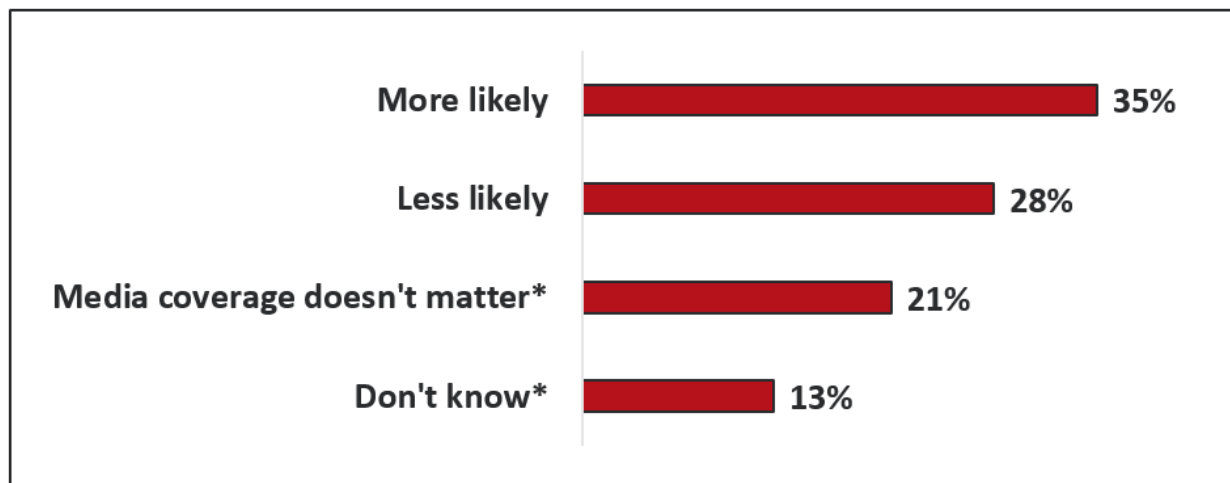




Public impressions of host city Atlanta in the wake of the 2019 Super Bowl

Findings from the APM Research Lab's
National Survey of Super Bowl Impressions
February 25, 2019

As a result of Super Bowl coverage, more than one-third of Americans say they are “more likely” to think of Atlanta as good place to visit



Question: “As a result of media coverage of the Super Bowl, are you more or less likely to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit?” *=Voluntary answer (other categories were offered to respondents). An additional 3 percent of respondents refused to answer. Notes: Results from a representative national sample of 970 adults living in all states except Georgia. Source: APM Research Lab’s National Survey of Super Bowl Impressions, conducted Feb. 5-10, 2019. Super Bowl LIII was held on Feb. 3, 2019.

Introduction

The National Football League's (NFL) annual championship game, the Super Bowl, stands among the most-watched sporting events in the world, and is the most watched live television event in the United States.¹

The economic costs and benefits of serving as the host city for the Super Bowl are fiercely debated.² Hosting the Super Bowl does, however, present civic boosters with an opportunity raise their city's national profile, with hopes of generating longer-term returns in the form of tourism, talent recruitment, and economic development.

How did hosting the Super Bowl impact national awareness and perceptions of Atlanta, which hosted the game in its Mercedes-Benz stadium as well as numerous related events across the city?

To help answer that question the APM Research Lab fielded the National Survey of Super Bowl Impressions. In it we asked a scientifically representative sample of 970 adult Americans across the United States, excluding Georgia, three primary questions:

- *Can you tell me what city the Super Bowl was held in this year? If not, how about the state?*
- *(If needed: This year's Super Bowl was held in Atlanta, Georgia.) As a result of media coverage of the Super Bowl, are you more or less likely to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit?*
- *What is the main reason you say that?*

Results from this survey do not approach a comprehensive evaluation of the longer-term costs and benefits to Atlanta of hosting Super Bowl LIII. For example, civic boosters may be less concerned with raising awareness among the general public than they are with very specific individuals and industry sectors. Still, these results provide insight to the immediate impacts of the Super Bowl on national perceptions of the host city.

Showcasing Atlanta: Contexts for visibility

Is the American general public aware that Atlanta hosted the 2019 Super Bowl? According to preliminary data by Nielsen, Super Bowl LIII drew an average of 98.2 million viewers, with 67 percent of U.S. homes with a television set tuned into the game, and 32.3 million social media interactions relating to the game across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts in the U.S.³

During the game, the Patriots triumphed over the Rams, 13-3, in a defensive showdown by both teams. The game's one touchdown, three field goals, and a record number of punts

resulted in the lowest scoring Super Bowl in history. Relative to recent years, ratings appear to have been hampered by a game many regarded as boring, with the fewest Super Bowl viewers since 2008. Nielsen reports that the Super Bowl has topped 100 million TV viewers each year since 2010, with the highest viewership occurring in 2015, at 114.4 million.

