

CANADIAN PRESS / LEGER MARKETING

**Canadians and
Professional Sports**

Report



1.0 Study Findings

- Interest in professional sports has decreased among a third of Canadians.

Question: *In the last five years, has your interest in professional sports such as NHL hockey, major league baseball, professional football or other sports INCREASED, REMAINED STABLE or DECREASED?*

n=1516	Increased	Remained stable	Decreased	Don't know/Refusal
Canada	13.5%	47.1%	33.8%	5.6%

- Because professional athletes have salaries that are too high, more than half of Canadians do not regard them with as much esteem as previously.

Question: *Which of the following statements best represents your opinion pertaining to the salaries paid to professional athletes?*

n=1516	Salaries too high and this has a negative impact on the way they regard athletes	Salaries too high but this does not have a negative impact on the way they regard athletes	Salaries reflect the laws of the marketplace	Don't know/Refusal
Canada	55.3%	25.6%	13.4%	5.6%

- Hockey remains the favourite professional sport of Canadians.

Question: *What is your favourite professional sport among the following...?*

n=1516	... hockey	... baseball	... football	... basketball	None	Don't know/Refusal
Canada	45.4%	14.6%	12.3%	9.3%	16.7%	1.6%

- Canadians prefer the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Question: *What is your favourite Canadian hockey team? Is it...?*

n=1519	
... the Toronto Maple Leafs	30.4%
... the Montreal Canadien	21.6%
... the Vancouver Canucks	8.9%
... the Edmonton Oilers	8.8%
... the Ottawa Senators	4.2%
... the Calgary Flames	4.2%
None of the above	17.2%
Don't know / Refusal	4.8%

- Canadians prefer Canadian football to American football.

Question: *In general, do you prefer CANADIAN football or AMERICAN football?*

n=1519	Canadian football	American football	Neither	Don't know / Refusal
Canada	39.3%	22.4%	32.2%	6.1%

2.0 Results

2.1 Interest in Professional Sports has Decreased Among a Third of Canadians

33.8% of Canadians mentioned that their interest in professional sports has decreased in the last few years while it has remained the same for 47.1% of Canadians and increased among 13.5% of them.

38.1% of occasional sports fans, 43.8% of baseball fans, 39.2% of football fans, 37.8% of men, 38.0% of those 45-54 years old, 41.6% of Quebecers, 39.9% of those in the higher income brackets, 38.1% for professionals and 39.9% of University-educated Canadians are more likely to have seen their interest in professional sports decrease.

However, for 24.9% of regular sports fans, 17.1% of hockey fans, 29.3% of those 18-24 years old, 17.3% of Ontarians and 27.2% of students, their interest has increased compared to other segment of the population.

Various reasons explain the decrease in the interest level in professional sports, the main one being related to the salaries of players (45.6%). The loss of Canadian franchises of professional sports teams (12.1%), the weak performances of Canadian teams (10.0%), the player strikes (7.0%) and the very large number of televised matches (5.8%) also account for the dwindling interest in sports. 17.2% did not mention any of these reasons.

Question: *In the last few years, has your interest in professional sports such as NHL hockey, major league baseball, professional football or other sports INCREASED, REMAINED STABLE or DECREASED?*

n=1516	Increased	Remained stable	Decreased	Don't know / Refusal
Atlantic provinces	9.8%	51.2%	31.7%	7.3%
Quebec	9.2%	46.2%	41.6%	3.1%
Ontario	17.3%	45.8%	31.1%	5.8%
Prairies	13.2%	56.0%	23.5%	7.3%
Alberta	10.5%	52.4%	31.4%	5.7%
British Columbia	14.9%	41.3%	35.8%	8.0%
Canada	13.5%	47.1%	33.8%	5.6%

Level of Interest in Professional Sports According to Favourite Sport

n=1516	Increased	Remained stable	Decreased	Don't know / Refusal
Hockey	17.1%	48.4%	33.7%	0.8%
Baseball	11.9%	42.6%	43.8%	1.8%
Football	10.9%	47.5%	39.2%	2.4%
Basketball	18.2%	46.5%	29.6%	5.7%

2.2 Because Professional Athletes Have Salaries That are too High, More than Half of Canadians Do Not Regard them with as much Esteem as Previously

According to 55.3% of Canadians, the ridiculously high player salaries have a negative impact on the esteem they feel for professional athletes. 25.6% of them recognize that player salaries are high but this fact does not affect the esteem they feel for the athletes. However, 13.4% mentioned that salaries are but a reflection of the laws of the marketplace in sports and “more power to them” if they can increase their income level.

60.2% of men, 62.2% of those 45-64 years old, 64.9% of Francophones, 64.6% of Quebeckers and 59.7% of occasional sports fans were more likely to find salaries too high.

