



Physical Health and Fitness; the Sports We Follow and Those We Play

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The Association for Canadian Studies commissioned the physical fitness and sports poll from Environics Research Group/Focus Canada. The survey of 2,002 Canadians 18 years of age and over looks at the amount of time that Canadians devote on a weekly basis to physical health and fitness. The survey also looks at the sports that Canadians follow most and those that they participate in most frequently. In terms of the sports that they follow a comparison is offered with the United States from recent surveys conducted in that country by the Gallup and Harris polling firms. The ACS-Environics survey was carried out by telephone from the end of December 2002 to the beginning of January 2003. Results are accurate to within plus or minus 2.2%, 19 times out of 20.

Part 1- Day 1

Physical Health and Fitness

As observed below Western Canadians and Ontarians do the most hours of physical fitness per week. Quebecers are the least physically active and well below the national average in this area.

Table 1

About how many hours per week, if any, do you dedicate to your physical health and fitness?

	Total	Atl. Prov	Quebec	Ontario	Western Canada
None	10	13	11	8	11
1 to 2 hours	20	17	26	21	15
3 to 4 hours	23	18	23	24	24
5 to 6 hours	17	15	18	17	17
7 to 10 hours	16	20	13	16	19
11 or more hours	12	14	9	12	14
DK/NA	1	2	1	1	-
Average	7.40	7.34	6.81	7.59	7.62

When broken down according to the three largest census metropolitan areas Montrealers lag well behind Torontonians and Vancouverites in terms of the time they devote to their physical health and activity on a weekly basis. Moreover unlike Toronto and Vancouver Montrealers tend to be well behind other Quebecers when it comes to the degree of physical activity and thus drag the rest of the province below levels of activity that are otherwise relatively in line with the national average.

Table 2

About how many hours per week, if any, do you dedicate to your physical health and fitness?

Subregions			
	Toronto	Montreal	Vancouver
None	8	12	9
1 to 2 hours	20	30	16
3 to 4 hours	28	21	25
5 to 6 hours	18	18	17
7 to 10 hours	14	10	19
11 or more hours	11	7	13
DK/NA	1	1	-
Average	7.13	5.33	6.81

On the basis of gender, as observed below men do more physical activity on a weekly basis than women.

About how many hours per week, if any, do you dedicate to your physical health and fitness?

	Total	Male	Female
None	10	9	11
1 to 2 hours	20	18	22
3 to 4 hours	23	22	24
5 to 6 hours	17	18	17
7 to 10 hours	16	17	16
11 or more hours	12	15	9
DK/NA	1	-	1
Average	7.40	8.17	6.67

Not surprisingly on the basis of age, younger Canadians are more likely to be engaged in physical activity than are older Canadians. Though the table below reveals that persons over the age of 60 are slightly more inclined than are those between the ages of 45 and 59 to engage on physical activity.

Table 3

About how many hours per week, if any, do you dedicate to your physical health and fitness?

	Age			
	18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 or more
None	6	9	10	15
1 to 2 hours	16	22	23	19
3 to 4 hours	22	25	25	21
5 to 6 hours	19	20	15	13
7 to 10 hours	19	15	16	17
11 or more hours	16	9	11	12
DK/NA	*	*	*	1
Average	8.53	7.09	6.66	6.80

Connected to the regional data cited in Table 1, anglophones devote more time on average to physical health and fitness per week than do francophones.

Table 4

About how many hours per week, if any, do you dedicate to your physical health and fitness?

	Language at home	
	English	French
None	10	10
1 to 2 hours	18	25
3 to 4 hours	24	23
5 to 6 hours	16	19
7 to 10 hours	18	12
11 or more hours	13	9
DK/NA	1	1
Average	7.64	6.88

As to immigrants, those of European origins other than British and French devote far more time to physical health and activity than do non-European immigrants that represent the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population.

Table 5

About how many hours per week, if any, do you dedicate to your physical health and fitness?

None-Brit Immigrants		
	Europe	Other
None	13	16
1 to 2 hours	16	26
3 to 4 hours	25	21
5 to 6 hours	15	22
7 to 10 hours	12	9
11 or more hours	13	4
DK/NA	1	-
Average	7.32	4.49

On a community-size basis, people living in the largest areas devote the least time to physical health and activity; those living in the smallest communities the most.

