



Emerson Poll: Americans are split on the Patriots and Brady, but football maintains sports dominance; Ben Carson emerges as a GOP darling; Sanders Slips as Biden is on the move

Boston (Sept. 9, 2015): After seven months of hearings, lawsuits and media spectacle surrounding the deflate-gate scandal, A national survey suggests Americans remain split on whether the Super Bowl Champion New England Patriots are cheaters; 48% believe they are cheaters and 52% say they're not. This mirrors the results of a similar survey conducted before the championship game last February, which found 47% identifying the Patriots as cheaters and 54% opposed to that label.

Although his four-game suspension was recently thrown out by the courts, Tom Brady has fared poorly in the court of public opinion. Forty-seven percent (47%) of those polled believe he should be suspended for his alleged role in the deflation of footballs prior to a playoff game, up from 25% who held that opinion in February.

"Deflate-gate" has been a favorite topic for national media coverage since the story broke in February. In the new poll, 54% of respondents had followed the story, which is lower than the 62% who followed the coverage of Adrian Peterson, the Minnesota Vikings running back accused of disciplining his 4-year son by hitting him with a switch.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, who has been ridiculed for his handling of deflate-gate, saw a slight uptick in the poll. Those who approve of Goodell were at 22%, compared to his 21% approval in an ECPS poll conducted last September. In the same time period, his disapproval ratings dropped from 45% to 41%.

As revealed in the September 2014 poll, football continues to be America's favorite sport, ranked first by 37% of respondents, followed by baseball (19%), basketball (9%), soccer (5%), and hockey (4%). More than one-fourth of those polled (27%) said their favorite sport was not among the five on the questionnaire. That's an increase of 10 points from the September 2014 findings.

On the political front, the GOP field is firming with 33% of Republican voters favoring Donald Trump for the nomination, up from 31% in late July, before the first debate. However, the big winner is Ben Carson, whose debate bounce propelled him from 5% to 20%. Jeb Bush has seen his numbers drop from 15% to 12% while Marco Rubio is at 8%. The rest of the top nine candidates are: Ted Cruz (6%), Scott Walker (5%), Mike Huckabee (4%), John Kasich (4%), and Carly Fiorina (3%). All other GOP candidates were at 1 percent or lower.

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In recent days news stories have bridged politics and sports with the Trump and Brady friendship as depicted by the picture of the Patriot quarterback with a Trump “Make America Great Again” baseball hat in his locker. Survey results reveal those who support the Patriots are more likely to be Trump supporters than those who see the Patriots as cheaters by 10 points, 38% to 28%. However, Prof. Spencer Kimball, the adviser to the polling society is cautious in making too much of this correlation, explaining the Northeast as a stronghold for both Trump and the Patriots. Kimball points out that Trump’s regional support is due to factors other than an implicit endorsement by the quarterback.

On the Democratic side, Hillary Clinton maintains her strong lead at 48%, but has dropped 6 points from the July 31 survey. Vice-President Joe Biden, flirting with a third presidential run, has enjoyed a 12-point bump in a month, while support for Senator Bernie Sanders has dropped 12 points in the same time frame. The two men are now tied at 21%.

GOP hopeful Ben Carson has seen a double-digit spike in his favorability rating, improving from 32% in July to 46% in the current survey. His unfavorable rating rose just 3 points, from 24% to 27%. Interestingly, Carson is the only candidate who has a net positive image among voters. Clinton’s image has remained consistent holding at 38% favorable to 56% unfavorable. Bush’s favorable rating has improved 10 points, from 25% to 35%, while his unfavorable rating remained at 51%. Trump continues to improve among those surveyed, jumping from 31% to 40% in favorability while his unfavorable numbers have dropped from 56% to 50%.

In head-to-head matchups for the general election, the lead Clinton enjoyed against her top GOP rivals has evaporated. She now trails Bush 47% to 40%, Carson 47% to 41%, and Trump 47% to 43%. Trump beats Sanders 45% to 38%. Mitt Romney, whose name has been floated in political circles for the past few weeks, holds a 47% to 42% lead in a hypothetical matchup with Clinton.

Most encouraging for Clinton is the fact that 29% of voters still expect her to win. Trump supporters are fast becoming believers, with 22% expecting the businessman to win. Only one in 10 (10%) said Bush would win, while 8% gave a nod to Biden and 8% to Carson.

President Obama’s approval dropped over the last 5 weeks from 46% to 41%, while his disapproval ticked up 1 point from 49% to 50%.

