

Bravado, heartbreak & the beautiful game: Canadian fans cheer England, Brazil; lament Portuguese & German exits

Half of those interested in the tournament have been streaming games at work or school

July 5, 2018 – The drama of the [world's most-watched](#) sporting event is alternately breaking hearts, and taking Canadian fans' breath away. Over the past three weeks, World Cup viewers have gone from the heights of elation to the depths of despair, depending on the fortunes of their favourite teams.

And, while the "beautiful game" is by no means Canadians' [preferred choice](#) of sporting event to watch when compared to hockey or the Olympic Games, a new Angus Reid Institute survey finds a significant segment of the country connecting with the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

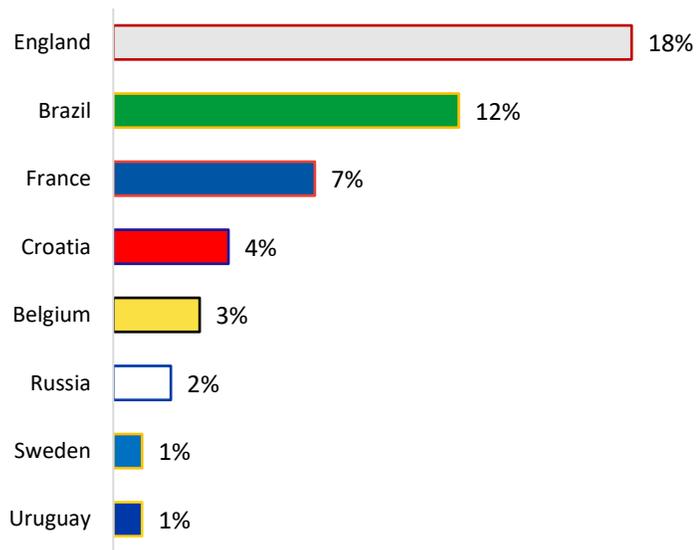
While this report may be hard to read for Japanese fans still grieving a last-second Round of 16 loss to Belgium, plenty of Canadians are able to cheer their team of choice into the quarter-finals. England and Brazil emerge as Canada's favourites for the rest of the tournament, and undoubtedly bar-owners across the country too. More than half of those who are interested in the tournament report watching a game at a bar or restaurant.

The big draw for many Canadians, however, is 2026. Along with Mexico and the United States, Canada recently won a joint bid to host the World Cup in eight years. The number of Canadians who are interested in that tournament jumps to just under half (46%) from the 37 per cent who say they are watching currently.

More Key Findings:

- Among Canadians who are following the tournament, England is the top rooting interest. More than one-in-six (18%) say they're pulling for the Three Lions. Brazil (12%) and eliminated powers Portugal (16%) and Germany (12%) are other top choices, while 16 per cent are just along for the ride, cheering for no squad in particular

**Which one or two teams are you cheering for?
Among those following the World Cup: n=470
(Teams that are still alive shown)**



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from June 25 – 27, 2018, among a representative randomized sample of 1,268 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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- Two elements hinder the 2018 World Cup for Canadian viewers. One-in-three (33%) say they would be catching more games if the time zone aligned more closely with theirs, and half (49%) say they worry that corruption influences game outcomes. Perhaps due to this, 27 per cent of Canadians say they're following the tournament less closely than they expected to.
- British Columbians are generally supportive of their provincial government's decision not to host World Cup games in Vancouver in 2026. Seven-in-ten (68%) say the government made the right choice, after reportedly having difficulty garnering clarity about the costs the province would incur
- Despite lower levels of viewership than other countries, Canadians pay their respects to soccer fans. More than six-in-ten (63%) say that soccer fans are more passionate than other sports fans

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Part 1: The Teams

Fan Favourites: Canadians' preferred teams still in the tournament

Canada has long touted itself as a multicultural mosaic, and this perception is rarely more apparent than during the FIFA World Cup, when living rooms, meeting places, social clubs and bars around the country fill with fans in jerseys from all over the world.

