



Survey of American Adults on Sports Jan. 25-30, 2023

N = 1,000 American adults

The sample has an adjusted margin of error +/-3.6 percentage points

See <http://uml.edu/polls> for full questionnaire/topline results and detailed methodology disclosure.

Survey design and analysis by John Cluverius, director of survey research at the University of Massachusetts Lowell Center for Public Opinion.

Do you have a question about this poll? If so, tweet @UML_CPO and we'll get back to you.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Two-thirds of respondents support monetary compensation for college athletes

"Americans see college athletes as workers who deserve payment for their performance," said Associate Professor John Cluverius, director of survey research at the Center for Public Opinion.

More than six in 10 Americans say it is certainly (20%) or probably (43%) true that college athletes should be paid for the games they play, a poll from the University of Massachusetts Lowell Center for Public Opinion has found. Those who disagreed, saying it was probably (17%) or definitely false (20%) rounded out the respondents.

The data shows a distinct partisan divide on the topic of paying college athletes. More than three-quarters of Democrats support paying college athletes compared to nearly half of Republicans.

- 77% of self-identified Democrats say it is probably (48%) or certainly (29%) true
- 64% of independents say it is (49%) probably true or (15%) certainly true
- 46% of Republicans say it is (34%) probably or (12%) certainly true

Despite this political disparity, support for paying athletes is consistent across income and education categories, though sharp divides along racial lines are also present.

- Black respondents are the most supportive of paying college athletes of any category reported in the poll. A total 77% said it is certainly (42%) or probably (35%) true college athletes should be paid.

- This is in contrast to Hispanic respondents, whose combined support for paying college athletes is a close second at 71%. In third are white respondents, more than half (58%) of whom support paying athletes overall.

At 68%, Americans broadly support college athletes profiting from their name, image and likeness in opportunities such as merchandise or video games. In contrast, 16% of respondents said college athletes should not be compensated for the use of their NIL and 15% had no opinion.

In contrast to the political breakdown of support for college athletes being paid for their performance, a majority of Americans of all political parties support NIL rights. However, within each political party, a large gap exists between those support NIL rights and those who do not.

- Democrats: 79% for to 10% against
- Independents: 59% for to 20% against
- Republicans: 62% for to 22% against

People who hold a four-year college degree are also more supportive of payment for NIL than people without: 73% for vs. 18% against. Two-thirds of respondents (66%) without a four-year college degree said college athletes should be paid for NIL use while 16% said that they should not.

2. As March Madness begins, support for college basketball registered among respondents at 16%

“You wouldn’t know it from the energy around March Madness, but comparatively few Americans are fans of college basketball,” said Cluverius. “While ratings for tournament games are high, people just don’t identify as fans of the sport.”

More than four in five respondents (84%), reported not supporting college basketball.

While there were some close relationships based on demographic data among those who do support college basketball, the most notable was along racial lines.

- Black respondents were almost twice as likely to say they were fans of college basketball as white respondents and five times as likely to say that they were college basketball fans as Hispanic respondents.
 - 30% of Black respondents said that they were fans of college basketball, while 70% said that they were not
 - 16% of white respondents said that they were fans of college basketball, while 84% said that they were not
 - 6% of Hispanic respondents in the poll selected college basketball fandom, while 94% said that they were not