

Pro Sports Interest in Canada #3

No NFL If It Means the End of the CFL - Poll

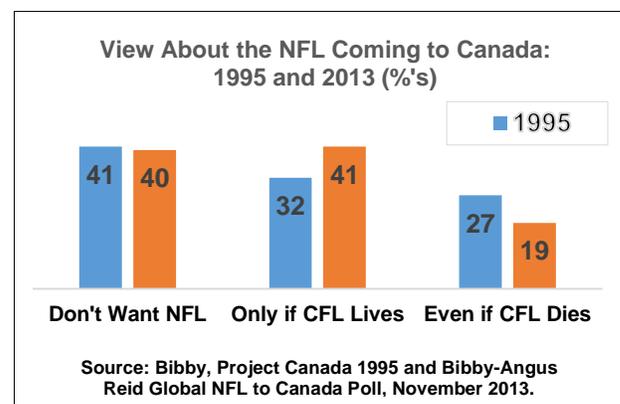
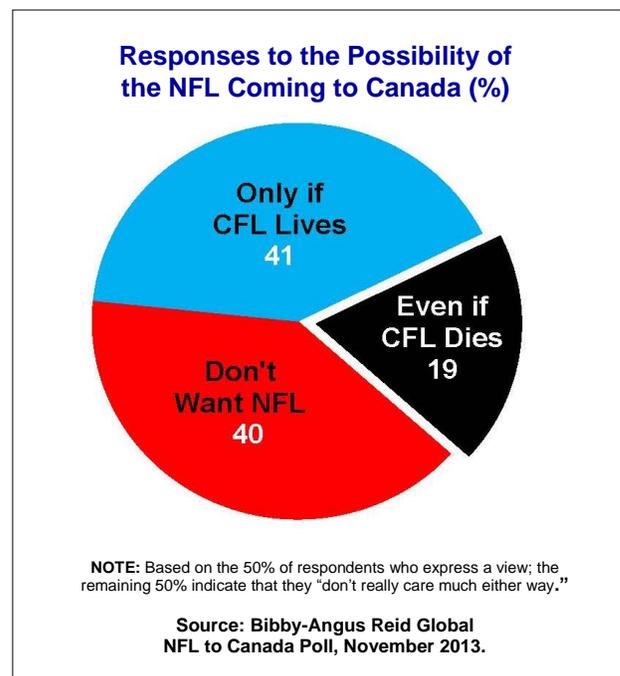
Increasing numbers of Canadians are following both the CFL and the NFL, reflected in the interest in both the 2013 Grey Cup in Regina followed one week later by an NFL game in Toronto between Buffalo and Atlanta.

But a new national survey has found that most football fans and many non-fans like things the way they are – and that they don't want the NFL to actually take up residence in Canada.

Some 80% of Canadians with an opinion on the matter either don't want the NFL to come to Canada or would only welcome the NFL if the CFL continued to operate. Under 20% would be happy to see the NFL come to Canada, even if it meant the end of the CFL.

The on-line survey of 1,007 Canadians was carried out in mid-November by sociologist Reginald Bibby of the University of Lethbridge and pollster Angus Reid Global, as part of their joint research on *The Future of Life in Canada*.¹

Since 1995, Canadians have become more insistent that they would only want the NFL in Canada if the CFL continued to exist (41% versus 32%). They also have become more inclined to take a position: almost 20% more people indicate that they care about the issue than was the case in 1995 (50% versus 33%).



¹ From November 18-19, 2013, Angus Reid Global conducted an online survey among 1,007 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error – which measures sampling variability – is +/- 3%.

In every region of the country, the predominant sentiment among people with a view on the topic is that they either don't want the NFL to come to Canada or would only welcome the league if the CFL continued to operate. The same holds for age.