Other non-viewers were vocal about their reasons for not tuning in. In New Orleans, dejected Saints fans—whose team was deprived a Super Bowl appearance by a controversial no-call late in the NFC championship game versus the Rams—chose instead to throw a “Boycott Bowl” featuring parades and parties, while numerous establishments across the city refused to air the Super Bowl.⁴ Additionally, director Ava DuVernay and others rallied behind the “#ImWithKap” hashtag and refused to watch the game as a show of support for former quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who has been denied employment in the league following kneeling during the National Anthem to protest police violence during the 2016 season.⁵

Beyond this, many Americans are not interested in football, or only minimally so. Even for those who watched the event, much of the Super Bowl coverage focused on the teams, specific players, and the game itself—not to mention the commercials and the half-time show.

Therefore, the Super Bowl does not necessarily guarantee renown for its host city, despite being the most watched live television event in the United States and the numerous related activities that give broad visibility to its host city.

However, organizers of Super Bowl LIII (53) employed several branding and entertainment mechanisms leading up to the event held at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, on February 3, 2019. In the nine days leading up to the Super Bowl, Centennial Olympic Park in downtown Atlanta hosted free live concerts, games, activities, and celebrities as part of the “Super Bowl LIVE” entertainment series.⁶ Other Super Bowl-sponsored events also highlighted the city’s attributes, and Atlanta played host to hundreds of national and international broadcasters who reportage greatly magnified the city’s visibility to those living far away.

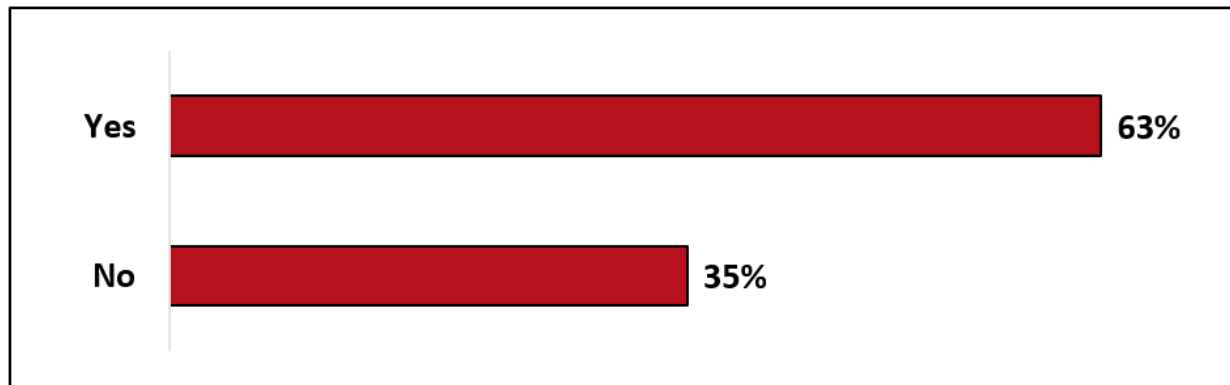
During the game itself, the announcers made numerous references to Atlanta. Pop band Maroon 5 headlined the halftime show, with appearances by rappers Travis Scott and Outkast’s Big Boi. Each gave “shout-outs” to Atlanta as well. Celebrities made local appearances in the city before and after the Super Bowl, fueling both traditional and social media coverage that went far beyond the game itself.

Given all of this, to what degree did the Super Bowl and the media whirlwind surrounding it actually alter the impressions of Atlanta among Americans?

Americans' awareness of the host city

Our survey found that in the week immediately after Super Bowl LIII (held on February 3, 2019), more than 6 in 10 American adults could name where the game was played, including 60 percent who named Atlanta when asked about the city, and another three percent who failed to name the city but accurately identified the state of Georgia. Importantly, the survey asked this question of all American adults, regardless of whether they had watched the Super Bowl. However, nine percent of Americans named an incorrect city, and the remaining 26 percent said they did not know where the Super Bowl was held.

More than 6 in 10 Americans could name the city or state where Super Bowl LIII was held (Atlanta, Georgia) in the week following the game



Question: "Can you tell me what city the Super Bowl was held in this year? If not, How about the state?"

