



Deflategate, FIFA Scandal, & Mizzou Protests Vie for Top Sports Story of 2015

*** Complete Tables for Poll Appended ***

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This Marist Poll Reports:

Three in ten sports fans, 30%, think the “Deflategate” controversy involving Tom Brady and the New England Patriots was the most profound sports story of 2015. The resignation of FIFA president Sepp Blatter after 14 FIFA executives were arrested for their involvement in a corruption scandal, 27%, and the protest by the University of Missouri’s football team to fight campus racism, resulting in the resignation of the University’s president, 27%, follow. The growing concern over Daily Fantasy Sports wagering on websites such as Draft Kings or Fan Duels receives 9%. But, differences of opinion exist. Latinos point to FIFA corruption as most significant.

It was a big year for the U.S. women’s soccer team, and American sports fans took notice. About one in three, 33%, considers the team’s World Cup victory over Japan to be the single best sports accomplishment of the year. American Pharaoh’s Triple Crown run came in second with 21% followed by the Kansas City Royals first World Series win since 1985 with 17%. The New England Patriots’ fourth Super Bowl win since 2002 receives 14%. 13% point to the victory of the Golden State Warriors over the Cleveland Cavaliers for the NBA title as the biggest sports accomplishment of 2015.

Which player had the biggest impact on his or her sport in 2015? Steph Curry of the NBA’s Golden State Warriors, 27%, and New England Patriots’ quarterback Tom Brady, 27%, top the list. Serena Williams, 19%, slides into the number three spot.

This Marist Poll has been conducted in conjunction with the Marist College Center for Sports Communication.

“These results affirm the significance of Tom Brady in the sports landscape,” says Keith Strudler, Director of the Marist College Center for Sports Communication, “Brady is considered one of the two top athletes of the year but is also viewed as a central figure in one of the biggest sports stories of the year.”

Poll points:

- 30% of American sports fans say “Deflategate” had the biggest impact on sports this year while 27% have this view of the resignation of FIFA president Sepp Blatter, and an additional 27% have this opinion of the resignation of the University of Missouri’s president as a result of the protests by the school’s football team over campus racism. Only 9% of sports fans mention growing concern over Daily Fantasy sports wagering on websites such as Draft Kings or Fan Duel.
- Demographic differences exist. “Deflategate” is thought to be the most influential sports story of the year by women who are sports fans, 33%, white sports fans, 32%, fans in the South, 31%, and those 45 or older, 30%. Of note, 28% of fans 45 or older mention the protests at the University of Missouri.
- The resignation of FIFA president Sepp Blatter is deemed the most resounding sports story by Latino sports fans, 46%, and fans in the West, 33%, and men, 32%.
- 33% of sports fans in the Northeast think “Deflategate” is the story with the biggest impact on sports this year while 31% say the same about the resignation of Sepp Blatter. Among Midwest fans, 31% cite the campus protests at the University of Missouri while 29% believe the “Deflategate” controversy was the most significant. 37% of African American sports fans note the importance of the campus protests at the University of Missouri while 34% think “Deflategate” was the most influential sports story in 2015. Among those under 45 years old, 31% choose the FIFA scandal while 30% select “Deflategate.”
- 33% of sports fans say the World Cup victory by the U.S. women’s soccer team over Japan is the biggest sports accomplishment of the year. 21% believe that honor goes to American Pharoah’s Triple Crown win while 17% say the Kansas City Royals’ first World Series victory since 1985 deserves top honors. 14% say the New England Patriots’ fourth Super Bowl win since 2002 is the biggest sports accomplishment of the year. 13% have this opinion of the Golden State Warriors defeat of the Cleveland Cavaliers in the NBA finals.
- While the U.S. women’s soccer team’s World Cup win is considered the biggest sports accomplishment by sports fans in other regions, among fans in the Midwest, the World Cup win, 31%, and the Royals’ World Series victory, 28%, battle it out for this year’s top honor.
- Among African American sports fans, 32% choose the U.S. women’s soccer team’s win while the same proportion, 32%, selects the Golden State Warriors’ victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers as the year’s biggest sports accomplishment. More than three in ten white sports fans, 31%, consider the World Cup victory to take top honors while 27% say this year’s Triple Crown win by American Pharoah deserves the noteworthy distinction. 42% of Latino sports fans mention the U.S. women’s soccer team’s World Cup victory.

