

Canadians are missing Ron MacLean in host role as they adjust to new Hockey Night in Canada broadcast

Nearly half of respondents like the new Rogers Sportsnet broadcast less than the old CBC one

November 11, 2014 – Three-quarters of Canadians who watch Hockey Night in Canada (HNIC) say Ron MacLean’s reduced role on the iconic show has hurt the Hockey Night in Canada brand, while two-in-five say George Stroumboulopoulos is a credible replacement as main host.

Those are among the findings of an Angus Reid Institute (ARI) survey measuring Canadian opinion on the program, and on the role of hockey in Canadian society and culture.

Hockey and Canada:

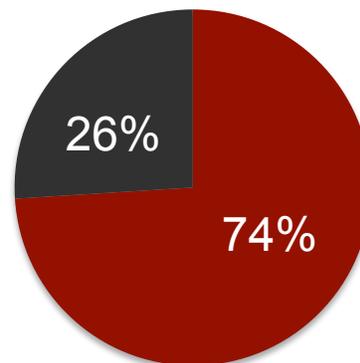
The survey results appear to re-affirm the primacy of hockey on Canadian culture and identity: one-in-ten say the sport “defines” our sense of who we are in this country and seven-in-ten say it is an “important part of Canadian culture”, along with other things.

The NHL:

When asked specifically about the National Hockey League (NHL), the vast majority (78%) said NHL hockey is either important or very important to Canadian culture and identity.

Respondents also told ARI about how important NHL hockey was to them personally. Ten per cent identified themselves as “diehard fans”. A further quarter (25%) say they are fans. Of note, one-in-seven men identify themselves as “diehard fans” while another two-in-seven say they are fans. Support for the league’s game is also strong among Canadians under the age of 55; 37 per cent of respondents aged 18-34 say they are diehard fans or fans, as do 38 per cent of respondents aged 35-54.

Ron MacLean’s reduced role on the broadcast has hurt the NHIC brand



■ Strongly agree/agree ■ Disagree/strongly disagree

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey among 1504 Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists from November 5-7, 2014. A probability sample of this size carries a margin of error of +/- 2.5%, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

This survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI.

Detailed charts, tables and regional results are found at the end of this release.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Senior Vice President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl

The New Show:

The survey also gauged how Canadians who watch HNIC are feeling about the change in hosts and format in the wake of a significant shift in broadcast rights from the CBC to Rogers Communications in a 12-year, \$5.2 billion deal with the NHL. The new broadcast debuted at the beginning of the hockey season, featuring George Stroumboulopoulos as the new main host, with reduced roles for former hosts and commentators Ron MacLean and Don Cherry.

When asked about the difference between broadcasts, most viewers (49%) said the show was different but “nothing major”; 37 per cent said they had noticed a “big difference”.

Canadians are also split on preference for the old and new broadcasts, with 45 per cent saying they liked the old CBC broadcast better. This sentiment rises to half (50%) among self-identified hockey fans and even higher (55%) among those who say they are “die-hard” fans.

Regional Coverage:

Respondents give Rogers Sportsnet the edge on the issue of balanced coverage of teams.

When asked about this issue in regards to the old CBC broadcast, two-thirds of respondents, (65%) and about as many die-hard fans (62%) said the public broadcaster had been properly balanced in its coverage of all Canadian NHL teams. One-third (35%) of respondents and 38 per cent of die-hard fans said the CBC had been too focused on teams in Ontario and Quebec.

When asked about Rogers Sportsnet’s performance on these measures, perception of balanced coverage of all Canadian NHL teams increases ten points to 75 per cent among respondents who watch HNIC, rising to 82 per cent among die-hard fans. One-quarter (25%) of respondents and 18 per cent of die-hard fans feel the Rogers Sportsnet broadcast is too focused on teams in Ontario and Quebec.

It is of note that twice as many die-hard fans felt this way about the CBC broadcast than they do now about the Rogers Sportsnet show.

The Hosts:

When asked their opinions about the new broadcast and its use of new and former hosts, fewer than ten per cent (8%) feel hosts Stroumboulopoulos, MacLean and Cherry’s chemistry is “clicking together”, while less than one-third (27%) say they have “no chemistry”. Notably, Canadian viewers do appear prepared to give the on-air team some time to find their groove, with two-thirds (65%) saying the chemistry is “coming along”.

Ron MacLean:

The survey results indicate the viewing public is missing Ron MacLean. Three-quarters (74%) of those watching HNIC this season agree that MacLean’s reduced role on the broadcast has hurt the show’s brand.

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When asked about how much they are see him during the broadcast, 48 per cent say “too little” and 45 per cent say “the right amount” (dropping to 34 per cent among die-hard fans). Only seven per cent say they are seeing MacLean “too much”.

