

Super-ior Bowl? Most Canadian football fans would choose Super Bowl over Grey Cup, but not everywhere

Interest in NFL steady, while interest in CFL drops compared to 2014 and 2018

February 9, 2023 – Millions of viewers will gather with friends and family to view one of the biggest spectacles of the year in sports this weekend – Super Bowl Sunday. The game is a largely unmatched commercial and sports extravaganza, but depending on where they are in Canada, some Canadian football fans would give it up to support their home league instead.

A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds that while three-in-five football fans in Canada (62%) would choose the Super Bowl over the Grey Cup if they could only watch one, two-in-five (38%) disagree, including a majority in Alberta and the Prairies.

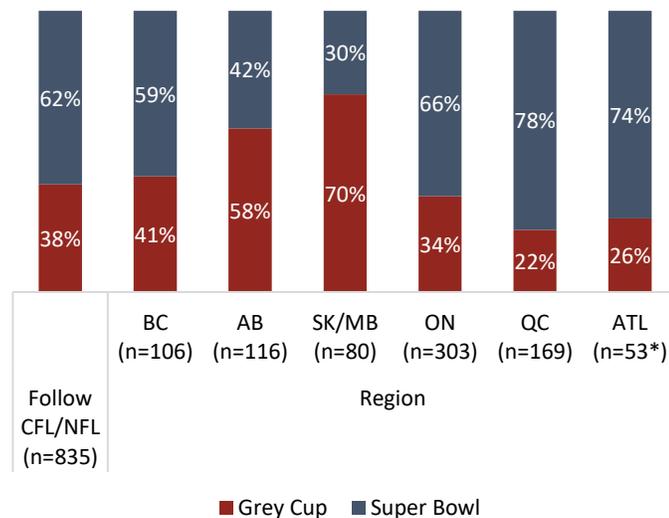
On a broader scale, each league has its strengths and weaknesses among the Canadian public. The aforementioned Prairie advantage is evident for the CFL, with close to twice as many Saskatchewan and Manitoba residents saying they follow that league closely (41%) than say this about the NFL (22%). That said, the American game has key strengths in Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada which will likely hearten NFL Canada executives and dismay CFL brass.

Age is also a factor. One-quarter of men aged 18 to 34 follow the NFL closely (26%) compared to just one-in-nine (11%) for the CFL. A similar ratio is evident for men 35 to 54 (34% NFL vs 19% CFL), while older men (55+) follow both leagues at an equal level, approximately three-in-ten.

More Key Findings:

- Men and women over the age of 54 are divided about which game they would prefer if they had to choose one. In fact, both lean slightly toward watching the Grey Cup rather than the Super Bowl. That said, three-quarters of men and women younger than this would choose the February American spectacle over November's Canadian tradition.

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



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from January 3 - 4, 2023 among a representative randomized sample of 1,515 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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- Among all football fans, 44 per cent say they prefer the NFL to the CFL, while 36 per cent offer the opposite view. Another one-in-five (19%) don't feel the need to choose a side, and say they like both equally
- Those who like both leagues equally are much more likely to say they would watch the Super Bowl than the Grey Cup (65% to 35%)

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.*

INDEX

- **The NFL vs CFL Debate**
- **A dip for the CFL?**
- **Regional and generational difference**
- **More prefer Super Bowl to Grey Cup**

