Partners, a long-time successful marketing and advertising agency, they mentioned a renewed urgency in expanding the Las Vegas brand beyond traditional audiences.<sup>21</sup> Professional sport offers opportunities to attract new visitors who are looking for unique experiences beyond the traditional visitor options. That does not imply that locals are missing out on sporting events. Leagues and sporting event host organizations (i.e., NCAA) are allocating resources to appeal to the 2.4 million residents in the local Las Vegas market and local marketing firms will likely see their business grow as efforts increase to attract fans and viewers for both midweek and weekend events.

R&R Partners believes that Las Vegas is a unique city for sports marketing and prior to professional sports teams arriving in Las Vegas, the industry did not have robust infrastructure for promoting sporting events beyond the occasional pay-per-view event. With even more professional teams on the horizon, growth in advertising and marketing is expected to continue as the industry matures. With that maturation comes new challenges and demand for a creative workforce. Specifically, the sport teams and leagues, for example, Ultimate Fighting Champion (UFC), need talented individuals who can market Las Vegas sports not only nationally and internationally, but locally too. Marketing operations that once included only one or two individuals, now require more than a dozen dedicated professionals, especially when it comes to the promotion of very large sporting events such as the National Football League's (NFL) Superbowl or Formula 1. Advertising agencies like R&R Partners have responded by creating specialized units and positions for those particular events. Local television stations, newspapers, and radio stations have responded as well, shifting resources towards new programming and coverage for local teams like KVVU Fox 5's and Beasley Media Group's partnership with the NFL's Las Vegas Raiders.<sup>22</sup>

Local businesses are benefiting from the presence of major teams and events, altering their advertising budgets to incorporate professional athletes. Today you can't drive on the 215 beltway or I-15 without seeing an athlete or team advertising a local business or promoting a public message. Just ask a local if they have seen a billboard of former Golden Knights player Ryan Reaves's water smart campaign for the Southern Nevada Water Authority or current Raiders player Hunter Renfrow advertisements for America First Credit Union. With sponsorships come new business opportunities, such as Las Vegas based Allegiant Airlines partnering with the NFL's Las Vegas Raiders on travel packages that includes tickets, airfare, and hotel for games at Allegiant Stadium.<sup>23</sup>

An undervalued aspect of the rise of professional sports in Las Vegas is the expansion of sports betting. The repeal in 2018 of the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PAPSA) proliferated sports betting operations across the country. Today sports betting is legal and operating in 33 states with 3 more states soon to be operational.<sup>24</sup> This new frontier has created never before seen partnerships between the gaming industry with professional sports leagues, teams, and sometimes even players themselves. An enormous investment has been made by gaming operators and promoters to ramp up their in-person and mobile sports betting operations and subsequent marketing campaigns to build customer loyalty. Research by JustGamblers USA, an online gambling reference website, using data from Google, found that Nevada was the most "sports obsessed state" in the United States, with a monthly average 85,406 sport-related searches per 100,000 people.<sup>25</sup> This includes searches by the 40 million plus annual visitors a year to Las Vegas. With the Super Bowl coming to Las Vegas in 2024 and being the second-ever Super Bowl to be held in a state with legal sports betting (Arizona was the first with the 2023 Super Bowl), 2024 might just be an unprecedented opportunity for further expansion of sports betting and connecting with new audiences.

## ***The Resiliency of the Golf Industry in Las Vegas***

Long before permanent professional sports came to Las Vegas, golf had already established itself. The first course opened in 1927 before the legalization of gambling in 1931. Las Vegas' oldest operating golf course, the Las Vegas Golf Club has been in continual operation since 1938.<sup>26</sup> Nevada has 88 golf course facilities, with over 55 golf courses in Southern Nevada. Over fifty percent of the courses in Nevada are semi-private, requiring a daily fee. With the decades-long drought along the Colorado River and severe water restrictions for outdoor use, the number of "green" outdoor golf courses in Southern Nevada is likely fixed for the foreseeable future and current outdoor water use restrictions are transforming the look and feel of many courses in the valley.

