

## Participating in Sports and Fitness Activities in Canada

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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 sports and fitness participation. 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.

**In what sports and fitness** activities do Canadians participate? While walking and hiking are the most preferred form of activity there is an important difference on the basis of gender as to the various types of activity. As observed below whereas men prefer to play hockey slightly over walking and hiking whereas women prefer the latter over hockey. While women rank swimming higher than men, golf and cycling are higher amongst men than women.

### 1. Sports Participation

**Table 1**

**What, do you consider to be your favorite sport or fitness activity to personally participate in, if any?**

	Gender		
	Total	Male	Female
Walking/hiking	20	13	26
Hockey	8	14	2
Skiing/snowshoeing/snowboarding	6	7	6
Swimming	6	5	8
Cycling	6	7	5
Golf	5	7	3
Jogging/running	4	5	4
Soccer	3	5	2
Baseball/softball	3	3	3
Basketball	2	2	2
Aerobic classes	2	1	3
Weightlifting	2	3	1
Hunting/fishing	2	4	*
Tennis	2	2	2
Work outs/the gym/exercise in general	2	1	2
Bowling	2	1	2
Other racquet sports (squash, racquetball, etc.)	1	2	1
None do not engage in any fitness activity	10	8	11

On a regional basis Quebecers do more sports than other Canadians. Quebecers prefer winter sports (combined Hockey, skiing, snowshoe/board) more than Canadians in other regions of the country. Swimming and cycling are also more popular in Quebec than elsewhere in the country. Hitting a ball is more popular in the rest of the country with more people playing golf and baseball.

**Table 2**  
**What do you consider to be your favorite sport or fitness activity to personally participate in, if any?**

	Atl. Prov	Quebec	Ontario	Western Can.
Walking/hiking	24	23	16	20
Hockey	10	7	7	8
Skiing/snowshoeing/snowboarding	3	11	4	6
Swimming	3	7	6	7
Cycling	3	8	4	6
Golf	4	3	6	6
Jogging/running	3	3	5	4
Soccer	3	5	4	2
Baseball/softball	4	1	4	4
Basketball	4	2	3	1
Aerobic classes	1	2	3	2
Weightlifting	3	1	2	3
Hunting/fishing	2	3	2	2
Tennis	1	4	2	1
Work outs/the gym/exercise in general	1	1	3	1
Bowling	4	1	1	2
Other racquet sports (squash, racquetball, etc.)	1	2	2	1
Combative sports (martial, arts, boxing, etc.)	2	1	2	2
Volleyball	3	1	1	2
Skating	1	2	2	*
Curling	1	-	1	2
Yoga	1	-	2	2
Football	-	1	1	1
Horseback riding	1	*	1	2
Boating (various)	1	1	1	*
Dancing	-	*	1	1
Rollerblading/skateboarding	-	*	1	1
Other watersports	*	1	1	1
Other	2	3	2	3
None do not engage in any fitness activity	12	8	11	10

In Montreal walking and hiking and winter sports are more popular amongst the sports activities in which residents are engaged than is the case in Toronto and Vancouver. In the other two cities, Golf and Jogging/Running are more popular. As well in Toronto and Vancouver such activities as working out (gym/exercise), weightlifting, yoga, martial arts and dancing are more popular than is the case in Montreal.

**Table 3**  
**What, do you consider to be your favorite sport or fitness activity to personally participate in, if any?**

	Sub-Regions		
	Toronto	Montreal	Vancouver
Walking/hiking	15	22	14
Hockey	6	8	6
Skiing/snowshoeing/snowboarding	6	11	7
Swimming	9	8	8
Cycling	3	7	7
Golf	7	3	6
Jogging/running	7	4	8
Soccer	6	6	2
Baseball/softball	2	-	3
Basketball	3	3	1
Aerobic classes	3	3	1
Weightlifting	3	1	2
Hunting/fishing	*	1	1
Tennis	1	5	1
Work outs/the gym/exercise in general	4	1	4
Bowling	2	1	-
Other racquet sports (squash, racquetball, etc.)	1	2	3
Combative sports (martial, arts, boxing, etc.)	2	*	3
Volleyball	1	-	2
Skating	2	1	-
Curling	1	-	-
Yoga	3	-	5
Football	-	1	2
Horseback riding	1	-	-
Boating (various)	1	1	-
Dancing	2	1	3
Rollerblading/skateboarding	-	1	1
Other watersports	*	1	1
Other	2	3	2
None do not engage in any fitness activity	8	8	8
DK/NA	1	-	-

On the basis of age, the table below provides interesting insight into the changing fitness and sports activities along the life cycle. One observes that walking and hiking become more popular with age and winter sports such as hockey and skiing decrease over one's life span. Cycling and swimming are most popular from the ages of 30 to 44. Golf and bowling emerge as more popular for those over the age of 45. Soccer and basketball are most popular amongst the 18 to 29 group. Finally some one out five persons over the age of 65 are not engaged in any fitness or sports activity.