All 32 teams that qualified for the 2018 World Cup count at least a few fans among those following the tournament in Canada, but certain teams are decidedly more popular than others.

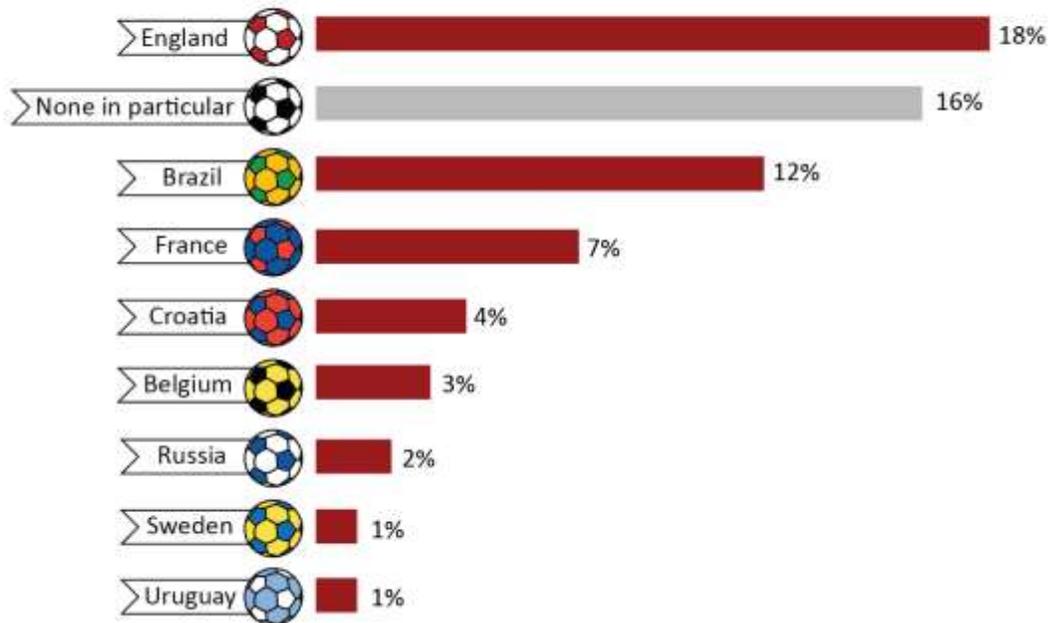
Leading the way is one of the oldest tiles in the mosaic, and one of the two countries that gives Canada many of its institutions of law and government: England. Some 18 per cent of Canadians who are following the World Cup say they're hoping for a victory for the country that once ruled Canada.

Canadian tournament broadcasters TSN and CTV likely held their breath alongside fans, as England defeated Colombia in a penalty shootout to advance to the quarterfinals. Of the teams remaining in the tournament, only Brazil has the support of more than 10 per cent of Canadian viewers, while fully one-in-six (16%) say they aren't rooting for anyone in particular:

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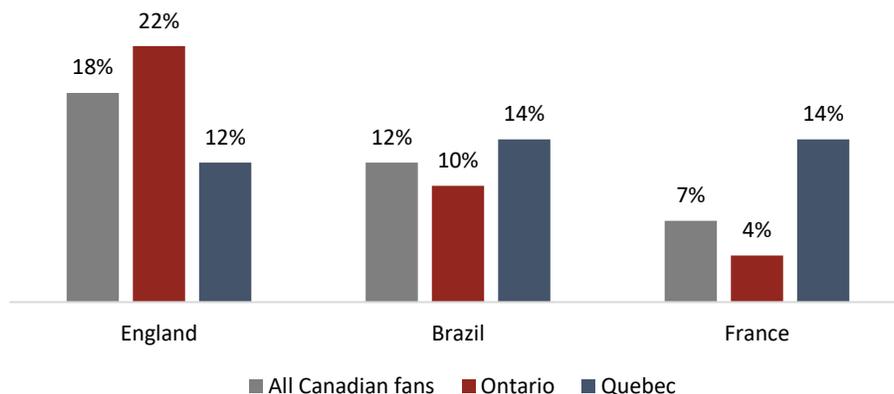
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**Which one or two teams are you cheering for?
(Teams still alive shown)**



