

NFL - Brand Struggles Continue

There was no comeback for the NFL's brand in October after significant slippage in September.

The newest monthly WG Sports Survey has found the NFL with the same 44% favorable - 40% unfavorable brand numbers in its October 31 - November 1 survey (1,000 registered voters), giving the NFL significantly higher unfavorables than any other major sport. This latest data adds to concerns that the impact of the events over the last two months may represent a longer term change in the overall public's view of the NFL. Even more problematic, the survey found that almost a third of the NFL's potential "fan base" (people who watched at least 2 games in a season) have a negative view of the league.

THE STATS

Overall NFL Favorable/Unfavorable

The Winston Group's first Sports Survey went into the field before the NFL national anthem controversy erupted. To date, the WG Sports Survey has done surveys (1,000 registered voters) in each of the last three months to look at the brand images of a variety of sports, both at the professional and college level. After NFL players began kneeling during the national anthem and President Trump's statements made news, the NFL's brand image slipped significantly, going from 57-23 favorable-unfavorable in August to 44-40 favorable-unfavorable a month later. In this most recent survey (October 31-November 1), the brand image was unchanged at 44-40 favorable-unfavorable. Other sports have generally not changed much during these three months.

	August 29-30		September 28-29		October 31-November 1	
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable
National Football League (NFL)	57	23	44	40	44	40
College Football	53	16	51	21	54	15
Major League Baseball (MLB)	61	13	63	16	61	12
National Basketball Association (NBA)	47	23	46	28	46	25
College Basketball	48	17	45	25	49	16
National Hockey League (NHL)	45	16	N/A	N/A	46	14
Major League Soccer (MLS)	36	16	N/A	N/A	36	15
NASCAR	N/A	N/A	43	24	42	22

Male Favorables/Unfavorables

In looking at important audiences where considerable slippage had previously occurred, the October survey found there was minimal change in brand image. Overall male favorables, which had fallen 23% going from 68% to 45%, saw only slight change in this survey coming in at 47%, up 2 points. Males 35-54 favorables which had previously fallen 31%, going from 73% to 42%, bumped up to 48%, a positive for the NFL. But older Males 55+ favorables in this survey slipped another 4 points down to 39% after falling 21% in

WG Sports Survey

September. A majority 54% among this key sports demographic, males 55+, now have an unfavorable view of the NFL.

National Football League	August 29-30		September 28-29		October 31-November 1	
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable
Male	68	22	45	44	47	46
Female	48	25	43	36	41	35
Males 35-54	73	19	42	47	48	45
Males 55+	64	26	43	47	39	54
Suburban	60	20	43	41	44	40
65+	53	23	38	44	38	47

How the NFL Potential Fan Base Feels

In this survey, we asked how many games a person had watched for each sport to determine a viewer's level of interest and used a 2 game minimum to define a potential if not actual fan.

There was some good news for the NFL in these numbers. More people in the US watched 2 or more NFL games — the highest percentage for any sport at 54.6%. Major League Baseball followed closely with 49.2%. The bad news, however, is that the data shows when it comes to brand image, almost one third of the NFL's potential fan base (those who watched at least 2 games) had an unfavorable view of the NFL. This contrasts with the fan bases of other sports which enjoy stronger, more favorable brand images. What was particularly interesting was looking at the contrast with college football which had 24% more favorables (and 23% less unfavorables) than the NFL among its potential fan base.

Watched at least 2 Games by Sport	% Watched 2 Games or More	Average Number of Games Watched if Watched at least 2 Games	Watched at least 2 Games	
			Favorable	Unfavorable
National Football League (NFL)	54.6	14.9	63	32
College Football	42.2	15.2	87	9
Major League Baseball (MLB)	49.2	33.0	87	6
National Basketball Association (NBA)	34.1	18.0	77	17
College Basketball	33.7	16.4	83	10
National Hockey League (NHL)	24.7	19.6	88	7
Major League Soccer (MLS)	12.9	8.4	88	6
NASCAR	21.9	8.7	92	4