Prompt Inquiry
a project of the Ishmael Policy Institute

WORKING PAPER NO. 2026-10 LEGACY SPORTS AND INSTITUTIONS

Boston Is the Big Four's Champion City. Widen 'Major League,' and Los Angeles Wins the Most.

Counting each league from when it went national, Boston and New York have won the most titles, 28 each, but New York has had about twice as many chances. Measured against equal odds, Boston has won 2.7 times its share, the only market that clears the study's strict statistical test.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Once each market's number of chances is taken into account, which U.S. market has won the most major-league championships?

Prompted and verified by **Patrick Ishmael**, Founding Prompter, for Prompt Inquiry, a project of the Ishmael Policy Institute. Drafted with AI assistance (Claude and Mia; review by Mack, Jack and Zack) under the prompter's direction.

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CONTENTS

Boston Is the Big Four's Champion City. Widen 'Major League,' and Los Angeles Wins the Most.

	About this paper	4
	The question	5
	What we found	6
1	Each league's modern era	7
2	Totals, rates and equal odds	9
3	Boston is the outlier that survives	11
4	One league or four	12
5	Missouri's two markets, against their peers	13
	Other ways to count	14
6	If "major league" means more than four	14
7	Counting runners-up and semifinalists	18
8	The same count, state by state	22
9	Every team, in every city it played in	26
10	Per resident, matched to the years	29
11	The case for counting titles, full stop	30
12	What the equal-odds test cannot show	30
13	Gaps and cautions	31
14	How the numbers were built	32
15	Sources	33
	Disclosures and citation	35

FIGURES

1	Titles won against titles expected under equal odds, each league's modern era through 2026	7
2	Which leagues carry each market, each league's modern era	13

3	Seven leagues: titles won against equal odds, each league's modern era	16
4	Seven leagues and the Open Cup: where each market's titles came from	17
5	Titles or finishes: how each market compares with equal odds, each league's modern era	20
6	Titles per million residents, by state, each league's modern era	24

ABOUT THIS PAPER

Research brief

RESEARCH QUESTION

Once each market's number of chances is taken into account, which U.S. market has won the most major-league championships?

METHOD AND SOURCES

The study's "How the numbers were built" section explains the counting rule; every count was built twice, independently. Sources are listed in full, with links where available, at the end of the study.

STARTING VIEW

Not recorded. This is a legacy study; see the note under Disclosures.

OPENING PROMPT

Not saved as a prompt at the time. The study's own account of how it started gives the question: "Patrick asked which U.S. metropolitan areas have been most successful in the four major leagues."

AI TOOLS AND VERIFICATION

Primary agents. Claude (Claude by Anthropic): research, analysis, figures and drafting; **Mia** (Muse by Meta): research brief, coordination and checks.

Contributing agents. Mack (Grok by xAI): independent review; league-size adjustment script; **Jack** (Grok by xAI): independent review and suggestions; **Zack** (Grok by xAI): independent review and suggestions.

Verification: the prompter is responsible for verifying the evidence this study rests on. Its sources and data are published so any reader can check the findings.

HOW THIS STARTED

Patrick asked which U.S. metropolitan areas have been most successful in the four major leagues. He supplied a list of champions from 2001 to 2025, asked for titles per franchise, then asked whether the count should be adjusted for how many championships each market had a chance to win. He then set the rule for the "modern era": each league counts from when it went national, when its title was open to the widest field in its history.

HOW THIS STUDY WAS MADE

Patrick Ishmael prompted this study and verified it. Claude drafted it and ran the analysis under his direction. The first research was done by Mia, an AI agent, who checked every champion in Patrick's list and corrected three franchise counts. This study rebuilt the count from scratch, extended it through 2026, and added the equal-odds test that three other AI agents (Mack, Zack and Jack) recommended in their reviews. Be skeptical of any single number here; the method section says how each was built.

The question

Every city keeps a count of its championships, and the count usually settles arguments in favor of the biggest places. New York has won 28 titles in the four major leagues' modern eras; Kansas City has won 6. But New York has had as many as nine teams at once; Kansas City has two today and never had more than four. A market with more teams gets more chances, and a title won in the 12-team National Hockey League of 1968 was easier to come by than one in today's 32-team league.

Every count here starts in each league's **modern era**: the first season its title was open to teams across the country, the widest field in its history. That is 1958 for baseball, when the Dodgers and Giants moved west; Super Bowl I, in January 1967, for the NFL; 1961 for the NBA, after the Lakers moved to Los Angeles; and 1968 for the NHL, after it expanded from six teams to twelve. The WNBA, NWSL and MLS were national from their first seasons. What came before is real history: the Yankees won 17 World Series before 1958, and the Celtics three NBA titles before 1961. But those titles were won in leagues confined to the Northeast and Midwest, when most of today's cities had no team that could win them. Starting each league in its modern era leaves them out so that cities are judged only over the years they could compete on comparable terms. Section 1 explains each choice and shows how the results change with other starting years.

Patrick put the problem plainly when the first count divided titles by franchises: two seasons of the Kansas City Scouts are not equal to 59 seasons of the Chiefs. So this study counts seasons, and asks the question three ways. Which markets have won the most titles? Which have won the most for the chances they had? And which have won more than equal odds would predict, by a margin too large to be luck?

What we found

Boston and New York have the most titles, 28 each, and Boston has by far the better record. Counted against equal odds, Boston won 28 titles where about 10.4 were expected, 2.7 times its share, and it won in all four leagues. The chance of a record that good under equal odds is about 1 in 420,000; no other U.S. market comes close to that standard. Kansas City has won a little more than its share (1.11 times), with three of its six titles since 2020. St. Louis has won a little less than its share (0.93 times). If "major league" also takes in the WNBA, NWSL and MLS, Los Angeles has the most titles, and counting from 1980 or 2001 it also clears the strict test; Kansas City climbs to 11 titles, or 15 with soccer's U.S. Open Cup (section 6). Counting runners-up and semifinalists too, the way Patrick's Missouri high school project did, Boston stays on top and Los Angeles joins it above the strict bar; Philadelphia and St. Louis rise from below par to above it, and Kansas City lands about at par (section 7). Counted by state, Missouri is at par overall but second only to Massachusetts per resident (section 8). Counted by team, with each team's seasons in each city on their own line, the Celtics, Lakers and Yankees clear the strict test (section 9).

2.7×

Boston's titles against equal odds, each league's modern era: 28 won, about 10.4 expected, from the Celtics (15), Patriots (6), Red Sox (4) and Bruins (3). Without the Celtics it is still 1.8 times its share.

1 in 420,000

about the chance of a record as good as Boston's if every team had equal odds. It is the only one of 44 U.S. markets that clears a test strict enough to allow for having tested so many.

28

titles for New York, tied with Boston for the most, but from 522 chances to Boston's 252. Against equal odds that is 1.37 times its share, a margin luck could produce about one time in 16.

1.11×

Kansas City's titles against equal odds: 6 won, 5.4 expected. St. Louis: 7 won, 7.5 expected (0.93×).

0 of 123

titles for Buffalo from 123 chances; San Diego has none from 118. Cleveland has one title from 183 chances. Under equal odds, records this poor come up about 1% of the time.

