



## FINDINGS OVERVIEW

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The **2015 CANAM SPORTS SURVEY** was conducted in February of 2015,<sup>1</sup> and involved representative national samples of 4,022 Canadians and 4,079 Americans. Participants were asked how closely they follow 20 different sports leagues and activities, with response options of “very closely,” “fairly closely,” “not very closely,” and “not closely at all.” The on-line surveys were carried out by Vision Critical in partnership with sociologist Dr. Reginald Bibby of the University of Lethbridge. Bibby wrote the items and has carried out the analysis; Vision Critical collected the data as part of their regular omnibus surveys in both countries. Probability samples of this size are accurate within about 2% points, plus or minus, of the actual population figures.

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<sup>1</sup> Three waves in each country: Canada February 18, 20, 23; U.S. February 16, 18, 23.

## INITIAL HEADLINE FINDINGS

**Table 1. Canadian Sports Interest Rankings vs. USA**

*“How closely do you follow...”*

% Indicating “Very closely” or “Fairly Closely”

	Canada 4022	USA 4079
1. NHL (National Hockey League)	46%	24
2. CFL (Canadian Football League)	26	10
3. NFL (National Football League)	23	58
4. MLB (Major League Baseball)	22	40
5. Curling	15	10
6. Men's Professional Tennis	14	17
7. PGA Tour (Men's Professional Golf)	13	20
8. Figure Skating	13	17
9. NBA (National Basketball Association)	12	33
10. Women's Professional Tennis	12	17
11. Motor Sports (e.g., NASCAR)	11	24
12. MLS (Major League Soccer)	09	15
13. UFC (Mixed Martial Arts)	08	16
14. NCAA Football	07	37
15. NCAA Basketball	06	32
16. LPGA Tour (Women's Professional Golf)	05	13
17. High school sports	04	20
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• Winter Olympics	53	48
• Summer Olympics	47	48
• World Cup (soccer)	20	25

**Table 2. USA Sports Interest Rankings vs. Canada**

*“How closely do you follow...”*

% Indicating “Very closely” or “Fairly Closely”

	USA 4079	Canada 4022
1. NFL (National Football League)	58%	<b>23*</b>
2. MLB (Major League Baseball)	40	<b>22</b>
3. NCAA Football	37	07
4. NBA (National Basketball Association)	33	12
5. NCAA Basketball	32	06
6. Motor Sports (e.g., NASCAR)	24	11
7. NHL (National Hockey League)	24	<b>46</b>
8. High school sports	20	04
9. PGA Tour (Men's Professional Golf)	20	13
10. Figure Skating	17	13
11. Men's Professional Tennis	17	14
12. Women's Professional Tennis	17	12
13. UFC (Mixed Martial Arts)	16	08
14. MLS (Major League Soccer)	15	09
15. LPGA Tour (Women's Professional Golf)	13	05
16. CFL (Canadian Football League)	10	<b>26</b>
17. Curling	10	<b>15</b>
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• Summer Olympics	48	47
• Winter Olympics	48	53
• World Cup (soccer)	25	20

\*Red: Top 5 in Canada

- **Average % following** these 20 sports & leagues: USA = 26%, Canada = 18%.
- **Top 5 average following:** USA = 40%, Canada 26%.
- **USA followings higher than those of Canada** in 16 of the 20 instances.
- **Canada slightly higher Winter Olympics.**

