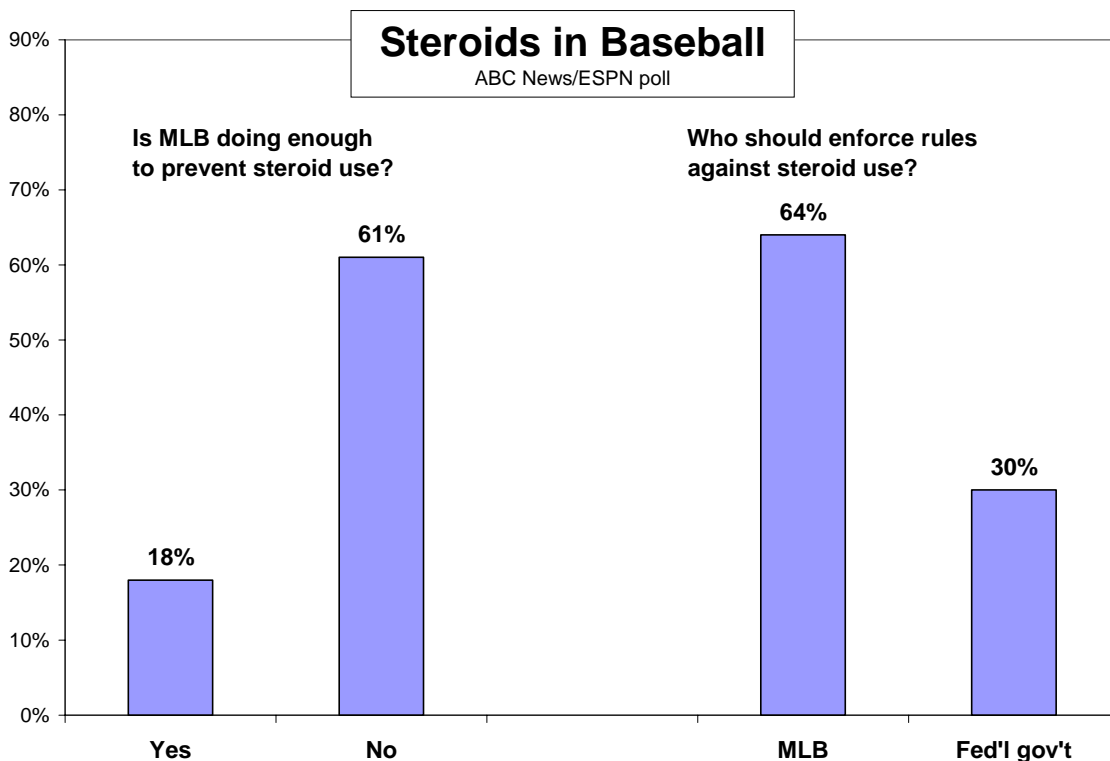


Broad Concern About Steroids Fuels Support for Punitive Rules

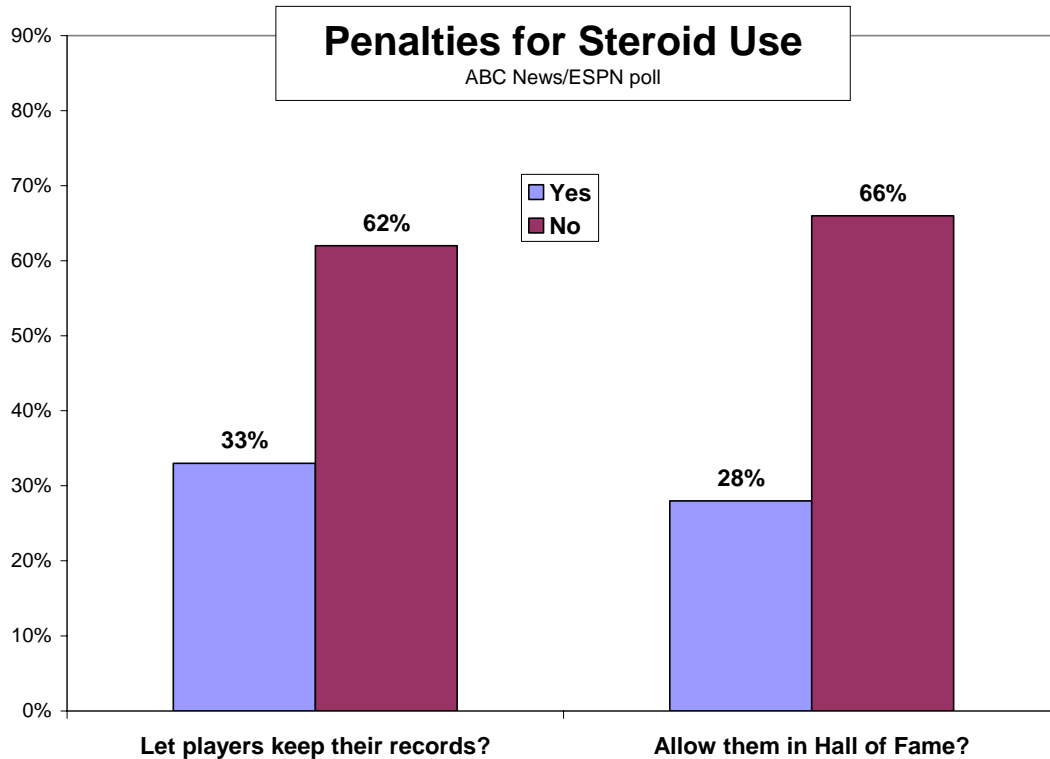
On the eve of congressional hearings on steroids in baseball, Americans express broad concern about young people using such drugs to emulate the stars, and favor a punitive approach for “juiced” athletes. But when it comes to enforcement, most want the federal government to stay in the bleachers.