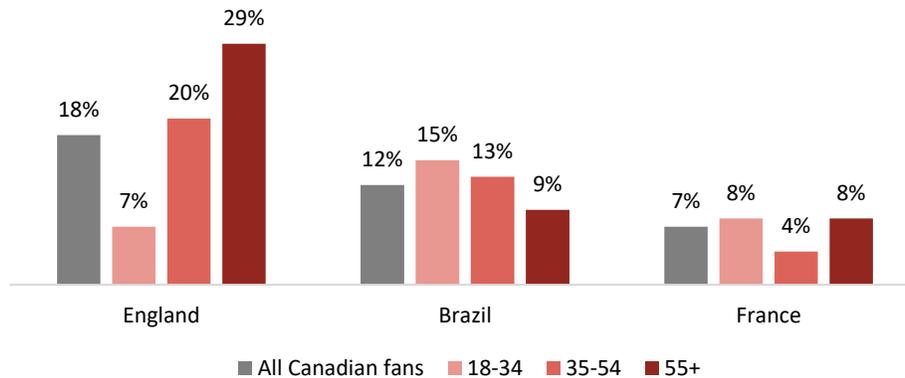
This country's other historic "founding nation" -- France -- is the third-most favoured, largely on the strength of the team's popularity in Quebec. As seen in the graph that follows, three times as many Quebec fans as Ontario fans are rooting for France, while England's popularity is much higher in English-speaking Canada:

Which one or two would you say you are rooting for the most? (asked of those who are following the World Cup closely, N=470)



There's also a notable age gap in support for England among Canadian soccer fans. Those ages 35 and older are much more likely to support the Three Lions, while those under 35 are much less enthusiastic:

Which one or two would you say you are rooting for the most? (asked of those who are following the World Cup closely, N=470)



Heartbreakers: Top teams that flamed out

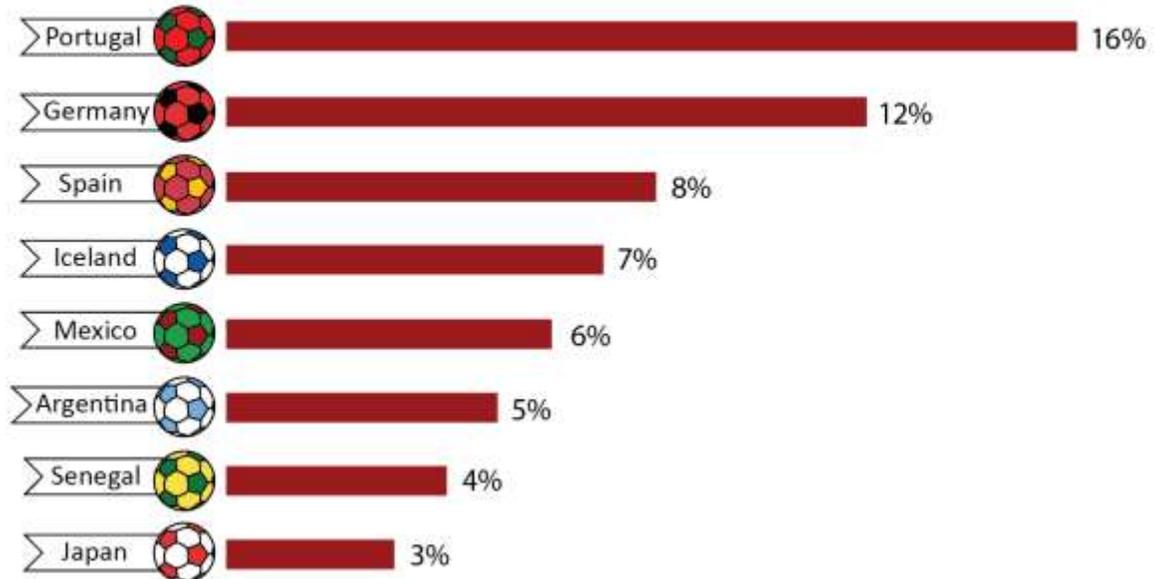
Many Canadians following the World Cup have already have already tasted bitter tears of disappointment. One-in-six (16%) were rooting for Portugal, which lost its Round of 16 match to Uruguay, while one-in-eight (12%) were cheering defending champions Germany, which crashed out of the tournament in the group stage.