- *Indifference to the issue* is highest in the **Atlantic region** – which currently is the only region without a CFL team. Yet even there, just 3% would welcome an NFL team in Canada if it meant the death of the CFL.
- Even in **Toronto**, the likely destination of such a team, only 15% would want to see the NFL's arrival if it meant the folding of the CFL – below the 25% who either don't want the NFL to come to Canada (7%) or would welcome the league only if the CFL continued to operate (18%).
- Approximately **40%** of Canadians in **younger, middle, and older age cohorts** either don't want to see the NFL come to Canada or would only welcome the league if the CFL continued to operate. Young Canadian adults **under 35**, for example, are *more likely than others to not be opposed to the NFL's arrival*. But they *also are more likely than others to express the proviso that the CFL would need to continue to exist*.

Views of the NFL Coming to Canada by Region and Age

	NAT	BC	PR	ONTARIO		QC	ATL	18-34	35-54	55+
				All	Toronto					
I don't want the NFL to come to Canada	20	30	40	14	7	12	18	15	21	23
I'd be happy to see the NFL come, but only if the CFL continued to operate	20	20	17	22	18	22	14	25	20	17
I'd be happy to see the NFL come, even if it meant the end of the CFL	10	10	4	11	15	11	3	15	10	3
I don't really care much either way	50	40	39	53	60	55	65	45	49	57
TOTALS	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Bibby-Angus Reid Global NFL to Canada Poll, November 2013.

Conclusion

These findings, when combined with the findings on the interest that Canadians have in the CFL and NFL, add up to a coherent picture. **Today as in the past, Canadians are more than happy to draw on the best and most enjoyable features of American life – and other cultures around the world, for that matter.** So it is that 21% are currently following the National Football League.

But that hardly means that they have abandoned Canadian culture and, in this instance, the Canadian Football League. Our surveys show that an even higher figure of 26% of Canadians are closely following the CFL. And fans are not always opting for one league over the other: 14% of each fan base follow both leagues.

So it is that large numbers of Canadians have a protective view of the Canadian Football League. **Relatively few people want the NFL to come to Canada, particularly if its arrival would mean the end of the CFL.** After all, the CFL has been a long-standing Canadian institution. Its slogan, "This Is Our League," seemingly resonates with many.

There's no question that the CFL historically has had its ups and downs. But the league has returned to Quebec, is returning to Ottawa, and is exploring the possibility of becoming truly "trans Canada" by extending its presence to the Atlantic region. In addition, new stadiums are springing up across the country. Television audiences this year were the second best in league history. In 2014, the CFL will begin to enjoy its richest TV contract ever. **This is a good time for Canadian pro football.**

Any attempt to drop an NFL team in Toronto and proceed to triumphantly market it as "Canada's team" – with little consciousness of cultural nerve-endings – may be met with surprising antagonism and indifference by much of the country.

Ironically, rather than acting oblivious to the importance of the CFL to Canadians, any entrepreneurs who have dreams of establishing an NFL team in Toronto would be advised to ensure that a CFL team simultaneously not merely survives but thrives in Toronto – even to the point of bankrolling the franchise. The costs would be trivial by NFL standards. What's more, there's no reason that such a "side venture" could not be profitable.

Rather than needing to be slain as a rival by incoming NFL team, a healthy CFL might actually be the key to the long-term success of such an NFL initiative. If appropriate cultural sensitivity and respect is shown towards "Our League," NFL backers may find that their franchise has an opportunity to co-exist reasonably harmoniously with the CFL in Canada.

Otherwise, the seemingly invincible NFL just might be thrown for a surprising loss "up north."

Dr. Reginald Bibby is a best-selling author and professor of sociology at The University of Lethbridge who has been monitoring social trends in Canada now for four decades.

The trends research is continuing in collaboration with pollster **Angus Reid Global** and **Andrew Grenville**. The findings on pro sport will be part of Bibby and Grenville's new book, *The Future of Life in Canada*, which will be released in late 2014.

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The Future of Life in Canada

*What Trends & Surprises Say
About Where We Will Be In 2050...
& Beyond*



Reginald W. Bibby

with

Andrew Grenville