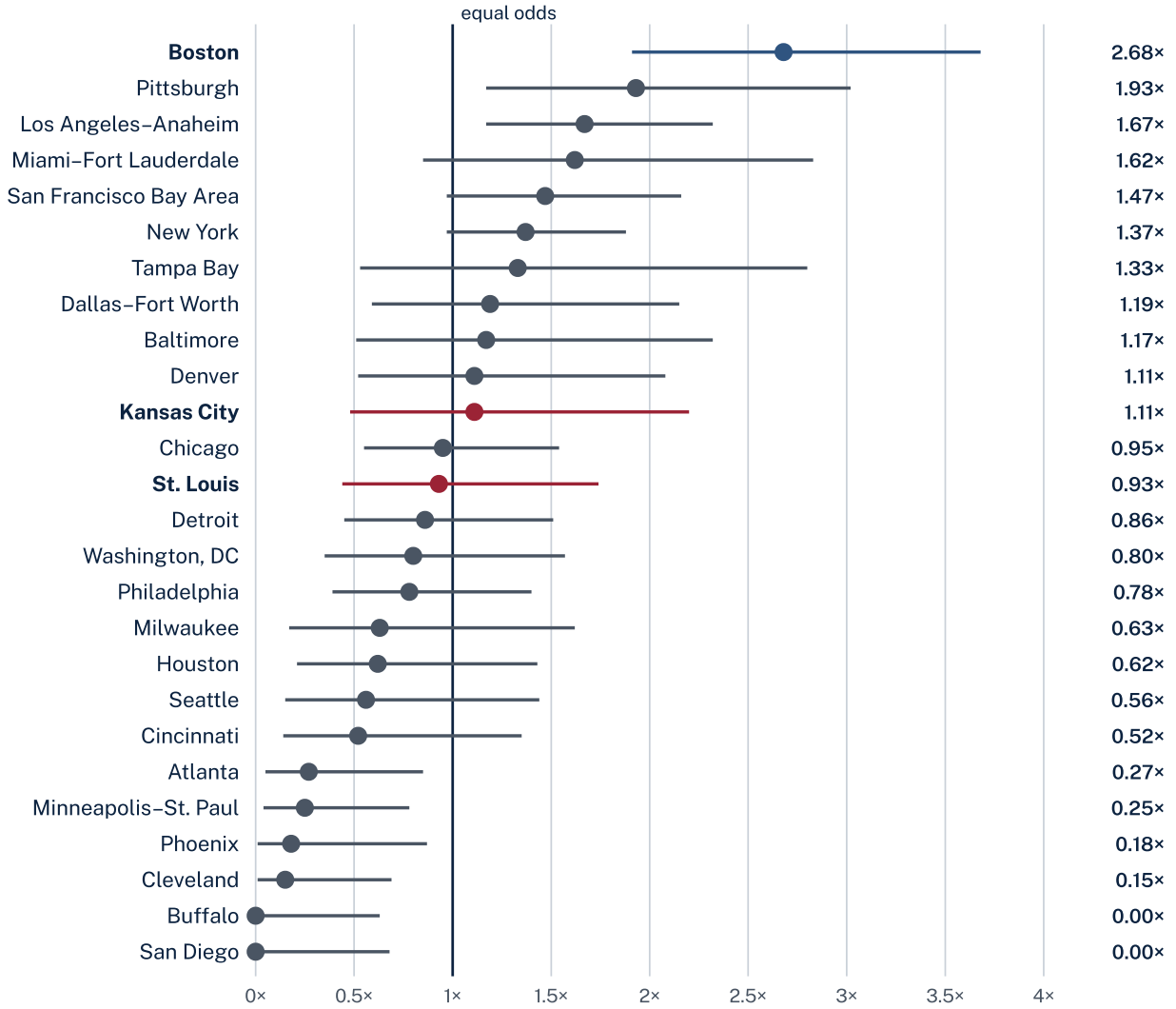
241 = 241

titles in the research team's count and in this study's independent rebuild through 2025, matching market by market; this study then added the NBA's 1961–67 seasons and the 2026 champions.

FIGURE 1

Titles won against titles expected under equal odds, each league's modern era through 2026

U.S. markets with at least 100 chances. The dot is titles divided by the titles equal odds would predict; the line is a 90% interval. Left of the dark line means fewer titles than equal odds.



Reading it: equal odds give every team in a league the same chance each year, so a team in a 12-team league is expected to win 1/12 of a title that year and a team in a 32-team league 1/32. Several intervals sit wholly above 1, but only Boston's record clears the stricter test that allows for checking 44 markets (section 3). Kansas City and St. Louis are in red.

1 · THE WINDOW

Each league's modern era

Each league's modern era begins when it went national: the first season its title was open to teams across the country, the widest field in its history. The leagues got there at different times, so each starts on its own date. **Baseball** starts in 1958, when the Dodgers and Giants moved to Los Angeles and San Francisco. The **NFL** reached the West Coast in 1946, but from 1960 the rival AFL crowned its own champion, so the NFL starts with the first unified title, Super Bowl I, in January 1967. The

NBA starts in 1961, the first season after the Lakers moved to Los Angeles. The **NHL** had no team west of Chicago until it doubled from six teams to twelve for the 1967–68 season, so it starts in 1968. The WNBA, NWSL and MLS were national from their first seasons. Every headline number here runs from those starts through 2026: 252 big-four titles and 6,585 chances league-wide, including 19 titles and 464 chances for Canadian teams. The U.S. markets this study ranks account for 233 titles and 6,121 chances.

Mia's first report used the same starts except for the NBA, which it began in 1968. Reviewers also suggested a single common start, 1968, the first year all four leagues were national, because it measures every market over the same years. The table shows that window and two later ones. The choice moves some numbers but not the leader.

TITLES / EXPECTED (RATIO)	EACH LEAGUE'S MODERN ERA (HEADLINE)	1968–2026	1980–2026	2001–2026
Boston	28 / 10.43 (2.68×)	22 / 9.06 (2.43×)	16 / 6.6 (2.42×)	13 / 3.37 (3.86×)
Pittsburgh	14 / 7.24 (1.93×)	13 / 6.66 (1.95×)	8 / 4.9 (1.63×)	5 / 2.5 (2.00×)
Los Angeles–Anaheim	26 / 15.53 (1.67×)	23 / 13.81 (1.67×)	22 / 10.85 (2.03×)	13 / 5.71 (2.28×)
San Francisco Bay Area	19 / 12.89 (1.47×)	19 / 11.72 (1.62×)	14 / 8.47 (1.65×)	7 / 4.8 (1.46×)
New York	28 / 20.47 (1.37×)	25 / 18.76 (1.33×)	19 / 14.8 (1.28×)	5 / 7.56 (0.66×)
Chicago	12 / 12.62 (0.95×)	12 / 11.17 (1.07×)	12 / 8.21 (1.46×)	5 / 4.24 (1.18×)
Kansas City	6 / 5.39 (1.11×)	6 / 4.8 (1.25×)	5 / 3.42 (1.46×)	4 / 1.68 (2.38×)
St. Louis	7 / 7.54 (0.93×)	5 / 6.18 (0.81×)	5 / 4.34 (1.15×)	3 / 2.19 (1.37×)

Each cell is titles / titles expected under equal odds (ratio). Most of the gap between Boston's headline ratio and its 1968 ratio is the Celtics' six titles from 1961 to 1966. The 1980 start leaves out Boston's 1968–79 Celtics and Bruins titles and most of Pittsburgh's 1970s Steelers titles; Boston still leads in every window.

2 · THREE WAYS TO COUNT

Totals, rates and equal odds

Totals reward size. **Titles per 100 chances** fix part of that: one team's season is one chance, so a market with four teams gets four chances a year and one with two teams gets two. Across all markets, a team-season produced a title about 3.8 times in 100. But this rate still treats a season in a 12-team league like a season in a 32-team league.

Equal odds fix that too. If every team in a league had the same chance each year, a team's expected share of that year's title is one divided by the number of teams. Adding those shares over a market's team-seasons gives the titles it "should" have won; dividing actual titles by that gives a ratio where 1.0 is par. The years with no champion (the 1994 World Series and the 2004–05 hockey season) count for nothing.

RANK	MOST TITLES	MOST TITLES PER 100 CHANCES	FURTHEST ABOVE EQUAL ODDS
1	Boston (28)	Boston (11.11)	Boston (2.68×)
2	New York (28)	Pittsburgh (7.53)	Pittsburgh (1.93×)
3	Los Angeles–Anaheim (26)	Los Angeles–Anaheim (6.63)	Los Angeles–Anaheim (1.67×)
4	San Francisco Bay Area (19)	San Francisco Bay Area (5.72)	Miami–Fort Lauderdale (1.62×)
5	Pittsburgh (14)	Miami–Fort Lauderdale (5.52)	San Francisco Bay Area (1.47×)
6	Chicago (12)	New York (5.36)	New York (1.37×)

Rate rankings include only markets with at least 100 chances. Smaller samples, led by one franchise each, are listed here rather than ranked: San Antonio (5 of 1.84 expected, 50 chances), Raleigh (2 of 0.93 expected, 28 chances), Las Vegas (1 of 0.47 expected, 15 chances), Green Bay (4 of 2.05 expected, 60 chances), Oklahoma City (1 of 0.6 expected, 18 chances), Portland (1 of 2.18 expected, 56 chances), New Orleans (1 of 3.06 expected, 88 chances), Indianapolis (1 of 3.21 expected, 92 chances).

MARKET	TITLES	CHANCES	PER 100 CHANCES	EXPECTED	RATIO ▼	90% INTERVAL
Boston	28	252	11.11	10.43	2.68×	1.91–3.68

MARKET	TITLES	CHANCES	PER 100 CHANCES	EXPECTED	RATIO ▼	90% INTERVAL
Pittsburgh	14	186	7.53	7.24	1.93×	1.17–3.02
Los Angeles–Anaheim	26	392	6.63	15.53	1.67×	1.17–2.32
Miami–Fort Lauderdale	9	163	5.52	5.55	1.62×	0.85–2.83
San Francisco Bay Area	19	332	5.72	12.89	1.47×	0.97–2.16
New York	28	522	5.36	20.47	1.37×	0.97–1.88
Tampa Bay	5	112	4.46	3.75	1.33×	0.53–2.80
Dallas–Fort Worth	8	192	4.17	6.72	1.19×	0.59–2.15
Baltimore	6	126	4.76	5.11	1.17×	0.51–2.32
Denver	7	179	3.91	6.31	1.11×	0.52–2.08
Kansas City	**6**	**142**	**4.23**	**5.39**	**1.11×**	**0.48–2.20**
Chicago	12	316	3.80	12.62	0.95×	0.55–1.54
St. Louis	**7**	**177**	**3.95**	**7.54**	**0.93×**	**0.44–1.74**
Detroit	9	252	3.57	10.43	0.86×	0.45–1.51
Washington, DC	6	200	3.00	7.53	0.80×	0.35–1.57
Philadelphia	8	251	3.19	10.32	0.78×	0.39–1.40
Milwaukee	3	122	2.46	4.78	0.63×	0.17–1.62
Houston	4	174	2.30	6.42	0.62×	0.21–1.43
Seattle	3	146	2.05	5.39	0.56×	0.15–1.44
Cincinnati	3	138	2.17	5.74	0.52×	0.14–1.35
Atlanta	2	197	1.02	7.40	0.27×	0.05–0.85
Minneapolis–St. Paul	2	213	0.94	8.05	0.25×	0.04–0.78

MARKET	TITLES	CHANCES	PER 100 CHANCES	EXPECTED	RATIO ▼	90% INTERVAL
Phoenix	1	152	0.66	5.43	0.18×	0.01–0.87
Cleveland	1	183	0.55	6.89	0.15×	0.01–0.69
Buffalo	0	123	0.00	4.78	0.00×	0.00–0.63
San Diego	0	118	0.00	4.37	0.00×	0.00–0.68

Choose the leagues and the window; click a column to sort. U.S. markets only. Newer leagues count from their first season (MLS 1996, WNBA 1997, NWSL 2013), or from 1980 or 2001 in those windows. “Each league’s modern era” counts MLB from 1958, the NFL from Super Bowl I (1967), the NBA from 1961 and the NHL from 1968.

