

## Behind the Streams of the Big Game

Did you watch the game via stream this year? You're not alone.

5.7 million people streamed the Super Bowl in 2021, rather than watching via cable broadcast - a 67% increase over 2020<sup>1</sup>. Given stay-at-home orders, social distancing requirements, and ongoing cord-cutting trends, this is unsurprising. Here are some of the key things that changed between this year and last, as well as best practices to consider if you're planning your own livestreaming experience.

It's not just football. **63%** of teams working on streaming expect volume to increase through 2021.

### The Super Bowl is one of the last events in the U.S. that still draws a massive live audience



However, people are increasingly watching the game via live stream rather than cable.

Streams of the game doubled between 2017 and 2020, as more people cut the cord and relied upon streaming services for live TV

2017  
1.71m<sup>2</sup>

2020  
3.4m<sup>3</sup>

2021  
5.7m<sup>4</sup>

Then COVID-19 hit, and livestreaming increased even more, as people skipped traditional Super Bowl parties and bars to safely watch at home

### When streaming, viewers expect the same HD quality as traditional cable



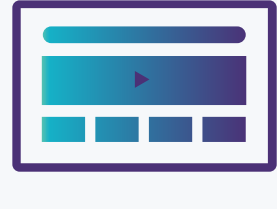
In 2020, Fox streamed the game in **4K HDR** for the first time<sup>5</sup>

Hope you have unlimited data! A 4K stream uses about **7.2 GB per hour**, compared to 0.9-3GB per hour for regular HD<sup>6</sup>

### And expect the same experience no matter how or where they stream



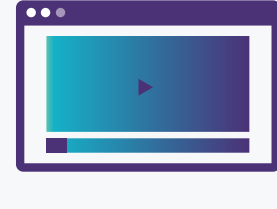
Streaming platforms



Smart TV applications



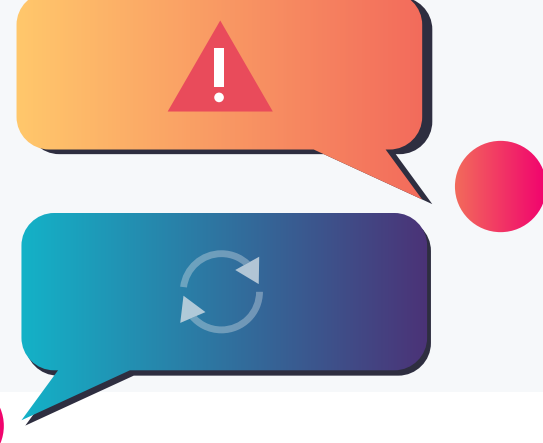
Streaming applications on TV, smartphones, tablets



Web browsers

### And there's no room for error when it comes to latency or lags

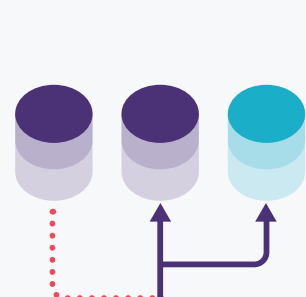
Thanks to active social media feeds, a lag of even **30 seconds** against the cable broadcast can become noticeable during critical plays (or shocking ads)



## What goes into delivering a large-scale, livestream event?

### Maximize your multi-CDN strategy

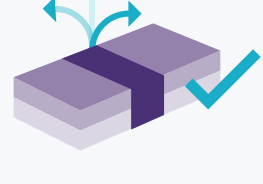
Make the most of your multi-CDN strategy by:



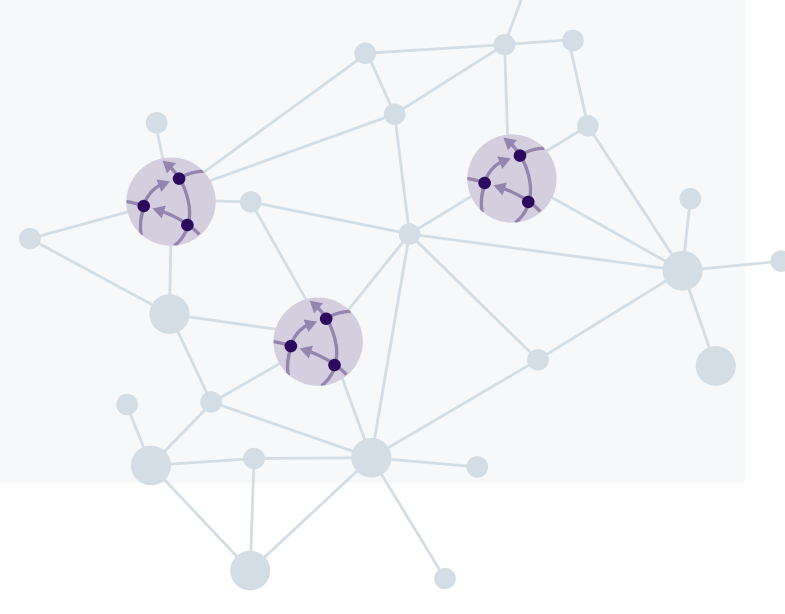
Ensuring enough bandwidth has been put aside to take on more traffic if a CDN experiences an outage mid-event



Reserving capacity to ensure CDNs can handle peak viewership as well as traffic burst expected during the livestream



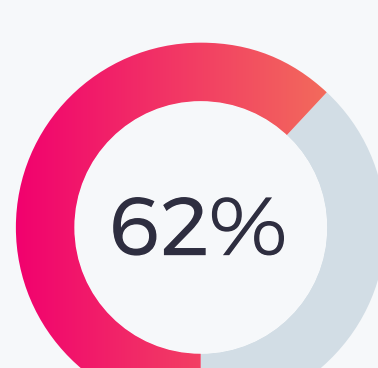
Pairing with an intelligent, automated traffic steering solution to ensure you stay within budget for your commits



### Choose the right intelligent traffic steering solution for your use case

**DNS-based decisions**  
a good option for teams using short time-to-lives (TTLs).

**HTTP-based decisions**  
a good fit for teams that would like more control over their decisions and when they are made, as they give an ordered list of optimal CDNs for the manifest generator to consume and consider.



62% of teams ranked **automated and intelligent traffic steering** as the most important tool for a high-quality streaming experience<sup>7</sup>

### Don't overcomplicate your routing policies

And lean on automating your routing policies when possible, rather than depending too heavily on human intervention. For example, we recommend focusing on creating policies that:

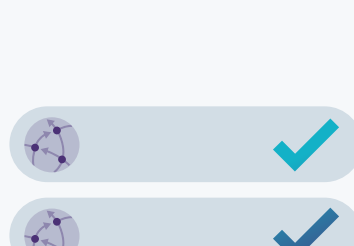
1

Take CDN capacity into account, so you stay under capacity reservations.



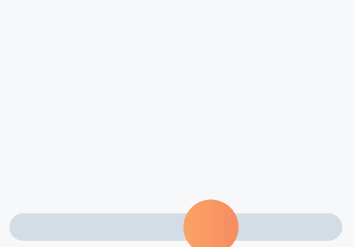
2

Set performance thresholds that intelligently remove poorly performing CDNs. These are particularly effective when they use real user monitoring (RUM) and quality of experience (QoE) metrics.



3

And still allow for simple manual adjustments on game day as a disaster recovery plan. You can't always predict what will happen during a live event, but you should always be prepared to act quickly.



<sup>1</sup> [https://www.wsj.com/articles/super-bowl-draws-lowest-audience-since-2007-11612880203?mod=hp\\_list\\_pos5&](https://www.wsj.com/articles/super-bowl-draws-lowest-audience-since-2007-11612880203?mod=hp_list_pos5&)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lightreading.com/video/super-bowl-liv-draws-average-streaming-audience-of-34m/d/d-id/757273>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lightreading.com/video/super-bowl-liv-draws-average-streaming-audience-of-34m/d/d-id/757273>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.wsj.com/articles/super-bowl-draws-lowest-audience-since-2007-11612880203?mod=hp\\_list\\_pos5&](https://www.wsj.com/articles/super-bowl-draws-lowest-audience-since-2007-11612880203?mod=hp_list_pos5&)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.lightreading.com/video/super-bowl-liv-draws-average-streaming-audience-of-34m/d/d-id/757273>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.androidcentral.com/how-much-data-does-streaming-media-use#:~:text=HD%2Dquality%20video%20uses%20about,about%207.2CB%20per%20hour.>

<sup>7</sup> <https://ns1.com/blog/new-data-highlights-how-qoe-demands-are-driving-more-companies-to-intelligent-traffic-management-solutions>