

As Soccer captures the attention of many North Americans did it move the 'goalpost' on Canadians sports preferences?

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Introduction and Methodology

The 2026 FIFA World Cup, hosted in Canada, the United States and Mexico, has placed soccer at the center of considerable public and media attention across North America. With Canada participating in the tournament after previous appearances in 1986 and 2022—and now competing as a host nation—this study examines whether the heightened visibility of the World Cup is beginning to modify Canadians' sports preferences. To examine the possible impact, the Association for Canadian Studies commissioned Leger to ask Canadians what their favorite sports to watch are over the course of the year.

The findings from the July 10-12 survey suggest that hockey remains firmly atop the country's favorite sports hierarchy, but that soccer is establishing a firm 'foothold', particularly among younger Canadians and allophones, many of whom are immigrants or have close connections to countries where soccer has long been the dominant sport. As Canada's population becomes increasingly diverse, its current and future sporting preferences will likely be shaped by demographic change, producing a broader and more varied sports landscape even as hockey retains its leading place.

Methodology

The findings arise from a survey of Canadians conducted by the firm Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies between July 10-12, 2026. The survey was conducted with 1505 respondents in Canada. A margin of error cannot be associated with a non-probability sample in a panel survey for comparison purposes. A probability sample of 1505 respondents would have a margin of error of $\pm 2.5\%$, 19 times out of 20.

Hockey remains the favorite sport for a plurality of Canadians but soccer is firmly in second amongst the 18-24 cohort

Over the course of the year, what is your favourite sport to watch?	Total	Male	Female	Between 18 and 24	Between 25 and 34	Between 35 and 44	Between 45 and 54	Between 55 and 64	65+
Hockey	36%	39%	34%	43%	36%	32%	42%	33%	36%
Baseball	9%	8%	10%	4%	11%	8%	8%	11%	10%
Football	9%	14%	5%	5%	9%	9%	7%	15%	10%
Basketball	5%	5%	5%	4%	8%	10%	4%	1%	3%
Soccer	8%	10%	6%	13%	10%	10%	7%	7%	5%
Tennis	3%	2%	5%	3%	2%	3%	3%	4%	5%
Other....	5%	5%	5%	7%	4%	4%	5%	6%	6%
None	23%	16%	30%	21%	21%	24%	23%	24%	26%

Hockey is far more dominant everywhere in Canada except in Ontario where a diverse menu erodes hockey's prevalence

Over the course of the year, what is your favourite sport to watch?	Atl.	QC	ON	MB/S K	AB	BC
Hockey	36%	45%	29%	40%	40%	37%
Baseball	11%	2%	14%	9%	9%	6%
Football	3%	9%	9%	17%	11%	11%
Basketball	3%	2%	7%	2%	4%	6%
Soccer	8%	7%	9%	7%	5%	11%
Tennis	1%	4%	5%	1%	3%	1%
Other	5%	5%	5%	4%	5%	8%
None	32%	25%	23%	21%	23%	20%

Hockey is king amongst the country’s francophones as baseball and basketball doesn’t much resonate for them; baseball connects more with English Canadians than others and hockey drops to one in four amongst the country’s most diverse population where soccer is firmly in second

Over the course of the year, what is your favourite sport to watch?	French	English	A language other than French or English
Hockey	46%	35%	26%
Baseball	3%	11%	10%
Football	7%	10%	8%
Basketball	1%	6%	9%
Soccer	6%	8%	17%
Tennis	5%	3%	7%
Other, please specify	5%	5%	9%
None	28%	23%	15%

Hockey declines somewhat amongst those with higher levels of educational attainment which is where soccer does best though still well behind hockey

Over the course of the year, what is your favourite sport to watch?	HS or less	Coll.	Univ or higher
Hockey	41%	37%	31%
Baseball	5%	12%	9%
Football	10%	9%	10%
Basketball	5%	3%	8%
Soccer	7%	6%	12%
Tennis	3%	3%	4%
Other, please specify	3%	6%	7%
None	27%	23%	20%

Hockey declines somewhat amongst urban residents with soccer and football getting more attention

Over the course of the year, what is your favourite sport to watch?	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Hockey	31%	40%	41%
Baseball	8%	10%	10%
Football	11%	9%	8%
Basketball	6%	6%	2%
Soccer	10%	8%	4%
Tennis	4%	3%	2%
Other, please specify	6%	4%	5%
None	25%	20%	27%

Higher income groups are more likely to follow sport (s)

Over the course of the year, what is your favourite sport to watch?	<40k	40-59k	60-79k	80-99k	100k+
Hockey	32%	36%	32%	38%	40%
Baseball	8%	9%	10%	10%	9%
Football	8%	12%	10%	9%	10%
Basketball	4%	3%	8%	4%	6%
Soccer	9%	8%	8%	9%	7%
Tennis	5%	2%	4%	5%	3%
Other, please specify	3%	5%	6%	6%	7%
None	32%	25%	24%	19%	19%