

  
**RONALD REAGAN**  
**CENTER ON CIVILITY AND DEMOCRACY**

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**Americans have more respect for sports opponents than political rivals, new Reagan Foundation Center on Civility & Democracy survey finds**

*While 75% say it is very important for athletes to show respect toward opponents, only 30% of Americans strongly agree that those with whom they disagree politically deserve their respect*

**SIMI VALLEY, CA** – The majority of Americans still believe in the foundational rules of sportsmanship, yet there is a disconnect in applying those same values to politics. A new national survey released today by the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute’s (RRPFI) Center on Civility and Democracy (CCD) reveals a striking disparity between how Americans view athletic competition versus political rivalry, as well as other findings related to how sports and politics overlap.

“This new data reveals that Americans still deeply understand and value healthy competition,” said Fred Ryan, Director of the Center on Civility and Democracy. “The challenge, and opportunity, is translating the grace, rules and respect we demand on the playing field into how we engage as citizens in our democracy. Our hope is that Americans everywhere will hold firm to their beliefs and convictions while recommitting to the values of fair play, good sportsmanship and civility. And we hope they will model this behavior in personal interactions, on social media, at local town halls and all the way to the halls of Congress.”

Major survey findings include:

- Nearly 8 in 10 Americans believe being a good sport is similar to being a good citizen, and 64% believe sports competition teaches people how to manage conflict respectfully.
- 97% of Americans say it is important to follow the rules even if breaking them would help you win, and 78% consider it very important. Additionally, 93% of Americans say congratulating the winner when your team loses is important, including 65% who say it is very important, while 96% say being gracious when your team wins is important, with 70% calling it very important.
- While 65% of Americans say congratulating the winner when their sports team loses is very important, only 48% strongly agree that their party should accept the result of a free and fair election.
- When comparing athletics and politics, 63% of Americans say that athletics positively affects a person’s integrity, while only 28% believe political involvement positively affects

one's integrity. Furthermore, Americans trust athletes nearly eight times more than they trust politicians.

- Sports gives hope as 86% believe athletes and leagues can be effective in promoting civility.
- 70% of major sports fans are comfortable discussing politics with people they disagree with, compared to 55% of the general public. Major sports fans are also significantly more likely to view sports as a model for respectful disagreement and civic engagement.

To access more survey findings and view the full report, visit [here](#).

This survey release is in support of CCD's Better Rivals Initiative in partnership with The Rose Bowl Institute, which helps citizens see the similarities between politics and sportsmanship. Relatedly, CCD has hosted and participated in multiple events that treat sports as a model for political behavior, including events tied to the Army-Navy and USC-UCLA rivalries.

### **Methodology**

An online survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,542 U.S. adults on issues related to sportsmanship, civility and sports engagement was conducted April 12-24, 2026 by Pinkston. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 2.3%.

### **About the Center on Civility and Democracy**

The Center on Civility and Democracy, an initiative of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute, is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to addressing the deep divisions and discord that threaten the foundations of American democracy. The Center fosters constructive solutions by promoting collaboration, respectful dialogue, and principled leadership. Learn more at [www.reaganfoundation.org/center-on-civility-and-democracy](http://www.reaganfoundation.org/center-on-civility-and-democracy).

### **About the Reagan Foundation and Institute**

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute (RRPFI) is the sole nonprofit organization created by President Reagan charged with advancing his legacy and principles – limited government, individual liberty, economic opportunity, freedom and democracy, peace through strength, and national pride.

A globally recognized nonpartisan organization based in Simi Valley, CA, with a leading policy institute in Washington, DC, RRPFI delivers impactful public affairs programming, policy convenings and projects of national and international significance, and distinctive educational initiatives. In addition, RRPFI sustains the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, the largest and most visited presidential library, which routinely hosts major special exhibitions.

An hour from Los Angeles International Airport, RRPFI's Simi Valley campus sits on 400 acres, serves as the final resting place of America's 40th President and former First Lady Nancy Reagan, displays a chunk of the Berlin Wall, and houses the plane President Reagan flew as Air Force One to 26 countries. Onsite are the Reagan Center for Public Affairs, Presidential

Learning Center, Air Force One Pavilion, and the Reagan Leadership Academy. More information is available at [www.reaganfoundation.org](http://www.reaganfoundation.org).

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