Table 6

About how many hours per week, if any, do you dedicate to your physical health and fitness?

Community Size

	1 million +	100K –1 million	5K – 100K	Less than 5K
None	9	8	11	12
1 to 2 hours	23	17	20	18
3 to 4 hours	25	24	22	22
5 to 6 hours	18	19	18	12
7 to 10 hours	13	18	16	21
11 or more hours	10	13	12	15
DK/NA	1	-	1	1
Average	6.40	7.44	6.88	9.73

Supporters of the Canadian Alliance spend more time on average towards their physical health and fitness than do supporters of other political parties. Those supporting the NDP and the Bloc devote the least amount of time to their health and fitness.

Table 6

About how many hours per week, if any, do you dedicate to your physical health and fitness?

	Fed. Political Preference				
	Lib.	P.C.	NDP	CA	Bloc Que.
None	8	13	12	9	10
1 to 2 hours	19	17	19	17	27
3 to 4 hours	24	22	30	24	21
5 to 6 hours	17	14	11	19	19
7 to 10 hours	19	22	15	17	10
11 or more hours	12	12	11	13	12
DK/NA	1	1	*	1	1
Average	7.56	7.65	6.74	8.69	5.94

Part 2 - Day 2

Favorite Sport to Watch

As observed below when it comes to viewing, listening or reading about sports in Canada hockey remains well ahead of the others. Quebec however remains an important exception in terms of the extent to which hockey is the most watched sport in the country. While it is indeed ahead of other sports, it is not as popular as it is in the other provinces. In Quebec figure skating, amateur hockey, tennis and soccer have a greater viewing and listening audience than is the case elsewhere in the country. The degree of respondents that do not follow any sport is higher in Quebec than it is elsewhere in Canada. Baseball and basketball also have particularly low followings in Quebec. Ontarians have a greater attraction to golf and NFL Football (as opposed to the CFL). In the Atlantic provinces, baseball (7%) finished third.

	Total	Atl. Prov	Quebec	Ontario	Western Canada
Hockey (professional)	29	30	20	32	31
Figure skating	7	8	10	6	6
Hockey (amateur)	5	6	8	4	4
Baseball	5	7	3	6	3
Soccer	4	3	6	5	3
Golf	4	4	4	6	3
Football (NFL)	4	3	4	6	3
Football (CFL)	3	1	4	2	5
Auto racing	3	4	3	2	4
Basketball	3	4	1	3	3
Curling	2	2	1	2	5
Tennis	2	*	5	1	1
Boxing	1	2	1	1	2
Equestrian events	1	1	*	1	2
Cycling/MotoCross	1	1	1	1	1
Skiing	1	-	2	*	*
Football (College)	1	-	1	1	*
Wrestling	1	2	1	*	*
Fishing	1	-	1	*	*
Other	5	5	4	5	5
None, do not follow sports	18	18	21	16	17
DK/NA	1	1	*	1	1

When the viewing and listening habits of Canada's larger cities are considered hockey is by far in the lead amongst Vancouverites with Toronto in second and Montreal a distant third. Indeed a majority of Vancouver respondents favour winter sports in their viewing and listening habits.

Table 10**What, if any, do you consider to be your favorite spectator sport to watch on TV, listen to on radio or follow in the newspapers?**

Sub-regions			
	Toronto	Montreal	Vancouver
Hockey (professional)	31	19	38
Figure skating	7	9	8
Hockey (amateur)	2	8	4
Baseball	6	3	4
Soccer	6	9	7
Golf	6	4	1
Football (NFL)	6	3	2
Football (CFL)	1	6	2
Auto racing	4	1	5
Basketball	3	4	1
Curling	2	1	1
Tennis	2	6	1
Boxing	12	-	2
Equestrian events	-	1	1
Cycling/MotoCross	1	*	2
Skiing	1	2	-
Football (College)	1	1	1
Wrestling	1	1	-
Fishing	-	*	-
Other	4	4	5
None, do not follow sports	18	21	16
DK/NA	1	1	*

On the basis of gender it is observed that professional hockey is more widely followed by men though nearly one quarter of women also follow the sport. For their part, approximately one out of eight women follow figure skating. While approximately one out of eight men do not follow any sport while nearly one out four women do not follow sports.

