

As American as Mom, Apple Pie and Football?

Football continues to trump baseball as America's Favorite Sport

NEW YORK, N.Y. – January 16, 2014 – In September and October, it's an argument that happens year after year in sports bars nationwide. But, it might be that it's one that comes to an easy conclusion, as football continues to dominate over baseball as America's Favorite Sport. Over one-third (35%) of adults who follow at least one sport say professional football is their favorite sport, while just 14% say baseball is their favorite.

The gap between the two sports has grown from last year, when 34% said pro football was their favorite while 16% said baseball was their favorite sport. This is the second largest gap between the two sports in the almost 30 years this survey has been conducted. The highest gap was in 2011, when it was 23 points as 36% said professional football was their favorite sport and 13% said baseball was their favorite.

These are some of the results of **The Harris Poll**[®] of 2,311 adults surveyed online between December 11 and 17, 2013 by [Harris Interactive](#).

Looking at how other sports fared, just over one in ten sports fans (11%) say college football is their favorite sport, while 7% say it is auto racing, 6% say men's professional basketball, 5% say hockey and 3% say it is men's college basketball. All other sports are favorites for 2% or less of sports fans.

There are some fluctuations in favorites over time. Since this question was first asked in 1985, professional football has gone up 11 points, from 24% of sports fans saying it was their favorite sport then to 35% saying so now. Baseball, on the other hand, has gone down 9 points, from 23% in 1985 to 14% today. Hockey has gone up 3 points while men's tennis, men's college basketball and horse racing have all gone down 3 points.

Some people favor a sport more than others

When it comes to the top sports, different groups are more likely to cite them as favorites. Those who live in rural areas (44%), people with a child under 18 (42%), and Easterners (39%) are more likely to say professional football is their favorite sport, while those with a post graduate degree (24%), Echo Boomers (31%), and Liberals (31%) are less likely to do so. When it comes to baseball, Hispanics (19%), those with a household income of \$100,000 or more (18%), and suburbanites (18%) are more likely to cite it as their favorite sport; African Americans (7%), those who live in rural areas (8%) and Echo Boomers (10%) are least likely to say baseball is their favorite.

Looking at college football, those in the South (17%), those with a post graduate degree (17%) and college graduates (16%) are more likely to say this is their favorite, while Easterners (4%), Hispanics (7%) and Democrats (8%) are least likely to say college football is their favorite sport. When it comes to auto racing, it is more likely to be the favorite for those living in rural areas (12%), those in households with an income under \$35,000 (12%), and those with a high school or less education (11%); auto racing is less likely to be the favorite for African Americans (1%), Hispanics (2%) and both post graduates and college graduates (3% each).

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TABLE 1
FAVORITE SPORT

"If you had to choose, which ONE of these sports would you say is your favorite?"

Base: All adults who follow one or more sport

	1985	1989	1992	1993	1994	1997	1998	2002	2003	2004
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Pro football	24	26	28	24	24	28	26	27	29	30
Baseball	23	19	21	18	17	17	18	14	13	15
College football	10	6	7	8	7	10	9	9	9	11
Auto racing	5	4	5	6	5	5	7	10	9	7
Men's pro basketball	6	7	8	12	11	13	13	11	10	7
Hockey	2	3	3	3	5	4	3	3	3	4
Men's college basketball	6	10	8	8	8	6	4	4	6	6
Men's golf	3	4	4	6	5	6	4	4	5	4
Men's soccer	3	2	2	1	3	3	4	3	3	3
Swimming	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Boxing	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2
Men's tennis	5	4	4	4	3	3	4	1	2	1
Bowling	3	5	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1
Horse racing	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	1
Track & field	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	1	3	1
Women's tennis	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	2	2
Women's college basketball	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	1	*	1
Women's soccer	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1
Women's pro basketball	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	*	1	1	*
Women's golf	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	*
Not sure	*	1	4	1	2	2	1	3	1	2
Pro football's lead over baseball	1	7	7	6	7	11	8	13	16	15

Note 1: NA = Not asked in that year. Men and women's sports were not always distinguished

Note 2: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Note 3: "*" indicates less than 0.5%

TABLE 1 (continued)

FAVORITE SPORT

"If you had to choose, which ONE of these sports would you say is your favorite?"

Base: All adults who follow one or more sport

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	CHANGE 1985-2012
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Pro football	33	29	30	31	35	31	36	34	35	11
Baseball	14	14	15	16	16	17	13	16	14	-9
College football	13	13	12	12	12	12	13	11	11	1
Auto racing	11	9	10	8	9	7	8	8	7	2
Men's pro basketball	4	7	4	6	5	6	5	7	6	0
Hockey	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	3
Men's college basketball	5	5	4	5	3	4	5	3	3	-3
Men's golf	4	4	4	4	4	2	2	2	2	-1
Men's soccer	2	2	2	3	2	4	1	2	2	-1
Swimming	NA	NA	NA	2	1	1	2	2	2	NA
Boxing	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	NA
Men's tennis	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	-3
Bowling	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	-2
Horse racing	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	-3
Track & field	*	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	-1
Women's tennis	1	1	*	1	1	1	1	1	1	NA
Women's college basketball	*	1	1	*	*	-	*	1	1	NA
Women's soccer	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	NA
Women's pro basketball	*	*	*	*	*	-	*	*	*	NA
Women's golf	*	1	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	NA
Not sure	2	3	2	1	2	3	1	2	3	3
Pro football's lead over baseball	19	15	15	15	19	14	23	18	21	20

Note 1: NA = Not asked in that year. Men and women's sports were not always distinguished

Note 2: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Note 3: "*" indicates less than 0.5%

TABLE 2

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIATIONS IN FAVORITE SPORTS

"If you had to choose, which ONE of these sports would you say is your favorite?"

Base: All adults who follow more than one sport

Sport	All Adults	Highest		Lowest	
	%		%		%
Pro football	35	Those who live in rural areas	44	Post grads	24
		Parents with child under 18	42	Echo Boomers	31
		Easterners	39	Liberals	31
Baseball	14	Hispanics	19	African Americans	7
		Those with household income \$100k+	18	Those who live in rural areas	8
		Suburbanites	18	Echo Boomers	10
College Football	11	Southerners	17	Easterners	4
		Post grads	17	Hispanics	7
		College graduates	16	Democrats	8
Auto Racing	7	Those living in rural areas	12	African Americans	1
		Those with household income less than \$35k	12	Hispanics	2
		Education of HS or less	11	Post grads/college graduates	3

Methodology

This **Harris Poll** was conducted online within the United States between December 11 to 17, 2013 among 2,311 adults (aged 18 and over), 1,550 of whom say they follow at least one sport. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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