

One quarter of Canadians say they'll watch Sunday's Grey Cup as popularity for CFL edges NFL approval

Canadian Football League maintains loyal older audience, but is now struggling to engage younger fans

November 28, 2014 –

A new survey by the Angus Reid Institute (ARI) reveals one-in-four Canadians say they'll be watching the Grey Cup on Sunday, but a significant difference in generational preferences may be casting clouds over the long term future of the Canadian Football League (CFL).

One-quarter of Canadians (24%) say they're committed to watching the game, while one-third (36%) are still making up their mind, and two-in-five (40%) say they won't.

The ARI online survey of Canadian adults measured opinion on the Grey Cup and CFL, and its significance to Canadian culture and identity.

Key Findings:

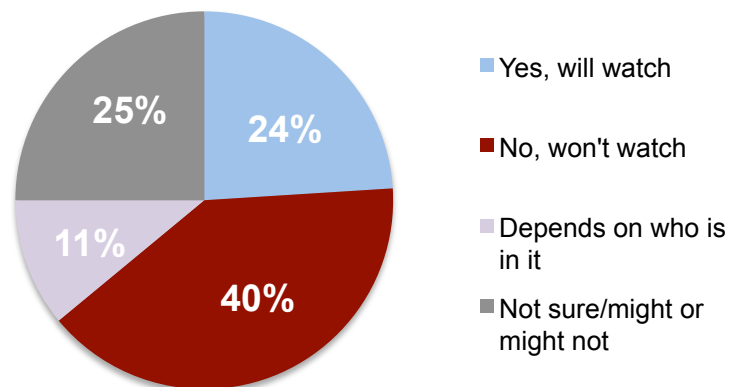
CFL and Canadian Culture:

Just over half of Canadians surveyed (53%) told ARI that the Grey Cup is an important aspect of Canadian culture and identity. One-fifth (21%) says it isn't a big factor, while the rest, (26%) say it holds no cultural impact at all.

CFL's Saskatchewan Strength

The CFL is known for its strong fan base on the Canadian prairies, and ARI's survey results bear this out. When Saskatchewan respondents were asked how closely they follow professional sports, they chose the CFL (65%) more than two-to-one over the NHL (29%). In every other province, the NHL commands the top professional sport spectatorship of Canadians (see tables at the end of this release).

Will you watch the Grey Cup this year?



METHODOLOGY:

Online surveys among 1504 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists from November 18-21, 2014. A probability sample of this size carries a margin of error of +/- 2.5%, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

This survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI.

Detailed charts, tables and regional results are found at the end of this release.

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CFL versus NFL:

Canadians are patriotic about their pigskin preferences, with two-in-five (44%) who watch both the US and Canadian leagues saying they prefer the CFL over the NFL (29%) nationally. British Columbians prefer the Canadian league over its US counterpart two-to-one. That ratio climbs to four-to-one in Alberta and Manitoba, and to five-to-one in Saskatchewan. Central and Eastern Canadians are more tepid. Ontarians prefer the NFL slightly more than the CFL. Quebecers prefer the CFL slightly more than the NFL. And in Atlantic Canada, the tables turn altogether, with respondents on the east coast choosing the NFL two-to-one over the CFL.

Grey Cup versus Super Bowl:

Affection for and loyalty to the CFL nationally does not guarantee a touchdown when it comes to the big games, with US football's major matchup still edging the Canadian championship.

When asked if they would chose the Super Bowl or the Grey Cup if they could only watch one of the games this season, Canadians were almost evenly split, but gave the edge to the Super Bowl (52% and 48% respectively).

The troubling Age Factor:

Age demographics reveal a significant story: two-thirds (65%) of those aged 18-to-34 chose the Super Bowl, while about as many (61%) aged 55+ chose the Grey Cup. This represents an inverse preference demonstrating an aging fan base for the CFL. Further, those aged 18-to-34 are twice as likely to not watch the Grey Cup as those older than this.

Another telling, and troubling story for the CFL comes from [an Angus Reid Institute poll](#) released earlier this month, showing more than one-third (37%) of 18-to-34 years olds say they are diehard NHL fans. In turn, this survey shows two-in-five (40%) Canadians in this age bracket saying they follow the NHL closely, compared to just 16 per cent the same age who follow the CFL closely. This represents a following for the NHL over the CFL more than two-to-one among a crucial demographic for sports advertisers and teams.