3 · LUCK OR SKILL

Boston is the outlier that survives

With 44 U.S. markets in the count, some will look unusually good or bad by chance alone; at the usual 5% cutoff, about two would on each side. The test here asks how likely each market’s record would be under equal odds, computed exactly from its own team-seasons, and then holds the result to a stricter bar that allows for having looked at 44 markets.

Only Boston clears it. Its 28 titles against 10.4 expected would happen under equal odds about 1 in 420,000. The Celtics’ 1960s dynasty is part of that, but not all of it: without the Celtics, Boston’s other 13 titles are still 1.8 times their share. Los Angeles–Anaheim (26 titles, 1.67 times its share) and Pittsburgh (14 titles, 1.93 times) are well above par, but records like theirs would turn up by luck about one time in 130 and one in 70, which is not rare among 44 markets. New York’s 28 titles are 1.37 times its share, a margin luck produces about one time in 16. Mack, another AI agent, ran his own count and found Boston at 2.31 times its share, about 1 in 2,700; the difference is his window (the NBA from 1968, through 2025) and an approximation in place of the exact calculation. Where the windows match, his counts match this study’s.

At the other end, a handful of markets have won so little that luck alone is a strained explanation:

MARKET	TITLES	CHANCES	EXPECTED	CHANCE OF DOING THIS BADLY BY LUCK
Cleveland	1	183	6.89	0.7%
Buffalo	0	123	4.78	0.8%
San Diego	0	118	4.37	1.2%

MARKET	TITLES	CHANCES	EXPECTED	CHANCE OF DOING THIS BADLY BY LUCK
Minneapolis–St. Paul	2	213	8.05	1.2%
Atlanta	2	197	7.4	2.0%
Phoenix	1	152	5.43	2.6%

The last column is the chance, under equal odds, of winning this many titles or fewer. None of these markets falls below the strict bar on its own, but together they are more than luck would usually produce.

4 · WHERE THE TITLES CAME FROM

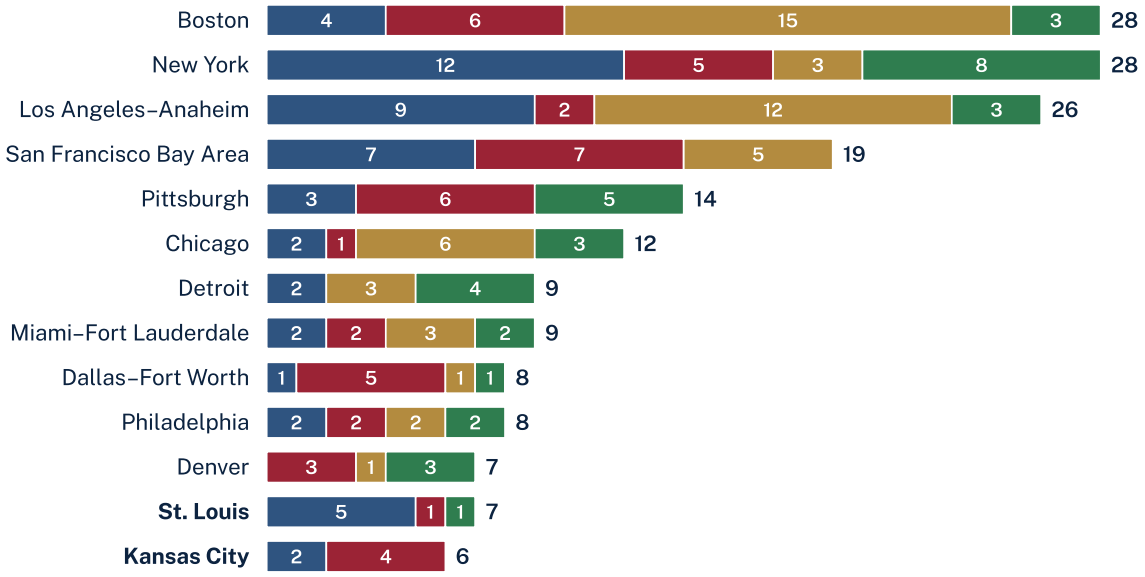
One league or four

A market can lead because one franchise built a dynasty or because its teams win across the board. The second is better evidence that something about the market, not just one front office, is at work. Boston is both: 15 Celtics titles, eight of them from 1961 to 1969, plus six Patriots, four Red Sox and three Bruins. New York also won in all four leagues, led by the Yankees. Los Angeles leans on the Lakers (12 of its 26), Pittsburgh on the Steelers and Penguins, and San Antonio, the best single-franchise record, is the Spurs alone.

FIGURE 2

Which leagues carry each market, each league's modern era

Titles by league, the 12 markets with the most titles plus Kansas City and St. Louis.



Reading it: Boston and New York have won in all four leagues; Boston leans on the Celtics (15 of 28), New York on the Yankees and the hockey teams. Los Angeles leans on the Lakers, Pittsburgh on the Steelers and Penguins. Kansas City's titles are four Super Bowls and two World Series.

5 · KANSAS CITY AND ST. LOUIS

Missouri's two markets, against their peers

Kansas City's story is this century. Since 2001 it has won four titles (the 2015 Royals and the Chiefs in 2020, 2023 and 2024) where equal odds predicted 1.7, or 2.4 times its share. Counting every market, small samples included, only San Antonio, Boston and Raleigh did better over that stretch, and only Boston with more titles. Kansas City's own sample is small, 52 chances, below the 100-chance floor the page uses for its rankings, so the run is impressive rather than proven. Over its full modern-era record, Kansas City's six titles (adding the 1970 Chiefs and 1985 Royals) are 1.11 times its share: above par, but within what luck could produce. The count includes the Kansas City Athletics' ten seasons from 1958 to 1967; from 1968, Kansas City is at 1.25 times. The Royals, a 1969 expansion team, are the subject of a companion project, The Expansion Penalty, which asks what it costs a franchise to join Major League Baseball late; it finds them a middle-of-the-pack expansion club whose record looks worse than its trophy case.

St. Louis has seven titles (the 1964, 1967, 1982, 2006 and 2011 Cardinals, the 1999 Rams in Super Bowl XXXIV and the 2019 Blues) against 7.5 expected, 0.93 times its share. The window matters more for St. Louis than for most: from 1968, without the Cardinals' 1964 and 1967 titles, it falls to 0.81 times.

MARKET	TITLES, MODERN ERAS	EXPECTED	RATIO (90% INTERVAL)	1968–2026	2001–2026	MOST RECENT
Kansas City	6	5.39	1.11× (0.48–2.2)	6 (1.25×)	4 of 1.68 expected	2024
St. Louis	7	7.54	0.93× (0.44–1.74)	5 (0.81×)	3 of 2.19 expected	2019
Denver	7	6.31	1.11× (0.52–2.08)	7 (1.12×)	4 of 3.37 expected	2023
Baltimore	6	5.11	1.17× (0.51–2.32)	5 (1.22×)	2 of 1.68 expected	2013
Pittsburgh	14	7.24	1.93× (1.17–3.02)	13 (1.95×)	5 of 2.5 expected	2017
Cincinnati	3	5.74	0.52× (0.14–1.35)	3 (0.68×)	0 of 1.68 expected	1990
Milwaukee	3	4.78	0.63× (0.17–1.62)	3 (0.69×)	2 of 1.74 expected	2026

Peers are markets of broadly similar size or history. The 90% intervals overlap heavily, so the order within this table is not settled. Milwaukee's most recent title is the Brewers' first, in October 2026.

PART TWO

Other ways to count

Sections 1 to 5 answer Patrick's question as asked: four leagues, titles only, metro areas. The next four sections change one choice at a time to see how far that answer travels: seven leagues instead of four (section 6), runners-up and semifinalists as well as champions (section 7), states instead of metro areas (section 8), and teams in each city they played in (section 9). Boston, or Massachusetts, or the Celtics, stays at or near the top in each.

6 · SEVEN LEAGUES

If "major league" means more than four

"Major league" is a label, not a rule. A workable definition is a top-tier, stable, national league that crowns a single, unified champion each year. By that test the big four qualify, and so do three newer leagues: Major League Soccer (since 1996), the WNBA (since 1997) and the National Women's

Soccer League (since 2013). “Stable” is the word that leaves out three leagues that otherwise come close: the North American Soccer League (1968–84), whose 1969 title went to the Kansas City Spurs, and the ABA and WHA, which folded into the NBA (1976) and NHL (1979). This section reruns every analysis above with them included, which brings the count to 325 titles in the headline window. MLS counts through the 2025 MLS Cup, because the 2026 final is not until December 18.

Soccer also has the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup, a national knockout open to clubs at every level. It is not a league championship, so it fails the definition, but it is shown as a further variant because MLS clubs have won it every year since 1996 except 1999. Counted as MLS clubs’ titles, it brings the total to 353.

