# Illegal Fire Stick streaming costs broadcasters billions and threatens sports funding



Illegal streaming through devices like Amazon's Fire Stick poses a significant threat to the broadcasting industry, with estimates suggesting that it costs sports rights holders and broadcasters billions of dollars each year. A recent report indicates that the rise of "dodgy" streaming services is becoming comparable to theft on an industrial scale, as it attracts large audiences away from legitimate sources of content. This trend has spurred concerted efforts from law enforcement and media companies to combat the rampant piracy affecting sports and premium television.

The Premier League, alongside major broadcasters such as Sky and DAZN, has been particularly vocal about the dangers of this practice. The alarming statistic that approximately 59% of UK Fire Stick owners have used their devices for illegal streaming in the past year underscores the scale of the issue. According to the Intellectual Property Office, nearly four million individuals in the UK illegally streamed live sports last year. These figures are corroborated by media analysts at Enders, who describe pirated streaming as a form of theft that undermines vast investments in sports broadcasting rights.

The financial implications of this illegal activity are stark. In the 2023-24 season, fans were estimated to spend around £870 annually on subscriptions to access all televised Premier League games. Coupled with rising costs for other entertainment subscriptions, many households face bills that exceed £1,000 per year. Such financial burdens have sparked a debate among fans, who argue that the escalating costs drive some to seek illicit alternatives.

This burgeoning piracy marketplace not only affects broadcasters financially; it also has implications for the entire sporting landscape. The Federation Against Copyright Theft (FACT) warns that illegal streaming weakens the creative industries and jeopardises funding for sports events, which in turn could adversely affect players, clubs, and the jobs linked to sports broadcasting. Kieron Sharp, CEO of FACT, emphasised the need for awareness, stating that those engaged in illegal streaming are risking significant legal repercussions.

Against this backdrop, various measures are being implemented to counteract this pervasive issue. Recent operations, such as the crackdown led by Europol, have targeted networks involved in the illegal distribution of content. In one operation, numerous suspects were arrested, highlighting the international scale of the problem. Meanwhile, Italy's Serie A has partnered with Meta to leverage social media monitoring tools, aiming to swiftly remove unauthorized streams. This approach indicates a growing recognition that technology companies must play a proactive role in combating piracy.

Despite ongoing efforts, the challenge of illegal streaming remains vast. Recent data suggests that the sports industry is set to surpass $680 billion in revenue by 2028, yet that figure could be even higher if piracy were effectively curbed. The English Premier League, recognised globally as a lucrative sporting competition, faces severe financial losses as illegal streams proliferate. In the last season alone, the league blocked over 600,000 illegal streams, a reflection of the escalating battle against piracy.