More than eight in 10 Americans in this ABC News/ESPN poll say they’re concerned that the use of steroids by well-known athletes encourages young people to use these drugs; nearly half are “very concerned” about it. Congressional leaders cite the same worry as a motivating factor in tomorrow’s star-studded hearings.

Baseball comes in for considerable blame: Six in 10 say Major League Baseball has not done enough to prevent the use of these drugs by its players. Nonetheless, perhaps reflecting a broader distaste for federal regulation, only 30 percent of Americans think the federal government should take charge of creating and enforcing rules on performance-enhancing drugs in baseball. Nearly two-thirds think MLB, despite its failings to date, should write the rulebook.



The public has some austere suggestions for those rules. More than six in 10 say baseball players who are found to have broken the sport's rules by using performance-enhancing drugs should have their statistics stricken from the record books. Two-thirds also say such players should be ineligible for election to baseball's Hall of Fame.



BONDS – On a related issue, fans broadly disagree with the decision not to call ballplayer Barry Bonds to testify before Congress tomorrow; more than seven in 10 say he should have been subpoenaed. Government Reform Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA) has said the committee didn't want a focus on Bonds to dominate the hearing, and also that the committee had sought to avoid conflict with the BALCO grand jury investigation in San Francisco, in which Bonds, among others, has testified.

Bonds reportedly testified that he took substances known as “cream” and “clear,” but that he did not know these were steroids. Most fans, however, dismiss his claim: About two-thirds in this survey believe Bonds in fact knowingly took steroids.

CONCERN – People who are very concerned about young athletes' steroid use are more likely than others to say Bonds should have been called to testify. They're also more likely to say MLB is not doing enough to address the problem, and to say players who used these drugs should be kept off the books and out of the Hall of Fame.

FANS – A positive result for MLB is that the steroids inquiry does not appear to have impacted baseball's fan base. Forty-six percent of Americans call themselves baseball

fans and another 12 percent say they're "somewhat" fans, for a total of 58 percent who can be fairly called fans of the sport.

That's quite similar to what it's been in the past (55 percent in a 2003 poll, 61 percent in 1999). But it's not always been so: Baseball's labor disputes in 1994 and 2002 sharply cut the number of people calling themselves fans.

Men are substantially more likely than women to be baseball fans, 65 percent versus 51 percent. The number of baseball fans drops among people age 55 and up, and peaks among people in higher-income households.

In one attitudinal difference, fans – perhaps not surprisingly – are 14 points more apt than non-fans to say enforcement of steroid rules should be left to MLB, not taken over by the federal government.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/ESPN poll was conducted by telephone March 11-15, 2005, among a random national sample of 1,019 adults. The results have a three-point error margin for the full population, and four points for baseball fans. Field work by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Jon Cohen.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollvault.html>.

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

1. Do you think Major League Baseball is or is not doing enough to prevent the use of steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs by professional baseball players?

		Enough	Not enough	No opinion
3/15/05	All	18%	61	21
	Fans	21	69	10

2. Who do you think should be in charge of creating and enforcing rules against the use of performance-enhancing drugs by professional baseball players - (Major League Baseball), or (the federal government)?

		Federal government	Major League Baseball	No opinion
3/15/05	All	30	64	6
	Fans	26	70	4

3. How concerned are you that the use of performance-enhancing drugs by well-known athletes encourages young people to use these drugs - very concerned, somewhat concerned, not so concerned or not concerned at all?

		-----Concerned-----			-----Not concerned-----			No opin.
		NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not so	Not at all	
3/15/05	All	82	48	34	17	8	9	1

Fans 86 50 36 14 8 6 *

4. Do you think professional baseball players who are found to have broken the sport's rules by using performance-enhancing drugs should or should not be allowed to remain in the record books?

		Should	Should not	No opinion
3/15/05	All	33	62	5
	Fans	37	59	4

5. Do you think such athletes should or should not be eligible for membership in the baseball Hall of Fame?

		Should	Should not	No opinion
3/15/05	All	28	66	5
	Fans	32	63	4

6. Are you a fan of professional baseball or not?

	-----Fan-----			
	NET	Yes	Yes, somewhat (vol.)	No
3/15/05	58	46	12	42
12/21/03	55	44	11	45
8/25/02*	32	28	4	67
11/21/99**	61	45	16	39
4/23/95*	37	28	9	63
2/14/93**	51	44	7	49

*Looming strike/post-strike.

**Gallup.

7. (IF A FAN) The ballplayer Barry Bonds was not among those subpoenaed to testify on steroid use before a congressional committee next week. Do you think Bonds should or should not have been called to testify?

		Should	Should not	No opinion
3/15/05	Fans	72	16	12

8. (IF A FAN) Just your best guess, do you think Bonds did or did not KNOWINGLY use steroids?

		Did	Did not	No opinion
3/15/05	Fans	65	16	19

END