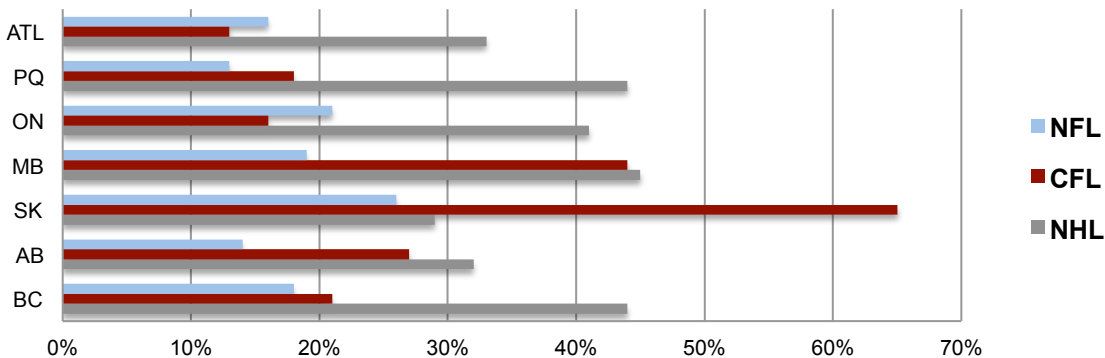
The CFL's Popularity in context:

It is the action on the ice rink that captures the attention of people in this country two-to-one over the action on the gridiron. Forty per cent say they follow the NHL closely, compared to 21 per cent who choose the CFL. This puts Canadian football at roughly the same level of popularity as Major League Baseball (18%) and the National Football League (17%). The CFL appears to be nearly three times as popular in this country as professional basketball (NBA: 8%) and soccer (MLS: 7%).

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How closely Canadians follow professional sports leagues



Spicing up the CFL?

There is encouragement to be taken from how Canadians who follow the CFL perceive the direction the league is taking. The ARI survey asked those respondents who are watching CFL games whether they felt the league was more or less exciting than it was five years ago. Three times as many (35%) said the league is *more* exciting than those who said it is more boring (11%). Most (44%) said the level excitement in the league is the same as what it was in 2009.

ARI also asked them whether combining the East and West Divisions into one large division would add excitement. One-quarter (26%) say such a move would spice things up, while two-in-five (37%) say it would actually lessen the excitement factor. The same number (37%) say this hypothetical change would make no difference one way or the other.

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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[Summary of Closely] How closely do you follow each of these professional sports leagues?

	Total (1504)	Region						
		BC (200)	AB (149)	SK (100)	MB (100)	ON (502)	PQ (353)	ATL (100)
NHL – National Hockey League	40%	44%	32%	29%	45%	41%	44%	33%
CFL – Canadian Football League	21%	21%	27%	65%	44%	16%	18%	13%
NFL – National Football League	17%	18%	14%	26%	19%	21%	13%	16%
MLB – Major League Baseball	18%	13%	13%	18%	16%	26%	8%	26%
NBA – National Basketball Association	8%	5%	2%	4%	8%	13%	5%	11%
MLS – Major League Soccer	7%	13%	3%	4%	3%	9%	7%	1%

**Regional sample sizes are unweighted numbers*

[Summary of Closely] How closely do you follow each of these professional sports leagues?

	Total (1504)	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 - 34	35 - 54	55+
NHL – National Hockey League	40%	52%	29%	41%	43%	37%
CFL – Canadian Football League	21%	31%	12%	16%	21%	25%
NFL – National Football League	17%	26%	9%	16%	19%	17%
MLB – Major League Baseball	18%	26%	10%	15%	19%	20%
NBA – National Basketball Association	8%	14%	3%	13%	8%	5%
MLS – Major League Soccer	7%	11%	4%	9%	8%	5%

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[Summary of Not Closely] How closely do you follow each of these professional sports leagues?

	Total (1504)	Region						
		BC (200)	AB (149)	SK (100)	MB (100)	ON (502)	PQ (353)	ATL (100)
NHL – National Hockey League	60%	56%	68%	71%	55%	59%	56%	67%
CFL – Canadian Football League	79%	79%	73%	35%	56%	84%	82%	87%
NFL – National Football League	83%	82%	86%	74%	81%	79%	87%	84%
MLB – Major League Baseball	82%	87%	87%	82%	84%	74%	92%	74%
NBA – National Basketball Association	92%	95%	98%	96%	92%	87%	95%	89%
MLS – Major League Soccer	93%	87%	97%	96%	97%	91%	93%	99%

**Regional sample sizes are unweighted numbers*

[Summary of Not Closely] How closely do you follow each of these professional sports leagues?