More eliminated teams that received notable support from Canadian fans can be seen in the graph that follows:

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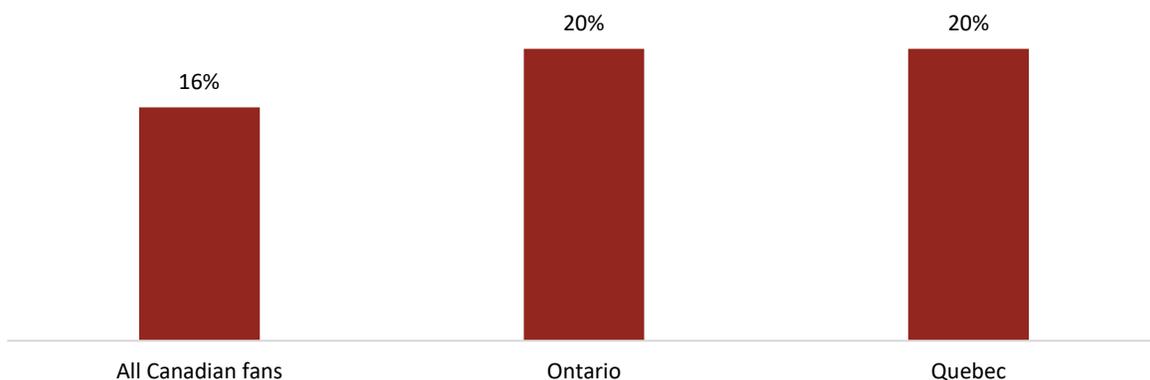
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**Which one or two teams are you cheering for?
(Teams that have been eliminated shown)**



Interestingly, while Ontarians and Quebecers who have been following the tournament closely diverge on England and France, they were united by an equally high degree of support for Portugal. Some 20 per cent of those closely following the World Cup in each province said they'd been backing Cristiano Ronaldo's team before it was sent home, a finding that may reflect the fact that those two provinces are home to the largest proportion of Portuguese Canadians, [according to Statistics Canada](#).

Percentage of fans who say they were rooting for Portugal in the World Cup



Part 2 – Connection to the World Cup

Who's watching?

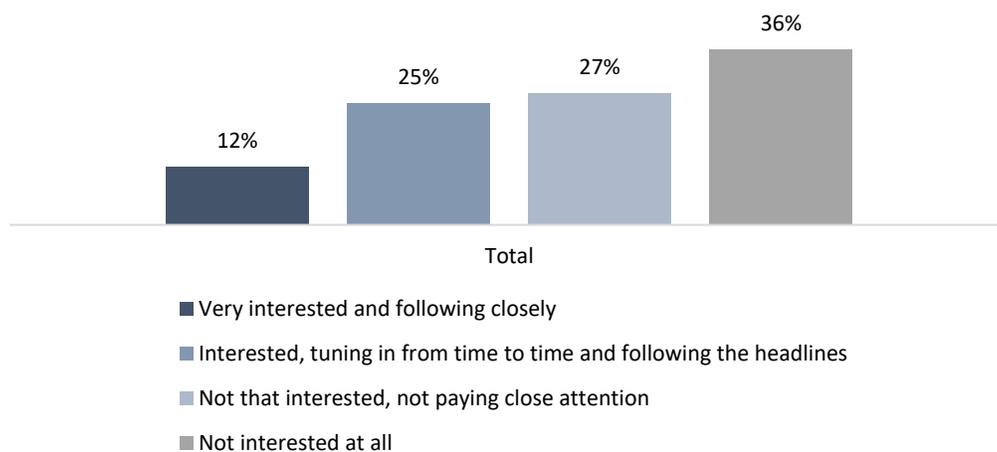
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The 2018 World Cup has featured dramatic finishes, stunning upsets, and exciting shootouts, but the proportion of the Canadian population paying attention is relatively small. Compared to the Olympics earlier this year and in 2016, far fewer are following.