The NFL vs CFL Debate

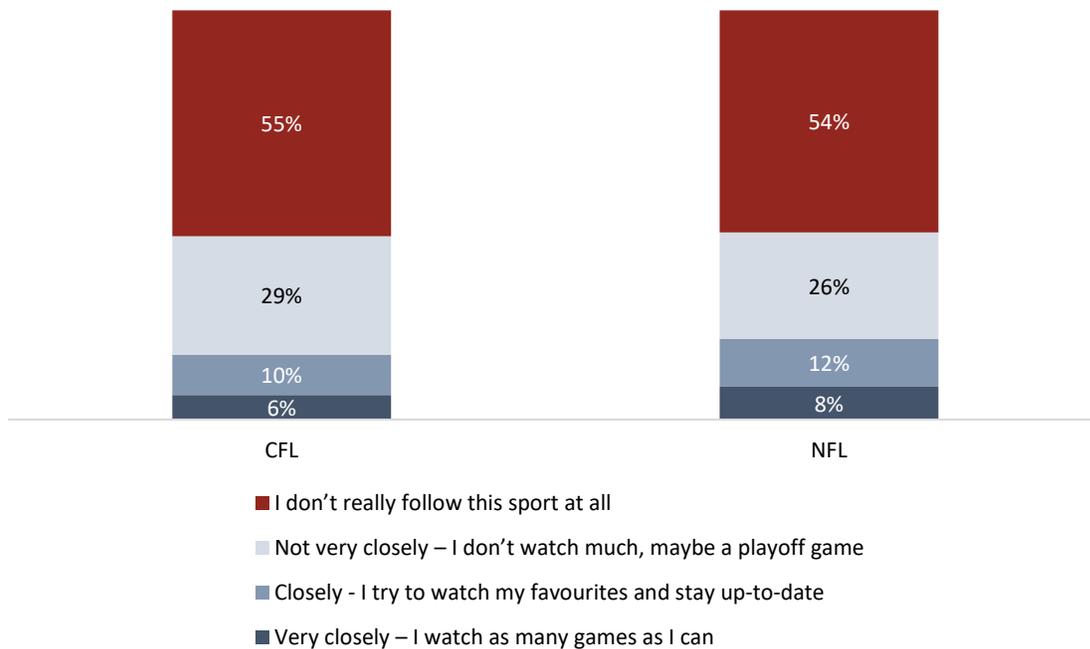
The NFL and CFL have competed for viewership for decades. This has led to innovations in the Canadian game, including feature games on Friday nights to avoid the Sunday head-to-head. The CFL has also more recently leaned into its Canadian-ness, choosing no longer to pursue American expansion – a [strange memory](#) for fans who watched in the 1990's. That said, [a multi-year television deal with ESPN](#) has helped to grow interest in the game south of the border.

Both leagues have built their own niche in Canada, with close to the same level of fandom among the public. Overall, 16 per cent of Canadians say they follow the CFL closely or very closely, while 20 per cent say this of the NFL. Another one-quarter or so consider themselves fringe fans of each:

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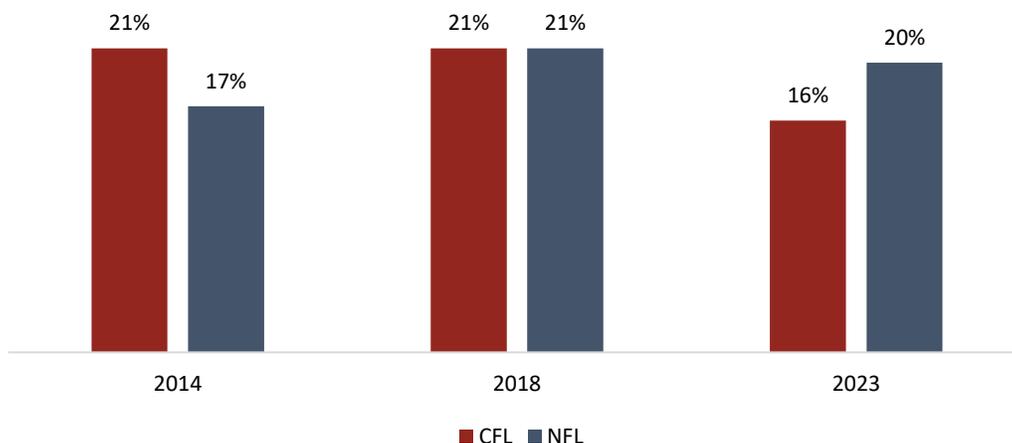
How closely do you follow each of these professional sports leagues?



A dip for the CFL?