Table 11
What, if any, do you consider to be your favorite spectator sport to watch on TV, listen to on radio or follow in the newspapers?

	Male	Female
Hockey (professional)	35	23
Figure skating	1	13
Hockey (amateur)	6	4
Baseball	4	5
Soccer	5	3
Golf	4	4
Football (NFL)	6	2
Football (CFL)	4	2
Auto racing	5	1
Basketball	2	3
Curling	1	4
Tennis	2	2
Boxing	2	1
Equestrian events	*	2
Cycling/MotoCross	1	*
Skiing	1	1
Football (College)	1	*
Wrestling	*	1
Fishing	1	*
Other	4	5
None, do not follow sports	12	23
DK/NA	1	1

Table 12**What, if any, do you consider to be your favourite spectator sport to watch on TV, listen to on radio or follow in the newspapers?**

As observed below hockey is much more popular amongst the generation between the ages of 18 to 44 than is in the groups that are 45 and over. Figure skating, golf and baseball seem to gain in popularity amongst the older group. Amongst the 18-29 respondents soccer finishes second to hockey as the most watched and listened to sport. This is likely attributable to the growth of the immigrant segment of the population and its interest in soccer.

	Age			
	18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 or more
Hockey (professional)	34	34	23	21
Figure skating	3	6	10	12
Hockey (amateur)	5	5	5	5
Baseball	3	3	6	8
Soccer	7	5	4	2
Golf	*	3	5	10
Football (NFL)	6	4	5	2
Football (CFL)	5	3	3	4
Auto racing	3	4	4	1
Basketball	5	3	3	*
Curling	1	1	2	6
Tennis	1	2	2	3
Boxing	2	2	1	1
Equestrian events	*	2	*	1
Cycling/MotoCross	2	1	*	-
Skiing	*	1	1	1
Football (College)	*	*	1	1
Wrestling	1	1	*	*
Fishing	1	*	1	*
Other	6	5	4	3
None, do not follow sports	14	17	19	21
DK/NA	1	1	*	1

Linked to the regional results hockey is followed more on average by English than French speakers. That said amateur hockey is slightly more popular amongst French speakers. Finally a greater share of anglophones follow sports than do francophones.

Table 13

What, if any, do you consider to be your favorite spectator sport to watch on TV, listen to on radio or follow in the newspapers?

Language at home		
	English	French
Hockey (professional)	31	21
Figure skating	7	9
Hockey (amateur)	4	7
Baseball	5	3
Soccer	3	6
Golf	4	4
Football (NFL)	4	3
Football (CFL)	3	4
Auto racing	3	3
Basketball	3	1
Curling	3	1
Tennis	1	4
Boxing	2	1
Equestrian events	1	*
Cycling/MotoCross	1	*
Skiing	*	2
Football (College)	1	1
Wrestling	1	1
Fishing	*	1
Other	5	4
None, do not follow sports	16	22
DK/NA	1	*

While hockey remains the sport that is most watched by immigrants there are certain noteworthy differences amongst European and non-European immigrants the principal one being the greater popularity of soccer amongst the non-Europeans and the stronger attraction of figure skating amongst Europeans. It is also worth noting that Europeans follow sports to a lesser degree than do non-Europeans.

Table 14

What, if any, do you consider to be your favorite spectator sport to watch on TV, listen to on radio or follow in the newspapers?

Non-British Immigrant		
	Europe	Other
Hockey (professional)	20	27
Figure skating	10	2
Hockey (amateur)	2	1
Baseball	1	4
Soccer	13	24
Golf	3	-
Football (NFL)	6	6
Football (CFL)	1	1
Auto racing	-	-
Basketball	2	8
Curling	1	-
Tennis	5	1
Boxing	1	-
Equestrian events	5	-
Cycling/MotoCross	1	-
Skiing	2	-
Football (College)	1	3
Wrestling	-	-
Fishing	-	-
Other	6	3
None, do not follow sports	23	14
DK/NA	1	4

With respect to income people with lower earnings tend to follow sports less than those in the higher brackets. And while hockey remains dominant it is persons in the lower middle and higher income brackets that follow the sport somewhat more. Golf and NFL Football are more widely followed by higher earners. Soccer and figure skating (which likely includes a disproportionately higher number of women) are more widely followed by the lower earners and the middle income group (\$60-\$80k) follow auto racing and NFL football to a slightly greater degree than persons in other income brackets.