While six-in-ten Canadians (58%) said they were watching the Winter Games from Pyeongchang, and a similar number (61%) watched the Summer Games in Rio, a much smaller number of Canadians (37%) are engaged with the World Cup.

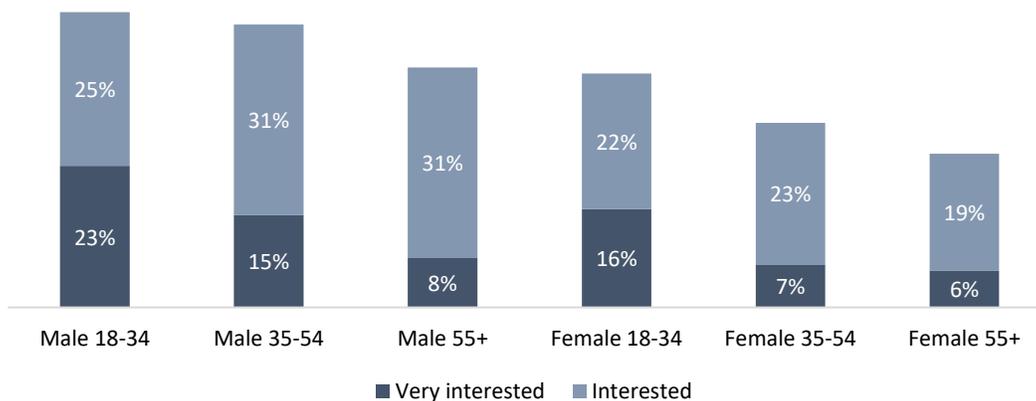
Of those who are tuned in, slightly more than one-in-ten (12%) are following closely, while another quarter (25%) are watching from time to time and keeping an eye on the headlines.

As you may be aware, the 2018 FIFA World Cup began in Russia earlier this month. How closely have you been following the tournament since it began?



Younger Canadians (those ages 18-34) are much more likely to be paying attention to the World Cup. Members of this age group are twice as likely as their 35-54-year-old counterparts to say that they're very interested. Few over the age of 55 are following closely, regardless of gender:

How closely have you been following the tournament since it began?

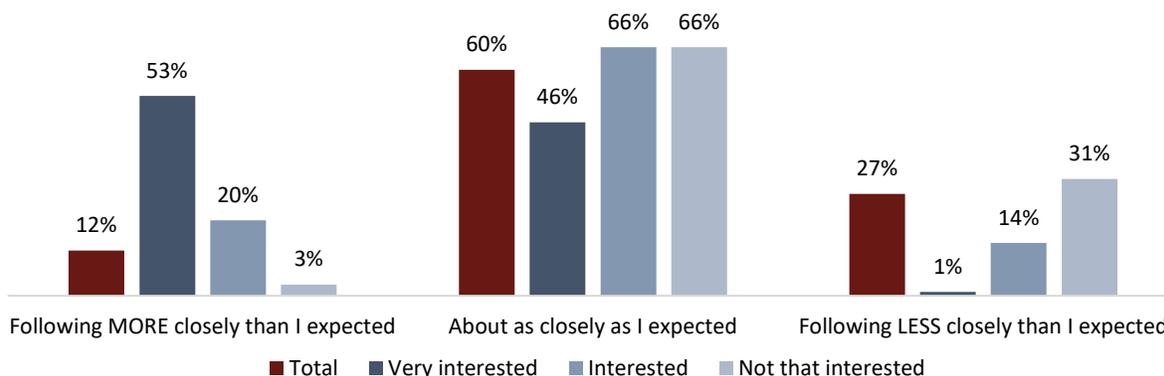


How have they watched?