	Total (1504)	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 - 34	35 - 54	55+
NHL – National Hockey League	60%	48%	71%	59%	57%	63%
CFL – Canadian Football League	79%	69%	88%	84%	79%	75%
NFL – National Football League	83%	74%	91%	84%	81%	83%
MLB – Major League Baseball	82%	74%	90%	85%	81%	80%
NBA – National Basketball Association	92%	86%	97%	87%	92%	95%
MLS – Major League Soccer	93%	89%	96%	91%	92%	95%

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Are you planning to watch the Grey Cup this year on November 30th?								
	Total (1504)	Region						
		BC (200)	AB (149)	SK (100)	MB (100)	ON (502)	PQ (353)	ATL (100)
Yes, will watch	24%	23%	37%	53%	51%	21%	20%	17%
No, won't watch	40%	36%	32%	17%	20%	43%	41%	54%
Depends on who is in it	11%	17%	11%	12%	5%	9%	15%	5%
Not sure/ Might or might not	25%	24%	21%	18%	24%	27%	24%	24%

**Regional sample sizes are unweighted numbers*

Are you planning to watch the Grey Cup this year on November 30th?						
	Total (1504)	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 - 34	35 - 54	55+
Yes, will watch	24%	33%	16%	19%	23%	31%
No, won't watch	40%	29%	50%	46%	39%	35%
Depends on who is in it	11%	12%	10%	12%	13%	8%
Not sure/ Might or might not	25%	26%	23%	23%	24%	26%

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Thinking now about the Grey Cup - which statement best describes your view?								
	Total (1504)	Region						
		BC (200)	AB (149)	SK (100)	MB (100)	ON (502)	PQ (353)	ATL (100)
The Grey Cup defines Canadian culture and identity	6%	3%	7%	7%	10%	6%	7%	3%
The Grey Cup is an important part of Canadian culture and identity	47%	52%	56%	59%	58%	48%	38%	36%
The Grey Cup isn't really a big factor in Canadian culture and identity	21%	23%	17%	16%	18%	22%	19%	34%
The Grey Cup is just a game and has nothing to do with Canadian culture and identity	26%	23%	20%	17%	14%	23%	37%	26%

**Regional sample sizes are unweighted numbers*

Thinking now about the Grey Cup - which statement best describes your view?						
	Total (1504)	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 - 34	35 - 54	55+
The Grey Cup defines Canadian culture and identity	6%	8%	4%	6%	8%	4%
The Grey Cup is an important part of Canadian culture and identity	47%	47%	47%	39%	48%	52%
The Grey Cup isn't really a big factor in Canadian culture and identity	21%	20%	23%	31%	20%	15%
The Grey Cup is just a game and has nothing to do with Canadian culture and identity	26%	25%	26%	24%	25%	29%

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Thinking about the Canadian Football League over time would you say:								
	Total (764)	Region						
		BC (102)	AB (97)	SK (81)	MB (71)	ON (230)	PQ (149)	ATL (34)
The CFL is a lot more exciting today than it was five years ago	16%	13%	12%	26%	22%	16%	14%	31%
The CFL is a little more exciting than it was five years ago	29%	32%	36%	36%	30%	22%	30%	35%
The CFL is exactly the same as it was five years ago	44%	41%	44%	26%	31%	50%	49%	25%
The CFL is a little more boring than it was five years ago	8%	8%	7%	8%	12%	8%	6%	9%
The CFL is a lot more boring than it was five years ago	3%	6%	1%	4%	5%	4%	1%	-

**Regional sample sizes are unweighted numbers*

Thinking about the Canadian Football League over time would you say:						
	Total (764)	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 - 34	35 - 54	55+
The CFL is a lot more exciting today than it was five years ago	16%	17%	15%	16%	18%	15%
The CFL is a little more exciting than it was five years ago	29%	29%	29%	31%	26%	30%
The CFL is exactly the same as it was five years ago	44%	43%	46%	40%	46%	45%
The CFL is a little more boring than it was five years ago	8%	8%	6%	8%	7%	8%
The CFL is a lot more boring than it was five years ago	3%	2%	4%	6%	3%	2%

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There are nine teams in the Canadian Football League today. The teams are currently divided into the East and West Divisions. Which statement best describes your view?