That isn't to say that golf is a dying sport in Southern Nevada by any means. The fixed number of golf courses in the city is expected to lead to increased demand on each course as the local population continues to grow. Additionally, the rise in sport tourism in the city has positively impacted the local golf industry, with golf tourism in Nevada generating \$744.3 million per year.<sup>27</sup> Newer, less traditional styles or "non-green" golf facilities such as Top Golf and the upcoming Atomic Range appeal to a broader clientele, proving to be popular not only with golf aficionados but also younger, diverse, and female demographic groups. This has created opportunities to educate and build bridges with potential new players that are currently underrepresented in the sport.

In addition to facilities like Top Golf fueling success, private courses are experiencing higher demand despite the rising membership fees. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many more people found the extra time to pick up these sport activities, including golf. Moreover, golf had the advantage of being played outdoors. This increased interest for golf has persisted three years after the worst impacts and restrictions of the pandemic. This includes junior golfers as well as adults. Youth participation has increased from 594 junior golfers in 2020 to 1,070 in 2022 or an increase of 80 percent.<sup>28</sup>

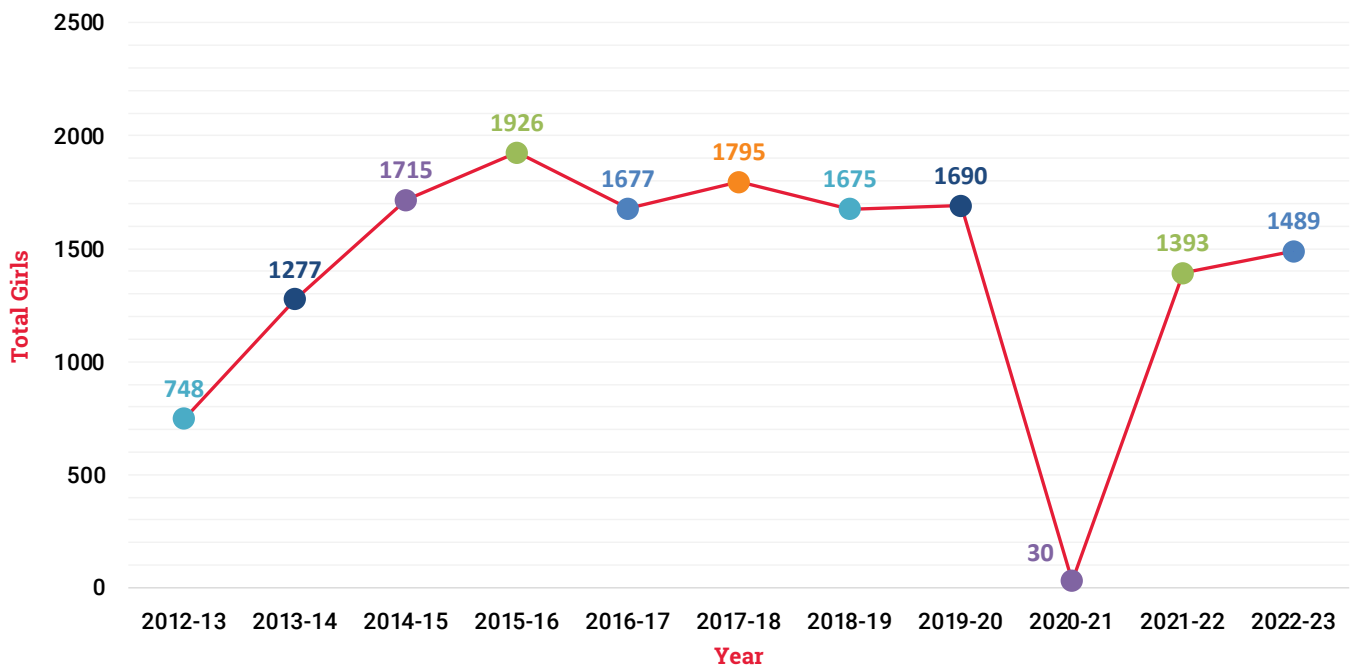
Overall, Nevada's golf industry generates \$1.242 billion per year in economic activity, mostly in Southern Nevada. As of 2017, 17,503 total jobs exist in the Nevada golf industry, which contribute to \$701.3 million in wages and benefits (SNGA, 2018). The golfing industry has been experiencing the same labor shortages as the broader leisure and hospitality industry with an extremely high demand for workers. In some instances, interns are being offered signing bonuses to work for golf courses during the peak of the golf season. Some jobs and career fields in the golf industry include: golfing coach, equipment manager, golf course maintenance, golf course professional, general management, and even ownership and leasing.<sup>29</sup> The skills required are similar to other leisure and hospitality fields but with a focus on the specifics and needs of the sport. Within UNLV's Hospitality College, the PGA Golf Management program produces aspiring golf professionals and connects them with industry representatives.

