

# MARIST POLL™

**POLL MUST BE SOURCED:**  
**NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll**  
**With the Center for Sports Communication at Marist College**

**Fans Cautious About Sports Amid Pandemic**  
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**This NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll with the Center for Sports Communication at Marist College reports:**

American sports fans are acutely aware of the threat the coronavirus poses to athletes and spectators, and they urge leagues and teams to proceed with caution.

A majority of fans (56%) say people should not be playing indoor team sports such as basketball, and the same proportion (56%) report they are concerned or very concerned that competing in these indoor sports could spread the virus within their own communities. Similar proportions of Americans, overall, agree.

Beyond their own backyards, fans want the NFL to assess how the Super Bowl may be experienced this year. Nearly half (49%) think fans should *not* be allowed to attend the game. An additional 34% say they should be permitted but *only* with restrictions. And, it's not just the Super Bowl. Fans want leagues to "pump the brakes" on sports attendance in general. Most sports fans believe attending indoor sporting events should not be permitted at all (46%) or should be allowed only with restrictions (36%). In fact, nearly six in ten fans and Americans, alike, (58%) assert government officials should be allowed to place restrictions on playing indoor team sports.

As in our [October poll on sports viewing habits](#), there are large political divisions. Those who identify as Republican are less likely to advocate for restrictions. For example, 83% of Democrats report the government should be able to place restrictions on indoor play, while only 28% of Republicans agree. Independents (61%) split the difference. Geographically, there are some divisions as well. Notably, while residents in the Northeast are more likely than those in the South to support government restrictions, a majority, regardless of region, favor regulations.

"The results show that different demographics are aware of their risks for the virus, and how sports are played, not in a vacuum, but in their local communities," says Jane McManus, the Director of the Center for Sports Communication.

Women, a group sports leagues have been cultivating as viewers, are more likely to advocate for a cautious approach, as were Baby Boomers and their elders. 60% of those 74 or older, a group that is particularly vulnerable to coronavirus, express concern that indoor team sports played locally will lead to community spread.

“Interestingly, compared with other generations, GenZ/Millennials (51%) are more likely to report being not very concerned or not concerned at all about indoor sports leading to community spread, but they are the most in favor of not allowing fan attendance at either indoor sporting events (52%) or the Super Bowl (55%),” says Dr. Zachary Arth, Assistant Professor of Sports Communication at Marist College.

Non-white residents are more likely than white residents to say that sports should be restricted.

Do you think each of the following should be allowed, should be allowed but only with restrictions, or should not be allowed because of coronavirus:	Should be allowed		Should be allowed, but only with restrictions		Should not be allowed	
	White	Non-white	White	Non-white	White	Non-white
	Fans attending games for indoor team sports	18%	19%	39%	26%	42%
Student-athletes participating in indoor team sports	28%	22%	43%	40%	27%	35%
Student-athletes traveling to play against other schools or teams	26%	23%	39%	31%	33%	44%
Student-athletes participating in college football games	31%	28%	41%	36%	28%	36%
Fans attending the Super Bowl	17%	21%	35%	21%	46%	55%

“The responses of people of color also reflect the outsized effect the virus has had on their communities,” notes Jane McManus, the Director of the Center for Sports Communication.