

Thursday, 29 September 2016

Finals fever part 2: Storm and Sharks fans compared

This weekend promises to be huge for football fans, with the AFL and NRL Grand Finals taking place on Saturday and Sunday respectively. Having completed our annual profile of the AFL finalists' supporters, Roy Morgan Research now delves into the data to compare and contrast supporters of the NRL finalists, Melbourne Storm and Cronulla Sharks. Obvious geographical differences aside, how do Storm and Sharks fans differ? Will the atmosphere at ANZ Stadium on Sunday evening be, ahem, Stormy – or a Sharknado?

Like their AFL counterparts, Melbourne Storm and Cronulla Sharks have very different-sized fan bases. As of June 2016, Melbourne Storm was the second-most popular team in the League (after the Brisbane Broncos), with 836,000 supporters — no less than 15.1% of total NRL fans. In contrast, the Sharks' 202,000 supporters account for 3.7% of the League's total fans.

While it is relatively small, the Sharks fan base is noteworthy for being comprised of more women than men. Almost 65% of Sharks supporters are female, making them the only Australian team* in the NRL whose supporters aren't predominantly male. On the other hand, nearly 61% of Storm fans are men: a gender skew typical of most NRL teams' supporters.

With a mean age of 47 years, Cronulla fans tend to be a little older than Melbourne supporters, who average 44 years. In fact, almost eight in every 10 Cronulla supporters is aged 35 or older, compared with 64.2% of their Melbourne counterparts.

Sharks supporters vs Storm supporters: vital stats

Key stats	Sharks supporters	Storm supporters
Number of supporters	202,000	836,000
Gender breakdown	35.1% men to 64.9% women	60.9% men to 39.9% women
Average age	47 years	44 years
Average household income	\$97,000	\$100,000
% who are financial members	17.7%	5.0%
% who go to NRL matches	28.4%	15.6%
% who watch NRL on TV	61.4%	71.3%
% who play rugby league	2.3%	6.1%
% who play soccer	10.1%	8.6%
% who play Australian Rules football	10.1%	1.7%

Source: Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia), July 2015-June 2016, n=641. **Base:** Australians 14+ who support Melbourne Storm or Cronulla Sharks

If the Sharks win on Sunday, it will be their first Premiership since joining the NRL in 1967. So one might expect their supporters to be more invested in their team than the Storm's, with that special commitment that comes of supporting an underdog. Indeed, 17.7% of Sharks fans

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are paid-up members of their club: more than three times the proportion of Storm supporters (5.0%).

Sharks fans are also more likely than Storm fans to attend NRL matches (28.4% vs 15.6%), but less likely to watch the NRL on TV (61.4% vs 71.3%). Considering the high proportion of women who support them, it's not so surprising to learn that Sharks fans are less likely than Storm fans to play rugby league themselves. Ironically, both groups of supporters are more likely to play soccer than rugby league, with Storm fans also being more likely to play Aussie Rules football – at a participation level (10.1%) close to that of Bulldogs supporters (10.4%), in fact!

Of course, Storm and Sharks supporters differ in many other ways beyond their demographics and sporting interests. Roy Morgan's attitudinal and behavioural data reveals some striking variations:

Sharks supporters vs Storm supporters: how their attitudes and activities vary

Sharks supporters	Storm supporters
More likely than Storm supporters to:	More likely than Sharks supporters to:
Eat chocolate bars	Eat single icecreams/icy poles
Go to a BYO restaurant	Go to a casino
Go to a rock or pop concert	Go to a nightclub
Drink hot chocolate	Drink carbonated soft drinks
Go to the beach	Go to an amusement/theme park
Pay for an exercise class (eg. yoga, Pilates)	Pay for personal fitness training
More likely to agree with the statements:	More likely to agree with the statements:
The Australian economy appears to be improving	I'm optimistic about the future
I enjoy clothes shopping	I'm a bit of an intellectual
I'm shy in social situations	I'm more extrovert than introvert
I don't have time to spend cooking	People often compliment me on my cooking
A low fat diet is a way of life for me	I love to do as many sports as possible
I drink more wine now than I used to	I often buy drinks from juice bars

Source: Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia), July 2015-June 2016, n=641. **Base:** Australians 14+ who support Melbourne Storm or Cronulla Sharks

* (New Zealand warriors also have more women than men among their supporters)

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

“With Melbourne Storm and the Cronulla Sharks gearing up to contest the NRL Grand Final this Sunday, Roy Morgan Research brings you a head-to-head comparison of each team’s supporters. This year’s final is shaping up to be a hard-fought match, with the Sharks determined to finally clinch their first title and the Storm set on making it Premiership number three. So which supporters will be shouting loudest this weekend?”

“Our results show that Sharks fans are more likely to be financial members of their club, indicating an elevated level of commitment. They are also more likely to attend NRL matches, suggesting that there will be more of them present at Sunday’s big showdown (the fact that it’s in their hometown helps, of course).

“Should the Sharks win, there is no doubt that their supporters will celebrate heartily: not only are they more likely than Storm fans to agree that they ‘drink more wine now than I used to’, they’re also far more likely to drink more premium beer than they used to, to like their alcoholic beverages strong, and to try any new drinks they hear about.

“On the other hand, if Melbourne Storm win, their supporters are more likely than their Sharks counterparts to hit a nightclub or casino to celebrate. Any lingering after-effects of their revelry will probably be tackled the next day with a personal training session and a healthy fresh juice...”

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Related research findings

View our [comprehensive range of NRL supporter profiles](#), including profiles of [Melbourne Storm supporters](#) and [Cronulla Sharks supporters](#).

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