- 27% of sports fans nationally say the Golden State Warriors' Steph Curry had the biggest impact on the NBA this year. Another 27% think NFL quarterback Tom Brady had the largest effect on his sport while 19% say tennis great Serena Williams had a major impact on tennis. 12% of American sports fans report professional golfer Jordan Spieth had the biggest impact on his sport in 2015, and 9% think professional soccer player Carli Lloyd had the greatest effect on the soccer world.
- Demographically, Steph Curry is believed to have had the biggest impact on the NBA by African American fans, 40%, and those under 45 years old, 39%, including 43% of those 18 to 29 years old. Men, 33%, Latinos, 31%, and sports fans who reside in the West, 31%, also have this view.
- Tom Brady is thought to have had the largest effect on the NFL by Northeast fans, 35%, white sports fans, 30%, and women who follow sports, 30%.
- 57% of Americans, similar to 60% last year, are sports fans.

How the Survey was Conducted

Nature of the Sample: Marist Poll of 1,517 National Adults

This survey of 1,517 adults was conducted December 1st through December 7th, 2015 by The Marist Poll in partnership with the Marist College Center for Sports Communication. Adults 18 years of age and older residing in the continental United States were interviewed in English or Spanish by telephone using live interviewers. Landline telephone numbers were randomly selected based upon a list of telephone exchanges from throughout the nation from ASDE Survey Sampler, Inc. The exchanges were selected to ensure that each region was represented in proportion to its population. Respondents in the household were randomly selected by first asking for the youngest male. To increase coverage, this landline sample was supplemented by respondents reached through random dialing of cell phone numbers from Survey Sampling International. The two samples were then combined and balanced to reflect the 2013 American Community Survey 1-year estimates for age, gender, income, race, and region. Results are statistically significant within ± 2.5 percentage points. There are 859 sports fans. The results for this subset are statistically significant within ± 3.3 percentage points. The error margin was not adjusted for sample weights and increases for cross-tabulations.

Nature of the Sample

		National Adults	Sports Fans
		Col %	Col %
National Adults		100%	
Sports Fans		57%	100%
Gender	Men	49%	59%
	Women	51%	41%
Age	Under 45	47%	46%
	45 or older	53%	54%
Age	18 to 29	22%	20%
	30 to 44	26%	26%
	45 to 59	27%	28%
	60 or older	26%	26%
Race	White	62%	60%
	African American	11%	15%
	Latino	14%	15%
	Other	12%	11%
Region	Northeast	18%	17%
	Midwest	22%	21%
	South	37%	37%
	West	23%	24%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	47%	45%
	\$50,000 or more	53%	55%
Education	Not college graduate	59%	59%
	College graduate	41%	41%
Interview Type	Landline	38%	39%
	Cell phone	62%	61%

Marist Poll National Adults: Interviews conducted December 1st through December 7th, 2015, n=1517 MOE +/- 2.5 percentage points. National Sports Fans: n=859 MOE +/- 3.3 percentage points. Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Marist Poll National Tables

		National Adults	
		Do you consider yourself to be a sports fan, or not?	
		Yes	No
		Row %	Row %
National Adults		57%	43%
Region	Northeast	54%	46%
	Midwest	55%	45%
	South	58%	42%
	West	60%	40%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	55%	45%
	\$50,000 or more	59%	41%
Education	Not college graduate	56%	44%
	College graduate	58%	42%
Age	Under 45	56%	44%
	45 or older	59%	41%
Age	18 to 29	53%	47%
	30 to 44	58%	42%
	45 to 59	59%	41%
	60 or older	58%	42%
Race	White	56%	44%
	African American	75%	25%
	Latino	58%	42%
Race	White	56%	44%
	Non-white	60%	40%
Gender	Men	68%	32%
	Women	47%	53%
Interview Type	Landline	60%	40%
	Cell phone	56%	44%

Marist Poll National Adults: Interviews conducted December 1st through December 7th, 2015, n=1517 MOE +/- 2.5 percentage points. Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Marist Poll National Tables

		Sports Fans					
		Which one of the following was the best single sports accomplishment of the year:					
		The US Women's Soccer team defeating Japan to win the World Cup	American Pharoah winning the Triple Crown	The Kansas City Royals winning their first World Series since 1985	The New England Patriots winning their 4th Super Bowl since 2002	The Golden State Warriors defeating the Cleveland Cavaliers for the NBA title	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %
Sports Fans		33%	21%	17%	14%	13%	3%
Region	Northeast	37%	21%	15%	16%	9%	2%
	Midwest	31%	23%	28%	9%	6%	3%
	South	33%	18%	15%	15%	15%	3%
	West	30%	23%	12%	13%	17%	4%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	35%	16%	18%	16%	12%	3%
	\$50,000 or more	33%	25%	17%	13%	12%	2%
Education	Not college graduate	32%	19%	18%	16%	12%	3%
	College graduate	33%	24%	15%	11%	14%	2%
Age	Under 45	31%	20%	16%	15%	17%	1%
	45 or older	35%	21%	18%	13%	9%	5%
Age	18 to 29	33%	19%	14%	18%	14%	2%
	30 to 44	29%	22%	18%	12%	19%	0%
	45 to 59	32%	25%	16%	12%	11%	3%
	60 or older	37%	17%	19%	13%	7%	7%
Race	White	31%	27%	20%	12%	7%	3%
	African American	32%	8%	11%	13%	32%	3%
	Latino	42%	10%	16%	16%	13%	3%
Race	White	31%	27%	20%	12%	7%	3%
	Non-white	35%	10%	13%	16%	22%	3%
Gender	Men	30%	23%	18%	13%	15%	3%
	Women	37%	18%	16%	15%	10%	3%
Interview Type	Landline	32%	21%	18%	14%	11%	6%
	Cell phone	33%	21%	17%	14%	14%	1%

