

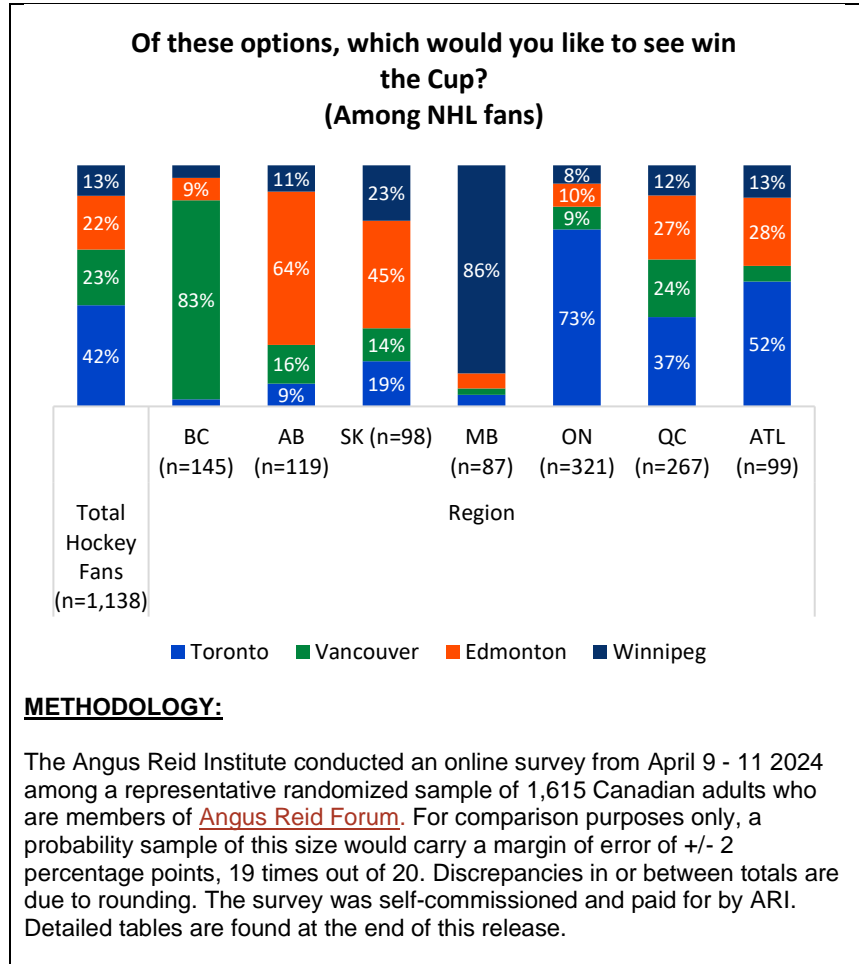
Matthews or McDavid? Hockey fans equally likely to say Toronto or Edmonton can end nation's Stanley Cup drought

Number of Canadians cheering for "any" Canadian team to win the Stanley Cup rises 7 points from 2016

April 15, 2024 – Just days before the National Hockey League's regular season ends and the spring rite of passage that is playoffs begin, Canadians know that they'll have four representatives in the perennial springtime battle for the Stanley Cup.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds renewed hope that one of Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, or Toronto will bring Canadians a desperately sought after Stanley Cup parade. This, more than three decades after the Montreal Canadiens won the Cup in 1993.

Asked which team they believe represents Canada's best opportunity, Canadian hockey fans are divided equally between the Toronto Maple Leafs (21%) and Edmonton Oilers (20%). Fewer, but still 14 per cent say the Vancouver Canucks will be the team to break the drought, while just five per cent believe the Winnipeg Jets have what it takes.



For many Canadians, the team to win has evidently become less important than the act of winning. In 2016, 57 per cent of Canadians said they didn't care which team ended the drought, while 43 per cent said the team to win was important to them. Now, nearing two-thirds (64%) say they'll cheer for any team that calls Canada home.

As to which team Canadians will be cheering for, a considerable east-west divide exists. Ontario east, the Leafs are easily the top choice for hockey fans, with three-quarters in Ontario (73%) and half in Atlantic Canada (52%) cheering for Auston Matthews and Co. In British Columbia, it's largely Canucks or bust, with 83 per cent of NHL followers in that province cheering for the odds-on Norris favourite Quinn Hughes and his team. The same story is true in Manitoba, where that province's hockey fans hope the Jets can take flight and mount a run to the Cup final in June. Two-thirds of Albertans who follow the NHL (64%) will be pulling for last year's league MVP Connor McDavid and the Oilers, though evidently Calgary fans hold back some of the enthusiasm for that province's only representative in the tournament.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

More Key Findings:

- Seven-in-ten Canadians say they pay at least some attention to the NHL (70%), while two-in-five could be considered active fans (40%). This is the highest mark noted by ARI in nearly a decade of asking Canadians about the league.
- Among the pool of hockey fans – that aforementioned 70 per cent of the population – about half say they're excited about playoff hockey. This excitement jumps in B.C., Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario, where provincial teams are represented, and drops lowest in Quebec, where the Montreal Canadiens rebuild continues.
- The Toronto Maple Leafs have also been the top hope for Canada to win a Stanley cup in 2019 and 2021 surveys, but have not made an Eastern Conference final since 2002