Table 15

What, if any, do you consider to be your favourite spectator sport to watch on TV, listen to on radio or follow in the newspapers?

	Household Income					
	Less than \$20K	\$20K to \$30K	\$30K to \$40K	\$40K to \$60K	\$60K to \$80K	\$80K or More
Hockey (professional)	25	26	29	37	26	32
Figure skating	10	7	9	5	5	5
Hockey (amateur)	6	4	5	4	6	5
Baseball	6	5	5	4	5	4
Soccer	7	5	2	2	5	5
Golf	2	3	4	4	5	5
Football (NFL)	2	3	5	4	7	6
Football (CFL)	4	2	3	3	3	4
Auto racing	3	3	2	3	4	2
Basketball	2	4	3	1	4	4
Curling	2	3	2	3	4	2
Tennis	-	1	3	3	2	1
Boxing	1	4	-	2	-	*
Equestrian events	*	2	1	1	1	1
Cycling/MotoCross	1	-	1	1	*	1
Skiing	*	1	1	*	1	2
Football (College)	1	1	*	-	1	1
Wrestling	1	1	*	*	*	-
Fishing	1	-	*	1	1	-
Other	4	8	5	4	4	3
None, do not follow sports	23	17	18	16	14	15
DK/NA	*	1	1	1	*	*

Approximately 3 of every 10 supporters of the country's national parties, with the exception of the Bloc Québécois supporters, consider hockey to be their favorite spectator sport (clearly connected to the regional trends seen above). Supporters of the Bloc Québécois are less inclined towards professional hockey, as a near equal share follow figure skating (probably due to a stronger presence of women in the Bloc Québécois).

Table 16

What, if any, do you consider to be your favourite spectator sport to watch on TV, listen to on radio or follow in the newspapers?

Fed. Political Preference					
	Lib.	P.C.	NDP	CA	Bloc Que.
Hockey (professional)	32	27	31	33	16
Figure skating	8	6	6	4	14
Hockey (amateur)	5	4	5	4	6
Baseball	5	7	4	6	2
Soccer	4	2	8	1	6
Golf	4	5	2	5	4
Football (NFL)	3	3	4	6	6
Football (CFL)	3	5	2	4	7
Auto racing	3	4	4	3	3
Basketball	3	4	4	2	1
Curling	2	4	4	2	-
Tennis	3	*	2	1	3
Boxing	2	1	1	2	1
Equestrian events	*	1	2	1	-
Cycling/MotoCross	1	*	1	1	1
Skiing	1	*	2	*	2
Football (College)	1	*	*	-	1
Wrestling	*	1	1	*	1
Fishing	*	1	*	*	1
Other	3	8	4	5	5
None, do not follow sports	17	16	12	16	20
DK/NA	1	1	*	*	-

Americans follow sports to a greater extent than do Canadians. The sports that are followed in Canada and the United States point to a significant cultural difference in the two countries. Not surprisingly, winter sports are more popular in Canada. Moreover professional hockey has an almost identical percentage of followers in Canada as NFL football does in the United States. Baseball, which has been on the decline in the United States, remains the third most popular sport to follow in that country. And whereas basketball is on the rise south of the border, in Canada it is still not as popular as baseball. That said, baseball is not followed in Canada a great deal more than are a variety of other sports.

Table 17

Canada and the United States: Comparing Sports that are followed most in the two countries

	Canada	United States
Hockey (professional)	29	3
Figure skating	7	4
Hockey (amateur)	5	
Baseball	5	12
Soccer	4	2
Golf	4	4
Football (NFL)	4	28
Football (CFL)	3	
Auto racing	3	6
Basketball	3	16
Curling	2	
Tennis	2	2
Boxing	1	2
Equestrian events	2	
Cycling/MotoCross	1	1
Skiing	1	
Football (College)	1	
Wrestling	1	1
Fishing	1	
Other	5	4
None, do not follow sports	18	12
DK/NA	1	

*The Gallup Poll. March 26-28, 2001. N=1,024 adults nationwide.