Marist Poll National Sports Fans: Interviews conducted December 1st through December 7th, 2015, n=859 MOE +/- 3.3 percentage points. Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Marist Poll National Tables

		Sports Fans				
		Which one of the following stories had the biggest impact on sports this year:				
		The scandal involving the New England Patriots and Tom Brady deflating footballs known as "Deflategate"	The resignation of FIFA president Sepp Blatter after 14 FIFA executives were arrested for their role in a corruption scandal	The University of Missouri football team protest over campus racism that led to the resignation of the University's president	The growing concern over Daily Fantasy Sports wagering on sites such as Draft Kings or Fan Duel	Unsure
		Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %
Sports Fans		30%	27%	27%	9%	7%
Region	Northeast	33%	31%	22%	10%	4%
	Midwest	29%	23%	31%	11%	6%
	South	31%	24%	27%	9%	9%
	West	27%	33%	25%	7%	8%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	36%	25%	23%	8%	8%
	\$50,000 or more	27%	29%	30%	9%	5%
Education	Not college graduate	35%	25%	24%	8%	9%
	College graduate	23%	30%	31%	10%	6%
Age	Under 45	30%	31%	25%	10%	4%
	45 or older	30%	24%	28%	8%	10%
Age	18 to 29	33%	32%	23%	9%	3%
	30 to 44	27%	30%	26%	11%	6%
	45 to 59	31%	25%	28%	8%	8%
	60 or older	28%	23%	29%	8%	12%
Race	White	32%	25%	26%	9%	7%
	African American	34%	14%	37%	6%	9%
	Latino	23%	46%	14%	12%	4%
Race	White	32%	25%	26%	9%	7%
	Non-white	27%	29%	27%	9%	8%
Gender	Men	28%	32%	25%	11%	5%
	Women	33%	20%	29%	7%	11%
Interview Type	Landline	31%	24%	25%	10%	10%
	Cell phone	29%	29%	28%	9%	6%

Marist Poll National Sports Fans: Interviews conducted December 1st through December 7th, 2015, n=859 MOE +/- 3.3 percentage points. Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Marist Poll National Tables

		Sports Fans					
		Which one of the following players had the biggest impact on their sport this year:					
		Professional tennis					Unsure
		NBA player Steph Curry	NFL quarterback Tom Brady	player Serena Williams	Professional golfer Jordan Spieth	Professional soccer player Carli Lloyd	
		Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %
Sports Fans		27%	27%	19%	12%	9%	6%
Region	Northeast	24%	35%	16%	12%	11%	2%
	Midwest	28%	29%	19%	10%	8%	6%
	South	26%	25%	20%	15%	8%	7%
	West	31%	21%	21%	10%	8%	9%
Household Income	Less than \$50,000	21%	32%	22%	8%	9%	8%
	\$50,000 or more	33%	23%	17%	17%	7%	3%
Education	Not college graduate	25%	30%	18%	11%	9%	7%
	College graduate	30%	21%	22%	14%	8%	5%
Age	Under 45	39%	22%	20%	6%	9%	4%
	45 or older	17%	30%	19%	18%	8%	7%
Age	18 to 29	43%	25%	12%	4%	10%	5%
	30 to 44	35%	20%	25%	8%	8%	3%
	45 to 59	21%	29%	19%	15%	9%	7%
	60 or older	12%	32%	20%	20%	7%	8%
Race	White	22%	30%	18%	17%	10%	4%
	African American	40%	21%	29%	3%	3%	3%
	Latino	31%	17%	15%	10%	12%	14%
Race	White	22%	30%	18%	17%	10%	4%
	Non-white	36%	21%	23%	5%	7%	8%
Gender	Men	33%	24%	16%	13%	8%	6%
	Women	18%	30%	25%	12%	9%	6%
Interview Type	Landline	19%	27%	19%	18%	9%	8%
	Cell phone	33%	26%	19%	8%	8%	5%

Marist Poll National Sports Fans: Interviews conducted December 1st through December 7th, 2015, n=859 MOE +/- 3.3 percentage points. Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.