

UMass Lowell Center for Public Opinion

2017 Sports Poll – MMA and Boxing

August 14, 2017 – August 21, 2017

N=1,000 American adults
Margin of error +/- 3.7% for all respondents

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

Survey Co-Directors: Joshua J. Dyck, Ph.D. and Francis T. Talty, Ph.D.

Survey Analysis by Joshua J. Dyck, Ph.D.

HIGHLIGHTS

In partnership with the Washington Post, the UMass Lowell Center for Public Opinion surveyed 1,000 American adults on their attitudes about sports. This, the first release in a series, covers the extent to which sports fan consider themselves fans of professional boxing and mixed martial arts. This survey was taken just prior to a crossover event scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 26 between boxer Floyd Mayweather and MMA fighter Conor McGregor that is being dubbed the “biggest fight in combat sports history.”

FINDINGS:

Most Americans consider themselves to be fans of sports, generally. A quarter of American adults describe themselves as fans of mixed martial arts; just over a quarter describe themselves as fans of boxing. There are a considerable number of MMA-only and boxing-only fans.

- All respondents were asked whether they consider themselves a fan of sports: 20% describe themselves as avid sports fan, 26% as regular fans and 35% as casual fans. Just 19% said that they are not a fan of sports at all. Men (26%) are more likely than women (14%) to describe themselves as avid sports fans, but most women still describe themselves as either a regular fan (26%) or a casual fan (40%).
- 25% of American adults are fans of mixed martial arts (MMA) and 28% are fans of professional boxing. While there is some overlap between those who like both MMA and boxing, there are also a considerable number of fans of one sport and not the other; 15% of Americans are fans of both, 10% are fans of MMA only, 13% are fans of boxing only and 43% are sports fans that do not consider themselves fans of either.
- The potential audience for the upcoming crossover fight is quite large: 38% of Americans are either a fan of mixed martial arts (MMA), boxing or both. The Mayweather/McGregor fight has the potential to considerably expand the pay-per-view audience that standalone boxing or MMA events can generate.

Biggest demographic differences are by age and race/ethnicity.

- Sports fans who watch MMA and boxing tend to be younger. For both MMA and boxing, the largest audiences exist among young respondents: 37% of 18-29 year olds are fans of MMA and 39% are fans of boxing. Among the oldest respondents in our sample, just 13% of those aged 65 and up are fans of MMA and only 17% are fans of boxing.
- MMA and boxing are also very popular among African-Americans and Latinos. For African-Americans, 29% are fans of both MMA and boxing, 9% are fans of MMA only and 23% are fans of boxing only; only a minority are sports fans who do not like either sport (31%) or are not sports fans at all (8%). For Latinos, 26% are fans of both MMA and boxing, 5% are fans of MMA only and 35% are fans of boxing only. As with black respondents, a minority of Latinos describe themselves as sports fans, but not fans of MMA or boxing (17%) or not sports fans at all (16%). For white respondents, however, a large majority indicate that they are sports fans, but not of MMA or boxing (52%) or not a fan of any sports (20%).