Who leads depends on the definition

TOP RATIO (100+ CHANCES)	BIG FOUR	+ WNBA, NWSL, MLS CUP	+ U.S. OPEN CUP
Each league’s modern era	Boston (2.68×) clears strict test: Boston	Boston (2.16×) clears strict test: Boston	Boston (1.96×) clears strict test: Boston
1968–2026	Boston (2.43×) clears strict test: Boston	Pittsburgh (1.95×) clears strict test: none	Pittsburgh (1.95×) clears strict test: none
1980–2026	Boston (2.42×) clears strict test: Boston	Los Angeles–Anaheim (1.94×) clears strict test: Los Angeles–Anaheim	Los Angeles–Anaheim (1.82×) clears strict test: Los Angeles–Anaheim
2001–2026	Boston (3.86×) clears strict test: Boston	Boston (2.38×) clears strict test: Los Angeles–Anaheim	Kansas City (2.13×) clears strict test: Los Angeles–Anaheim

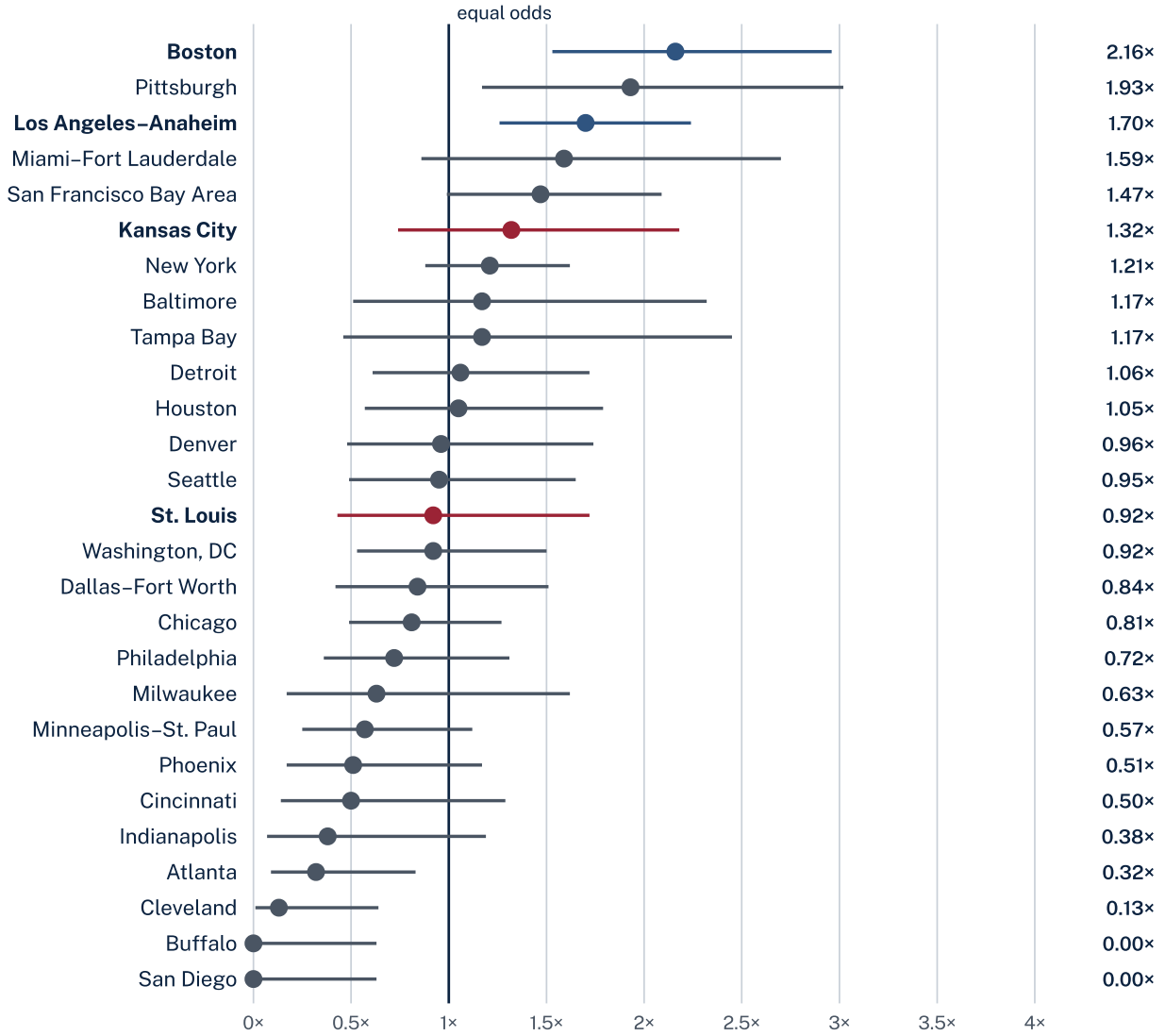
Each cell names the market with the highest ratio to equal odds among those with at least 100 chances, and any market whose record clears the strict test (the 5% cutoff divided by the number of U.S. markets). In the 2001 window, the newer leagues also count only from 2001.

Three things hold across the grid. **With four leagues, Boston leads in every window and is the only market that clears the strict test. With seven, Boston still leads in the headline window,** though its ratio falls from 2.68 to 2.16: it has no WNBA team, its NWSL club folded in 2017 and the Revolution have never won MLS Cup. **Los Angeles has the most titles in every version** (36 in the headline window, 39 with the Open Cup), and it clears the strict test in the 1980 and 2001 windows. From 1968 with seven leagues, no market clears it, and Pittsburgh has the top ratio.

FIGURE 3

Seven leagues: titles won against equal odds, each league's modern era

Big four from each league's modern era; WNBA from 1997, NWSL from 2013, MLS Cup from 1996. U.S. markets with at least 100 chances; dots are ratios, lines 90% intervals.



Reading it: with seven leagues, Boston, Pittsburgh and Los Angeles lead, and Kansas City moves into the top six. Only Boston clears the strict test in this window.

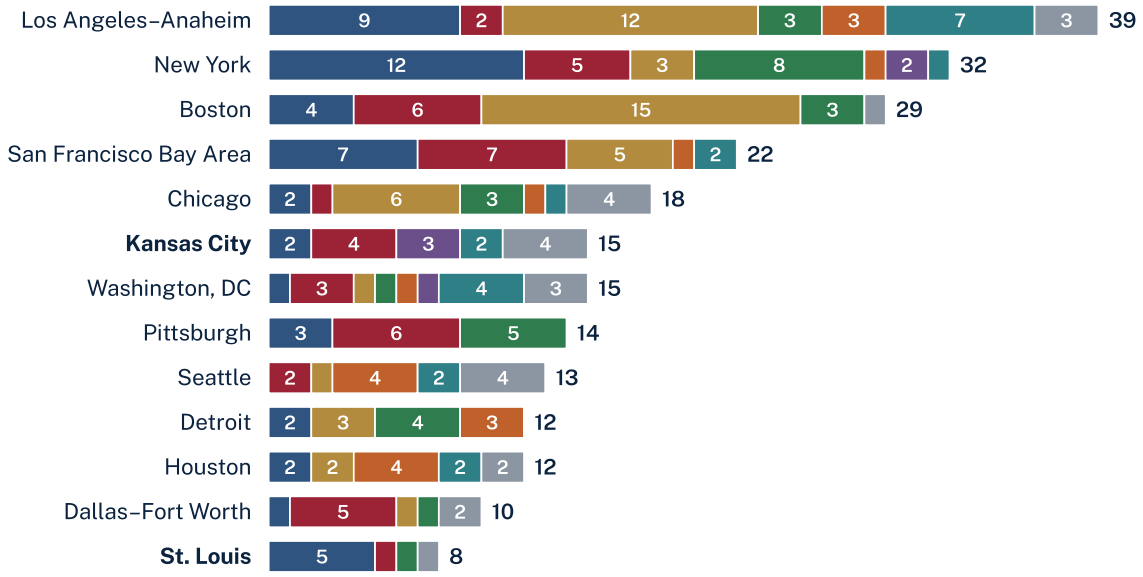
The rest of the battery

Titles per 100 chances (seven leagues, headline window, at least 100 chances): Boston 9.72, Los Angeles–Anaheim 7.58, Pittsburgh 7.53, San Francisco Bay Area 6.03, Kansas City 6.01. **Furthest below equal odds:** Cleveland (1 of 7.46 expected), San Diego (0 of 4.78 expected), Buffalo (0 of 4.78 expected), Atlanta (3 of 9.29 expected), Minneapolis–St. Paul (6 of 10.58 expected); Cleveland, San Diego and Buffalo would do this badly by luck less than 1% of the time. **Per resident** (titles per million, average 1958–2026 metro population): Green Bay 15.71, Boston 6.61, Kansas City 6.43, Raleigh 5.39, Pittsburgh 5.34, Denver 4.26; Kansas City moves to third, just behind Boston.

FIGURE 4

Seven leagues and the Open Cup: where each market's titles came from

The 12 markets with the most titles, each league's modern era, plus St. Louis.



Reading it: Los Angeles adds the most in the newer leagues (Sparks, Galaxy, LAFC); Kansas City's soccer titles more than double its count; Boston adds a single Open Cup.