The CFL has endured some challenges in recent years. Its 2020 season was cancelled after the league was denied funding from the federal government to allow it [to operate a mini season](#) in Winnipeg. Further, while the Grey Cup still drew [solid viewership](#) this year, the league's semi-final viewership has been [trending downward](#) for more than half a decade. The Angus Reid Institute notes a drop in the percentage of Canadians saying they follow the league closely compared to studies in both 2014 and 2018:

Percentage saying they follow each league closely:



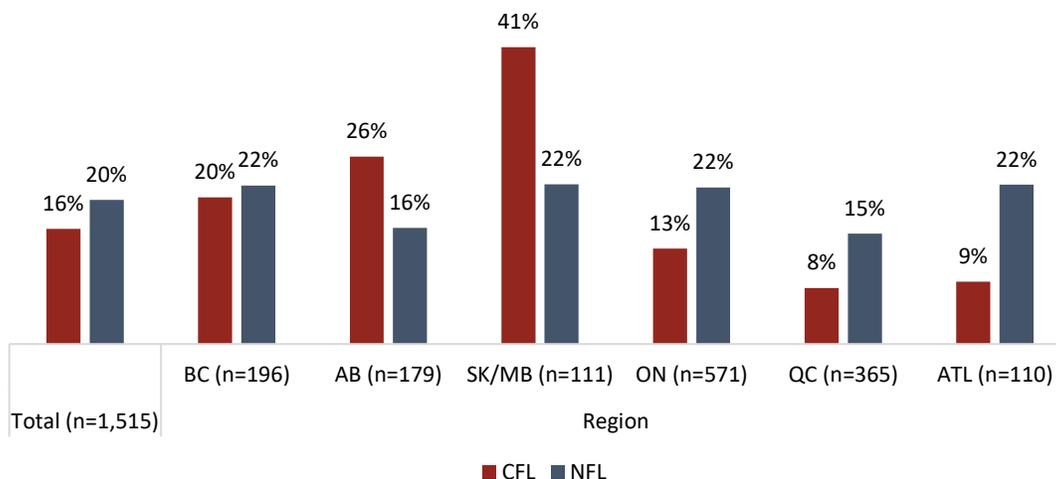
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Regional and generational differences

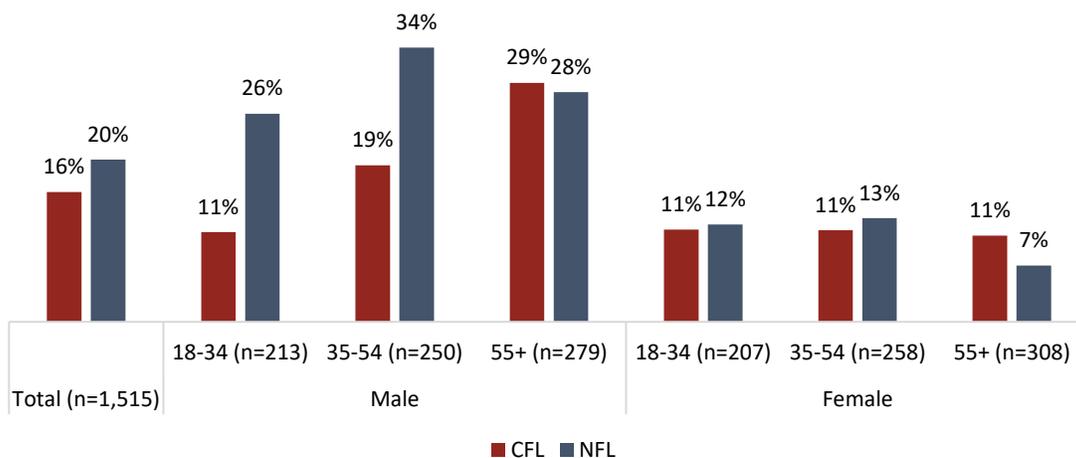
The real intrigue among viewership populations is within the demographic data. Each league appears to have its own strengths and weaknesses – with the exception of British Columbia, which is amenable to both at the same level. Albertans and those in Saskatchewan and Manitoba are far more likely to follow the CFL than the NFL, while fans further east are more likely to watch the American game:

Percentage of Canadians that follow each league very closely or closely:



The CFL draws much of its viewership from men over 54 years of age. This group is by far most likely to say they follow Canada’s league closely (29%), while also watching the NFL with a similar propensity (28%). Their younger peers offer much higher levels of viewership to the NFL, while women are close to equally likely to follow each – approximately one-in-ten across all age groups say this:

Percentage of Canadians that follow each league very closely or closely:



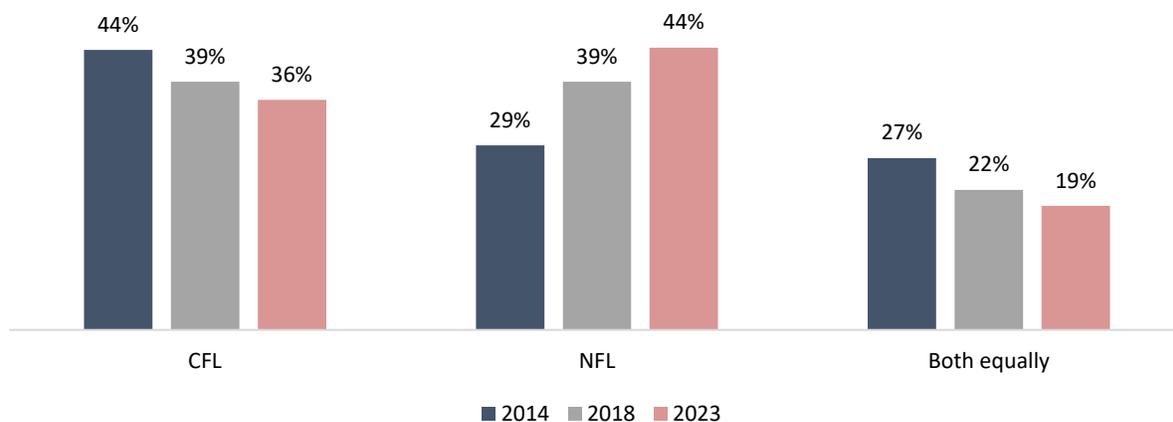
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Attention paid to each league is close to even, but which is *preferred*? Here the split between the two becomes more evident. Slightly more than two-in-five (44%) prefer the NFL, while slightly fewer than two-in-five prefer the CFL (36%). One-in-five football fans (19%) say they don't have a preference between the two.

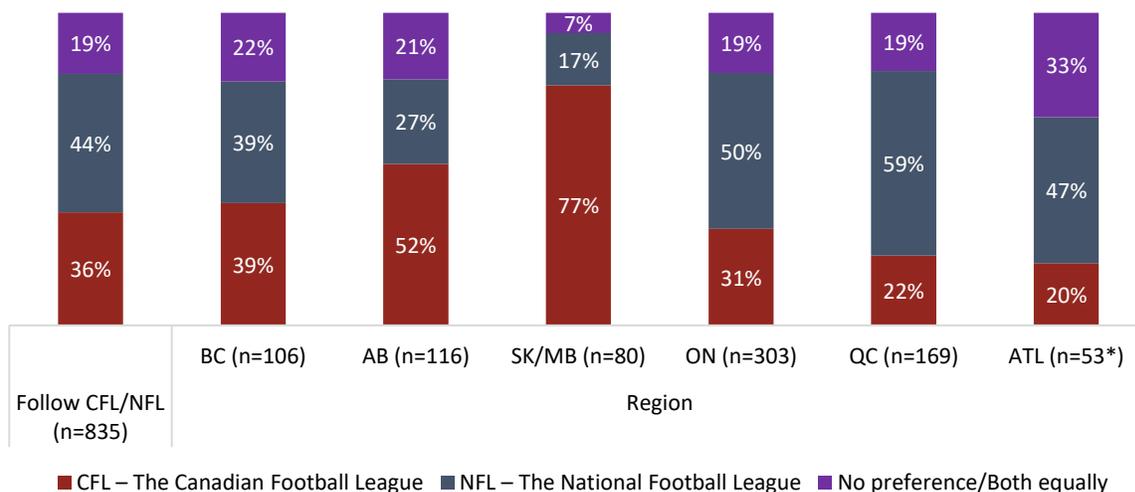
This is, however, perhaps another sign that the CFL is facing faltering momentum in the head-to-head against the NFL. The percentage of Canadians saying they enjoy both leagues equally has dropped eight points since 2014, with most moving in the direction of the NFL rather than the CFL:

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



The same geographical trends are noted on this question is in the previous:

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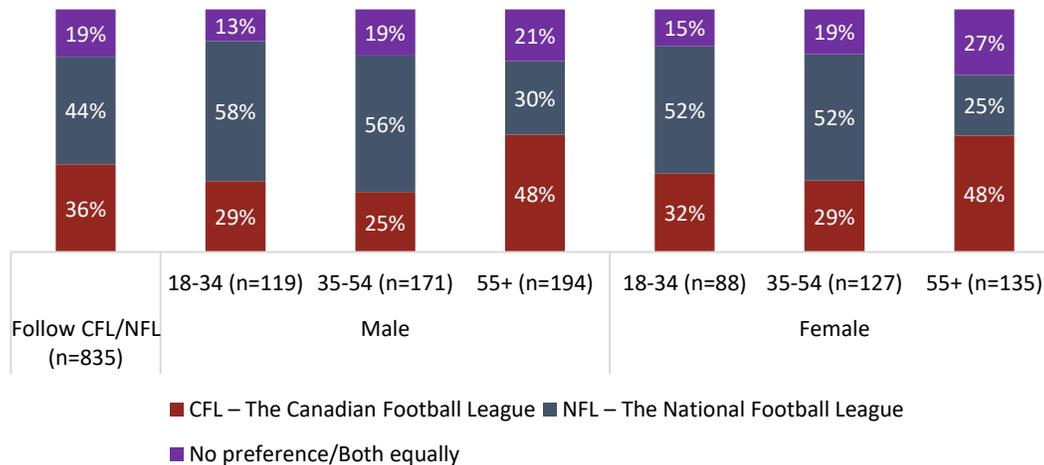
***smaller sample size, interpret with caution**

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Notably, while men over 54 years of age are equally as likely to follow both the CFL and NFL, they show a clear preference for the CFL. The challenge for the Canadian league in the coming decades will be competing for attention among their younger counterparts, who show an obvious preference for the NFL:

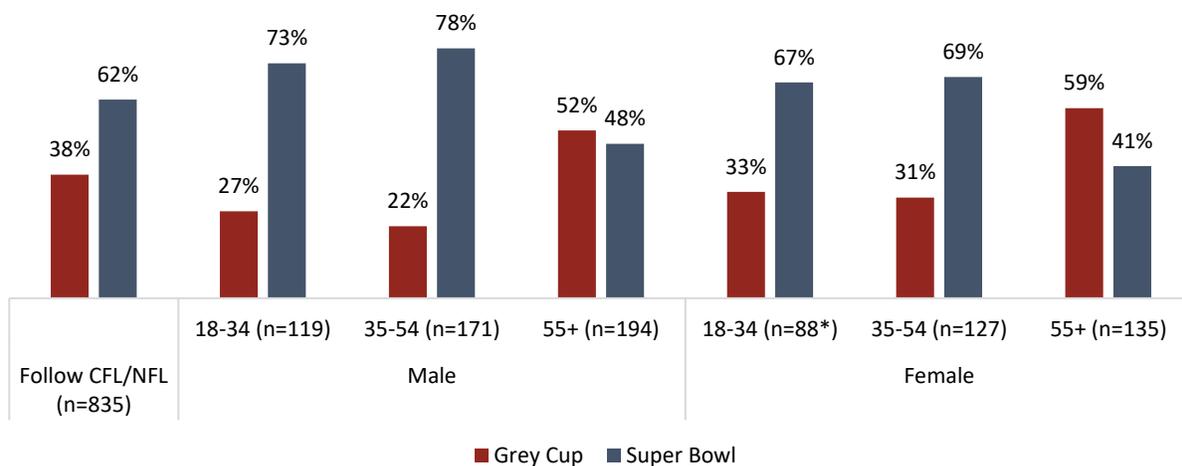
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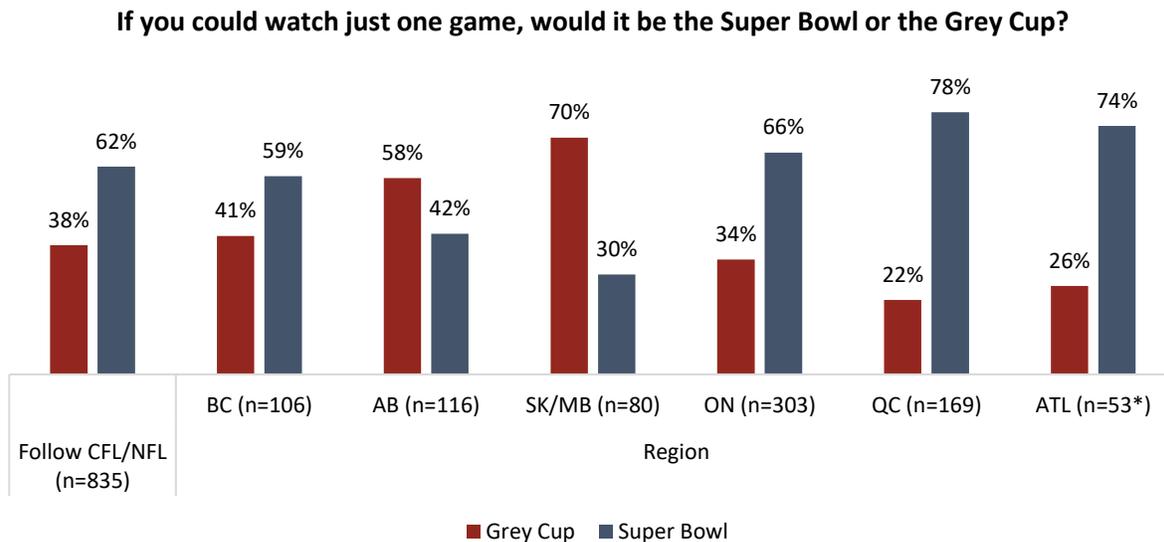
More prefer Super Bowl to Grey Cup