In addition, 29.3% of women, 32.5% of those 18-24 years old, 28.1% of Anglophones, 33.2% of Canadians living in the Prairies, 35.3% of students and 28.9% of regular sports fans find, more than other segments of the population, that salaries are very high but that this does not affect the esteem they feel for professional athletes.

Question: *Which of the following statements best represents your opinion pertaining to the salaries paid to professional athletes?*

n=1516	
Atlantic provinces	46.4%
Quebec	64.6%
Ontario	54.6%
Prairies	46.6%
Alberta	54.4%
British Columbia	50.9%
Canada	55.3%

... the salaries of players have become ridiculously high and this has a negative impact on the way you regard professional athletes

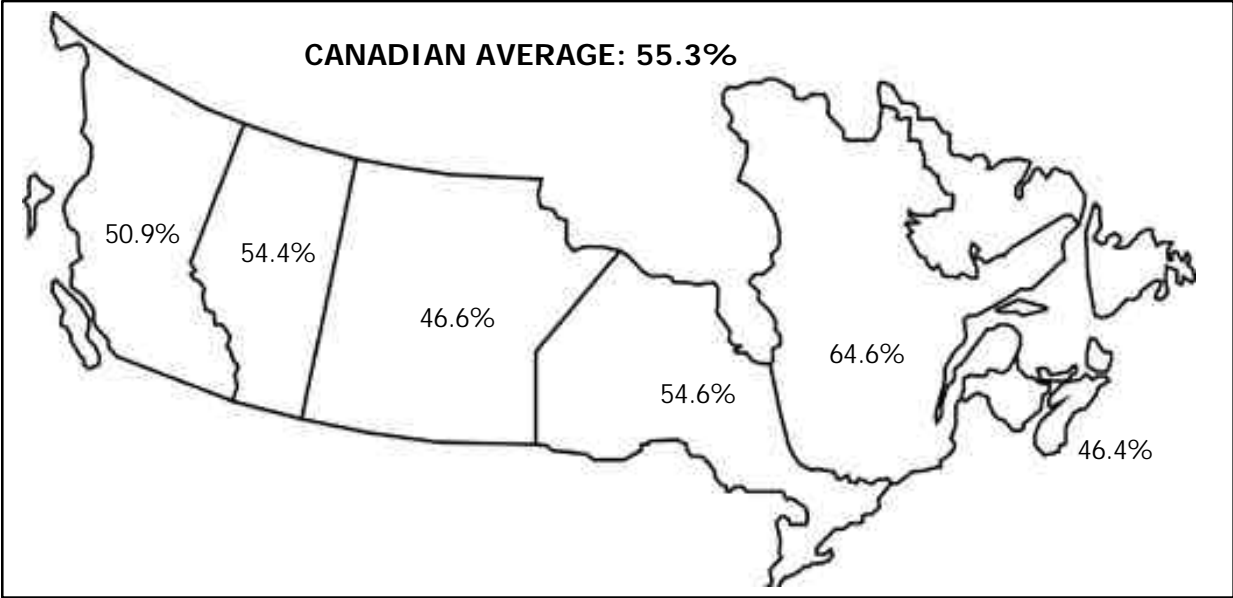
n=1516	
Atlantic provinces	26.4%
Quebec	21.5%
Ontario	25.6%
Prairies	33.2%
Alberta	27.5%
British Columbia	27.0%
Canada	25.6%

... the salaries of players are too high but this does not really have an impact on the way you regard professional athletes

n=1516	
Atlantic provinces	18.7%
Quebec	11.9%
Ontario	13.4%
Prairies	12.2%
Alberta	11.6%
British Columbia	15.4%
Canada	13.4%

... the salaries of players only reflect the laws of the marketplace in sports and more power to them if they can increase their incomes

Percentage of Canadians who mentioned that player salaries being too high has had a negative impact on how they regard professional athletes



2.3 Hockey Remains Canadians' Favourite Professional Sport

For 45.4% of Canadians, hockey is the favourite professional sport, followed by baseball (14.6%), football (12.3%) and basketball (9.3%) while 16.7% do not have a favourite sport.

Hockey represents the favourite sport of Canadians more or less equally in all regions of the country. This is not the case, however, for other professional sports. We therefore see that baseball is most popular among residents of the Atlantic provinces with a rate of preference of 23.7% and only 8.2% in Quebec. Football, for its part, is preferred by 18.1% of Albertans with their two teams and 17.1% of Quebeckers. In terms of basketball, it was particularly less popular in Alberta (3.2%).

Finally, among hockey fans, we find 50.4% of men, 55.5% of those 18-24 years old, 51.8% of Albertans and 57.3% of manual workers.