One of the biggest roadblocks for new workers to enter the golf industry is a lack of knowledge about how golf can be a career path on its own and provide both long-term personal and professional success. While the Las Vegas golf industry has struggled with water restrictions, labor shortages, and an aging demographic, the industry is evolving and profitable in Las Vegas, which provides opportunities for innovation and growth.

### **Clark County School District and Girls Flag Football**

In 2009, the Clark County School District (CCSD) was challenged by the parent of a student-athlete who alleged that CCSD was not in compliance with Title IX, which prohibits discrimination based on sex in any education institution receiving federal funding. The parents filed a formal complaint, resulting in then Judge Brian Sandoval ruling that CCSD needed to add a sport for girls. A UNLV expert in gender equity conducted a survey in cooperation with CCSD to determine what sport was of the greatest interest to incoming 9th graders as well as current 10th and 11th grade students. The survey found that flag football was the sport students expressed the most interest in and that CCSD could quickly implement a girl's flag-football program. At the time, Florida and Alaska were the only two states with varsity flag-football programs for girls at the high school level.

**Figure 11. Participation in Girls Flag Football in the Clark County School District**



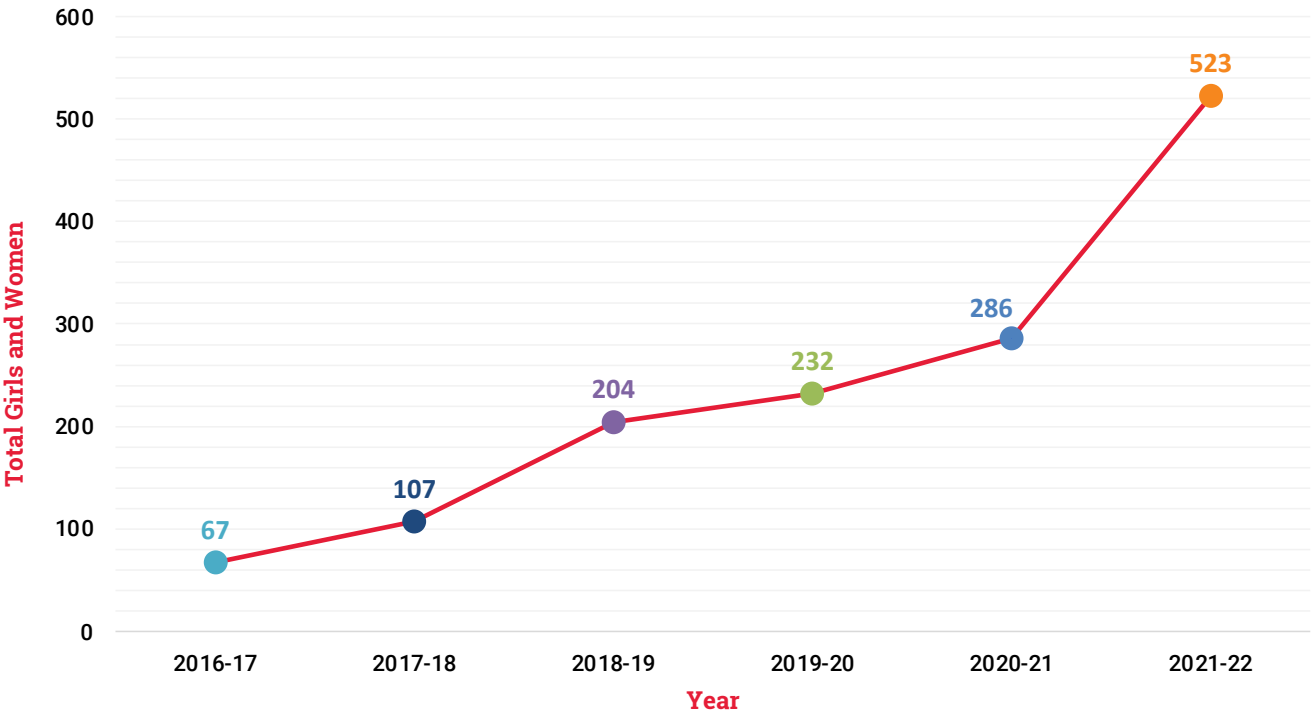
Source: CCSD

As Figure 11 shows, interest in girls flag football grew quickly in CCSD, nearly doubling from the 2012 season to the 2013 season, and nearly tripling from the 2012 season to the 2015

season. A sustained level of interest was evident from the 2016 season through the 2019 season. COVID resulted in the cessation of almost all high school sports in the 2020 season. Interest rebounded after COVID to a respectable level with expectations that previously sustained levels will be achieved in the coming years. The success of girls flag football at CCSD is an example for other states to emulate. After initially beginning with