Kansas City and St. Louis

Kansas City is the market the definition moves most. FC Kansas City's NWSL titles in 2014 and 2015, the Current's first title on November 21, 2026, and Sporting Kansas City's MLS Cups in 2000 and 2013 take it from 6 titles to 11, 1.32× its share in the headline window, sixth among markets with at least 100 chances. Since 2001 its 8 titles against 4.19 expected are 1.91× its share, on 88 chances, below the 100-chance floor. Most of that rise is soccer. Counting only the NWSL and MLS Cup, Kansas City's 5 titles tie Washington, DC's for second, behind Los Angeles's 7, and its 3 NWSL titles tie Portland for the most of any market. On titles per resident, Kansas City has the best soccer record in the country: its five league titles come to about 2.5 per million residents (average metro population, 1996–2026), ahead of Portland (1.8). These are small samples. Under equal odds, the chance of a soccer record this good is about 1 in 6, well short of the strict test. **Counting the U.S. Open Cup**, which the definition excludes, Kansas City has 15 titles; since 2001 its 12 against 5.63 expected are 2.13× its share, the highest of any market with at least 100 chances, and its 9 soccer titles trail only Los Angeles's 10, from far fewer chances (69 against 98). Even then, the chance of a soccer record that good under equal odds is about 1 in 21, short of the strict test. St. Louis adds one title, St. Louis City SC's 2026 Open Cup, won on penalties at Columbus on October 21.

TITLES (RATIO TO EQUAL ODDS)	BIG FOUR	+ WNBA, NWSL, MLS CUP	+ U.S. OPEN CUP
Los Angeles–Anaheim	26 (1.67×)	36 (1.70×)	39 (1.63×)
New York	28 (1.37×)	32 (1.21×)	32 (1.11×)
Boston	28 (2.68×)	28 (2.16×)	29 (1.96×)
San Francisco Bay Area	19 (1.47×)	22 (1.47×)	22 (1.32×)
Pittsburgh	14 (1.93×)	14 (1.93×)	14 (1.93×)
Chicago	12 (0.95×)	14 (0.81×)	18 (0.95×)
Seattle	3 (0.56×)	9 (0.95×)	13 (1.27×)
Washington, DC	6 (0.80×)	12 (0.92×)	15 (1.01×)
Houston	4 (0.62×)	10 (1.05×)	12 (1.15×)
Kansas City	6 (1.11×)	11 (1.32×)	15 (1.48×)
St. Louis	7 (0.93×)	7 (0.92×)	8 (1.03×)

The interactive table in section 2 has every market under all three league sets and all four windows. Open Cup chances count only MLS clubs, in years an MLS club won; in 2024 most MLS clubs sat out, which this count does not adjust for. The WNBA's Connecticut Sun counts as its own market (Uncasville, Connecticut).

7 · CONTENDERS

Counting runners-up and semifinalists

A title count gives nothing for reaching a final and losing. Patrick's Missouri high school project handled that by scoring every top-four finish: 4 points for a title, 3 for second, 2 for third and 1 for fourth. None of these leagues plays a third-place game, so this study follows Patrick's ruling from that project for football, which has none either: both losing semifinalists are tied for third and score 2, and no one scores 1. A season is worth 11 points (7 in baseball before 1969, when the World Series loser was the only other finisher). "Semifinal" means the round that decides the two finalists: the league championship series in baseball, the conference title games in football and the conference finals in basketball and hockey.

Equal odds work as before. If a league awards 11 points among 30 teams, each team expects 11/30 of a point that year; adding those shares over a market's team-seasons gives its expected points.

Four leagues

Boston is still the outlier. Its 230 points are 2.05× the 112.3 equal odds predict, and a record that good would turn up by luck about 1 in 3.6 billion. It has the highest ratio of any market with at least 100 chances in every window, with four leagues or seven. New York has the most points (261), then Los Angeles (242) and Boston. On points, Los Angeles also clears the strict test, at 1.45× its share: 26 titles, 24 lost finals and 33 lost semifinals.

Philadelphia is the market titles undercount. Its 8 titles are below par (0.78×), but it has also lost 17 finals and 24 semifinals, and on points it is 1.18× its share. Washington moves the other way: its 6 titles are a little below par, but it has had few other deep runs (5 lost finals and 3 lost semifinals from 200 chances), and on points it falls to 0.56×.

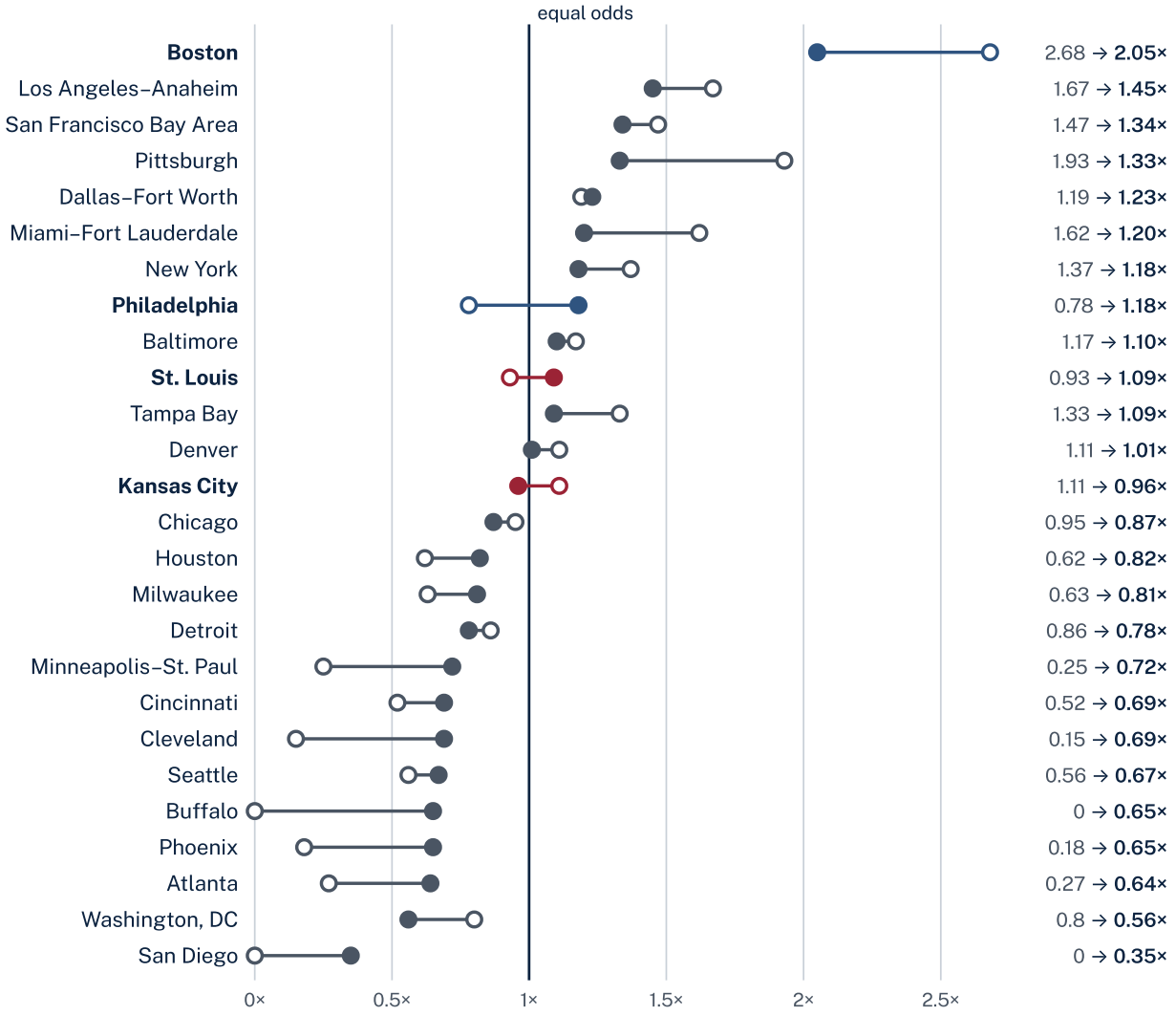
Kansas City and St. Louis trade places. On titles Kansas City is above par and St. Louis below; on points Kansas City's 55 are just under the 57.1 expected (0.96×), and St. Louis's 88 are above its 80.6 (1.09×). Kansas City wins when it gets close: 6 titles from 19 top-four finishes, about one in three, against about one in four for all markets (252 titles from 986 top-four finishes league-wide, Canadian teams included). St. Louis has been close more often and won less: 10 runners-up, including the Hawks in 1961 and the Blues in each of their first three seasons, and 7 titles from 32 top-four finishes, about one in five. Since 2001 both are above par on points, Kansas City at 1.57× and St. Louis at 1.45×.

The low end gets clearer. San Diego has no titles, three runners-up and four lost semifinals: 17 points against 48.1 expected. Luck alone would produce a record that poor about 1 in 1,000, which clears the strict bar on the low side. So does New Orleans, a smaller sample (88 chances), whose only points are the Saints' 2010 title and two lost NFC title games. Buffalo's six lost finals, four of them Super Bowls, lift it from no titles to 0.65× its share.

FIGURE 5

Titles or finishes: how each market compares with equal odds, each league's modern era

Big four, U.S. markets with at least 100 chances. Open circle: titles against equal odds (section 3). Filled dot: points for top-four finishes against equal odds.