Notes: Results include adults living in all states except Georgia. An additional 2 percent of respondents refused to answer.

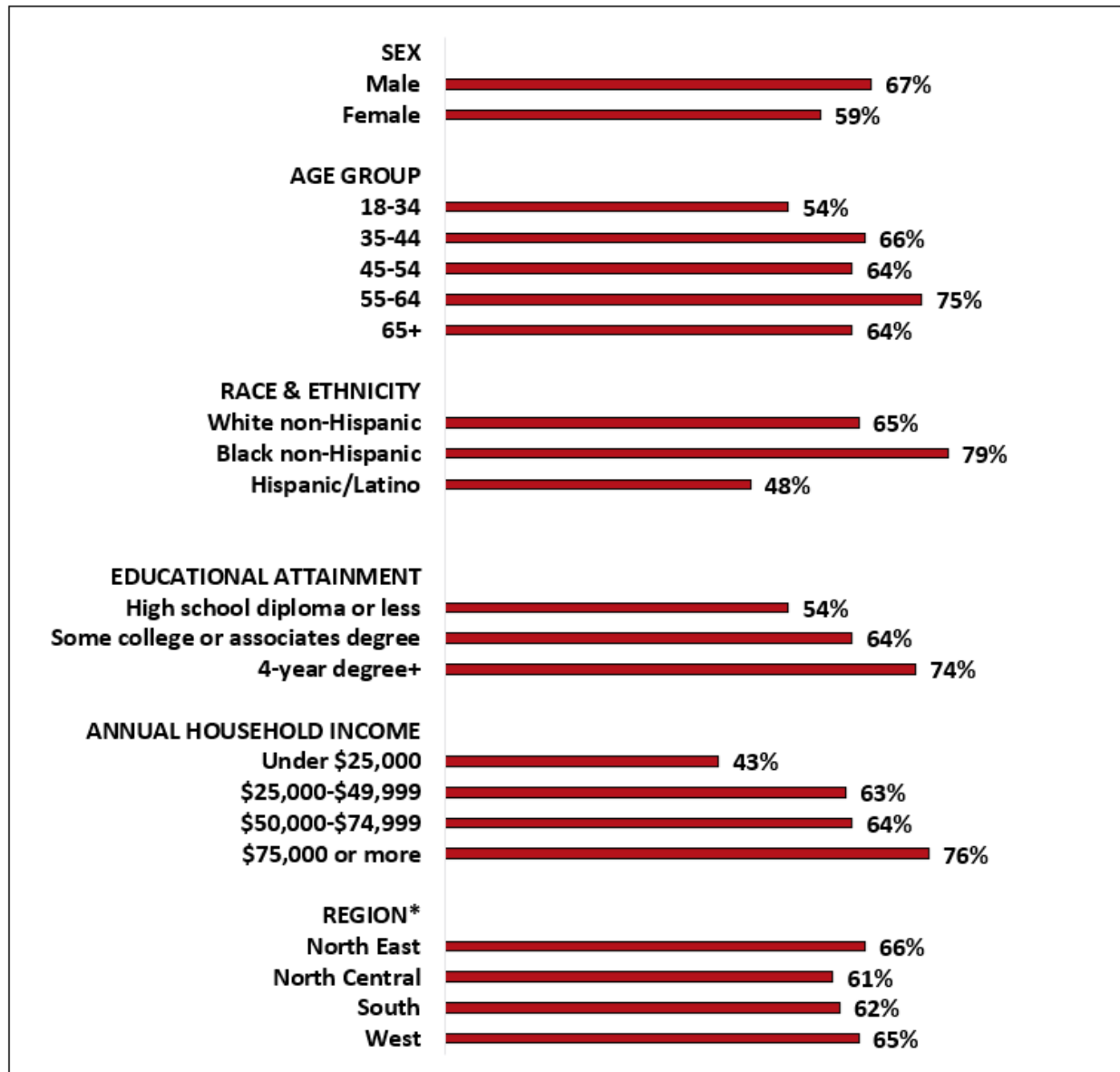
Notes: Results from a representative national sample of 970 adults living in all states except Georgia. Source: APM Research Lab's National Survey of Super Bowl Impressions, conducted Feb. 5-10, 2019. Super Bowl LIII was held on Feb. 3, 2019.