one team at each school (varsity), a need existed to expand opportunities to include a second team (junior varsity), and then a third team (freshmen) to accommodate the growing interest among girls. More recently, private schools such as Bishop Gorman and charter schools, such as SLAM Academy have also offered flag football for girls.

As a final indication of the value this sport offers to girls sport participation in southern Nevada, several girls graduating from CCSD schools have now been offered college scholarships to play collegiate flag football at NAIA colleges and universities. The opportunity to attain a scholarship and college education was not even imaginable at the time CCSD added flag football. Yet, this provides a unique experience to girls through CCSD athletics. In total, flag football has created 15,415 sport participation opportunities for girls in southern Nevada. There has been a similar pattern among young women and girls who play youth hockey in Nevada. Between the 2017 and 2022 season, girls in youth hockey dramatically increased 683 percent from 67 to 523 players under 18. The majority of the increase seems to have come from players under the age of eight.<sup>30</sup>

**Figure 12. Participation in Women and Girls Youth Hockey**



Source: CVegas Golden Knights



## IV. What's Next for the Las Vegas Sports Economy

CBER forecasts that performing arts, spectator sports, and related industries employment will grow by 12.4 percent or 2,944 permanent jobs from 2022 to 2030. This is a conservative estimate, given the current preparations for a long-term presence of Formula 1 and discussions about potentially hosting Major League Soccer (MLS), National Basketball Association (NBA), and Major League Baseball (MLB) teams in Las Vegas and possibly two additional stadiums and other scheduled sporting events. Occupational employment projections by the the Bureau of Labor and Statistics forecasts that 95,500 entertainment and sports occupations will be added between now and 2031, representing a 12.6 percent increase, or 1.1 percent of all news jobs added over the coming decade.<sup>31</sup>

