

January 25, 2014
PRESS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

47% OF AMERICANS SAY THE NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS ARE CHEATERS, BUT MOST THINK BELICHICK AND BRADY SHOULD NOT BE SUSPENDED

BOSTON (1/25/2015) 47% of those polled think the New England Patriots are “cheaters,” according to a national survey conducted by the Emerson College Polling Society (ECPS) this weekend. 39% do not believe claims that coach Bill Belichick and quarterback Tom Brady knew nothing about the doctored footballs, however a majority (57%) says the scandal is not a big deal. Only 28% and 25%, respectively, think Belichick and Brady should be suspended for the Super Bowl.

Among 1,098 adults surveyed, more than 98% had heard about the Patriots using underinflated footballs during their recent conference championship win over the Indianapolis Colts, and 60% said they were following the scandal very closely or somewhat closely.

As media coverage of the “Deflate-gate” scandal overshadows other Super Bowl news, the Emerson poll found that 36% of the American public is rooting for the Seattle Seahawks to win the NFL championship game on February 1, compared to 31% who are rooting for the New England Patriots, and 33% who don’t care who wins.

The demographics of Deflate-gate

Different population groups have different views on the upcoming game and the controversy. Asked who they were rooting for, men favored New England over Seattle, 38% to 33%; women leaned toward Seattle, 39% to 24%; and African Americans favored the Seahawks by more than 2 to 1 (41% to 19%). Young people were the least forgiving of the Patriots’ alleged transgressions. For example, 34% of those ages 18 to 34 felt Tom Brady should be suspended, compared to 24% in the 35-to-54 age bracket, and 20% of those 55 to 74. Only 12% of people 75 and older thought the Pats quarterback should be benched.

The Northeast: More engaged and more partisan

A regional analysis reveals that Northeasterners are more engaged in the Deflate-gate scandal than their counterparts in other regions. Almost half of those from the Northeast (46%) say they are following the story very closely, compared to 26% from the Midwest, 28% from the South, and 27% from the West.

Northeasterners also have more partisan views. They favor the Patriots over the Seahawks by a margin of 38 points (57% to 19%), compared to Westerners, the least partisan group, who favor the Seahawks by only two points (36% to 34%). Respondents from the South also favor the Seahawks (41% to 22%), as do Midwesterners (37% to 21%). Only 15% of Northeasterners think Brady should be suspended compared to 33% from the West, 23% from the South and 25% from the Midwest.

Interestingly, the Midwest has the highest percentage of respondents (42%) who don't care who wins the Super Bowl and the biggest share of people (43%) who believe Belichick and Brady knew nothing about the deflated footballs. Yet, Midwesterners are also the largest share of people (59%) who think the Patriots are cheaters.

Regardless of personal loyalties, 41% of those surveyed think the Patriots will win the Super Bowl, compared to 35% who believe the Seahawks will win. Fueled by the ongoing scandal, overall data trends suggest that this will be the most watched Super Bowl ever.

An update on the NFL and domestic violence

Last September, as the NFL came under fire for its handling of domestic violence, an ECPS poll found that 47% of Americans believed the league needed to do more to address the issue. In this most recent ECPS poll, that number fell slightly to 44%.

Caller ID

The ECPS poll was conducted from January 23 to 24. The national polling sample consisted of 1,098 respondents, with a margin of error of +/-2.9% at a 95% confidence level. The survey was conducted using an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system and sponsored by ECPS. The full methodology and results can be found at www.theecps.com.

Looking ahead

ECPS is currently conducting a Massachusetts statewide poll on public attitudes regarding Boston's professional sports teams, the city's bid to host the 2024 summer Olympics, and reaction to a anti-racism protest that disrupted commuter traffic for several hours on January 14. The results of that survey will be published later this week.

AAPOR Transparency Initiative

The Emerson College Polling Society (ECPS) has been named a Charter Member of the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Transparency Initiative—joining the ranks of more than 20 top polling organizations, including the Pew Research Center, the Gallup Organization, and the Washington Post. AAPOR is the leading professional organization of public opinion and survey research professionals in the United States, with members from academia, media, government, the nonprofit sector, and private industry. <http://transparency.aapor.org/index.php/transparency>