A variety of characteristics were related to Americans heightened or diminished awareness of the Super Bowl LIII's location:

- There is ample evidence that the Super Bowl doesn't hold the same sway with younger Americans. Among those under age 35, some 34 percent expressed that they didn't know where the game was held, and an additional 10 percent evidenced they did not by offering the wrong city. Only 54 percent Americans under age 35 were aware of the game's location. However, roughly 65 percent among those age 35-44, 45-54, or 65+ knew the location, as did 75 percent of Americans 55-64, the most of any age group.

- Black (non-Hispanic) Americans were the most likely to have knowledge of Atlanta or Georgia as the host, with 79 percent giving the correct response. Sixty-five percent of White Americans knew where Super Bowl LIII was held, along with only 48 percent of Hispanic/Latinx Americans.
- Americans with higher incomes were more likely to know the game's location. Among those with annual incomes of \$75,000 or more, roughly three-fourths answered Atlanta or Georgia. This proportion fell to about two-thirds among those with incomes between \$25,000-\$49,999, and \$50,000-\$74,000. Among Americans with incomes below \$25,000 annually, about 4 in 10 knew the location.
- Among those with a high school education, just 54 percent had knowledge of the game's host. The likelihood of giving the correct response rose 10 percentage points among those with some college education including two-year degrees (64%) and an additional 10 points among those with a four-year degree or additional education (74%).
- Males (67%) were more likely than females (59%) to know the location.
- Among the four broad regions of the United States (North East, North Central, West, and South) respondents were equally likely (statistically) to correctly name the Super Bowl location, at roughly 6 in 10. (See End Notes for which regions comprise which states).

Proportion who knew location of Super Bowl LIII, by group



Question: "Can you tell me what city the Super Bowl was held in this year? If not, how about the state?"

*See End Notes for definition of regions. Notes: Results from a representative national sample of 970 adults living in all states except Georgia. Source: APM Research Lab's National Survey of Super Bowl Impressions, conducted Feb. 5-10, 2019. Super Bowl LIII was held on Feb. 3, 2019.

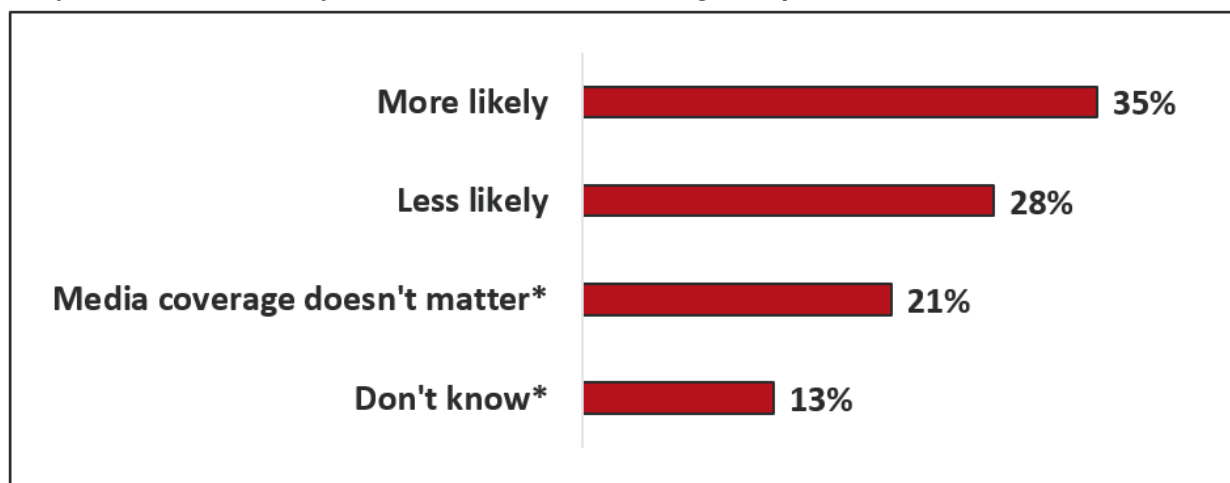
Impressions of the host city

To measure how adults throughout the country may have changed their impressions of Atlanta, we asked them to respond to the following question: “As a result of media coverage of the Super Bowl, are you more or less likely to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit?”

This question was asked of all survey respondents, regardless of whether they were initially able to name Atlanta or Georgia as the host location of the event. For those who did not know or recall, we started with the statement: “This year’s Super Bowl was held in Atlanta, Georgia.”