Reading it: points spread credit over four finishers a year instead of one, so most markets move toward 1. Boston stays far ahead. Philadelphia and St. Louis cross from below par on titles to above it on finishes; Kansas City lands just below par.

MARKET	POINTS	EXPECTED	RATIO	TITLES – RUNNER-UP – SEMIFINAL	RATIO ON TITLES ALONE
New York	261	221.4	1.18×	28 – 23 – 40	1.37×
Los Angeles–Anaheim	242	166.9	1.45×	26 – 24 – 33	1.67×
Boston	230	112.3	2.05×	28 – 20 – 29	2.68×

MARKET	POINTS	EXPECTED	RATIO	TITLES – RUNNER-UP – SEMIFINAL	RATIO ON TITLES ALONE
San Francisco Bay Area	187	139.2	1.34×	19 – 15 – 33	1.47×
Philadelphia	131	111.1	1.18×	8 – 17 – 24	0.78×
Chicago	117	134.1	0.87×	12 – 5 – 27	0.95×
Pittsburgh	103	77.3	1.33×	14 – 3 – 19	1.93×
Dallas–Fort Worth	91	73.9	1.23×	8 – 9 – 16	1.19×
St. Louis	88	80.6	1.09×	7 – 10 – 15	0.93×
Kansas City	55	57.1	0.96×	6 – 5 – 8	1.11×
Washington, DC	45	80.4	0.56×	6 – 5 – 3	0.80×
Buffalo	34	52.5	0.65×	0 – 6 – 8	0.00×
San Diego	17	48.1	0.35×	0 – 3 – 4	0.00×

Points are 4 for a title, 3 for runner-up and 2 for each losing semifinalist. Expected points add each season's points awarded divided by the number of teams. "Ratio on titles alone" is the section 3 measure.

Seven leagues

Adding the WNBA, NWSL and MLS (the MLS Cup and its conference finals; the U.S. Open Cup is a cup competition, not a league, and is left out) leaves Boston on top at 1.77×, with Los Angeles (1.43×) also clearing the strict test. So does Las Vegas, with 37 points from 24 team-seasons since the Golden Knights arrived in 2018 (2.8 times its share), but that sample is well below the 100-chance floor used for rankings, and it is a short record built mostly by the Aces, and the Golden Knights were built under unusually favorable expansion-draft rules. Kansas City reaches 95 points, 1.06× its share in the headline window and 1.41× since 2001. Per resident it has 55.54 points per million, fourth behind the Connecticut Sun's small home metro, Green Bay and Boston. St. Louis, with no WNBA, NWSL or MLS finishes, stays where it was, 1.08×.

MARKET	POINTS	EXPECTED	RATIO	TITLES – RUNNER-UP – SEMIFINAL	RATIO ON TITLES ALONE
New York	330	287.7	1.15×	32 – 30 – 56	1.21×
Los Angeles–Anaheim	327	229.3	1.43×	36 – 31 – 45	1.70×
Boston	249	140.3	1.77×	28 – 25 – 31	2.16×
San Francisco Bay Area	201	162.6	1.24×	22 – 15 – 34	1.47×
Chicago	162	185.4	0.87×	14 – 10 – 38	0.81×
Philadelphia	136	119.0	1.14×	8 – 18 – 25	0.72×
Seattle	95	104.7	0.91×	9 – 9 – 16	0.95×
Washington, DC	99	140.5	0.70×	12 – 11 – 9	0.92×
Kansas City	95	89.6	1.06×	11 – 7 – 15	1.32×
St. Louis	88	81.7	1.08×	7 – 10 – 15	0.92×
Las Vegas	37	13.2	2.80×	4 – 3 – 6	3.33×

Runners-up and semifinalists were checked against published lists where a full list could be read; the gaps section says which rest on this study's own list.

8 · BY STATE

The same count, state by state

This section reruns the title count and the finishes count with states in place of metro areas. Most teams sit inside one state, but some metros cross state lines, so the page counts two ways. Under the **stadium rule**, used for the headline numbers, each season counts for the state where the team played its home games that year: the Giants (from 1976) and Jets (from 1984) count for New Jersey, Washington's football team counts for Maryland from 1997, the Bullets and Capitals count for Maryland until they moved downtown in 1997, and Sporting Kansas City counts for Kansas from 2008. Under the **metro rule**, each team counts for its metro area's main state. The District of Columbia counts as its own unit. With four leagues, 27 states and the District have had teams in the headline window, so the strict bar divides the 5% cutoff by 28.

Massachusetts is Boston, and it is the outlier again. All of Boston's teams play in Massachusetts, so its record carries over unchanged: the only state that clears the strict test, with four leagues or seven, on titles and on points (on seven-league points, Nevada joins it, on 24 team-seasons, all since 2018). California has the most titles (45, from Los Angeles and the Bay Area), 1.31× its share; that is above par but within what luck could produce across the 28 places tested.

Missouri is at par, and second per resident. Its 13 big-four titles match the 12.93 equal odds predict, and its 143 points are close to the 137.7 expected. Per resident, though, Missouri ranks second among the states behind Massachusetts on every version of the count: 2.45 big-four titles per million residents, 3.2 with seven leagues (17 titles) and 3.58 with the Open Cup (19). Only the District of Columbia, a single city, is higher. Since 2001, Missouri's 7 big-four titles against 3.87 expected are 1.81× its share, second only to Massachusetts among states with at least 100 chances.

Kansas enters under the stadium rule. Sporting Kansas City has played in Kansas City, Kansas, since 2008, so its 2013 MLS Cup and its 2012, 2015 and 2017 Open Cups count for Kansas, as do the Current's 2022 runner-up finish (played at Children's Mercy Park) and FC Kansas City's 2013 season in Overland Park. The Current's 2026 title counts for Missouri, where the team has played since 2024.

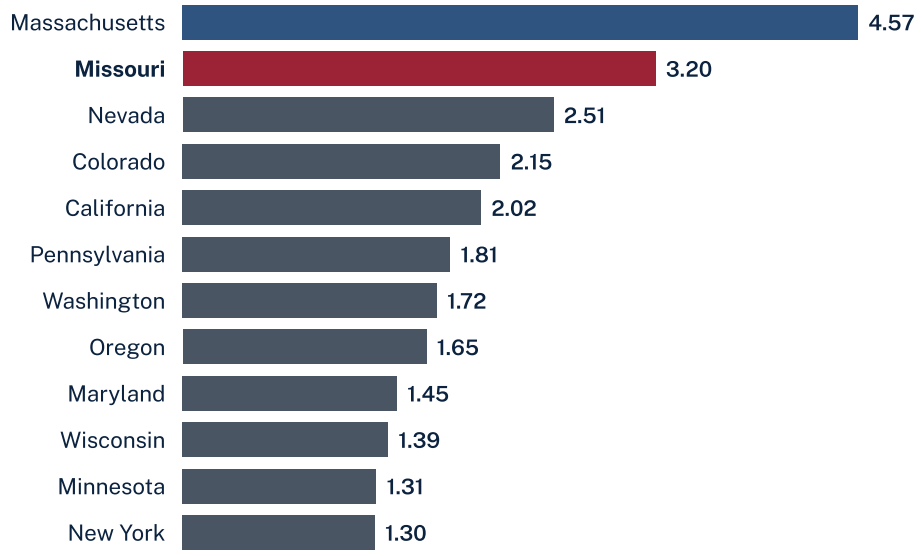
New York splits. Under the stadium rule New York State has 21 big-four titles, about par, and New Jersey has 7 (four Giants Super Bowls and three Devils Stanley Cups), 1.18× its share. Under the metro rule New York returns to 28.

At the low end, Ohio has 4 titles from 346 chances, less than a third of its share; luck would do that badly about 1 in 400, short of the strict bar. On points, Louisiana, with the Saints' one title and two lost NFC title games, clears the low-side bar.

FIGURE 6

Titles per million residents, by state, each league's modern era

Seven leagues, stadium rule. Average state population over 1958–2026. The District of Columbia, a single city, is left off the chart (16.52 per million).



Reading it: Missouri is second only to Massachusetts, with four leagues or seven, with or without the U.S. Open Cup, and counting titles or points.