	Total (764)	Region						
		BC (102)	AB (97)	SK (81)	MB (71)	ON (230)	PQ (149)	ATL (34)
It would be more exciting to combine the teams into one big division	26%	33%	29%	27%	37%	21%	24%	23%
It would be less exciting to combine the teams into one big division	37%	29%	43%	51%	34%	35%	36%	52%
It would make no difference one way or the other	37%	38%	29%	22%	29%	44%	40%	25%

**Regional sample sizes are unweighted numbers*

There are nine teams in the Canadian Football League today. The teams are currently divided into the East and West Divisions. Which statement best describes your view?

	Total (764)	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 - 34	35 - 54	55+
It would be more exciting to combine the teams into one big division	26%	29%	20%	33%	28%	18%
It would be less exciting to combine the teams into one big division	37%	38%	36%	33%	36%	41%
It would make no difference one way or the other	37%	33%	44%	34%	35%	41%

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Thinking about football, which of these two professional leagues do you prefer?								
	Total (845)	Region						
		BC (108)	AB (101)	SK (83)	MB (73)	ON (278)	PQ (159)	ATL (43)
CFL – Canadian Football League	44%	50%	62%	77%	67%	32%	43%	24%
NFL – National Football League	29%	25%	16%	13%	15%	35%	32%	42%
No preference/Both equally	27%	25%	21%	10%	18%	32%	25%	34%

**Regional sample sizes are unweighted numbers*

Thinking about football, which of these two professional leagues do you prefer?						
	Total (845)	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 - 34	35 - 54	55+
CFL – Canadian Football League	44%	45%	43%	33%	42%	54%
NFL – National Football League	29%	30%	29%	39%	34%	18%
No preference/Both equally	27%	26%	28%	28%	24%	28%

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If you could watch just one game, would it be the Super Bowl or the Grey Cup?								
	Total (845)	Region						
		BC (108)	AB (101)	SK (83)	MB (73)	ON (278)	PQ (159)	ATL (43)
Grey Cup	48%	54%	67%	77%	77%	44%	35%	46%
Super Bowl	52%	46%	33%	23%	23%	56%	65%	54%

**Regional sample sizes are unweighted numbers*

If you could watch just one game, would it be the Super Bowl or the Grey Cup?						
	Total (845)	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 - 34	35 - 54	55+
Grey Cup	48%	49%	47%	35%	46%	61%
Super Bowl	52%	51%	53%	65%	54%	39%

CFL Questionnaire

F1. Now, on a lighter note, we have a few final questions about professional sports.

How closely do you follow each of these professional sports leagues?

[Randomize - Rows]

NHL – National **Hockey** League
 CFL – Canadian **Football** League
 NFL – National **Football** League
 MLB – Major League **Baseball**
 NBA – National **Basketball** Association
 MLS – Major League **Soccer**

Very closely – I watch as many games as I can
 Closely - I try to watch my favourites and stay up-to-date
 Not very closely – I don't watch much, maybe a playoff game
 I don't really follow this sport at all

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F2. Thinking now about the CFL - are you planning to watch the Grey Cup this year on November 30th from Vancouver?

- Yes, will watch
- No, won't watch
- Depends on who is in it
- Not sure/Might or might now

F3. Which statement best describes your view?

- The Grey Cup defines Canadian culture and identity
- The Grey Cup is an important part of Canadian culture and identity
- The Grey Cup isn't really a big factor in Canadian culture and identity
- The Grey Cup is just a game and has nothing to do with Canadian culture and identity

[Exclude those who say they don't follow CFL at all – Skip to F6]

F4. Thinking about the Canadian Football League over time would you say :

- The CFL is a lot more exciting today than it was five years ago
- The CFL is a little more exciting than it was five years ago
- The CFL is exactly the same as it was five years ago
- The CFL is a little more boring than it was five years ago
- The CFL is a lot more boring than it was five years ago

F5. There are nine teams in the Canadian Football League today. The teams are currently divided into the East and West Divisions. Thinking about the size of the league and the number of teams, which statement best describes your view?

- It would be more exciting to combine the teams into one big division
- It would be less exciting to combine the teams into one big division
- It would make no difference one way or the other

[Exclude those who say they don't watch CFL AND NFL]

F6. Thinking about football, which of these two professional leagues do you prefer?

- CFL –the Canadian Football League
- NFL – The National football League
- No preference/Both equally

F7. If you could watch just one game, would it be the Super Bowl or the Grey Cup?

- Grey Cup
- Super Bowl

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