

Edmonton football team's decision to change name scores with most Canadians, but not with most CFL fans

More than half of CFL fans and Alberta residents say it was the wrong choice to end use of 'Eskimos'

August 7, 2020 – After years of [debate](#) over the use of Indigenous names and imagery in sports, and amid threats from sponsors of withdrawn support, the Edmonton Canadian Football franchise will change its name.

Across the country, teams in [varsity](#), [minor](#), and [professional leagues](#) have been doing the same in recent years. The latest study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds a majority of Canadians supportive of the decision.

But while 57 per cent of Canadians say dropping the name was the right choice, the same cannot be said for CFL fans. More than half of those who follow the league (55%) say the name should have stayed.

The issue generates division across a number of demographics. Men under 35 largely are onside with the franchise's decision, while men 55 and over lean the other way. University-educated Canadians are overwhelmingly supportive compared to those with high school accreditation, who are divided evenly.

Perhaps most notably, Albertans are least likely in the country to say the right call was made; six-in-ten (58%) say the team called the wrong play on this matter.

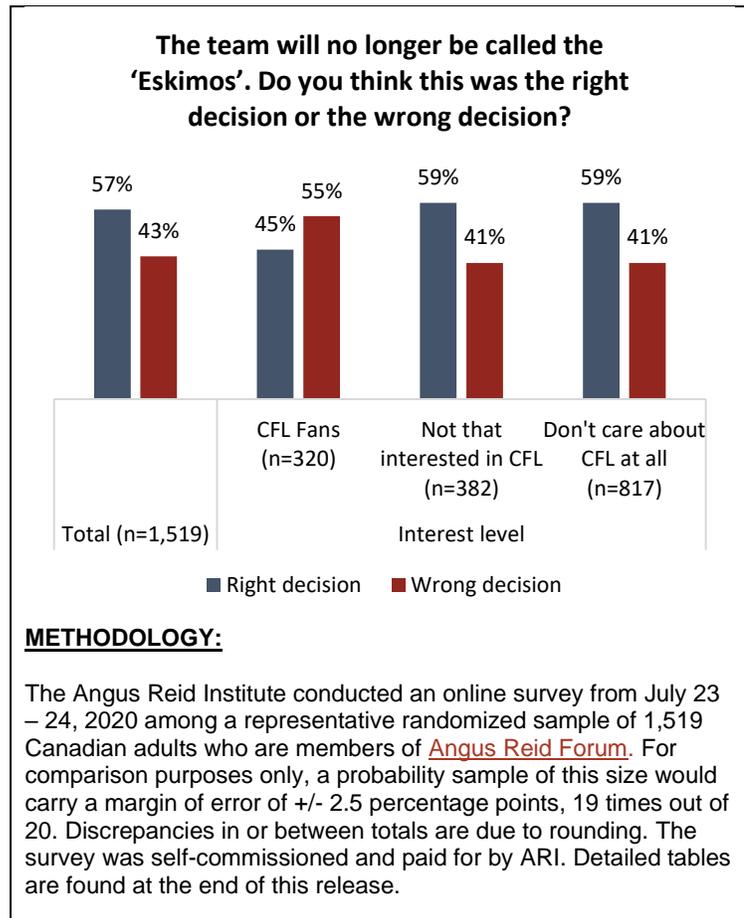
About ARI

*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 foundation 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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Fans and non-fans disagree over decision to change the name

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The CFL's broader demographic challenges

What should the new name be?