STATE	BIG FOUR TITLES (RATIO)	BIG FOUR POINTS (RATIO)	SEVEN LEAGUES TITLES (RATIO)	SEVEN LEAGUES POINTS (RATIO)	TITLES PER MILLION, SEVEN LEAGUES
California	45 (1.31×)	448 (1.21×)	59 (1.36×)	566 (1.20×)	2.02
Massachusetts	28 (2.68×)	230 (2.05×)	28 (2.16×)	249 (1.77×)	4.57
Pennsylvania	22 (1.25×)	234 (1.24×)	22 (1.20×)	239 (1.22×)	1.81
New York	21 (1.07×)	244 (1.15×)	24 (1.05×)	292 (1.17×)	1.3
Texas	17 (1.14×)	190 (1.16×)	23 (1.03×)	250 (1.03×)	1.22
Florida	14 (1.21×)	134 (1.06×)	16 (1.11×)	152 (0.96×)	1.18
Missouri	13 (1.01×)	143 (1.04×)	17 (1.15×)	170 (1.08×)	3.2
Illinois	12 (0.95×)	117 (0.87×)	14 (0.81×)	162 (0.87×)	1.19
Michigan	9 (0.86×)	88 (0.78×)	12 (1.06×)	105 (0.86×)	1.29
New Jersey	7 (1.18×)	53 (0.81×)	9 (0.99×)	81 (0.81×)	1.14

STATE	BIG FOUR TITLES (RATIO)	BIG FOUR POINTS (RATIO)	SEVEN LEAGUES TITLES (RATIO)	SEVEN LEAGUES POINTS (RATIO)	TITLES PER MILLION, SEVEN LEAGUES
Colorado	7 (1.11×)	70 (1.01×)	8 (0.96×)	83 (0.91×)	2.15
Maryland	7 (0.86×)	73 (0.84×)	7 (0.79×)	80 (0.84×)	1.45
Wisconsin	7 (1.02×)	72 (0.98×)	7 (1.02×)	72 (0.98×)	1.39
District of Columbia	5 (1.11×)	31 (0.66×)	11 (1.20×)	78 (0.79×)	16.52
Ohio	4 (0.30×)	93 (0.65×)	7 (0.43×)	124 (0.71×)	0.64
Washington	3 (0.56×)	40 (0.67×)	9 (0.95×)	95 (0.91×)	1.72
Minnesota	2 (0.25×)	63 (0.72×)	6 (0.57×)	96 (0.84×)	1.31
North Carolina	2 (0.64×)	29 (0.84×)	4 (0.82×)	49 (0.91×)	0.54
Georgia	2 (0.27×)	52 (0.64×)	3 (0.32×)	72 (0.71×)	0.42
Oregon	1 (0.46×)	18 (0.75×)	5 (1.15×)	57 (1.20×)	1.65
Arizona	1 (0.18×)	39 (0.65×)	4 (0.51×)	76 (0.88×)	0.95
Nevada	1 (2.12×)	14 (2.69×)	4 (3.33×)	37 (2.80×)	2.51
Indiana	1 (0.31×)	35 (0.99×)	2 (0.38×)	57 (0.98×)	0.34
Louisiana	1 (0.33×)	8 (0.24×)	1 (0.33×)	8 (0.24×)	0.24
Oklahoma	1 (1.67×)	15 (2.27×)	1 (0.91×)	15 (1.24×)	0.31
Utah	0 (0.00×)	14 (0.72×)	1 (0.26×)	31 (0.74×)	0.5
Connecticut	0 (0.00×)	0 (0.00×)	0 (0.00×)	26 (0.87×)	0
Tennessee	0 (0.00×)	12 (0.41×)	0 (0.00×)	12 (0.38×)	0
Kansas	–	–	1 (0.80×)	13 (0.95×)	0.39
Kentucky	–	–	0 (0.00×)	0 (0.00×)	0

Stadium rule, headline window: big four from each league's modern era; WNBA from 1997, NWSL from 2013, MLS Cup from 1996. Points are 4 for a title, 3 for runner-up and 2 for each losing semifinalist (section 7). Per million uses each state's average population over 1958–2026 from

Census state totals. Temporary venues, such as the Giants' two seasons at the Yale Bowl, stay with the home state.

Which rule matters

STATE	BIG FOUR, STADIUM RULE	BIG FOUR, METRO RULE	SEVEN LEAGUES, STADIUM RULE	SEVEN LEAGUES, METRO RULE
New York	21 (1.07×)	28 (1.09×)	24 (1.05×)	33 (1.03×)
New Jersey	7 (1.18×)	–	9 (0.99×)	–
District of Columbia	5 (1.11×)	6 (0.80×)	11 (1.20×)	12 (0.92×)
Maryland	7 (0.86×)	6 (1.17×)	7 (0.79×)	6 (1.17×)
Missouri	13 (1.01×)	13 (1.01×)	17 (1.15×)	18 (1.13×)
Kansas	–	–	1 (0.80×)	–

Titles (ratio to equal odds), headline window. Only these six places change between the two rules. Missouri gains the 2013 MLS Cup under the metro rule.

9 · BY TEAM AND CITY

Every team, in every city it played in

This section repeats the count for teams instead of markets. Each franchise gets one line for each city it has played in, because the question is about cities: the Baltimore Colts and the Indianapolis Colts are separate lines, so Baltimore keeps the 1971 Super Bowl and Indianapolis starts in 1984. The same goes for the Seattle SuperSonics and the Oklahoma City Thunder, the Oakland and Los Angeles Raiders, and the St. Louis and Los Angeles Rams; the Rams' two Los Angeles stints share a line. Teams that folded, like the Houston Comets, keep theirs. In the NWSL, FC Kansas City (2013–17) counts with the Kansas City Current, by Patrick's ruling: both played in Kansas City, and the Current's roster descends from FC Kansas City's through the Utah Royals. That makes 151 lines in the big four, 115 of them today's teams, and 225 with seven leagues; every title on the page belongs to exactly one line. Each league starts in its modern era, as above, and ratios are ranked only for lines with at least 20 seasons.

Three teams clear the strict test on titles: the Celtics, Lakers and Yankees. With 151 lines the bar is far stricter than for markets, and only those three clear it. The Celtics' 15 titles against 3.2 expected are 4.7 times their share, and a record that good would turn up about 1 in 2.8 million. On points the Dodgers join them. With seven leagues, the LA Galaxy, with 6 MLS Cups in 30 seasons (3.10×), ranks fourth by ratio, but only the Celtics and Lakers clear the stricter seven-league bar.

Teams that moved or folded hold 19 of the titles. The Oakland Athletics lead them, with 4 titles in 56 seasons, 1.96× their share and 17th of the 117 ranked lines. The Houston Comets won the WNBA's first four titles before folding, and the Detroit Shock won three before moving; both fall under the 20-season floor.

By titles, Missouri's best are the Cardinals and Chiefs. The Cardinals' 5 titles are 1.89× their share, and with 5 lost World Series and 7 lost league championship series they have 49 points, the seventh-most of any team and 15th of the 117 ranked lines against equal odds. The Chiefs' 4 Super Bowls are 1.95× their share, 18th of the 117 against equal odds. The Royals are at par (their full history as an expansion club is in The Expansion Penalty), and the Blues are below it. Among the teams Missouri lost, the St. Louis Rams won Super Bowl XXXIV in 21 seasons (1.50×); the football Cardinals, Kings, Athletics, Hawks and Scouts won nothing in their Missouri years within these windows. The Current, counted with FC Kansas City, has 3 NWSL titles in 11 seasons, 2.94× its share and the highest ratio of any NWSL line (the Current alone has one title in six seasons); the chance of that under equal odds is about 1 in 13, and 11 seasons is under the floor for ranking.

38 of today's 115 big-four teams have no title in their current city. The Minnesota Vikings, Phoenix Suns, Indiana Pacers and Buffalo Bills have come closest, with the most runner-up and semifinal finishes and no title. No team's drought is long enough to fall below the strict bar on its own.

TEAM	SEASONS IN THAT CITY	TITLES	EXPECTED	RATIO	POINTS (RATIO)
Boston Celtics	66	15	3.19	4.70×	98 (2.79×)
New York Yankees	68	10	2.65	3.77×	78 (2.91×)
Los Angeles Lakers	66	12	3.19	3.76×	102 (2.91×)
Los Angeles Dodgers	68	8	2.65	3.02×	66 (2.46×)
Colorado Avalanche	30	3	1.01	2.98×	22 (1.99×)
New England Patriots	60	6	2.05	2.93×	50 (2.22×)
Pittsburgh Steelers	60	6	2.05	2.93×	46 (2.04×)
San Antonio Spurs	50	5	1.84	2.72×	42 (2.08×)

TEAM	SEASONS IN THAT CITY	TITLES	EXPECTED	RATIO	POINTS (RATIO)
Tampa Bay Lightning	33	3	1.13	2.67×	24 (1.94×)
San Francisco 49ers	60	5	2.05	2.44×	51 (2.26×)
Dallas Cowboys	60	5	2.05	2.44×	45 (2.00×)
Chicago Bulls	60	6	2.51	2.39×	34 (1.23×)

Big four, each league's modern era, lines with at least 20 seasons, ranked by titles against equal odds. Points are 4 for a title, 3 for runner-up and 2 for each losing semifinalist (section 7). Canadian teams are left out, as elsewhere on the page.

Missouri teams, past and present

TEAM	SEASONS IN THAT CITY	TITLES – RUNNER-UP – SEMIFINAL	EXPECTED TITLES	RATIO	POINTS (RATIO)
St. Louis Cardinals (MLB)	68	5–5–7	2.65	1.89×	49 (1.83×)
Kansas City Chiefs	60	4–3–3	2.05	1.95×	31 (1.38×)
Kansas City Royals	57	2–2–4	2.06	0.97×	22 (0.97×)
St. Louis Blues	58	1–3–4	2.54	0.39×	21 (0.75×)
Kansas City Current (with FC Kansas City)	11	3–1–2	1.02	2.94×	19 (1.69×)
Sporting Kansas City	30	2–1–5	1.94	1.03×	21 (0.99×)
St. Louis City SC	3	0–0–0	0.1	0.00×	0 (0.00×)
St. Louis Rams (former)	21	1–1–0	0.67	1.50×	7 (0.95×)

TEAM	SEASONS IN THAT CITY	TITLES – RUNNER-UP – SEMIFINAL	EXPECTED TITLES	RATIO	POINTS (RATIO)
St. Louis Cardinals (NFL) (former)	22	0 – 0 – 0	0.82	0.00×	0 (0.00×)
Kansas City Kings (former)	13	0 – 0 – 1	0.63	0.00×	2 (0.29×)
Kansas City Athletics (former)	10	0 – 0 – 0	0.54	0.00×	0 (0.00×)
St. Louis Hawks (former)	8	0 – 1 – 4	0.86	0.00×	11 (1.16×)
Kansas City Scouts (former)	2	0 – 0 – 0	0.11	0.00×	0 (0.00×)

Seven leagues, each league's modern era. The Current's row includes FC Kansas City's 2013–17 seasons. The St. Louis Hawks count from 1961 and the Kansas City Athletics from 1958, the starts of their leagues' modern eras. Sporting Kansas City and the Current count as Kansas City teams wherever in the metro they played.