Asked whether they've been following the tournament more or less closely than they expected to be, Canadians are more likely to say the latter. More than one-in-four (27%) say they have been paying less attention to the 2018 World Cup than they intended to, while fewer than half that many (12%) say they have been paying more attention.

As might be expected, those who have been "very interested" in the tournament are more likely to say they've been following "more closely" than expected, while those who are less interested are mostly following as closely as they expected to be:

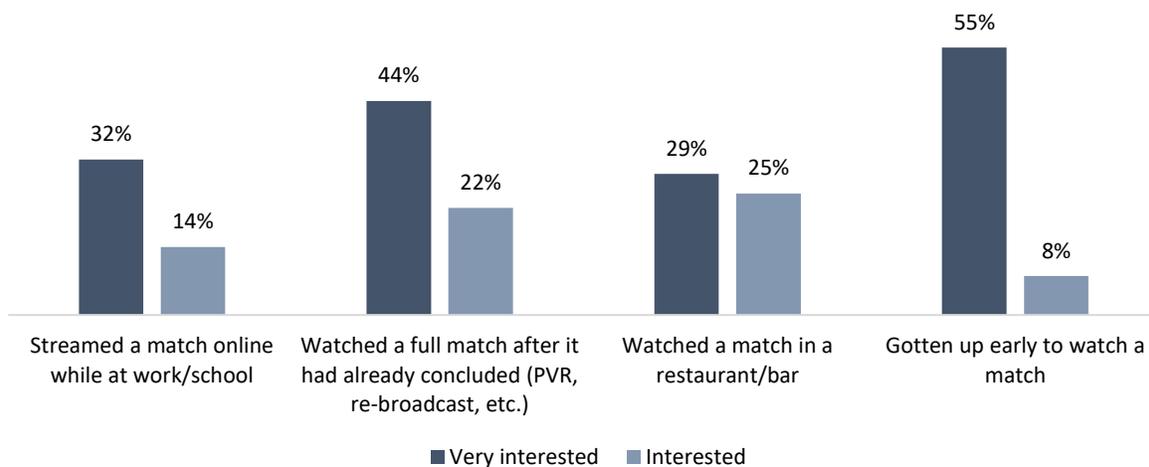
And, since the tournament began, would you say you have been following it more or less closely than you expected to follow it?



One reason the tournament may not be capturing the attention of casual fans is the time zone factor. Hosted in Russia, matches have begun as early as 5 a.m. in the Pacific time zone, and no matches have taken place during the “primetime” hours after the end of the work day.

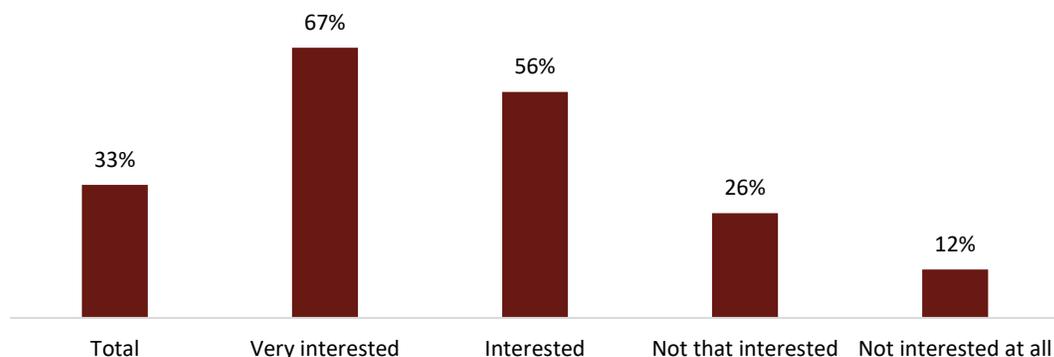
The time zone difference has prompted hardcore fans to alter their routines. A full majority (55%) of those who are very interested in the tournament report getting up early to watch a match, and large numbers have also streamed matches online, or watched full matches after they were completed:

Which of the following have you done since the 2018 FIFA World Cup began?