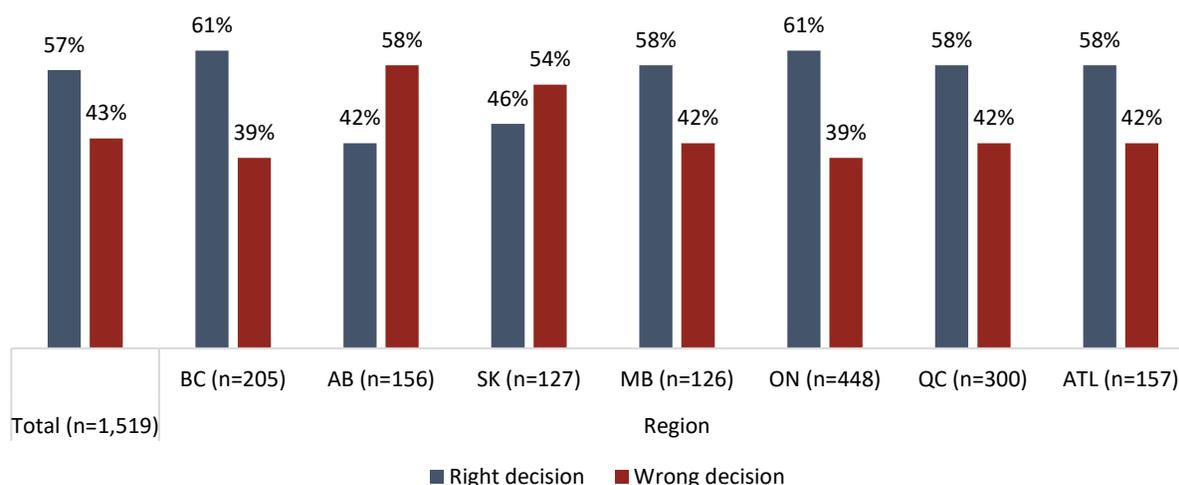
Fans and non-fans disagree over decision to change the name

The Edmonton Football Team has won 14 Grey Cups in its storied history. It's next championship, however, will be under a different name.

In July, the team announced that it would no longer call itself the "Eskimos", putting an end to a 50-year run. The team has not announced a replacement and will simply be called the Edmonton Football Team in the interim. This change was announced just days after the NFL's Washington team dropped "Redskins" as its name.

Most Canadians (57%) say the Edmonton Football Team's name change was ultimately the right call. Another two-in-five (43%), however, disagree. This ratio holds across most of the country, but flips in Alberta and Saskatchewan, where a majority of residents would have preferred the old name remain:

Edmonton's Canadian Football League franchise has decided to change its name. The team will no longer be called the 'Eskimos'. Do you think this was the right decision or the wrong decision?

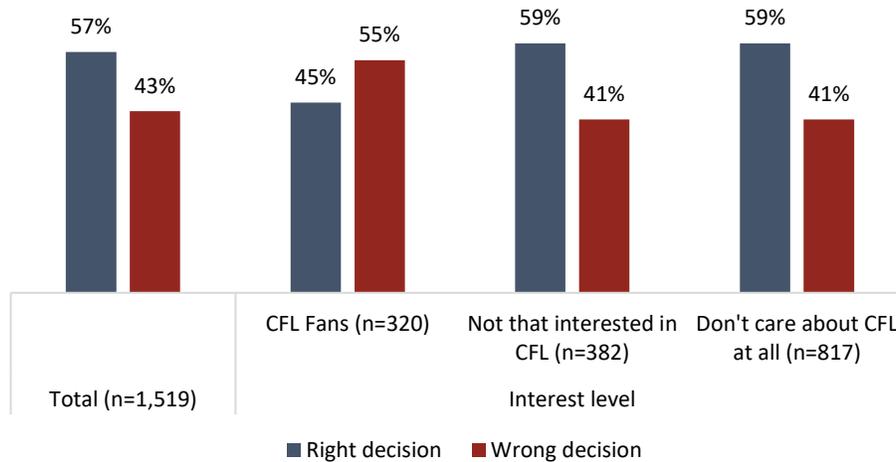


Attachment to the CFL plays a role in opinions about the name change. Those who follow the league closely ([see detailed tables for breakdown of fandom](#)) are more likely to say the name change was a bad choice than a good one, while those with little to no interest in the CFL are much more likely to agree with it:

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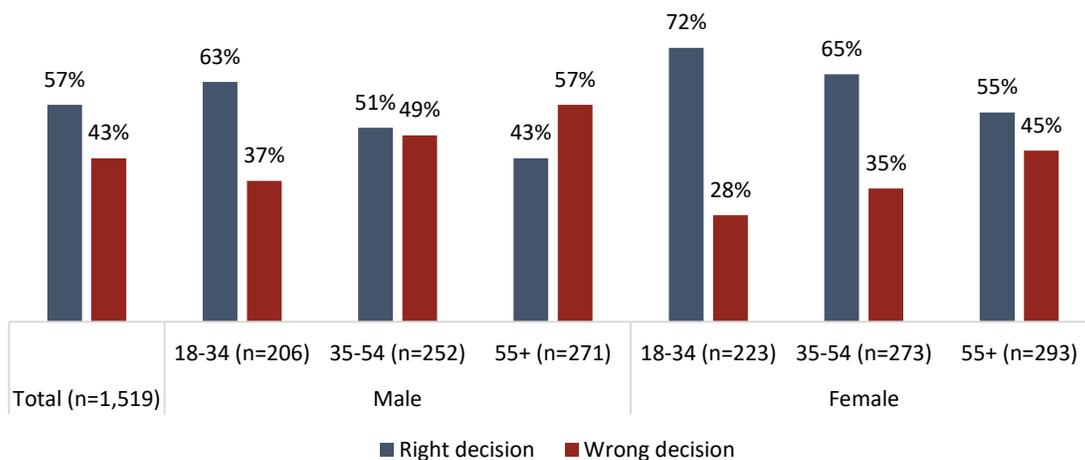
The team will no longer be called the 'Eskimos'. Do you think this was the right decision or the wrong decision?



Age and Gender

Younger Canadians, both men and women alike, are more likely to feel this was the right course of action. Young women are most likely to feel this way (72%), while men 55 years of age and older disagree at the highest levels (57%):

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Education and Politics

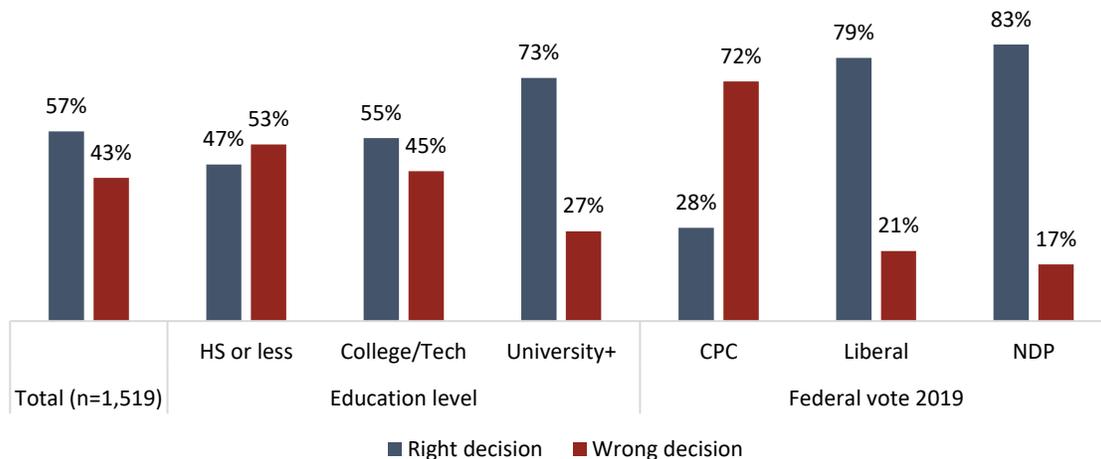
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There are also educational and ideological aspects to this discussion. Those with a university education say the name had to go at a level 26-points higher than those with a high school diploma or less. In addition, past Conservatives voters are the most adamant that the name should not have changed, while the decision is uncontroversial among past Liberals and New Democrats:

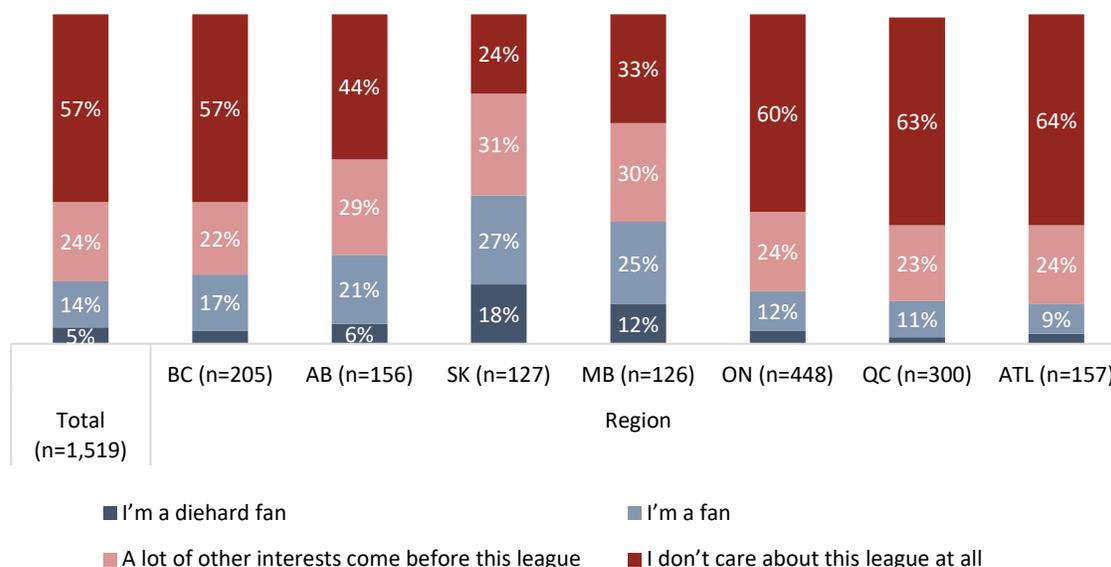
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The CFL's broader demographic challenges

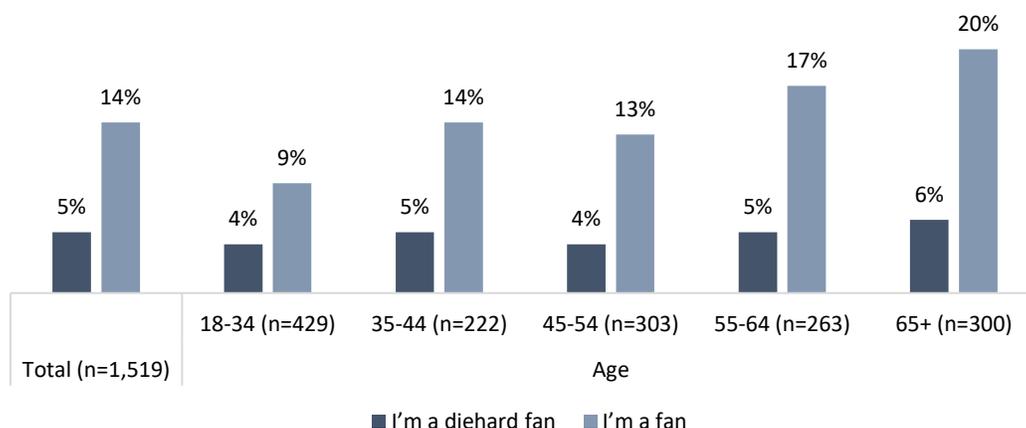
The fact that CFL fans are more opposed to the name change may speak to the league's demographics and the challenges they present going forward. The CFL's greatest support is found in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, which combine to represent less than seven per cent of Canada's population. In Ontario, Quebec and B.C., there are few die hard CFL fans to be found, and lower numbers of fans in general:

How closely do you follow the CFL?