Canadians don't *have* to choose between the November tradition of the Grey Cup and the February spectacle that is the Super Bowl. If they were forced to however, most would opt for the American game. Whether it's the lure of Rihanna at the halftime show, the multi-million-dollar commercials, or the game itself, three-in-five (62%) say they would watch the Super Bowl, while two-in-five (38%) would watch the Grey Cup:

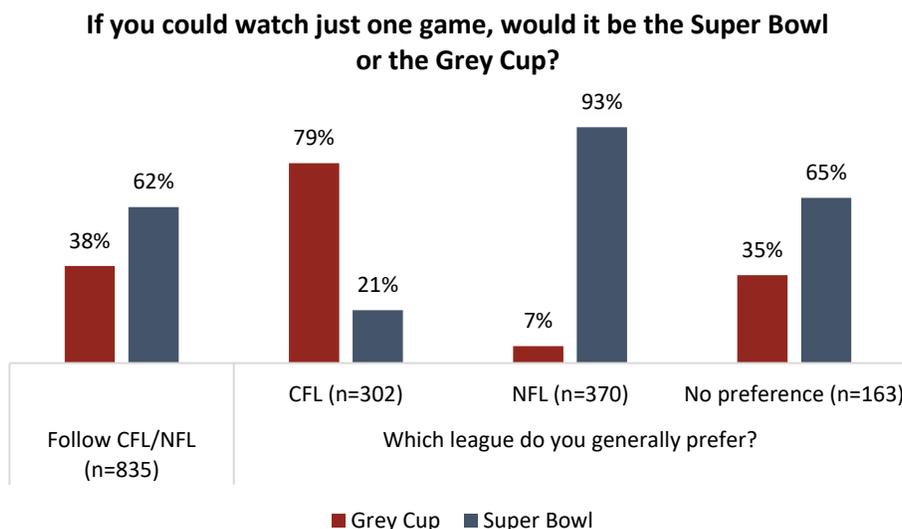
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British Columbians, divided evenly in attention paid to both leagues, and preference for each, lean toward the Super Bowl in this faceoff:



Notably, CFL fans are more likely to prefer the Super Bowl than NFL fans to prefer the Grey Cup. Further, two-thirds (65%) of those who don't place one league over the other would watch the Super Bowl if they had to pick:



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