Based on this question, it appears that media coverage related to the Super Bowl had both positive and negative impacts to the public’s impressions of Atlanta as a desirable city to visit, with more Americans taking away positive impressions. Overall, 35 percent of adults indicated that they were “more likely” to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit as a result of Super Bowl media coverage, compared to 28 percent who indicated that Super Bowl coverage made them “less likely” to think of the host city as a good place to visit. About 2 in 10 respondents rejected the “more likely” and “less likely” options provided to them by interviewers, indicating instead that Super Bowl coverage did not influence the way they think about Atlanta.

As a result of Super Bowl coverage, more than one-third of Americans say they are “more likely” to think of Atlanta as good place to visit



Question: “As a result of media coverage of the Super Bowl, are you more or less likely to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit?” *=Voluntary answer (other categories were offered to respondents). An additional 3 percent of respondents refused to answer. Notes: Results from a representative national sample of 970 adults living in all states except Georgia. Source: APM Research Lab’s National Survey of Super Bowl Impressions, conducted Feb. 5-10, 2019. Super Bowl LIII was held on Feb. 3, 2019.

The proportion “more likely” and “less likely” to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit as a result of Super Bowl coverage, by group

	Number of respondents (before weighting)	More likely	Less likely	Coverage doesn't matter*	Don't know*
ALL	970	35%	28%	21%	13%
SEX					
Male	576	33%	27%	23%	13%
Female	394	37%	29%	20%	12%
AGE GROUP					
18-34	174	37%	24%	23%	12%
35-44	117	29%	29%	26%	12%
45-54	148	39%	30%	12%	17%
55-64	182	37%	26%	24%	9%
65+	335	31%	33%	21%	12%
RACE & ETHNICITY					
White non-Hispanic	671	31%	28%	24%	13%
Black non-Hispanic **	96	55%	19%	13%	10%
Hispanic/Latino	109	39%	31%	19%	9%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT					
High school diploma or less	309	36%	30%	17%	14%
Some college/associate's degree	254	38%	29%	18%	12%
4-year degree+	390	30%	24%	29%	11%
ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME					
Under \$25,000	163	47%	30%	9%	12%
\$25,000-\$49,999	197	43%	27%	18%	10%
\$50,000-\$74,999	137	38%	25%	20%	10%
\$75,000 or more **	293	26%	32%	25%	14%
REGION					
North East	176	36%	25%	23%	11%
North Central	225	32%	29%	23%	13%
South **	336	42%	27%	16%	12%
West	233	27%	31%	26%	14%

Question: “As a result of media coverage of the Super Bowl, are you more or less likely to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit?” * = Voluntary answer (other categories were offered to respondents). ** Category is significantly different from others in the group, as noted in accompanying narrative. See End Notes for definition of regions. Notes: Results from a representative national sample of 970 adults living in all states except Georgia. Source: APM Research Lab’s National Survey of Super Bowl Impressions, conducted Feb. 5-10, 2019. Super Bowl LIII was held on Feb. 3, 2019.

Did the 2019 Super Bowl coverage impact certain groups' sense of Atlanta as "a good place to visit" more strongly than others? When we analyzed the data using the same groupings as in the awareness section, and discovered some interesting patterns, as noted in the table and explained below.

- Overall, 35 percent of adults indicated that they were "more likely" to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit as a result of Super Bowl LIII media coverage, compared to 28 percent who said "less likely." Unprompted, 21 percent of respondents said media coverage does not make a difference in their impression of the city. An additional 13 percent said they didn't know, and three percent refused to answer.
- Non-Hispanic Black Americans were most likely to report improved impressions of the host city following Super Bowl LIII, with 55 percent saying they were more likely to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit. This is significantly higher than the share of White non-Hispanic Americans (31%) who said so. Black Americans were the only demographic group in our survey with more than *half* reporting that the Super Bowl covered improved their impression of Atlanta.
- Residents of the South region were most likely to say "more likely," at 42 percent, compared to 36 percent in the North East, 32 in the North Central, and 27 percent in the West states. (See End Notes for regional definitions.) Geographic proximity to the Atlanta (which is in the South) may make visiting an easier or more attractive proposition for these respondents.
- Those respondents with annual household incomes of \$75,000 or more were the least likely to report improved impressions of Atlanta (26%) due to media. Americans earning less than \$75,000 annually were more likely to have positively shifted their perspective of Atlanta as a destination.
- There were no meaningful differences by age, gender, or education level among respondents saying they were "more likely" to consider Atlanta a desirable destination following Super Bowl media coverage.
- The likelihood of saying they were "more likely" was not statistically different between those who were able to name Atlanta or Georgia as Super Bowl LIII's host location, and those who were not.