George Stroumboulopoulos:

The decision to have Stroumboulopoulos – a well-known talk show host with an established interest in hockey – helm the new broadcast was a calculated risk for Rogers Communications, aimed in part at attracting a younger viewing audience. It would appear existing viewers are still adjusting to the change.

Three-in-five (60%) respondents do not see Stroumboulopoulos as a credible replacement for MacLean as the main host of HNIC. Only eight per cent of viewers say they’re seeing “too little” of Stroumboulopoulos, compared to two-in-five (41%) who say they’re seeing him “too much”. Half of respondents feel his airtime is “just right”.

Don Cherry:

Cherry, the long-time host of Coach’s Corner, [took to the airwaves last weekend](#) to complain about the lack of time allotted for his analysis under the new broadcast format. Both Cherry and MacLean have seen their overall roles and airtime reduced from the old CBC broadcasts.

In spite of less airtime, when respondents were asked how they felt about how much or how little they have been seeing Cherry since the season began, 38 per cent said, “the right amount”, while about as many (36%) said, “too little”. One-quarter (26%) said, “too much”.

French Canada:

The survey also asked French-speaking viewers in Quebec how they are feeling about the change in broadcast from RDS to TVA Sports. One third of viewers overall reported noticing a “big difference” between the broadcasts – rising to two-thirds (63%) among die-hard fans. Quebecers are also getting used to the new broadcast, with 36 per cent saying they like the TVA format less than the old RDS show. Again, this opinion rises to two-thirds among self-identified “die-hard” fans in Quebec.

Detailed tables are found on the following pages

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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Thinking about Canadian culture and identity, how important is the game of hockey?

	Region								Gender		Fandom		
	Total (1504)	BC (200)	AB (150)	SK (100)	MN (100)	ON (504)	ATL (100)	PQ (350)	Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die Hard and Fan	I don't care about hockey at all
Hockey defines Canadian culture	12%	11%	10%	8%	22%	14%	14%	8%	12%	11%	49%	25%	4%
Hockey is an important part of Canadian culture – and so are other things	71%	72%	75%	73%	62%	76%	72%	62%	68%	74%	49%	72%	59%
Hockey isn't really a big factor in Canadian culture	7%	7%	4%	6%	7%	6%	9%	11%	9%	6%	2%	2%	14%
Hockey is just a game and has nothing to do with Canadian culture	10%	10%	10%	13%	10%	5%	5%	18%	11%	9%	0	1%	23%

Now thinking specifically about NHL hockey, how important is it to Canadian culture and identity?

	Region								Gender		Fandom		
	Total (1466)	BC (200)	AB (150)	SK (100)	MN (100)	ON (504)	ATL (100)	PQ (314)	Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die Hard and Fan	I don't care about hockey at all
Very Important/Important	78%	70%	80%	70%	78%	80%	81%	80%	76%	82%	98%	94%	57%
Not very important/Totally unimportant	22%	30%	20%	30%	22%	20%	19%	20%	24%	18%	2%	6%	43%

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Shachi Kurl, Senior Vice President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl

How important is NHL hockey to you?

	Region								Gender	
	Total (1504)	BC (200)	AB (150)	SK (100)	MN (100)	ON (504)	PQ (314)	ATL (100)	Male	Female
I'm a diehard fan	10%	10%	10%	4%	18%	10%	8%	14%	14%	7%
I'm a fan	25%	25%	24%	26%	31%	26%	24%	21%	28%	22%
A lot of other interests come before hockey	37%	33%	36%	42%	24%	37%	38%	39%	36%	37%
I don't care about hockey at all	28%	32%	29%	27%	27%	27%	29%	25%	28%	35%

How important is NHL hockey to you?

	Region								Age		
	Total (1504)	BC (200)	AB (150)	SK (100)	MN (100)	ON (504)	PQ (314)	ATL (100)	18-34	35-54	55+
I'm a diehard fan	10%	10%	10%	4%	18%	10%	8%	14%	13%	12%	6%
I'm a fan	25%	25%	24%	26%	31%	26%	24%	21%	24%	26%	25%
A lot of other interests come before hockey	37%	33%	36%	42%	24%	37%	38%	39%	35%	34%	41%
I don't care about hockey at all	28%	32%	29%	27%	27%	27%	29%	25%	28%	28%	29%

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Have you noticed a difference between the look and feel of the Rogers broadcast and the old CBC broadcast?						
	Total (659)	Gender		Fandom		
		Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die hard fan + fan	I don't care at all about hockey
Big difference	37%	39%	34%	53%	41%	33%
It's different but nothing major	49%	50%	49%	40%	49%	25%
No difference	14%	11%	17%	7%	10%	42%

Based on what you've seen or heard, how familiar are you with these changes?						
	Total (659)	Gender		Fandom		
		Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die hard fan + fan	I don't care at all about hockey
Very familiar	28%	34%	20%	63%	36%	
Familiar	39%	39%	38%	22%	40%	30%
Not familiar	25%	21%	30%	13%	19%	17%
Not at all familiar	8%	6%	12%	2%	6%	53%