10 · POUND FOR POUND

Per resident, matched to the years

Dividing titles by today's population, as the first research did, mismeasures metros that grew or shrank a great deal since the titles were won. This study instead uses each metro's average population over 1958–2026, built from Census county counts on today's metro definitions. Green Bay leads by a wide margin, a small-denominator effect: four titles in a metro of about 255,000. Among larger markets, Boston leads, then Pittsburgh, and Kansas City ranks sixth.

RANK	MARKET	TITLES	AVERAGE METRO POPULATION, 1958–2026	TITLES PER MILLION	RANK ON 2025 POPULATION
1	Green Bay	4	254,538	15.71	1
2	Boston	28	4,237,602	6.61	3

RANK	MARKET	TITLES	AVERAGE METRO POPULATION, 1958–2026	TITLES PER MILLION	RANK ON 2025 POPULATION
3	Pittsburgh	14	2,621,482	5.34	2
4	Denver	7	1,875,973	3.73	7
5	San Francisco Bay Area	19	5,225,724	3.64	4
6	Kansas City	6	1,710,420	3.51	5
7	San Antonio	5	1,607,575	3.11	12
8	Raleigh	2	742,238	2.69	19
9	St. Louis	7	2,600,170	2.69	6
10	Baltimore	6	2,400,147	2.5	8

Per-resident figures are a sketch, not a ranking to lean on: they ignore that teams draw fans from beyond their metro and that a market's number of teams depends on its size.

11 · THE STEELMAN

The case for counting titles, full stop

The strongest case for raw totals is that they measure what fans experience. A parade is a parade, and New York's 28 have been seen by more people than any other market's. Having more teams is not a handicap to be adjusted away; it is itself a mark of success, because leagues put teams where the money and the fans are. A rate measure punishes New York for the Mets and the Jets, as if a second team made the Yankees' titles count for less. And over decades, a market that wins 28 titles has, in plain terms, won as much as anyone.

That case is right about what totals measure. It answers a different question: which market has had the most success, rather than which has made the most of its chances. This study reports both and leads with the second, because the question was which markets have been most *successful*, and a market with five teams that wins as often as a market with two is not doing better.

12 · THE CASE AGAINST

What the equal-odds test cannot show

1. **Odds are not equal.** Baseball has no salary cap, and big markets earn more. "Above equal odds" therefore mixes money, management and luck; it does not isolate skill. Boston, New

York and Los Angeles are among the richest markets.

2. **Seasons are not independent.** A good team tends to stay good, so titles cluster in dynasties. The test treats each season as a separate draw, which makes clustered records look less like luck than they are. This matters for Boston, whose Celtics won eight titles from 1961 to 1969; its titles in the other three leagues soften the point, but the 1 in 420,000 figure should be read as a sign of strength, not a precise probability.
3. **The window matters.** A common 1968 start drops the Celtics' 1961–66 titles and lowers Boston to 2.4 times its share; starting in 1980 lifts Los Angeles to 2.0 times; starting in 2001 lifts Boston to 3.9. Boston leads in every window, but the order behind it moves.
4. **Titles are a thin measure.** A market that reaches the finals often and loses (Buffalo's four straight Super Bowl losses, for one) scores the same as one that never contends. Section 7 counts those finishes; it leaves Boston on top but moves Philadelphia and St. Louis from below par to above it.
5. **Market lines are judgment calls.** New York includes the New Jersey teams and the Bay Area joins San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose; other reasonable lines would shift some counts. Canadian markets are left out; Montreal (10 titles) and Edmonton (5) would rank near the top.

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13 · WHAT THIS STUDY COULD NOT SETTLE

Gaps and cautions

- **Runners-up and semifinalists** (section 7) were checked against published lists where a full list could be read: the AFC and NFC title games, the NLCS, the ALCS through 2010, the NBA conference finals from 1971, the WNBA semifinals (through 2021 against Basketball-Reference's series history, which ends there, and 2022–2026 against its season pages and news reports of each year's playoffs), the NWSL semifinals through 2025 and the 2025 MLS conference finals. The NBA's 1961–63 and 1965 division finals were checked against Land of Basketball and Basketball-Reference. The NHL semifinals and conference finals, the NBA's 1964 and 1966–70 division finals, the AFL title games of 1967–70, the other MLS conference finals and the most recent seasons rest on this study's own list, compiled from season results. Earlier playoff rounds and playoff appearances are not counted. The equal-odds chance for points deals each season's places at random among a league's teams, ignoring that two teams in the same conference cannot both reach the final.
- **Champion lists** were checked against published lists for the NHL (NHL.com), the NFL (ESPN) and the NBA (Wikipedia), and for baseball's 2025 and 2026 results; the earlier World Series list rests on the research

team's sources and this study's independent list agreeing for every market.

- **Newer leagues** (section 6) were checked against the WNBA's own champions list, ESPN's NWSL list, U.S. Soccer's Open Cup list and MLS's own recaps; one widely republished MLS Cup list credits the 2021 title to Portland, but New York City FC won it. The 2026 NWSL title rests on the league's own report of the November 21 final.
- **Population by year** interpolates between census counts before 2000 and does not reallocate counties created later (Broomfield, Colorado, and a few Virginia cities); the effect is small.
- **States** (section 8) are assigned by where each team played its home games, from team and stadium histories this study did not check against one published list. The Washington Spirit, which has split home games between the District and Leesburg, Virginia, since 2021, counts for the District; the Nets count for New Jersey from 1977–78 through 2011–12.
- **Teams** (section 9) get one line per city, so a franchise that moved starts a new line in its new city, and the old line keeps the titles won there. FC Kansas City counts with the Kansas City Current by Patrick's ruling; the NWSL does not yet list them as one franchise.
- **Edge cases.** The Syracuse Nationals (1961–63) count as their own market before becoming the Philadelphia 76ers, and the Warriors count for Philadelphia before their move to San Francisco in 1962. The Athletics count in the Bay Area through 2024 and Sacramento from 2025; the Packers are a Green Bay franchise despite their Milwaukee home games through 1994; temporary moves (the Saints in 2005, the Raptors in 2020–21) stay with the home market.

14 · METHOD

How the numbers were built

Every champion from each league's modern era through 2026 and every franchise's home market by year were listed from scratch and compared with the research team's totals, which they match for every market through 2025 when the NBA is counted from 1968, as the research team did (titles, team-seasons and chances); one franchise count, New Orleans, is corrected from 2 to 3. A "chance" is one franchise in one championship year in which a title was awarded. That answers the objection Patrick raised to counting franchises: two seasons of the Kansas City Scouts are not equal to 59 seasons of the Chiefs, and here they count as 2 chances against 59 (baseball is dated by World Series year, the NFL by Super Bowl year, and the NBA and NHL by the year the season ends).

Expected titles sum one divided by the number of teams in the league that year. The chance of a record under equal odds is computed exactly from each market's own team-seasons, and the 90% intervals are exact intervals on the title count, divided by expected titles. The strict bar divides the usual 5% cutoff by the 44 U.S. markets tested. Per-resident figures use each metro's average population over 1958–2026, summing Census county counts within today's (2023) metropolitan statistical areas; the Bay Area combines the San Francisco and San Jose metros. The finishes count (section 7) scores 4 points for a title, 3 for the runner-up and 2 for each losing semifinalist, following Patrick's ruling on ties for third in his Missouri high school project; expected points add each season's points awarded divided by the number of teams, and the chance of a record under equal odds is computed exactly by dealing each season's places at random among that league's teams. The state count (section 8) and the franchise count (section 9) repeat both counts with states, or each team's seasons in each city, in place of markets; per-resident figures use Census state totals, interpolated between census years before 2000.

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DISCLOSURES

Disclosures and citation

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Question from Patrick Ishmael, a Kansas City sports fan.

ABOUT THE PROMPTER

Patrick Ishmael is the founder of the Ishmael Policy Institute and Prompt Inquiry's Founding Prompter and Editor. He has spent most of his career in and around Missouri public policy. He worked on political campaigns, and from May 2011 to January 2024 he worked at the Show-Me Institute, a Missouri public policy organization, where he wrote on state and local government and testified before Missouri legislative committees. Today he is a financial advisor and a Missouri attorney. He holds honors degrees in finance and political science from Saint Louis University and a law degree from Saint Louis University School of Law. Several of the questions he revisits here began as his own student work there.

This bio is the prompter's disclosure. It is the same on every study he leads.

Legacy study. First published as a Special Project on The Ishmael Record (patrickishmael.com), November 22, 2026, before this charter was adopted. It is republished as it was made, except that its notes on who did the work now match this site's byline. Against the current publishing standard it lacks the opening prompt and the prompter's starting view, because those requirements did not exist when it was made. They have not been reconstructed after the fact. Patrick Ishmael verified it for republication. Its versioning begins at 1.0, and any later change is recorded in the change log.

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