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Wednesday, 28 September 2016

Finals fever: Bulldogs and Swans fans compared

Even the 12 million Australians who don't support an AFL team would probably be aware that this Saturday's AFL Grand Final is shaping up to be an historic Battle Royale, as the Western Bulldogs break their 55-year Grand Final drought to meet Finals habitués, the Sydney Swans. So how do the teams' supporters stack up against each other? Are they as different as the teams they support? Roy Morgan reveals all...

The most immediately striking difference between the two teams' fan bases is the size of each. As of June 2016, the Swans were the AFL's most popular team, with 1.1 million supporters (or a mighty 14.5% of the country's total footy fans!), while Bulldogs fans numbered some 249,000 – or 3.3% of all AFL supporters.

The Doggies may have fewer supporters (although their performance during this Finals series will no doubt win them some more – watch this space!), but they do boast the League's most gender-balanced fan base: 49.9% men and 50.1% women. In contrast, 58.4% of Sydney supporters are men and 41.6% women.

Of the two teams' supporters, Sydney's tend to be slightly older, with a mean age of 47 years, compared with 44 years for Western Bulldogs fans. It is worth noting that a slightly higher proportion of Bulldogs supporters are aged 65 and older (19.2% vs 18.4%) – old enough to remember their team's last Grand Finals appearance more than half a century ago (back in the days when Sydney was still South Melbourne...)

Swans supporters vs Bulldogs supporters: vital stats

Key stats	Swans supporters	Bulldogs supporters
Number of supporters	1.1 million	249,000
Gender breakdown	58.4% men to 41.6% women	49.9% men to 50.1% women
Average age	47 years	44 years
Average household income	\$114,000	\$102,000
% who are financial members	4.8%	16.3%
% who go to AFL matches	26.7%	32.1%
% who watch AFL on TV	65.1%	75.3%
% who play Australian Rules football	4.4%	10.4%

Source: Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia), July 2015-June 2016, n=873. **Base:** Australians 14+ who support Sydney Swans or Western Bulldogs

When it comes to the strength of their fans' commitment, Roy Morgan data suggests that passions will be running particularly high among Western Bulldogs supporters this Saturday (and not simply because their team is in its first Grand Final for over half a century). Not only are 16.3% paid-up members of the club (compared with 4.8% of Sydney Swans fans), but 32.1%

attend AFL matches (vs 26.7%) and 75.3% watch the AFL on TV (vs 65.1%). Bulldogs supporters are also more than twice as likely as Swans fans to play Australian Rules footy (10.4% vs 4.4%) themselves.

And the differences between Bulldogs and Swans supporters don't stop there. Delving into Roy Morgan's attitudinal and behavioural data reveals some interesting divergences...

Swans supporters vs Bulldogs supporters: how their attitudes and activities vary

Swans supporters	Bulldogs supporters
More likely than Bulldogs supporters to:	More likely than Swans supporters to:
Play a sport	Do formal exercise (eg. gym, running, aerobics)
Go to a café for coffee or tea	Go to a BYO restaurant
Eat McDonald's	Eat Hungry Jack's
Purchase beer	Purchase cordial
Go to the beach	Take a daytrip
Watch Formula 1 Racing on TV	Work on a car
More likely to agree with the statements:	More likely to agree with the statements:
I try to look stylish	I'm a bit of an intellectual
I consider myself a leader more than a follower	Success is important to me
The Government is doing a good job running the country	I don't trust the current Australian Government
I prefer beer to wine	I drink more wine than I used to
I like to eat healthily but don't want to compromise on taste	I try to buy organic food whenever I can
I love to cook	I would rather clean than cook any day

Source: Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia), July 2015-June 2016, n=873. **Base:** Australians 14+ who support Sydney Swans or Western Bulldogs (NB: alcohol data for supporters 18+)

Norman Morris, Industry Communications Director, Roy Morgan Research, says:

"As another AFL Grand Final rolls around, so too does Roy Morgan's annual comparison of each team's supporters. Unlike some years, when both groups of fans share many similarities, Bulldogs and Swans fans are noticeably different.

"One key difference is how much more involved Bulldogs supporters are with AFL, being over three times more likely than Sydney supporters to be financial members of their club, as well as showing greater inclination to attend matches and watch them on TV. Considering their team hasn't been in a Grand Final for 55 years, this makes sense— you've got to be very committed to stick it out with a perpetual underdog!

"The different political attitudes of each team's fans is also noteworthy. Swans supporters are more likely than their Bulldogs counterparts (not to mention the average Australian) to believe the 'Government is doing a good job running the country': which

is good news for Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who recently declared his support of the team at a UN conference in New York, no less!

“Bulldogs fans, on the other hand, are more likely than Swans supporters (and the average Aussie) to say they ‘don’t trust the current Australian Government’...which would probably please former PM Julia Gillard, one of the team’s highest-profile fans.

“Regardless of who wins on Saturday, we look forward to a spirited match between two worthy rivals...”

For comments or more information about Roy Morgan Research’s sports data, please contact:

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Related research findings

View our [comprehensive range of AFL supporter profiles](#), including the [Western Bulldogs Supporters profile](#) and the [Sydney Swans Supporters profile](#).

Compiled with data from Roy Morgan’s Single Source survey (the largest of its kind in the world, with 50,000 respondents p.a), these ready-made profiles provide a broad understanding of the target audience, in terms of demographics, attitudes, activities and media usage in Australia.

About Roy Morgan Research

Roy Morgan Research is the largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state of Australia, as well as in Indonesia, the United States and the United Kingdom. A full service research organisation specialising in omnibus and syndicated data, Roy Morgan Research has over 70 years’ experience in collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

Margin of Error

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
5,000	±1.4	±1.2	±0.8	±0.6
7,500	±1.1	±1.0	±0.7	±0.5
10,000	±1.0	±0.9	±0.6	±0.4
20,000	±0.7	±0.6	±0.4	±0.3
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2