Which statement best describes how you feel about this season of Hockey Night in Canada?						
	Total (659)	Gender		Fandom		
		Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die hard fan + fan	I don't care at all about hockey
I like it more than the old CBC broadcast	14%	15%	13%	21%	16%	
I like it less than the old CBC broadcast	45%	45%	44%	55%	50%	38%
I don't have a preference either way	41%	40%	42%	24%	34%	62%

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Thinking about the personalities you see on the new Hockey Night in Canada broadcasts, tell us how you feel about the chemistry						
	Total (659)	Gender		Fandom		
		Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die hard fan + fan	I don't care at all about hockey
They are clicking together really well	8%	7%	10%	12%	9%	N/A
The chemistry is coming along	65%	62%	69%	59%	63%	70%
They have no chemistry	27%	31%	21%	29%	28%	30%

Now, tell us how you feel about how much you're seeing George Stroumboulopoulos during the broadcast:						
	Total (659)	Gender		Fandom		
		Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die hard fan + fan	I don't care at all about hockey
Too much	41%	45%	37%	50%	43%	34%
Too little	8%	7%	10%	7%	9%	N/A
The right amount	50%	48%	53%	42%	48%	66%

Now, tell us how you feel about how much you're seeing Ron MacLean during the broadcast:						
	Total (659)	Gender		Fandom		
		Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die hard fan + fan	I don't care at all about hockey
Too much	7%	6%	7%	12%	8%	12%
Too little	48%	53%	42%	53%	50%	24%
The right amount	45%	41%	51%	34%	43%	64%

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Now, tell us how you feel about how much you're seeing Don Cherry during the broadcast:

	Total (659)	Gender		Fandom		
		Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die hard fan + fan	I don't care at all about hockey
Too much	26%	27%	24%	22%	25%	31%
Too little	36%	37%	36%	39%	37%	17%
The right amount	38%	36%	40%	38%	37%	52%

Ron MacLean's reduced role on the broadcast has hurt the NHIC brand

	Total (654)	Gender		Fandom		
		Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die hard fan + fan	I don't care at all about hockey
Strongly agree/agree	74%	74%	75%	78%	75%	77%
Disagree/strongly disagree	26%	26%	25%	22%	25%	23%

George Stroumboulopoulos is a credible replacement for MacLean as main host

	Total (654)	Gender		Fandom		
		Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die hard fan + fan	I don't care at all about hockey
Strongly agree	7%	6%	8%	6%	6%	10%
Agree	32%	31%	34%	34%	33%	12%
Disagree	43%	44%	43%	39%	42%	56%
Strongly disagree	17%	19%	16%	21%	18%	21%

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Since the 2014 season began last month, how many NHL games have you watched on TV, in French?

	Quebec Total (370)	Gender		Fandom		
		Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die hard fan + fan	I don't care at all about hockey
More than 4	20%	28%	12%	73%	53%	
2 or 3	13%	15%	12%	9%	19%	1%
One	11%	14%	8%	6%	12%	1%
None	56%	43%	68%	12%	15%	97%

In Quebec, broadcasting rights for Saturday nights, playoffs and special events have changed from RDS to TVA Sports. Have you noticed a difference between the look and feel of the TVA Sports and the old RDS broadcast?

	Quebec Total (164)	Gender		Fandom		
		Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die hard fan + fan	I don't care at all about hockey
Big difference	33%	33%	32%	63%	39%	N/A
It's different but nothing major	47%	50%	41%	33%	47%	59%
No difference	21%	17%	27%	4%	14%	41%

Which statement best describes how you feel about the new broadcast 'la super soirée LNH' on TVA sports this season?

	Quebec Total (164)	Gender		Fandom		
		Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die hard fan + fan	I don't care at all about hockey
I like it more than the old RDS broadcast	17%	17%	18%	19%	21%	N/A
I like it less than the old RDS broadcast	36%	38%	33%	63%	38%	N/A
I don't have a preference either way	47%	45%	49%	18%	41%	100%

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Which statement best reflects your view?						
	Total (667)	Gender		Fandom		
		Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die hard fan + fan	I don't care at all about hockey
CBC broadcasts were too focused on teams in Ontario and Quebec	35%	39%	30%	38%	36%	49%
CBC was properly balanced in their coverage of all Canadian NHL teams	65%	61%	70%	62%	64%	51%

Which statement best reflects your view?						
	Total (667)	Gender		Fandom		
		Male	Female	I'm a die hard fan	Die hard fan + fan	I don't care at all about hockey
Rogers SportsNet broadcasts are too focused on teams in Ontario and Quebec	25%	24%	26%	18%	25%	29%
Rogers SportsNet broadcasts are balanced in their coverage of all Canadian NHL teams	75%	76%	74%	82%	75%	71%

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