Reasons given for changed impressions

What drives people's impressions of Super Bowl host cities? What reasons do people give for being either "more likely" or "less likely" to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit? We asked and recorded answers verbatim. These answers were then grouped into categories for analysis.

Reasons people gave for saying they were "more likely" to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit following Super Bowl LIII

Those who were "more likely" to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit in the Super Bowl's wake gave a variety of reasons for saying so. The highest proportion of respondents (23%) mentioned their own personal familiarity with the area, often through connections with family, friends, or work. It may have been that Super Bowl coverage reminded them of these connections, encouraging them to see Atlanta as desirable destination for visiting (again).

Because I went there before and I liked it, the city. I just stayed for a couple of days; I went around the town. You can't do much if you don't stay long.

Because I have family there and it's a nice place.

Thirteen percent of the "more likely" group offered specific favorable impressions relating to the city's cleanliness, safety, weather, or friendly people.

Atlanta is a safe place.

It's a friendly town. Southern hospitality.

Because I live down south. I love it here, and I don't have to deal with that winter weather. I can't stand the cold; I can barely deal with the cold in Tennessee.

Another 13 percent offered non-specific favorable comments about the city, including one who said, "I've never heard anything bad about Atlanta." An identical share (13%) named attractions offered in Atlanta as motivating reasons to visit. Examples of these comments include:

It just has a deep musical history.

It has more attractions and more things to visit, like historical sites to see.

We like the aquarium. We like the food very well.

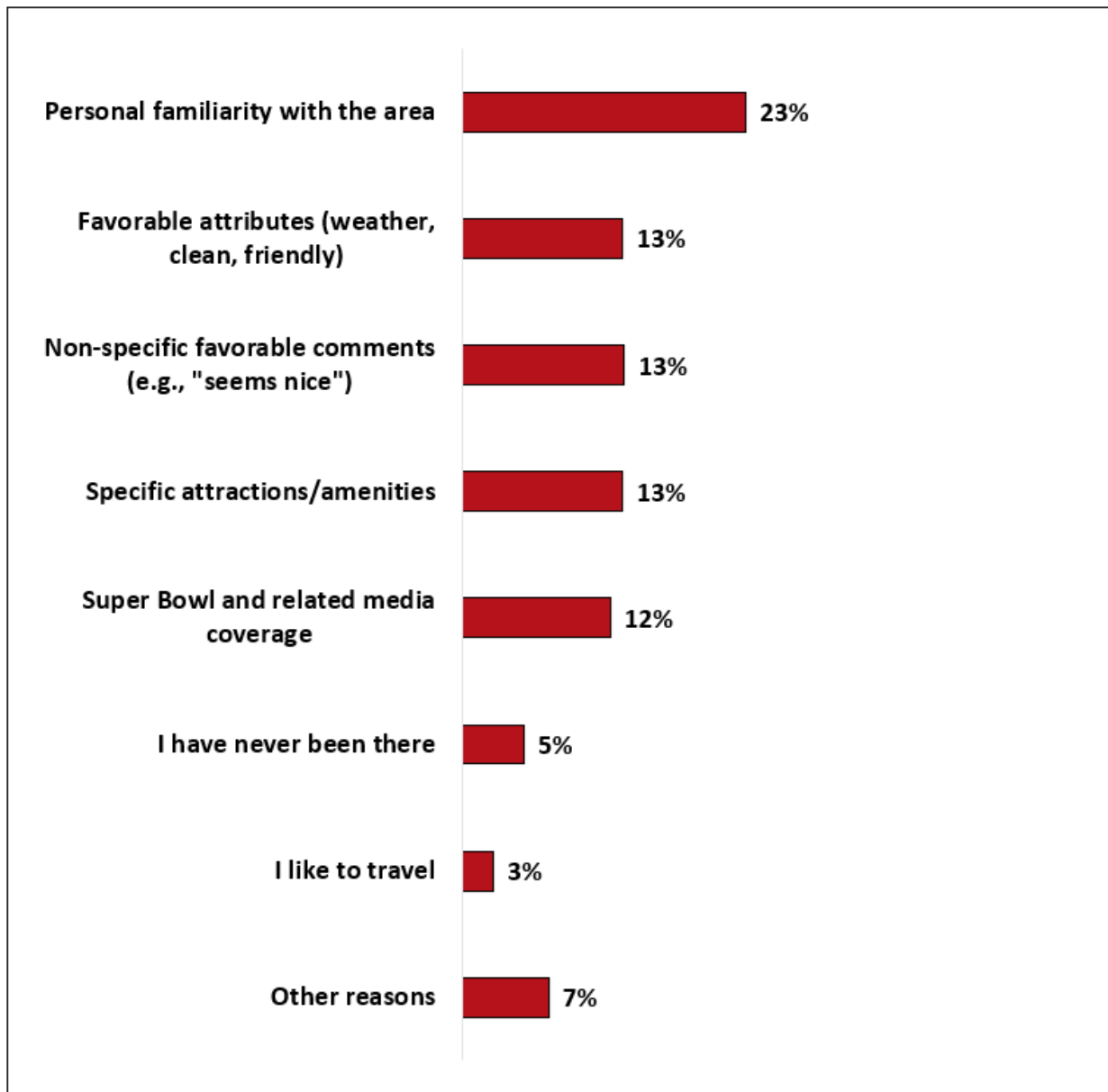
Twelve percent of respondents mentioned something specifically related to the Super Bowl or related media coverage that showed Atlanta in a positive light, such as:

Because of being able to handle such a big amount of people, the crowd. So I think they are doing it good, they can accommodate visitors in the area.

It looked pretty from the aerial shots. The downtown area looked pretty.

Five percent of those more likely to consider Atlanta as a destination to visit explained their response by saying something along the lines of “I have never been there.” Another three percent said they like to travel, to explain why they’d like to visit. Finally, seven percent of the “more likely” group offered reasons unrelated to the other categories.

Many of those who are now “more likely” to think of Atlanta as good place to visit cite Super Bowl coverage and personal familiarity



Question: “What is the main reason you say that?” (A follow-up on respondents’ answers to the question, “As a result of media coverage of the Super Bowl, are you more or less likely to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit?”) Notes: Results include adults living in all states except Georgia. Weighted number of respondents = 342. Source: APM Research Lab’s National Survey of Super Bowl Impressions, conducted Feb. 5-10, 2019. Super Bowl LIII was held on Feb. 3, 2019.

Reasons people gave for saying they were “less likely” to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit following the Super Bowl LII

Considering the minority of respondents who were “less likely” to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit in the 2019 Super Bowl’s wake, 36 percent named personal reasons, such as:

I say that because I’m just like less likely, even though all the advertisements.

Because I don’t have any money.

An additional 34 percent cited what they perceived were unfavorable characteristics of the city, such as traffic or lack of interesting attractions to explain their response, such as:

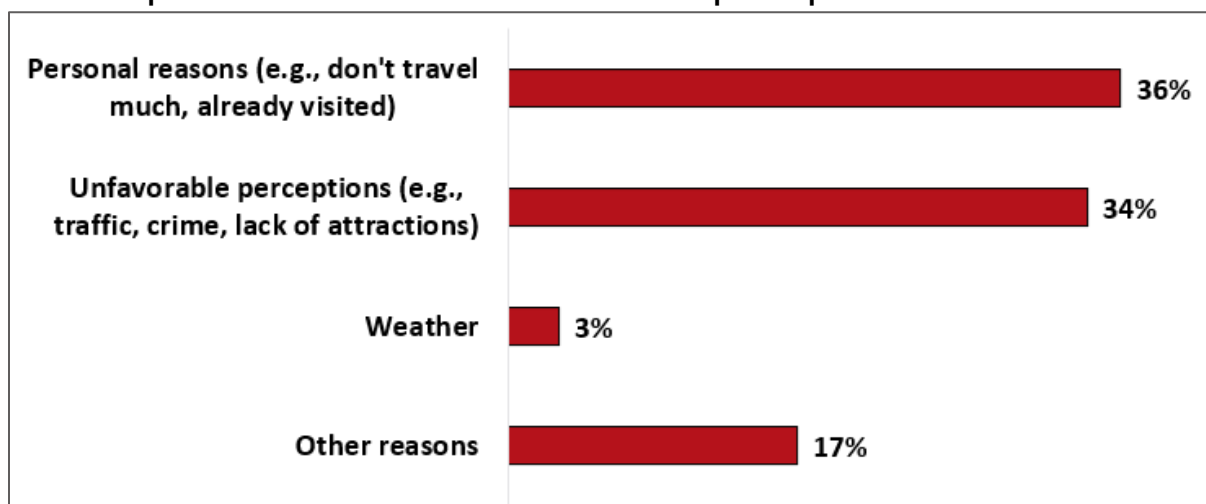
It’s not a good thing to live there. Too much traffic and busy.