**Table 3. Canadian Sports Interest by Canadian Regions**

<i>"How closely do you follow..."</i>	<b>Canada 4022</b>	<b>ON 1506</b>	<b>BC 523</b>	<b>AB 433</b>	<b>SK 126</b>	<b>MB 142</b>	<b>QC 989</b>	<b>ATL 304</b>
1. NHL (National Hockey League)	46%	45	47	48	38	51	49	41
2. CFL (Canadian Football League)	26	21	29	42	64	51	21	14
3. NFL (National Football League)	23	26	25	22	24	23	19	21
4. MLB (Major League Baseball)	22	32	17	18	25	18	12	23
5. Curling	15	14	14	23	36	38	08	17
6. Men's Professional Tennis	14	13	12	09	15	08	20	10
7. PGA Tour (Men's Professional Golf)	13	15	14	13	17	11	11	14
8. Figure Skating	13	14	11	10	08	10	16	14
9. NBA (National Basketball Association)	12	19	11	09	09	10	4	10
10. Women's Professional Tennis	12	11	10	07	11	08	20	07
11. Motor Sports (e.g., NASCAR)	11	14	09	10	06	08	10	14
12. MLS (Major League Soccer)	09	10	13	05	02	03	09	03
13. UFC (Mixed Martial Arts)	08	07	08	07	08	08	09	09
14. NCAA Football	07	08	08	07	03	03	05	06
15. NCAA Basketball	06	08	06	04	05	02	03	05
16. LPGA Tour (Women's Professional Golf)	05	05	05	04	09	03	06	04
17. High school sports	04	05	03	04	06	05	04	07
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• Summer Olympics	47	51	46	44	44	44	47	43
• Winter Olympics	53	55	55	54	50	57	49	49
• World Cup (soccer)	20	25	24	17	13	12	17	13

**Regionally in Canada:**

- **interest in the NHL** is the **highest of any sport**
- the **CFL, NFL, and major league baseball** have the **second largest followings**, although regional variations are fairly pronounced for the CFL and MLB
- **curling** is most popular on the prairies, the **NBA** in Ontario, **Women's Pro Tennis** in Quebec
- interest in the **Olympics** is highly uniform across regions, while **World Cup**
- **Soccer** interest is highest in Ontario and British Columbia

**Table 4. Canadian Sports Interest by Major Canadian Cities**

<i>"How closely do you follow..."</i>	<b>Canada 4022</b>	<b>TOR 589</b>	<b>MTL 449</b>	<b>VAN 289</b>	<b>CAL 163</b>	<b>EDM 127</b>	<b>WPG 114</b>	<b>OTT 127</b>
1. NHL (National Hockey League)	46%	44	51	49	49	50	60	55
2. CFL (Canadian Football League)	26	21	24	30	42	46	60	26
3. NFL (National Football League)	23	27	20	29	26	19	30	22
4. MLB (Major League Baseball)	22	35	13	17	22	18	17	24
5. Curling	15	13	08	12	23	29	41	10
6. Men's Professional Tennis	14	18	21	14	13	08	12	13
7. PGA Tour (Men's Professional Golf)	13	14	12	11	10	16	17	18
8. Figure Skating	13	16	16	12	13	10	09	11
9. NBA (National Basketball Association)	12	29	06	13	12	06	12	09
10. Women's Professional Tennis	12	14	23	11	10	06	11	10
11. Motor Sports (e.g., NASCAR)	11	12	09	10	11	09	09	13
12. MLS (Major League Soccer)	09	12	11	17	08	04	05	12
13. UFC (Mixed Martial Arts)	08	07	08	05	05	09	11	08
14. NCAA Football	07	09	06	07	05	09	05	08
15. NCAA Basketball	06	11	04	07	05	04	03	05
16. LPGA Tour (Women's Professional Golf)	05	05	05	05	03	07	04	06
17. High school sports	04	04	03	05	02	03	05	03
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• Summer Olympics	47	54	50	46	45	46	51	55
• Winter Olympics	53	53	49	56	56	56	64	65
• World Cup (soccer)	20	35	23	28	23	15	17	20

**Interest in specific sports differs little by major Canadian cities.**

- The **NHL and CFL rank 1-2 in all of the country's major cities**, except Toronto.
- In the **Toronto** instance specifically, **interest in the CFL ranks 5<sup>th</sup> below the NHL, MLB, the NBA and the NFL**; interest in the CFL, however is **well above** that of **Major League Soccer**.