In conclusion, as the demand for sports content continues to rise, driven by both fans and the proliferation of streaming technology, broadcasters find themselves at a critical juncture. The consequences of piracy extend beyond mere financial losses; they impact the very fabric of the sports industry, threatening the future viability of broadcasting rights and the sustainability of sporting events. Consequently, the combined efforts of law enforcement, technological innovation, and industry collaboration are vital in addressing this multifaceted challenge.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-14765463/Dodgy-Fire-Stick-broadcasters-sports-bodies-billions.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/755c9f71-4f10-4a18-a481-692cb4b250eb)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-14765463/Dodgy-Fire-Stick-broadcasters-sports-bodies-billions.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.globaldata.com/media/sport/piracy-threatens-sports-industry-revenue-growth-with-illegal-streaming-costing-leagues-millions-annually-reveals-globaldata/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/italys-serie-does-deal-with-meta-fight-illegal-streaming-2024-12-12/), [[7]](https://www.ft.com/content/3f49aa83-2244-455a-baf8-71b1904acd19)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/48f63457-9c6f-4d5e-adfb-d6d47fb71c66), [[4]](https://apnews.com/article/f8024734ba5987ec17e9235b8df1ec2b)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.globaldata.com/media/sport/piracy-threatens-sports-industry-revenue-growth-with-illegal-streaming-costing-leagues-millions-annually-reveals-globaldata/), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/755c9f71-4f10-4a18-a481-692cb4b250eb)
* Paragraph 6 – [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/italys-serie-does-deal-with-meta-fight-illegal-streaming-2024-12-12/), [[4]](https://apnews.com/article/f8024734ba5987ec17e9235b8df1ec2b)
* Paragraph 7 – [[7]](https://www.ft.com/content/3f49aa83-2244-455a-baf8-71b1904acd19)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-14765463/Dodgy-Fire-Stick-broadcasters-sports-bodies-billions.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/755c9f71-4f10-4a18-a481-692cb4b250eb> - A report by media analysts at Enders has revealed that pirated streaming of sports and premium television constitutes 'industrial scale theft,' costing content providers and rights holders billions of dollars annually. The report highlights that pirated feeds make up a significant portion of premium sports viewership, with a single illegal stream of a major event, such as a football match, drawing tens of thousands of viewers and multiplying further through social media sharing. Broadcasters like Sky and DAZN claim this piracy undermines their ability to secure costly sports broadcasting rights. The widespread availability and use of devices like Amazon's Firestick have exacerbated the problem, with 59% of UK users reporting its use for pirated content. Media companies employ real-time 'war room' tactics to combat piracy but face challenges due to limited proactive engagement from tech platforms. Enders criticizes major technology firms for insufficient action and suggests a complete overhaul of existing tech infrastructure and licensing to combat piracy. The issue will be central to an upcoming media conference in London. Sky calls for more cohesive actions from tech companies and governments to protect creative industries.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/italys-serie-does-deal-with-meta-fight-illegal-streaming-2024-12-12/> - Italy's top-flight soccer league, Serie A, has partnered with Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, to combat illegal live streaming of matches. This collaboration will provide Serie A with Meta's tools for real-time monitoring, reporting, and swift removal of unauthorized streams on their social media platforms. The initiative aims to protect the value of broadcast rights, which are crucial for the league's revenue, including lucrative deals with DAZN and Sky worth 4.5 billion euros. Serie A's CEO, Luigi De Siervo, hopes that other platforms will join these efforts to curb piracy. The move follows increased measures by Italian authorities to address online piracy, highlighted by a recent dismantling of a piracy network with over 22 million users.
4. <https://apnews.com/article/f8024734ba5987ec17e9235b8df1ec2b> - Europol conducted a large-scale operation last summer during the UEFA EURO 2024 and the Paris Olympics to dismantle a network of illegal streaming providers, targeting pirated sports, movies, and TV content. Over 560 resellers were identified, over 100 suspects were pinpointed, and 11 arrests were made with the cooperation of Spain's top soccer league, La Liga. The operation involved extensive searches, resulting in the seizure of nearly 30 servers, 270 IPTV devices, 100 domains, drugs, weapons, cryptocurrency totaling around 1.6 million euros, and 40,000 euros in cash. The network illegally distributed over 2,500 TV channels to more than 22 million global users. 'Operation Kratos' spanned 15 countries, including both EU and non-EU members, with collaboration from EU agencies and private digital content companies.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/48f63457-9c6f-4d5e-adfb-d6d47fb71c66> - Italian authorities have dismantled a major piracy ring that provided 22 million European subscribers with cheap access to pirated content from international streaming services like DAZN, Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+. The operation, which involved a complex IT system to capture and resell live programming and on-demand content, generated approximately €3 billion annually and caused over €10 billion in damages to broadcast companies. The investigation, led by prosecutor Francesco Curcio, culminated in coordinated raids across Italy and several other countries, resulting in the arrest of 11 individuals. Dubbed the largest operation against audiovisual piracy, the crackdown involved shutting down servers in Romania and Hong Kong, disrupting the illegal distribution of pirated content. This significant step in combating content theft was praised by Luigi De Siervo, CEO of Italy's Serie A football league, highlighting the ongoing battle against sophisticated pirating technologies affecting the sports industry.
6. <https://www.globaldata.com/media/sport/piracy-threatens-sports-industry-revenue-growth-with-illegal-streaming-costing-leagues-millions-annually-reveals-globaldata/> - The sports industry is projected to surpass $680 billion in revenue by 2028; however, this figure could be even higher if not for the impact of piracy. Driven by rising cable costs and easy internet access, illegal streaming is causing significant revenue losses, especially for leagues like the English Premier League, prompting stakeholders to seek stronger strategies to protect media rights and maximize revenue, reveals GlobalData, a leading data and analytics company. GlobalData’s latest Strategic Intelligence report, 'Strategic Intelligence: Media Piracy in Sport 2024,' reveals that the industry is reportedly losing approximately $28 million a year, and tackling the problem of piracy has become a significant challenge for leagues and broadcasters. The Premier League has major issues with piracy, with the league blocking more than 600,000 illegal streams during the 2022/23 season. Olivia Snooks, Sport Analyst at GlobalData, comments: 'As technology has advanced and internet connectivity has become more accessible, piracy has grown exponentially in the world of soccer. As the English Premier League is one of the most lucrative soccer competitions globally, the league is a prime target for piracy. Unauthorized streaming and broadcast of Premier League matches have led to substantial financial losses for the league and its member clubs.'
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/3f49aa83-2244-455a-baf8-71b1904acd19> - UK law enforcement is grappling with a surge in illegal sports streaming, particularly via internet TV media boxes like Fire Sticks, which are often preloaded with software enabling access to pirated content. Emma Warbey, head of the Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit, revealed that the problem has escalated significantly, straining police efforts. While authorities mainly target organized crime groups and major resellers, individuals using such devices often evade consequences. The widespread use of pirated streams has alarmed broadcasters, including Sky, which estimates Fire Sticks account for about half of illegal Premier League football streaming in the UK. Piracy not only diminishes the value of sports broadcasting rights but also funds serious criminal activities such as fraud, labor exploitation, and trafficking. Warbey emphasized that piracy is far from a victimless crime and warned users of potential data theft. Enforcement tactics include sending cease and desist letters to low-level offenders and the use of High Court orders to block illegal streams. Despite efforts, full-scale prosecutions are challenging due to lengthy investigations and resource constraints, prompting a focus on dismantling large-scale criminal networks.