

The Image of the NFL and Other Sports

Prior to the recent NFL controversy, the Winston Group had done a survey looking at the brand images of a variety of sports, both at the professional and college level (August 29-30 - 1,000 registered voters). Post the controversy, we went back into the field (September 28-29 - 1,000 registered voters) to revisit those images and see if any changes had occurred.

In the first survey, 57% were favorable and 23% were unfavorable to the NFL. Post the controversy, the image slipped significantly, with 44% favorable and 40% unfavorable. The favorable margin went from +34% to +4%; the country is now basically neutral toward the NFL. While some other sports saw some minor slippage, none came close to matching the drop the NFL suffered.

In contrast to other sports, the NFL is now in a much more difficult position. For example, in August the NFL trailed Major League Baseball in terms of favorables by just 4%. Now that margin favors MLB by 19%. Also, in contrast to college football, the NFL led in terms of favorables by 4%, but now trails by 7%.

	August		September	
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable
National Football League	57	23	44	40
College Football	53	16	51	21
Major League Baseball	61	13	63	16
National Basketball Association	47	23	46	28
College Basketball	48	17	45	25

But more critically for the NFL, the fall off in favorables occurred among important audiences. Among males, NFL favorables fell 23%, going from 68% to 45%. In looking at a more specific audience, males 34-54, NFL favorables fell 31%, going from 73% to 42%. Among this group the NFL has a surprising negative image, as it went from +54% (73% favorable - 19% unfavorable) in August to -5% (42% favorable - 47% unfavorable) in September.

National Football League	August		September	
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable
Male	68	22	45	44
Female	48	25	43	36
Males 35-54	73	19	42	47
Independent Males	62	25	34	48
Suburban	60	20	43	41
65+	53	23	38	44