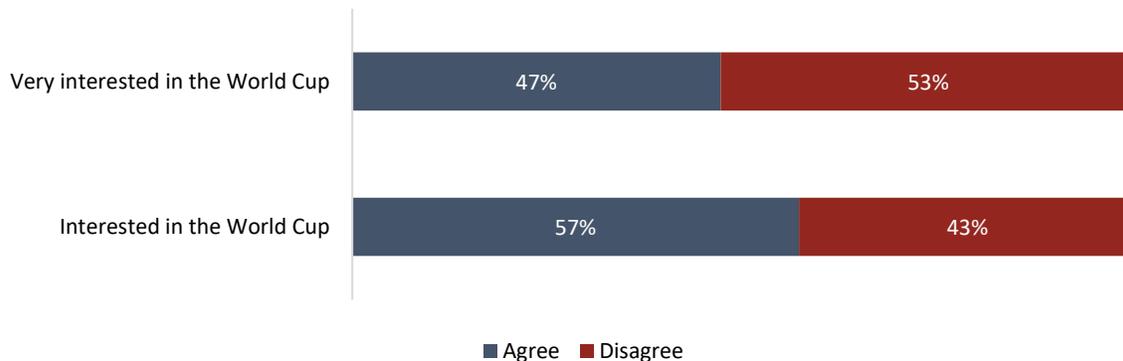
That said, one-in-three Canadians (33%) say they would be more inclined to watch if the games were happening in a different time zone. This includes two-thirds of the “very interested” – who are already going out of their way to watch matches – and a full majority of those who are merely “interested” – who largely aren’t.

**Percentage who Agree with the following statement:
"I'd watch more if games were happening in a different time zone and aired live in the evening"**



Another concern that might potentially be turning off some would-be Canadian fans: corruption. Nearly half of all Canadians (49%) say they worry that FIFA corruption influences the outcomes of individual games at the tournament, and a full majority of those who express moderate interest in the tournament agree with a statement to this effect:

"I worry that FIFA corruption influences the outcomes of World Cup games"



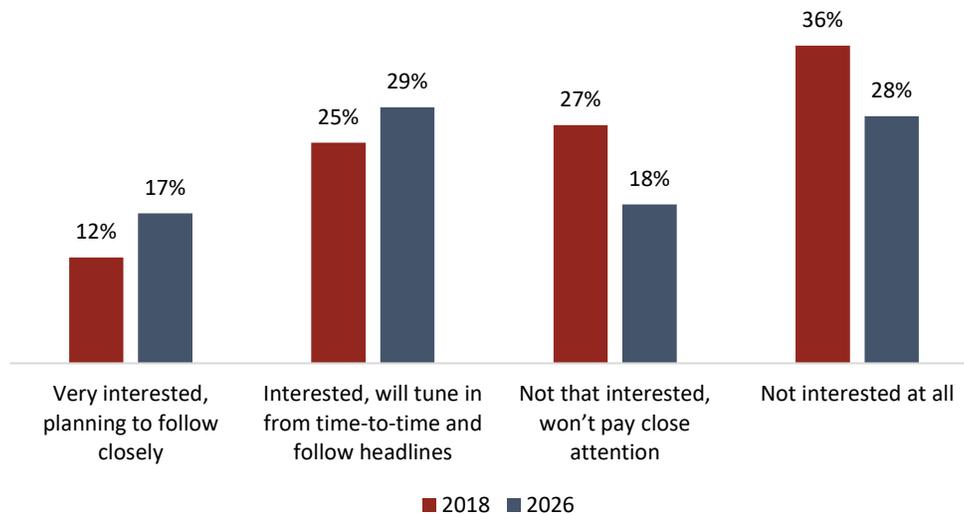
Part 3 – Looking ahead

Increased attention on 2026

Having learned that Canada, alongside Mexico and the United States, will play host to World Cup matches in 2026, 46 per cent of Canadians say they will be interested in that tournament. This is especially notable, as the participation of Canada’s men’s national team has yet to be confirmed. Canada would need to qualify or be given a host-nation spot in the tournament. The team has only qualified once in history, in 1986, where it lost all three games and did not score.

