







POPULARITY AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF BASEBALL IN JAPAN

With the kickoff of Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB) on March 28, this report delves into baseball's popularity in Japan, the NPB league structure, the most popular teams, and highlights from the career of Japan's global baseball superstar, Shohei Ohtani.

Most Watched Sports in Japan

On-site viewing		
	Baseball NPB & MLB	13.2%
	Football J-League	4.9%
	Basketball B.League & NBA	2.2%






TV & Internet		
	Professional Baseball	49.7%
	High School Baseball Koshien	30.9%
	National Football Team	28.6%

*Based on a survey conducted with 40,000 people.

Baseball vs Football

While football has a larger playing population in Japan, baseball is still the country's most popular sport in terms of fan following and cultural significance.


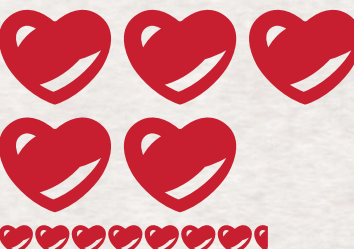








Most Popular Professional Japanese Sports Leagues in Japan

	NPB	Most popular since 1996	51.8%
	J-League Football		24.4%
	Professional Sumo		20.1%
	B.League Basketball		15.2%
	Professional Golf		12.3%

*Based on a survey conducted with 1,200 people.

Favourite Athletes in Japan

3 of the top 5 most popular athletes in Japan are baseball players.

1		Baseball Shohei Ohtani	57.4%	
2		Baseball Ichiro Suzuki	2.1%	
3		Baseball Shigeo Nagashima	2.0%	
4		Golf Hideki Matsuyama	1.3%	
5		Ice Skating Yuzuru Hanyu	1.0%	

Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB)

12 participating teams

Teams and Structure

CENTRAL LEAGUE



YOMIURI GIANTS



HANSHIN TIGERS



YOKOHAMA DENA BAYSTARS



HIROSHIMA TOYO CARP



TOKYO YAKULT SWALLOWS



CHUNICHI DRAGONS

PACIFIC LEAGUE



FUKUOKA SOFTBANK HAWKS



HOKKAIDO NIPPON-HAM FIGHTERS



CHIBA LOTTE MARINES



TOHOKU RAKUTEN GOLDEN EAGLES



ORIX BUFFALOES



SAITAMA SEIBU LIONS

NPB regular season features 143 games

125 intra-league

18 inter-league

The top 3 teams from each league compete in the Climax Series, with winners facing off in the Japan Series (best-of-seven).

Most-Followed Japanese Baseball Teams

	HANSHIN TIGERS	2.6M		HOKKAIDO NIPPON-HAM FIGHTERS	1.6M
	FUKUOKA SOFTBANK HAWKS	1.7M		YOMIURI GIANTS	1.5M
				CHUNICHI DRAGONS	1.2M

(Instagram and X, as of March 2025)

Most-Followed Japanese Baseball Players



8.8M followers

Shohei Ohtani is renowned for being a dominant pitcher and elite hitter, a rare combination last seen with Babe Ruth. His ability to excel in both roles has made him a global sensation.

Significant Records

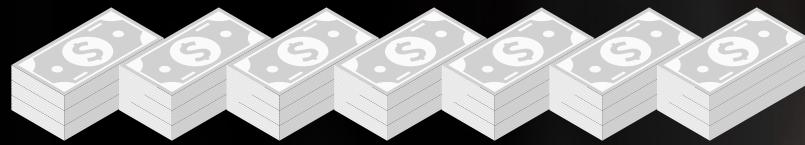
3-time MVP Award winner



World Series Champion



\$700M contract with LA Dodgers



First MLB player to **HIT 50 HOME RUNS** and **STEAL 50 BASES** in a single season

TIME 100 Most Influential People (2021)

SHOHEI OHTANI

A GLOBAL SUPERSTAR

References

Central Research Services, Inc <https://www.crs.or.jp/data/pdf/sports24.pdf>

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology https://www.mext.go.jp/sports/content/250311-spt_kensport01-000040805_02.pdf

Sasakawa Sports Foundation https://www.ssf.or.jp/thinktank/sports_life/data/index.html