

New Poll: Australians see Soccer and AFL as the future of football – even league and union fans agree

A Crosby|Textor poll has found that a majority of Australians believe soccer (61%) and AFL (52%) have their 'best days ahead'; whilst only a minority believed this is true of rugby league and union (41% and 34% respectively).

Interestingly, even in the traditional rugby league and union states of New South Wales (including the ACT) and Queensland, less than half (49%) believe league's 'best days are ahead' with 39% believing union's 'best days are ahead'.

Whilst a majority of league and union fans believe their own sport has its 'best days ahead' (73% and 68% respectively), they are just as likely to think soccer and AFL have a bright future in Australia.

When asked to nominate the football code they believe will be dominant in twenty years' time, only 3% backed rugby union, which is only marginally ahead of American gridiron football (1%). On the same question, 42% opted for AFL and 26% for soccer. 17% thought rugby league would end up the top code in Australia.

Rugby league and union supporters were also more likely to nominate AFL as the dominant future code (32% and 35% respectively) than their own sport of preference (30% and 12% respectively).

"You'll always get a heated debate amongst Australians over which football code is the best one, but when they were asked to look to the future they offered a more considered and objective opinion", said Mark Textor, Joint Managing Director of Crosby|Textor.

Though rugby is still strongly supported in New South Wales and Queensland, Crosby|Textor's poll found that AFL is now supported by half the Australian population (50%, including 21% strong supporters), with only 40% supporting rugby league and 28% supporting rugby union nationwide.

Soccer now rivals rugby codes for support, with over a third (37%) of Australians classing themselves as fans, and outdoes them in terms of support in the 18-34 growth market (43% support, compared to 37% for rugby league and 25% for rugby union).

The next soccer World Cup being held in South Africa this year may well inflate the game's support base further, with over half (56%) of Australians saying that they are likely to watch a game. Additionally, over three quarters of Australians (79%) support Australia's bid to host the 2018 or 2022 soccer World Cup; a figure consistently reported across fans of all four football codes.

The Crosby|Textor survey was carried out on-line between 12-17 March 2010. The statistically significant national sample of 2,093 respondents aged 18 years or over was weighted to reflect the latest ABS population statistics.

For further information and full data tables please visit www.crosbytextor.com or contact Yaron Finkelstein on 0414 927 663.

Full questions asked on football:

Q1) Please describe your level of support for each of the following sports:

Q2) And thinking about those same sports, for each please tell us whether you think its 'best days' are ahead or behind it in Australia.

Q3) Regardless of whether you support or are interested in any particular football code, which one of the codes do you think or guess will be the dominant football game across Australia in 20 years time?

Q4) Thinking about the next soccer World Cup, being held in South Africa this year with Australia's Socceroos taking part, how likely is it that you will watch or listen to at least one match, including; attending, watching on TV, the internet or podcast, or listening to it on the radio?

Q5) Australia is currently bidding to host either the 2018 or 2022 soccer World Cup. Regardless of whether you support or are interested in soccer, would you say that you support or oppose Australia's bid to host the World Cup?