Question: *What is your favourite sport among the following...?*

n=1516	... hockey	... baseball	... football	... basketball	None	Don't know / Refusal
Atlantic provinces	41.8%	23.7%	4.7%	10.8%	15.8%	3.2%
Quebec	42.0%	8.2%	17.1%	11.0%	21.5%	0.2%
Ontario	46.8%	17.7%	7.8%	10.4%	15.4%	1.9%
Prairies	41.0%	18.2%	16.4%	7.3%	14.6%	2.4%
Alberta	51.8%	9.8%	18.1%	3.2%	14.0%	3.1%
British Columbia	47.7%	13.4%	14.3%	7.9%	15.3%	1.4%
Canada	45.4%	14.6%	12.3%	9.3%	16.7%	1.6%

2.4 Canadians Prefer the Toronto Maple Leafs

Asked to say who their favourite hockey was, 30.4% of Canadians mentioned the Toronto Maple Leafs, while 21.6% chose the Montreal Canadiens, 8.9% opted for the Vancouver Canucks, 8.8% for the Edmonton Oilers, 4.2% for the Calgary Flames and 4.2% for the Ottawa Senators. 17.2% did not indicate their preference.

It goes without saying that the Toronto Maple Leafs are dominant in Ontario (61.1%), that the Canadiens wins out in Quebec (58.8%), the Canucks in British Columbia (57.3%) and the Oilers in Alberta (54.7%). The Calgary Flames are supported by 22.1% of Albertans and 12.2% of Canadians who live in the Prairies. When it comes to the less popular NHL team, the Ottawa Senators, it was found to have the support of 7.2% of Quebecers, 5.3% Ontarians, 2.9% of residents of the Atlantic provinces, 2.4% of those who live in the Prairies. The Senators have not supporters in Alberta or British Columbia.

Question: *What is your favourite hockey team? Is it...?*

n=1516	The Montreal Canadiens	The Ottawa Senators	The Toronto Maple Leafs	The Calgary Flames
Atlantic provinces	22.9%	2.9%	39.1%	1.9%
Quebec	58.8%	7.2%	5.6%	0.7%
Ontario	9.6%	5.3%	61.1%	0.3%
Prairies	10.0%	2.4%	21.9%	12.2%
Alberta	4.5%	0.0%	2.5%	22.1%
British Columbia	5.6%	0.0%	8.2%	5.4%
Canada	21.6%	4.2%	30.4%	4.2%

n=1516	The Edmonton Oilers	The Vancouver Canucks	None in particular	Don't know / Refusal
Atlantic provinces	3.2%	3.7%	16.6%	9.7%
Quebec	3.4%	0.3%	21.3%	2.7%
Ontario	1.5%	0.9%	16.3%	5.1%
Prairies	16.4%	3.5%	27.1%	6.5%
Alberta	54.7%	4.1%	6.7%	5.5%
British Columbia	5.7%	57.3%	14.6%	3.3%
Canada	8.8%	8.9%	17.2%	4.8%

2.5 Canadian Football Preferred Over American Football

39.3% of Canadians prefer Canadian football while 22.4% lean more toward American football. 32.2 % do not prefer one over the other.

Canadians living in the Prairies (61.6%) and Alberta (59.2%) clearly prefer Canadian football.

Moreover, 42.3% of men, 44.1% of those 65 years old or over, 41.5% of Anglophones and 45.8% of manual workers prefer Canadian football.

However, 30.6% of men, 40.6% of those 18-24 years old, 26.4% of Ontarians, 30.7% of those in the higher income brackets, 39.6% students and 25.9% of University graduates prefer American football.

Question: *In general, do you prefer CANADIAN football or AMERICAN football?*

n=1519	Canadian football	American football	Neither	Don't know / Refusal
Atlantic provinces	34.4%	17.4%	40.5%	7.8%
Quebec	36.8%	24.4%	33.8%	5.0%
Ontario	32.7%	26.4%	35.2%	5.7%
Prairies	61.6%	13.2%	17.9%	7.3%
Alberta	59.2%	13.1%	21.3%	6.5%
British Columbia	39.0%	21.9%	31.1%	8.0%
Canada	39.3%	22.4%	32.2%	6.1%

3.0 Methodology

This study was conducted by Leger Marketing through telephone interviews among a representative sample of 1516 English- or French-speaking Canadians, 18 years of age or older.

The interviews were conducted from our Montreal and Winnipeg call centres between January 22 and January 27, 2002. Up to ten call-backs were made in the case of non-response.

Using data from Statistics Canada, the results were weighted according to geographic location, gender and language spoken at home to ensure a sample representative of the entire Canadian adult population. In the end, the maximum margin of error obtained for a sample of 1516 respondents is of $\pm 2.6\%$, 19 times out of 20.