Caller ID

The Emerson College Polling Society poll was conducted Saturday, September 5 through Tuesday, September 8. The polling sample for the Democratic and the GOP primary consisted of 392 and 409 likely voters, respectively, with a margin of error of +/- 4.9% and a 95% confidence level. The General Election sample consisted of 955 likely voters with a margin of error of +/- 3.1% and a 95% confidence level. Data was collected using an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. The full methodology and results can be found at www.theecps.com.

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NATIONAL SURVEY RESULTS

What is your gender?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|--------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Male | 448 | 46.9 |
| | Female | 507 | 53.1 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

Do you consider the Patriots cheaters?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Yes | 457 | 47.8 |
| | No | 498 | 52.2 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

Do you feel the country is headed in the right direction or is on the wrong track?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|-----------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Right direction | 273 | 28.6 |
| | Wrong direction | 538 | 56.3 |
| | Undecided | 144 | 15.1 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Roger Goodell, the commissioner of the NFL has handled the Tom Brady deflategate issue?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|--------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Approve | 208 | 21.8 |
| | Disapprove | 393 | 41.2 |
| | Undecided | 276 | 29.0 |
| | Never heard of him | 77 | 8.1 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

What is your Favorite professional sport?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Hockey | 41 | 4.3 |
| | Basketball | 84 | 8.8 |
| | Baseball | 176 | 18.5 |
| | Football | 348 | 36.5 |
| | Soccer | 52 | 5.4 |
| | Other | 254 | 26.6 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

Is your opinion of Hillary Clinton generally favorable or generally unfavorable?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|--------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Favorable | 365 | 38.2 |
| | Unfavorable | 533 | 55.9 |
| | Undecided | 56 | 5.9 |
| | Never heard of her | 1 | .1 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

Do you think Tom Brady should be suspended for deflategate?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|--------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Yes | 447 | 46.8 |
| | No | 508 | 53.2 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |
| | Not at all Closely | 179 | 18.7 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

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Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Approve | 393 | 41.2 |
| | Disapprove | 477 | 49.9 |
| | Undecided | 85 | 8.9 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

Party Affiliation

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|------------------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Democrat | 407 | 42.6 |
| | Republican | 361 | 37.8 |
| | No party preference or Independent | 187 | 19.6 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

For whom did you vote for in the last presidential election in 2012 between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|--------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Obama | 487 | 51.0 |
| | Romney | 449 | 47.0 |
| | Someone Else | 19 | 2.0 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

Is your opinion of Jeb Bush generally favorable or generally unfavorable?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|--------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Favorable | 338 | 35.4 |
| | Unfavorable | 488 | 51.1 |
| | Undecided | 126 | 13.2 |
| | Never heard of her | 3 | .3 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

Is your opinion of Scott Walker generally favorable or generally unfavorable?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|--------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Favorable | 266 | 27.9 |
| | Unfavorable | 401 | 42.0 |
| | Undecided | 210 | 22.0 |
| | Never heard of her | 78 | 8.2 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

Is your opinion of Ben Carson generally favorable or generally unfavorable?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|--------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Favorable | 434 | 45.5 |
| | Unfavorable | 256 | 26.8 |
| | Undecided | 186 | 19.5 |
| | Never heard of her | 79 | 8.3 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

Thinking about the upcoming presidential primaries and caucuses early next year, do you think you will vote/lean toward voting in your state's Democratic contest, Republican contest, or do you think you will skip the primary season and just vote next November?

| | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid Democrat | 392 | 41.1 |
| Republican | 409 | 42.9 |
| Skip Primary | 111 | 11.6 |
| Undecided | 43 | 4.5 |
| Total | 955 | 100.0 |

If the Democratic Primary for President was held today, and the candidates were {RANDOMIZE} Joe Biden, Lincoln Chafee, Hillary Clinton, Martin O'Malley, Bernie Sanders, or Jim Webb, for whom would you vote or lean toward?

| | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid Clinton | 188 | 47.8 |
| Sanders | 80 | 20.5 |
| Biden | 84 | 21.4 |
| Webb | 4 | 1.1 |
| O'Malley | 4 | .9 |
| Other | 6 | 1.6 |
| Undecided | 26 | 6.7 |
| Total | 392 | 100.0 |
| Missing System | 563 | |
| Total | 955 | |

Is your opinion of Donald Trump generally favorable or generally unfavorable?

| | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|--------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid Favorable | 381 | 39.9 |
| Unfavorable | 482 | 50.4 |
| Undecided | 89 | 9.3 |
| Never heard of her | 4 | .4 |
| Total | 955 | 100.0 |

Is your opinion of Bernie Sanders generally favorable or generally unfavorable?

| | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|--------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid Favorable | 326 | 34.1 |
| Unfavorable | 407 | 42.6 |
| Undecided | 167 | 17.5 |
| Never heard of her | 55 | 5.8 |
| Total | 955 | 100.0 |

Is your opinion of Marco Rubio generally favorable or generally unfavorable?

| | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|--------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid Favorable | 348 | 36.4 |
| Unfavorable | 383 | 40.1 |
| Undecided | 180 | 18.9 |
| Never heard of him | 44 | 4.6 |
| Total | 955 | 100.0 |

If the Republican Primary for President of the United States were held today, who would be your first choice to win the Republican nomination? {RANDOMIZE LIST}

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|---------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Trump | 137 | 33.5 |
| | Bush | 48 | 11.7 |
| | Walker | 19 | 4.5 |
| | Cruz | 25 | 6.1 |
| | Rubio | 34 | 8.2 |
| | Carson | 81 | 19.7 |
| | Paul | 4 | 1.1 |
| | Huckabee | 18 | 4.3 |
| | Christie | 4 | .9 |
| | Perry | 1 | .2 |
| | Fiorina | 11 | 2.7 |
| | Kasich | 15 | 3.6 |
| | Graham | 1 | .3 |
| | Other | 3 | .7 |
| | Undecided | 10 | 2.4 |
| | Total | 409 | 100.0 |
| Missing | System | 546 | |
| Total | | 955 | |

Age

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|--------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | 18-34 | 273 | 28.6 |
| | 35-54 | 254 | 26.5 |
| | 55-74 | 330 | 34.6 |
| | 75 and above | 98 | 10.3 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

Region

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Northeast | 170 | 17.8 |
| | Midwest | 209 | 21.9 |
| | South | 348 | 36.4 |
| | West | 228 | 23.9 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

If the presidential election was tomorrow and the candidates were Republican Jeb Bush and Democrat Hillary Clinton, who would you vote for?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|-----------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Jeb Bush | 450 | 47.1 |
| | Hillary Clinton | 386 | 40.4 |
| | Undecided | 119 | 12.5 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

If the presidential election was tomorrow and the candidates were Republican Scott Walker and Democrat Hillary Clinton, who would you vote for?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Walker | 429 | 44.9 |
| | Clinton | 411 | 43.0 |
| | Undecided | 115 | 12.1 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

If the presidential election was tomorrow and the candidates were Republican Ben Carson and Democrat Hillary Clinton, who would you vote for?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Carson | 447 | 46.8 |
| | Clinton | 395 | 41.4 |
| | Undecided | 113 | 11.9 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

If the presidential election was tomorrow and the candidates were Republican Mitt Romney and Democrat Hillary Clinton, who would you vote for?

| | | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid | Romney | 453 | 47.4 |
| | Clinton | 397 | 41.6 |
| | Undecided | 105 | 11.0 |
| | Total | 955 | 100.0 |

For statistical purposes only, can you please tell me what your ethnic background / ancestry is?

| | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid White or Caucasian | 772 | 80.9 |
| Black/ African-American | 89 | 9.3 |
| American Indian/Alaska | 20 | 2.1 |
| Asian or Asian American | 11 | 1.1 |
| Native Hawaiian | 2 | .2 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 31 | 3.3 |
| Other | 17 | 1.7 |
| Don't Know | 14 | 1.4 |
| Total | 955 | 100.0 |

Regardless of who you will vote for, Who do you think will be the next President of the United States?

| | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|--------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid Bush | 95 | 10.0 |
| Clinton | 278 | 29.1 |
| Trump | 210 | 22.0 |
| Sanders | 62 | 6.5 |
| Carson | 77 | 8.1 |
| Biden | 76 | 8.0 |
| Rubio | 29 | 3.1 |
| Someone else | 127 | 13.3 |
| Total | 955 | 100.0 |

If the presidential election was tomorrow and the candidates were Republican Marco Rubio and Democrat Hillary Clinton, who would you vote for?

| | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid Rubio | 428 | 44.8 |
| Clinton | 412 | 43.1 |
| Undecided | 115 | 12.0 |
| Total | 955 | 100.0 |

If the presidential election was tomorrow and the candidates were Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton, who would you vote for?

| | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid Trump | 444 | 46.5 |
| Clinton | 409 | 42.9 |
| Undecided | 102 | 10.7 |
| Total | 955 | 100.0 |

If the presidential election was tomorrow and the candidates were Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Bernie Sanders, who would you vote for?

| | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------------|-----------|---------------|
| Valid Trump | 431 | 45.2 |
| Sanders | 364 | 38.1 |
| Undecided | 160 | 16.7 |
| Total | 955 | 100.0 |