

HOCKEY

Canadians Want to Ban Head Shots from Hockey, But No Consensus on Fights

The proportion of Canadians and hockey fans who are satisfied with the NHL's efforts in looking after player safety has increased since March.

[OTTAWA – Nov. 1, 2011] – Canadians and professional hockey fans continue to believe that the game would be better off if head shots were abolished, but a disagreement on the issue of fights remains, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

The online survey of a representative sample of 2,005 Canadian adults also shows that Canadians and professional hockey fans are more satisfied with the efforts of the National Hockey League (NHL) to look after the safety of players than they were seven months ago.

Injuries and Violence

As was the case in the [survey on hockey](#) conducted in March 2011, a large proportion of Canadians (90%) continue to believe that hockey is a sport that carries a significant risk of head injuries—more than boxing (88%), football (78%), mixed martial arts (53%) or rugby (55%). One third of all respondents (33%)—and practically half of hockey fans (48%)—say they know someone who has sustained a concussion or serious head injury as a result of playing hockey.

More than half of Canadians (56%, -4 since March) think that professional hockey has become a more violent sport over the past five years. Among hockey fans, the proportion of respondents who believe the sport has become more violent has dropped from 48 per cent to 38 per cent. In addition, fewer Canadians are not considering to encourage their kids to avoid playing hockey (31%, -3), willing to watch fewer

KEY FINDINGS

- **80% of Canadians and 83% of hockey fans think the game would be better off if head shots were banned**
- **42% of Canadians (+8) and 68% of hockey fans (+24) rate the NHL's efforts in looking after the safety of players as "very good" or "good."**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From October 19 to October 21, 2011, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 2,005 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 2.2%. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure samples representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

CONTACT:

Jaideep Mukerji, Vice President, Angus Reid Public Opinion, 613-691-0948, jaideep.mukerji@angus-reid.com

hockey games than they currently do (27%, -7) and to refrain from buying products from companies that sponsor professional hockey (22%, -7).

The decrease in the level of violence-related animosity towards the sport is accompanied by a noticeable shift in the way Canadians and hockey fans look at the NHL. In March, only 34 per cent of Canadians and 42 per cent of hockey fans rated the NHL's efforts in looking after the safety of its players as "very good" or "good." This month, 42 per cent of Canadians (+8) and 68 per cent of fans (+24) are satisfied with the league's actions on this matter.

Head Shots and Fights

As was observed in the March 2011 survey—conducted in the aftermath of the incident involving professional hockey players Zdeno Chara and Max Pacioretty—a large proportion of Canadians (80%, -1) and hockey fans (83%, -7) believe the game would be better off if head shots were banned. However, there is still no consensus on the topic of on-ice fighting, with 43 per cent of Canadians (+2) saying the game would be better off, but half of hockey fans (49%, =) saying the game would be worse off.

Analysis

As the NHL season begins with a new Canadian team in Winnipeg, respondents across the country are maintaining their tough stance on head shots. Both Canadian and hockey fans believe that the game would be better off if this practice were completely banned. Fights, however, remain a contentious topic. Canadians at large see no place for it in the game, while half of fans continue to believe that the game would be worse off without them.

The one indicator that changed dramatically since March is the way respondents perceive the actions of the NHL. The appointment of Brendan Shanahan as the league's head disciplinarian has had a positive effect on perceptions, and an impressive 24-point increase in the proportion of fans who rate the NHL's efforts to look after the safety of players as "very good" or "good."

Our March 2011 survey on professional hockey can be found [here](#).

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About Angus Reid Public Opinion

[Angus Reid Public Opinion](#) is a public affairs practice headed by Dr. Angus Reid: an industry visionary who has spent more than four decades asking questions to figure out what people feel, how they think and who they will vote for. A team of talented and experienced practitioners with a unique and profound understanding of global issues conduct high quality research throughout the world on a daily basis for corporations, governments, academic researchers, and non-profit organizations.

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**For more information, please contact
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

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Hockey

Which of the following professional sports, if any, do you feel carry a significant risk of head injuries?
Please select all that apply.

	All Canadians	Self-described professional hockey fans
Hockey	90%	89%
Boxing	88%	86%
Football	78%	87%
Mixed Martial Arts	60%	65%
Rugby	55%	60%
Soccer	23%	23%
Baseball	16%	15%
Basketball	8%	8%
None of these	1%	1%
Not sure	1%	1%

Hockey

Have you, or someone you know, ever sustained a concussion or serious head injury as a result of playing any of the following sports? – “Yes” listed

	All Canadians	Self-described professional hockey fans
Hockey	33%	48%
Football	17%	24%
Boxing	12%	16%
Rugby	10%	15%
Mixed Martial Arts	7%	9%
Baseball	5%	6%
Soccer	7%	10%
Basketball	2%	3%

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Hockey

In your view, has professional hockey become a more violent sport over the past five years?

Views on Hockey					
	Total	I am a hockey fan, I truly enjoy watching the game	I watch hockey as much as I can, but I don't follow it all the time	I will watch a hockey game now and then, but it's not my favourite sport	I don't really care for hockey
Yes	56%	38%	56%	62%	67%
No	32%	58%	39%	26%	10%
Not sure	11%	4%	5%	12%	22%

Hockey

Would you consider taking any of the following actions as a result of recent violent incidents in hockey? – **“Definitely would” and “Probably would” listed**

Views on Hockey					
	Total	I am a hockey fan, I truly enjoy watching the game	I watch hockey as much as I can, but I don't follow it all the time	I will watch a hockey game now and then, but it's not my favourite sport	I don't really care for hockey
Encourage your kids to avoid playing hockey	31%	13%	22%	36%	52%
Watching fewer hockey games than you currently do	27%	7%	18%	31%	49%
Refrain from buying products from companies that sponsor professional hockey	22%	8%	16%	22%	40%

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Hockey

How would you rate the NHL's efforts in looking after the safety of its players?

Views on Hockey					
	Total	I am a hockey fan, I truly enjoy watching the game	I watch hockey as much as I can, but I don't follow it all the time	I will watch a hockey game now and then, but it's not my favourite sport	I don't really care for hockey
Very good / Good	42%	68%	51%	38%	15%
Bad / Very bad	45%	28%	43%	51%	55%
Not sure	13%	3%	6%	12%	30%

Hockey

In your view, what impact, if any, would the following actions have on the game of hockey? –

Banning head shots

Views on Hockey					
	Total	I am a hockey fan, I truly enjoy watching the game	I watch hockey as much as I can, but I don't follow it all the time	I will watch a hockey game now and then, but it's not my favourite sport	I don't really care for hockey
Hockey would be better off	80%	76%	82%	82%	79%
Hockey would be no better or worse off	11%	17%	12%	9%	7%
Hockey would be worse off	3%	5%	3%	2%	2%
Not sure	6%	2%	2%	6%	11%

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Hockey

In your view, what impact, if any, would the following actions have on the game of hockey? –

Banning fighting

Views on Hockey					
	Total	I am a hockey fan, I truly enjoy watching the game	I watch hockey as much as I can, but I don't follow it all the time	I will watch a hockey game now and then, but it's not my favourite sport	I don't really care for hockey
Hockey would be better off	43%	21%	36%	48%	66%
Hockey would be no better or worse off	23%	27%	29%	25%	13%
Hockey would be worse off	25%	49%	28%	19%	9%
Not sure	8%	3%	7%	8%	12%

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