About ARI

*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.*

INDEX**Part One: Excitement high in represented markets****Part Two: Canada's best hope?**

- **Leafs, Oilers both chosen by one-in-five as the team to end Cup curse**
- **Which team is "Canada's Team"?**
- **As Stanley Cup drought grows, more say they'll cheer for any Canadian team**

Part One: Excitement high in represented markets

For many Canadians, it's the most wonderful time of the sporting year. Hockey is a game that, despite perceptions of [massive cultural challenges](#) facing it, defines how many people [view this nation](#). Despite this passion and investment, each year for the past three decades, Canadian hockey fans have been left with a sour taste in their mouths, watching American rivals (yes, largely made up of Canadian players) raise the Stanley Cup.

Related:

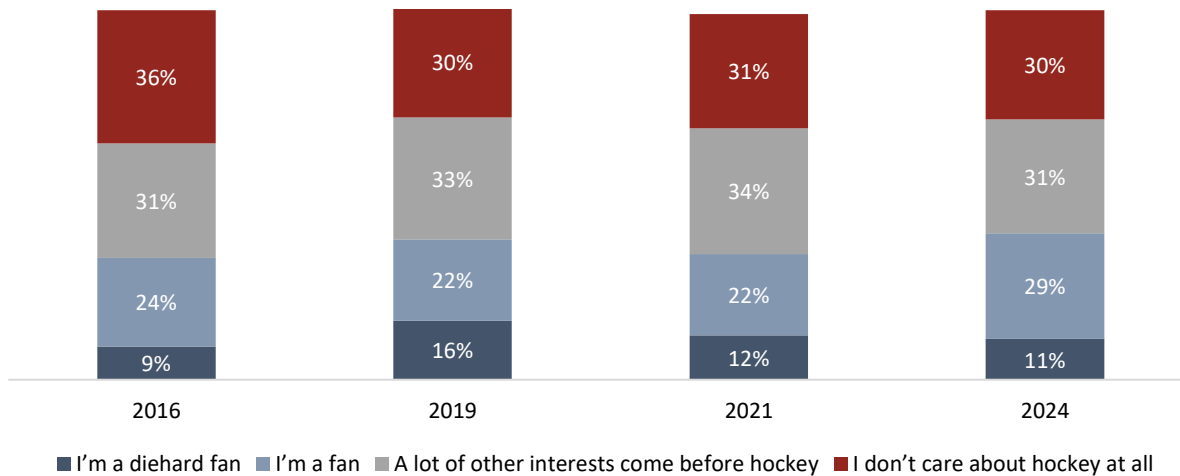
- [**Canadians may love their hockey, but they also see serious problems with its culture**](#)
- [**Canadians show little confidence in Hockey Canada culture change**](#)

The National Hockey League itself, appears to be in a good place, as two-in-five Canadians (40%) now consider themselves fans of the league. This is a higher mark than was reported in 2021, 2019, and 2016. Commissioner Gary Bettman [recently argued](#) that game has never been better, with stars and talent abound, and expansion into Las Vegas and Seattle both accomplished in the past eight years.

CONTACT:

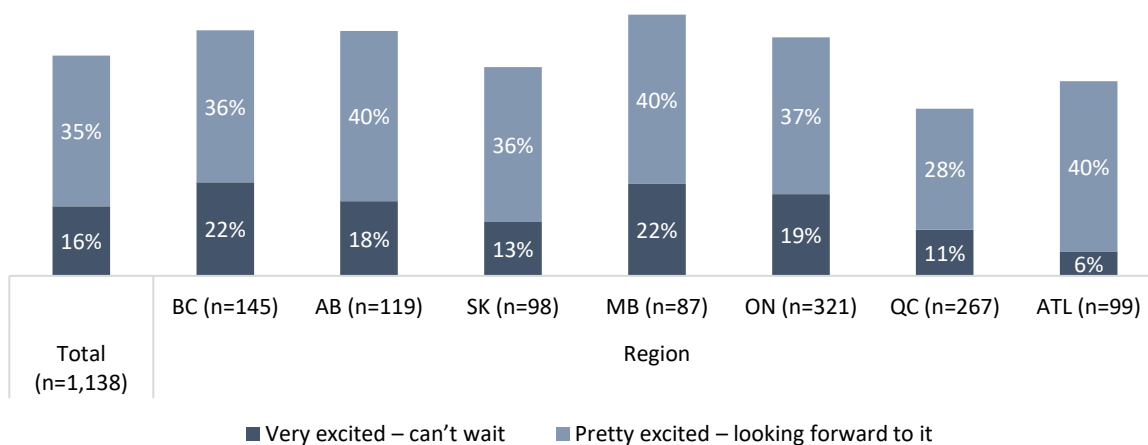
Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

First, how important is professional hockey played at the NHL level to you, personally?



