

Pro Sports Interest in Canada #2

Football Now More Popular Than Baseball in Canada
Second only to hockey

Way back in February of 1942 – just over 70 years ago – some 59% of Canadians told the Gallup organization that their favourite sport was hockey, 17% said baseball, and just 8% said football. Basketball – despite being invented by a Canadian – wasn’t mentioned by so much as 1% of the populace.

Well, some things never change. A national survey of 1,505 Canadians carried out this month by well-known sociologist Reginald Bibby of the University of Lethbridge and pollster Angus Reid Global has found that *hockey* continues to be the favourite major pro sport of Canadians. Just under 1 in 2 people (46%) say that they closely follow the NHL.

But, wait a minute: some things *do* change. Today, *baseball* has been surpassed by *pro football* as the second most popular sport in Canada.

- Some 33% of people across the country report that they are close followers of football – CFL and NFL-style. That level is well above the 20% who are fans of Major League Baseball.
- And basketball remains a distant fourth, with the NBA having a current fan base that includes just 8% of Canadians.

Actually, Bibby’s surveys dating back to 1990 show that pro football moved into second place behind hockey around 2000. It’s apparent that Canadians have increasingly been morphing into *football fans* rather than being *either CFL or NFL fans*. Up until 2000, only 7% followed both leagues. Today that level has doubled to 14%. Another 12% follow only the CFL, while a further 7% only follow the NFL. That adds up to 33% of Canadians – easily enough for football to claim second place in popularity behind hockey.

It therefore is no surprise that many Canadians will embrace both the Grey Cup game in Regina in late November, and the Buffalo-Atlanta game one week later in Toronto.

However, as we will see in our 3rd sports release early next week, precisely because many enjoy the CFL along with the NFL, most do not want to see the NFL actually come to Canada – particularly if such a development endangered the CFL.

	1942	2013
Hockey	1	1
Baseball	2	3
Football	3	2
Basketball	4	4

Sources: Gallup, CIPO Poll, February 1942; Bibby-Angus Reid Global Sports Poll, November 2013.

NHL	46%
CFL & NFL*	33
MLB	20
NBA	7

*Both 14%, CFL only 12%; NFL only 7%.
Source: Bibby-Angus Reid Global Sports Poll, November 2013.

NEXT UP: A RELEASE NEXT WEEK AS TORONTO HOSTS BUFFALO & ATLANTA
How Canadians Feel About the Possibility of the NFL Coming to Canada

Dr. Reginald Bibby is a best-selling author and professor of sociology at The University of Lethbridge who has been monitoring social trends in Canada now for four decades.

The trends research is continuing in collaboration with pollster **Angus Reid Global** and **Andrew Grenville**. The findings on pro sport will be part of Bibby and Grenville's new book, *The Future of Life in Canada*, which will be released in late 2014.

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