Because I did not see something that make me [want to] go to Atlanta.

Because it’s a hot concrete jungle and I don’t like [it] because too many people.

Three percent of “less likely” group named the weather (e.g. “too hot”) for their reasoning.

Many of those who are now “less likely” to think of Atlanta as good place to visit cite personal reasons and unfavorable perceptions



Question: “What is the main reason you say that?” (A follow-up on respondents’ answers to the question, “As a result of media coverage of the Super Bowl, are you more or less likely to think of Atlanta as a good place to visit?”) Notes: Results include adults living in all states except Georgia. Weighted number of respondents = 272. Source: APM Research Lab’s National Survey of Super Bowl Impressions, conducted Feb. 5-10, 2019. Super Bowl LIII was held on Feb. 3, 2019.

Finally, while not the point of the survey, some Americans couldn’t help but comment on the Super Bowl itself.

The Super Bowl was very boring this year.

[It’s] over-sensationalized and over-paid people. It’s a racket.

Conclusion

Hosting the Super Bowl offers cities a unique opportunity to raise their national profile and impact both awareness and impressions among the American public. As shown in the results of the 2019 National Survey of Super Bowl Impressions, more than 6 in 10 adults outside of Georgia could name either the city of Atlanta or the state of Georgia as the host locale for Super Bowl LIII. Additionally, more than one-third of Americans indicated that Super Bowl media coverage improved their impression of Atlanta—at least in terms of whether they consider the city a good place to visit—seven percentage points above the share of Americans who indicated Super Bowl coverage made them less likely to visit.

Notably, Black Americans were the most likely to have knowledge of the host location and most likely to report improved impressions of Atlanta following Super Bowl LIII—the only demographic group with more than half reporting this. Residents of the South region—perhaps due to proximity—also stood out as the most likely geography to say so. However, there is ample evidence that the Super Bowl doesn’t hold the same sway with younger Americans as older ones, and that Hispanic/Latinx Americans have far less awareness of the game, minimizing opportunities to benefit from associations with it.

In sum, Super Bowl LIII resulted in a net improvement in the impressions of Atlanta in the minds of Americans who live outside of Georgia. However, future cities cannot be assured of similar positive perceptions deriving from the Super Bowl and associated media, particularly among certain demographic groups.

About the Survey

The 2019 National Survey of Super Bowl Impressions was conducted as a part of a national omnibus survey conducted by SSRS of Glen Mills, Pennsylvania. The survey was conducted via telephone, 60 percent via cell phone and 40 percent landline, with 970 adult Americans living outside of Georgia on February 5-10, 2019. (Super Bowl LIII was held on February 3, 2019). The survey's overall margin of error is +/-3.6 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. For additional details about survey methodology, please see: https://www.americanpublicmedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/SSRS_2019_Feb_5-10_OmnibusSurvey_Methods.docx

This survey was funded through internal resources. It was not conducted on behalf of or in conjunction with any other entity or initiative.

This report was jointly authored by Andi Egbert and Craig Helmstetter of the APM Research Lab.

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In addition to philanthropic support and partnership, we are happy to entertain requests for proposals and other contractual inquiries related to research and analysis.

Contact: info@apmresearchlab.org | apmresearchlab.org

End Notes

¹ See <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/02/05/these-global-sporting-events-totally-dwarf-the-super-bowl/> and <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2017/tops-of-2017-television-and-social-media.html>.

² For example, see: “Padding Required: Assessing the Economic Impact of the Super Bowl,” by Matheson and Baade in *European Sport Management Quarterly* (Volume 6, Issue 4, 2006), available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184740601154490> and “Super Bowl XLIX and Related Events Generate an Economic Impact of \$719.4 Million According to Study Completed by Arizona State University,” press release issued by the Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee, June 23, 2015, available at <http://seidmaninstitute.com/project/super-bowl-xlix/>. For examples of the local coverage of the debates related to hosting Super Bowl 52 in Minneapolis, see <https://www.mprnews.org/topic/superbowl> and <http://www.startribune.com/star-tribune-coverage-of-super-bowl-lII-at-u-s-bank-stadium/411341685/#1>.

³ See <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2019/super-bowl-lIII-draws-98-2-million-tv-viewers-32-3-million-social-media-interactions.html>.

⁴ See <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/04/us/saints-fans-boycott-bowl-trnd/index.html>.

⁵ See <http://time.com/5519606/colin-kaepernick-super-bowl-boycott/>.

⁶ See <https://www.atlanta.net/super-bowl/super-bowl-events/>.