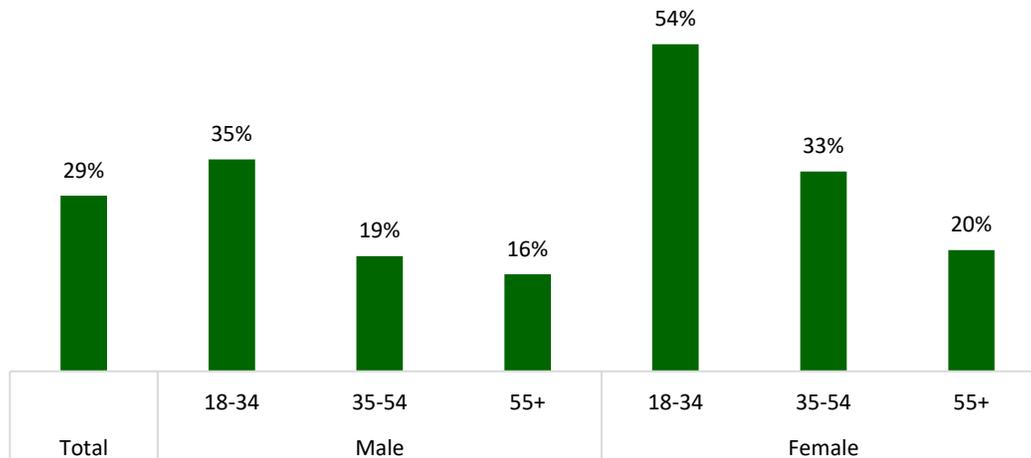
The CFL's fans are also older. Interest among those under 35 years of age is relatively low, while those of retirement age are most engaged. The league is currently attempting to salvage its 2020 season, with [\\$30 million](#) requested from the federal government, but these demographic trends suggest it will be dealing with longer term challenges as well:

How closely do you follow the CFL?



The press surrounding the name change, however, will likely be received positively by young people – the generation that the league will be trying to woo over the coming decade. Whether it will have any impact on willingness to watch the sport remains to be seen, but views of the term 'Eskimos' were considerably more negative among 18- to 34-year-olds when the Angus Reid Institute asked in 2019:

**Percentage who found the name or logo offensive in June 2019:
"Edmonton Eskimos"**

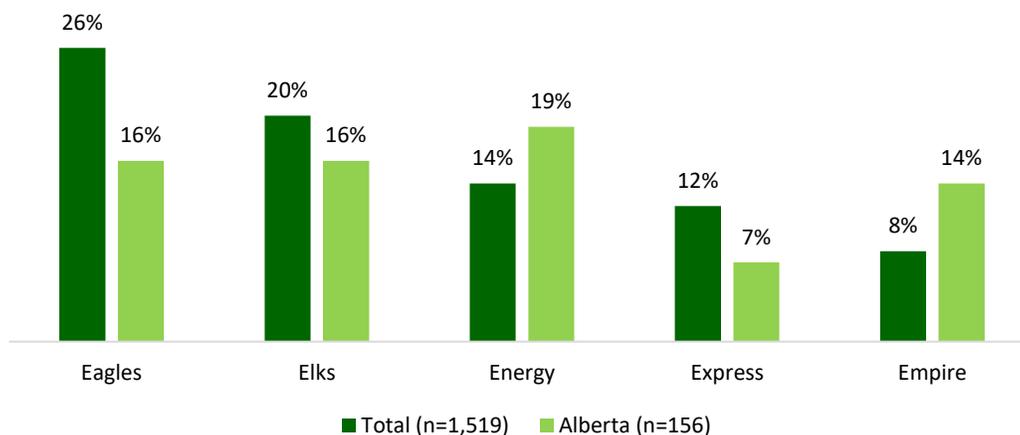


What should the new name be?

While the temporary name for the team – the Edmonton Football Team – will be in place while the franchise picks a new one, there is no clear favourite. Respondents were asked which option they prefer from a list of names that have been discussed recently.

The most popular option among the public is Eagles, while Elks also chosen by one-in-five. Albertans are divided about which name they prefer for the team. Four of the options presented are within five points of each other. The team has not released a timeline for a new name:

**There have been a number of names suggested to replace 'Eskimos'.
Which of the following do you like best?**



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For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

For detailed results by engagement with the CFL, [click here](#).

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