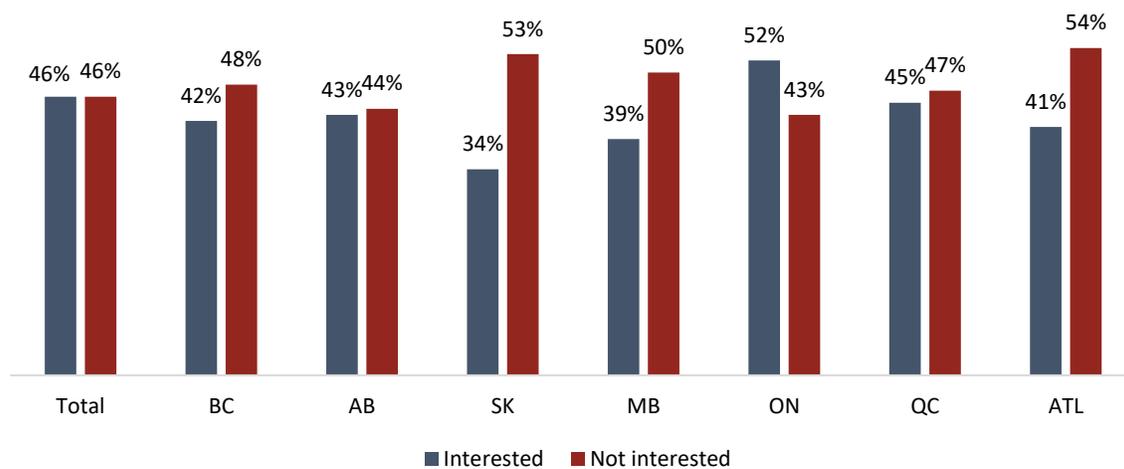
Canada’s inclusion would go a long way toward building more enthusiasm:

Interest in FIFA World Cup



The host cities for 2026 have yet to be finalized, but Edmonton, Montreal and Toronto will be considered to split the 10 games hosted in this country. Levels of interest vary across the country, with Ontarians most excited:

Interest in 2026 World Cup



British Columbians agree with decision not to host

Notable in its absence from the list of potential host cities for Canada in 2026 is Vancouver. The city, which hosted the 2010 Olympics and 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup, was thought by many to be an obvious choice to play [a key role](#) in Canada's bid.

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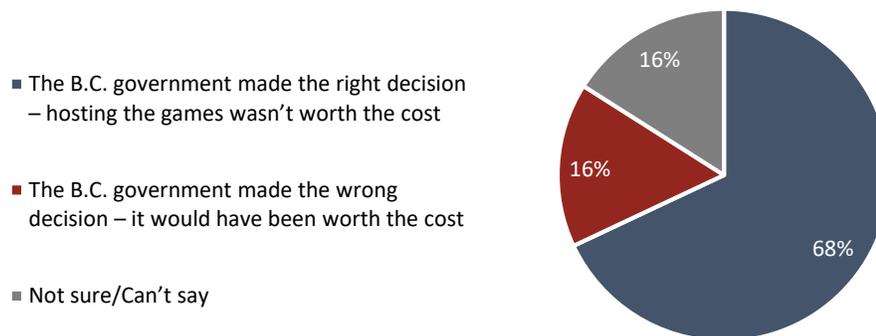
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The provincial government however, decided not to pursue participation, after being unable to come to terms with the United Bid Committee over [clarification of the costs](#) B.C. taxpayers would incur.

The City of Vancouver released a statement shortly after the news broke saying that it was “[extremely disappointed](#)” with the decision. B.C. residents however, are largely on the side of the government. Although some consider this a once in a lifetime opportunity that would have brought millions of dollars worth of tourism to the city, British Columbians rejected accepting an unclear package of financial and security-related responsibilities.

Notably, Minneapolis and Chicago [also pulled their bids](#) over similar concerns. (For full wording of the question, [click here.](#))

**Considering all of this, which of the following perspectives is closer to your own?
Among BC residents: n = 183**



*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 foundation 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.*

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here.](#)

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