



behavior research center's

Rocky Mountain Poll

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CLOUDY ATTENDANCE FORECAST FOR PROFESSIONAL SPORTS IN VALLEY

Phoenix, Arizona, May 28, 2001. Attendance at professional sporting events in the Valley has dipped recently and may be in for a longer period of doldrums than owners or players would care to experience. Among Arizonans who have attended or still attend professional sporting events provided by teams such as the Phoenix Suns, Arizona Diamondbacks, Phoenix Coyotes and the Arizona Cardinals, 35 percent now say they will be attending fewer events in the future. Only 13 percent plan on attending more games.

What is more, among those who have purchased season tickets from one of more of these teams at some time in the past, 39 percent say they will be attending fewer games. Among those who have held season tickets as recently as within the past two years, 43 percent project they will be attending fewer games in the next few years. One might reasonably wonder if individual game ticket buyers would step in to pick up the slack but even within their ranks, 32 percent forecast lower levels of game attendance for themselves and only 15 percent say they will be going to more games.

The findings outlined in this report are based on a survey of 604 adults across Maricopa County conducted in May 2001 by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona as part of the Center's independent and non-partisan Rocky Mountain Poll series. The public is welcome to visit www.brcpolls.com to read this and other recent poll results.

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It may be reasonable to speculate that cutbacks in sports consumers' attendance trace to concerns about the economy and their own economic security, yet it appears that other more long lasting and profound reasons may be affecting the public's respect for and interest in professional sports *per se*. Chief among these is sports consumer belief that professional sports organizations are pursuing pricing strategies that put their products out of reach for their budgets as well as concerns that many professional athletes are in trouble with the law and thus not good role models for children and young adults.

The view that professional sports are pricing themselves out of the market is held by 70 to 80 percent of people who are pro sports fans, and six of ten express concern about the role model issue. Charles Barkley's protest a decade or so ago that "I am not a role model" apparently sounds hollow to many parents who see their youngsters wearing the numbers and images of some of today's "bad boys" in professional sports.

- ! 80 percent believe the cost of tickets, parking and concessions has become too expensive.
- ! 70 percent say they have lots of entertainment choices and pro sports clubs have priced themselves out of the market.
- ! Six of ten believe professional athletes are too often in trouble with the law and have become poor role models for young people.
- ! Nearly as many admit having trouble identifying with players because of the huge salaries they command.
- ! Half say free agency is dampening team loyalty since players just come and go each year.
- ! At a lower but certainly not insignificant level, 47 percent admit that the economy has become so worrisome to them that attending games must be considered a luxury rather than a regular feature in their leisure time activities.

- ! Finally, although six in ten disagree, 41 percent say that pro sports now contains so much “hype” that the events are not as enjoyable for them anymore.

Another indicator of the season ticket problem facing professional sports clubs is the finding that even though a whopping 86 percent of Valley adults consider themselves fans of one or more professional sports, only 15 percent have ever owned season tickets and only 12 percent have purchased pro sports season tickets within the past two years. In contrast, 67 percent attend individual games but forego season tickets.

Considering that consumers have four major league teams to choose from, the low market penetration of season ticket sales itself is a stunning statement about the inability of most people to make such purchases. For example, over the past two years, 22 percent of families earning \$65,000 or more purchased season tickets to at least one of the Valley’s professional sports teams, compared to only eight percent in the \$45,000 to \$64,999 bracket, and only six percent among families earning under \$45,000 per year.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: This Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona (2001-II-09), is based on 604 interviews with adult heads of household throughout Maricopa County during May of 2001. Where necessary, figures for age, sex, race and political party were weighted to bring them into line with their actual proportion in the population. In a sample of this size, one can say with a 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of +/-4.06 percent of what they would have been had the entire adult population been surveyed. The Rocky Mountain Poll is conducted by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona and is an independent and non-partisan research program sponsored by the Center.

This statement conforms to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

For this and other polls, see www.brcpolls.com/results.

ENCLOSED: Statistical tables.

STATISTICAL DATA

Behavior Research Center
 Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona
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“There are four Major League professional sports teams here in the Valley: the Phoenix Suns, Arizona Diamondbacks, Phoenix Coyotes and the Arizona Cardinals. When it comes to these teams, have you . . .”

	Total	FAMILY INCOME		
		Under \$45K	\$45K to \$64.9K	\$65K +
<u>DIRECT ATTENDANCE</u>				
Ever purchased individual game tickets	67%	59%	72%	83%
Ever purchased season tickets	15	8	13	25
Purchased season tickets in the past two years	12	6	8	22
(Net: any of the above)	(86%)			
<u>MEDIA ATTENDANCE</u>				
Watched their games on television	79	75	86	85
Listened to their games on the radio	44	40	46	53

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*“Looking to the next several years, do you think you will be attending more games, about the same number or fewer games?”*

|                                | PROFESSIONAL SPORTS FANS WHO . . . |                                              |                                  |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                                | Have Ever Purchased Season Tickets | Purchased Season Tickets Within Past 2 Years | Purchase Individual Game Tickets |
| <u>Will Be Attending . . .</u> |                                    |                                              |                                  |
| More games                     | 15%                                | 13%                                          | 15%                              |
| Same number                    | 45                                 | 41                                           | 52                               |
| Fewer games                    | 39                                 | 43                                           | 32                               |
| (Net point shift)              | (-24)                              | (-30)                                        | (-17)                            |

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“Some fans of professional sports say they may be attending fewer games in the future due to a variety of reasons. In your own case, do the following factors apply to you?”

% SAYING EACH APPLIES TO THEM

	Total	Income Level		
		Under \$45K	\$45K to \$64.9K	\$65K +
<u>FINANCIAL FACTORS</u>				
The cost of tickets, parking and concessions has become too high.	81%	87%	78%	76%
We have lots of entertainment choices and pro sports have priced themselves out of the market.	70	70	72	64
Attending professional sports is a luxury and we have just cut back because of the current condition of the economy.	47	57	46	34
<u>ROLE MODELS/FREE AGENCY</u>				
Too many professional athletes are in trouble with the law and have become negative role models for kids and young adults.	60	62	57	59
Players salaries have become so high that I have a hard time identifying with them like I used to.	59	57	62	52
With free agency, I find it hard to identify with the teams because players just come and go.	51	52	48	50
Pro sports contain too much commercial hype and so are not as enjoyable as they used to be.	41	47	38	33

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