**Table 5. Canadian Sports Interest by Age and Gender**

<i>"How closely do you follow..."</i>	CANADA			18-34		35-54		55+	
	ALL	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. NHL (National Hockey League)	46%	59	34	57	35	63	36	55	33
2. CFL (Canadian Football League)	26	38	15	26	10	39	15	47	19
3. NFL (National Football League)	23	36	10	32	10	37	12	38	09
4. MLB (Major League Baseball)	22	32	13	27	11	31	11	36	16
5. Curling	15	19	12	13	07	18	09	25	19
6. Men's Professional Tennis	14	18	09	18	07	18	09	20	11
7. PGA Tour (Men's Professional Golf)	13	19	08	11	05	17	07	27	13
8. Figure Skating	13	08	19	05	09	07	15	11	30
9. NBA (National Basketball Association)	12	17	07	26	10	17	06	11	04
10. Women's Professional Tennis	12	16	09	13	07	17	09	17	11
11. Motor Sports (e.g., NASCAR)	11	16	07	12	03	19	10	18	07
12. MLS (Major League Soccer)	09	12	05	15	04	11	06	12	05
13. UFC (Mixed Martial Arts)	08	12	03	16	05	14	04	07	01
14. LPGA Tour (Women's Professional Golf)	05	07	03	04	02	06	03	11	03
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• Winter Olympics	53	55	51	54	48	57	48	54	56
• Summer Olympics	47	51	44	48	40	51	43	52	49
• World Cup (soccer)	20	27	14	32	16	25	15	24	11

- **Men are far more likely than women** to be following almost all of these 20 leagues and sports, with the single exception of **figure skating**. The differences hold **regardless of age**.
- That said, the **rank order of interest is fairly similar** for both men and women.
- The **NHL has a highly balanced age structure** of fans, whereas the **CFL and MLB** – while they have **solid cores of younger followers** – also have **proportionately more older fans** than either the NHL or NFL.
- Canadians who follow **figure skating** tend to be somewhat **older women**, while **NBA fans** tend to be disproportionately **younger men**.

**Table 6. Canadian Interest in Major Pro Sports: 1990-2015**

*Follow "Very Closely" or "Fairly Closely"*

	NHL	PRO FOOTBALL*	CFL	NFL	MLB	NBA	MLS
<b>2015</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2005</b>	30	24	20	13	13	7	-
<b>2000</b>	30	20	15	12	17	8	-
<b>1995</b>	38	21	15	13	28	6	-
<b>1990</b>	36	21	16	11	24	4	-

\*Both CFL & NFL: 15%; CFL only 11%; NFL only 8%

Sources: Bibby, Project Canada Surveys and Vision Critical, February 2015.

### Over the past 25 years...

- Interest in both the **NHL and pro football** has jumped from 1990 levels by some 10 percentage points and 13 percentage points respectively. Interest in the CFL remains somewhat higher than that of the NFL (26% vs 23%).
- Canadian interest in **major league baseball** (22%) has rebounded to just under the peak levels of the early 1990s and the days of the Blue Jays World Series conquests, after dipping severely between the late 90s and about 2010.
- Interest in the **NBA** has increased in recent years to some 12%, after being fairly flat at around 7% through 2005.
- The general increase in interest levels in pro sports in Canada would seem to be to be the result of accelerated television and Internet coverage in Canada led by Rogers Communications and Bell Media – as well as the intensified exposure of all of these leagues, except for the CFL, by the American media and their American corporate sponsors.

**Table 7. American Interest in Some Select “Canadian” Sports**

“How closely do you follow...”

% Indicating “Very Closely” or “Fairly Closely”

	<b>NHL</b> (National Hockey League)	<b>Figure Skating</b>	<b>CFL</b> (Canadian Football League)	<b>Curling</b>
<b>NATIONALLY</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>18-34</b>	35	25	22	22
<b>35-54</b>	28	14	7	7
<b>55+</b>	13	14	3	3
<b>Male</b>	34	16	14	14
<b>Female</b>	15	18	6	6
<b>Northeast</b>	33	18	8	10
<b>Midwest</b>	25	13	7	6
<b>West</b>	27	23	16	17
<b>South</b>	18	15	8	8

**In the United States:**

- interest in the **NHL, figure skating, the CFL, and curling** is **highest among adults under the age of 35** – perhaps reflecting to some extent the greater accessibility to these sports and leagues via the Internet, particularly apart from the NHL;
- as in Canada, American **males are more likely than females to follow these sample sports**, with the **exception of figure skating**, where interest levels are similar;
- **regionally**, interest in the **NHL** is highest in the **northeast**, and interest in **figure skating, the CFL and curling** is slightly higher in the **western region** (states include CA, AZ, CO, WA, OR, UT, MT); apart from these exceptions, it would seem that the **small variations by region** reflect the fact that accessibility for people with an interest in them no longer has geographical limitations.