In the meantime, Las Vegas marches on with high-profile sporting events. Allegiant Stadium held the 2022 NFL Pro Bowl, which drew roughly 30,000 out-of-town visitors generating an estimated economic impact of \$54.7 million. The subsequent 2022 NFL Draft brought nearly 300,000 people to the Strip over the three-day event.<sup>32</sup> The success of those events prompted the LVCVA to approve funding up to \$1.75 million for the 2023 Pro Bowl held in February 2023 with the first Super Bowl ever to be held in Las Vegas scheduled in February 2024 and estimated economic impact of \$500 million.<sup>33 34</sup> Super Bowl LVIII is expected to generate nearly \$700 million in economic impact. The LVCVA expects an expense of \$60 million to host the event, creating 4,597 full and part-time jobs (equivalent to 2020 Super Bowl LV, Tampa, FL). The expected tax generation for the event will be between \$65 and \$70 million, according to Steve Hill, LVCVA CEO, and president.<sup>35</sup>

Another newcomer to the Las Vegas sports market, the National Lacrosse League's (NLL) Las Vegas Desert Dogs also looks to capitalize on playing under the bright lights of the Strip. The team initiated play with the 2022/23 season at Michelob Ultra Arena, which is located inside the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino and is also home to the WNBA's Aces.

MLS commissioner Don Garber recently confirmed that the soccer league was in discussions with potential investors Wes Edens and Nassef Sawiris about establishing its 30th team in Las Vegas in the foreseeable future. The Commissioner stated in early November 2022 that the franchise looks to establish its 30th team "sometime in the first half" of 2023, with both Las Vegas and San Diego being serious candidates.<sup>36</sup> In addition to future professional sports teams, the Oakland Athletics, a major league baseball team now in conflict with the city council of Oakland over suggestions for a new stadium, could head in the same direction in coming to Las Vegas as their former neighbors at the Coliseum, the now Las Vegas Raiders. The Oakland Athletics have submitted five separate offers for plots of land in Las Vegas as it considers options outside of the "Golden State" and agreed recently to purchase land on Tropicana just west of the I-15. Then, in a surprise move, the Athletics moved the site of the old Tropicana site at Tropicana and Las Vegas Boulevard in partnership with Bally's.

A final recent significant announcement came in March 2022 when sports executive and entrepreneur Tim Leiweke's Oak View Group (world's largest stadium and arena developer)

31 Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2023, Table 1.; 32 Horwath, 2022.; 33 Akers, 2023.; 34 Lilly, 2022.; 35 Garcia, 2022.; 36 Sigal, 2022.

acquired 25 acres of land in Las Vegas to build a \$3 billion sports and entertainment district. The location is along I-15 and I-215 across from a newly planned Brightline West high-speed rail system and might begin construction in 2023.<sup>37</sup> The entertainment district will feature a U.S. \$1 billion, 20,000-seat, 850,000 square foot NBA basketball arena. The remainder will be used to develop a casino hotel and additional amenities on the 25-acre property.<sup>38</sup>

The future looks bright for Las Vegas in the world of professional and amateur sports though many questions remain, which is why we pose the following questions below for consideration for further research.

### **Additional questions for research:**

- Are there sports deserts in Las Vegas and why?
- What are the lingering inequities in sports in Las Vegas?
- What does the data say about the impact of youth sports participation in Las Vegas as a result of the increase of professional sports in Las Vegas?
- What are the jobs tied to the growth of the sports economy in Las Vegas? What are the spillovers?
- What is the impact on public safety, sex trafficking, and other negative externalities of the sports economy in Las Vegas?
- What is the impact on quality of life in Southern Nevada and does having professional sports attract new residents?
- Can we quantify the influence of professional sport on the local marketing and advertising industry or entrepreneurial activities?
- What is the point of saturation of professional sports in Las Vegas?

### ***Want to learn more? Check out CBER's GIS map on the Sports Economy:***

<https://arcg.is/108Ln92>. The map includes all locations of all public and private sporting facilities, business establishments (unidentified), trails, parks, schools, community centers, and heatmap of sport infrastructure.

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