**Table 4**  
**What, do you consider to be your favorite sport or fitness activity to personally participate in, if any?**

	Age			
	18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 or more
Walking/hiking	6	16	29	32
Hockey	13	9	5	2
Skiing/snowshoeing/snowboarding	10	6	5	4
Swimming	6	8	6	5
Cycling	4	9	5	3
Golf	1	4	7	7
Jogging/running	4	5	5	2
Soccer	8	4	1	*
Baseball/softball	3	4	4	1
Basketball	7	1	1	*
Aerobic classes	2	2	2	2
Weightlifting	3	3	2	*
Hunting/fishing	1	2	3	2
Tennis	2	2	2	2
Work outs/the gym/exercise in general	3	2	1	1
Bowling	*	*	2	5
Other racquet sports (squash, racquetball, etc.)	2	2	1	1
Combative sports (martial arts, boxing, etc)	2	2	1	1
Volleyball	4	1	-	*
Skating	1	2	2	1
Curling	1	1	2	1
Yoga	1	1	2	1
Football	4	*	*	-
Horseback riding	1	2	1	*
Boating (various)	-	1	1	1
Dancing	1	*	*	2
Rollerblading/skateboarding	2	*	*	-
Other watersports	1	*	1	*
Other	3	3	2	1
None do not engage in any fitness activity	6	6	9	21

In the case of immigrants walking and hiking are far more popular amongst European immigrants whereas soccer is by far the most popular activity amongst non-Europeans with hockey and winter sports overall lagging behind. Apart from soccer, basketball is more popular on average amongst non-European immigrants while cycling is popular amongst those from Europe.

**Table 5**

What, do you consider to be your favorite sport or fitness activity to personally participate in, if any?

	Non-Brit Immigrant	
	Europe	Other
Walking/hiking	18	9
Hockey	4	1
Skiing/snowshoeing/snowboarding	10	5
Swimming	9	9
Cycling	8	3
Golf	1	3
Jogging/running	5	6
Soccer	6	15
Baseball/softball	3	2
Basketball	-	5
Aerobic classes	2	3
Weightlifting	3	-
Hunting/fishing	-	-
Tennis	5	6
Work outs/the gym/exercise in general	-	5
Bowling	4	2
Other racquet sports (squash, racquetball, etc.)	-	1
Combative sports (martial arts, boxing, etc)	-	2
Volleyball	1	-
Skating	2	1
Curling	1	-
Yoga	6	2
Football	-	1
Horseback riding	*	-
Boating (various)	-	-
Dancing	-	2
Rollerblading/skateboarding	-	1
Other watersports	-	1
Other	-	1
None do not engage in any fitness activity	12	14

## 2. Sports: The Relationship Between What We Play and What We Watch

**Table 6**

When it comes to sports Quebecers prefer to play rather than to watch to a greater degree than do other Canadians.

	Follow	Participate	Percentage that play more than follow (Difference)
Canada	82	90	8
Atlantic	82	88	6
Quebec	79	92	13
Ontario	84	89	5
Western Canada	83	90	7

Although men participate in sports to a much greater degree than women, the latter participate in fitness and sports activities much more than they follow them.

**Table 7**  
**Gender**

	Follow	Participate	Difference
Men	88	92	4
Women	77	89	12

Whereas European immigrants are far more inclined to participate in sports and fitness activities as they follow sports, non-Europeans tend to participate as much as they follow.

**Table 8**  
**European versus non-European immigrants**

	Follow	Participate	Difference
European	77	88	11
Non-European	86	86	0

**Table 9**  
**Age**

	Follow	Participate	Diff
18-29	86	94	8
30-44	83	94	11
45-59	81	91	10
60 and more	79	79	0

As observed below while Quebecers follow hockey more than they play it, in the rest of Canada there is a much greater difference in degree to which people follow the sport relative to how much they play. In the Atlantic Provinces and Ontario people follow baseball more than it is played. In British Columbia soccer and football are followed more than it is played while golf and baseball are played more than they are followed. In Quebec with the exception nearly all sports are followed more than they are played.

**Table 10**  
**Following and Participating in Selected Sports by region**

	Atlantic		Quebec		Ontario		Western Canada	
	Follow	Participate	Follow	Participate	Follow	Participate	Follow	Participate
Hockey	30	10	20	7	32	7	31	8
Tennis	-	1	5	4	1	2	1	1
Golf	4	4	4	3	6	6	3	6
Soccer	3	3	6	5	5	4	3	2
Baseball/softball	7	4	3	1	6	4	3	4
Basketball	4	4	1	2	3	3	3	1

### III. Sports Mosaics-Canada versus the United States

In the ongoing effort to determine the ways in which Canada differs from its neighbor to the South, clearly the sports that we follow in the two countries marks us off from one another. Americans follow sports more than do Canadians. Clearly football is to the United States what hockey is to Canada, basketball more popular than baseball than baseball in the United States and the opposite is true in Canada. Soccer is more popular in Canada and auto racing more so in the United States.

**Table 11**  
**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	1	
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

#### **IV. Sports Personnel**

As observed below most of Canada's sports personnel are concentrated in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Slightly over 38% of the country's sports personnel are located in the province of Ontario, a percentage similar to that which the province constitutes within Canada. Quebec has just less than 25% of sports personnel. However Quebec's share of athletes falls well below its population with some 17% whereas British Columbia is home to 20% of the country's athletes. However Quebec is home to a proportionately larger share of the country's trainers and instructors with over 26% in the province.



**Table 12**  
**Sports Personnel in regions across Canada, 2001**

	Athletes, Coaches, Referees and related occupations	Athletes	Coaches	Sports Officials and Referees	Program leaders and instructors in recreation and sport
Canada	75 975	2 595	9 310	4 505	59 565
Atlantic Provinces	4 870	70	515	240	4 040
Quebec	18 690	440	2 180	535	15 530
Ontario	28 815	1 015	3 595	1 705	22 505
Manitoba	2 050	85	205	255	1 505
Saskatchew an	2 380	95	360	240	1 680
Alberta	7 065	355	930	555	5 520
British Columbia	11 855	530	1 505	975	8 845

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 2001

According to Statistics Canada, some 85,7% of Canadian athletes are male, 14,6% female. In Quebec, 13,9% are female, whereas in Ontario the percentage is slightly higher at 15,9%.