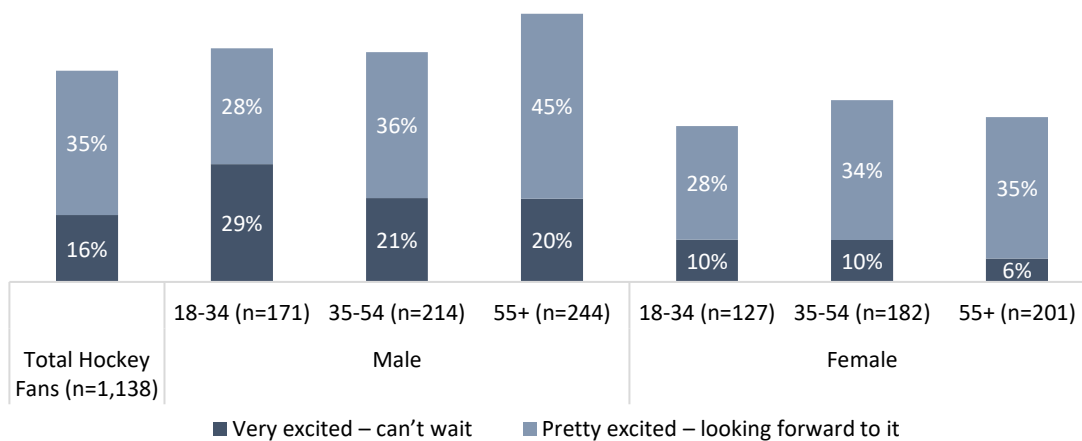
The Stanley Cup Playoffs are set to begin later this week, with Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Toronto all punching their ticket to the four-round tournament. Among those who watch hockey, enthusiasm is highest in provincial markets that have teams represented, though at least two-in-five fans in every region say they're looking forward to playoffs.

And what about this year's playoffs, which start in a couple weeks, how excited would you say you are to watch this?



Fandom breaks down on gender lines more than generations, with men of all ages more likely to be fans of the NHL ([see detailed tables](#)) and to say that they're excited to drop the puck on the playoffs. Men over the age of 54 show the highest levels of enthusiasm:

**And what about this year's playoffs, which start in a couple weeks, how excited would you say you are to watch this?
(Among those who follow hockey)**

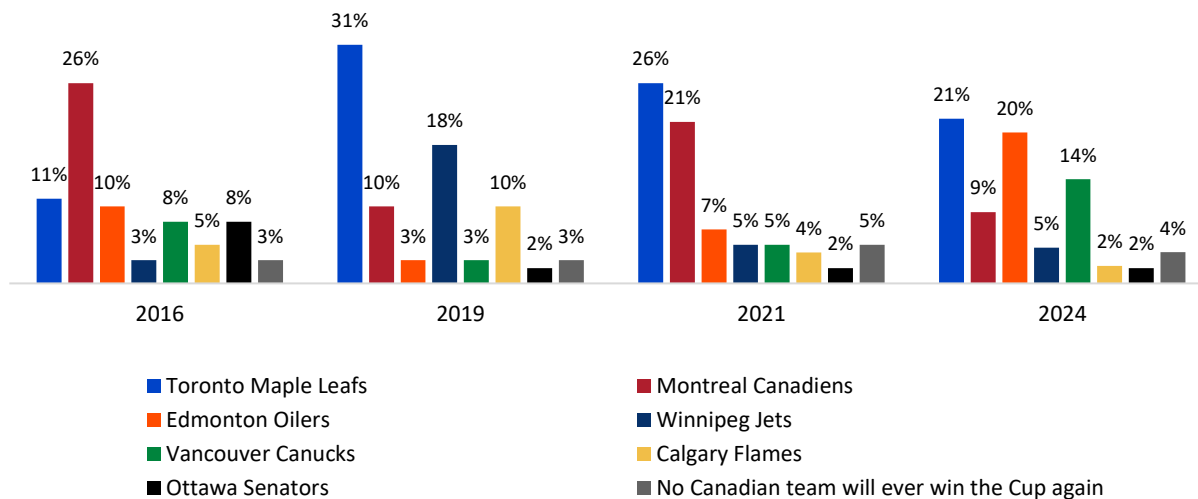


Part Two: Canada's best hope?

Canadian teams have frequently come ever-so-close to winning the Stanley Cup since 1993. Some have called it a curse, while others have cried foul against the NHL, suggesting the league prefers American winners. Regardless of the reason, the Canucks (twice), Flames, and Oilers have all come within one game of winning the Cup over the last three decades, while both the Ottawa Senators (2007) and Montreal Canadiens (2020) have made the finals.

Asked which team is the best bet to break the drought, one-in-five choose Toronto (21%) or Edmonton (20%) respectively, while 14 per cent choose Vancouver. A persistent three to five per cent of Canadian hockey fans continue to say that no Canadian team will ever win the Cup again:

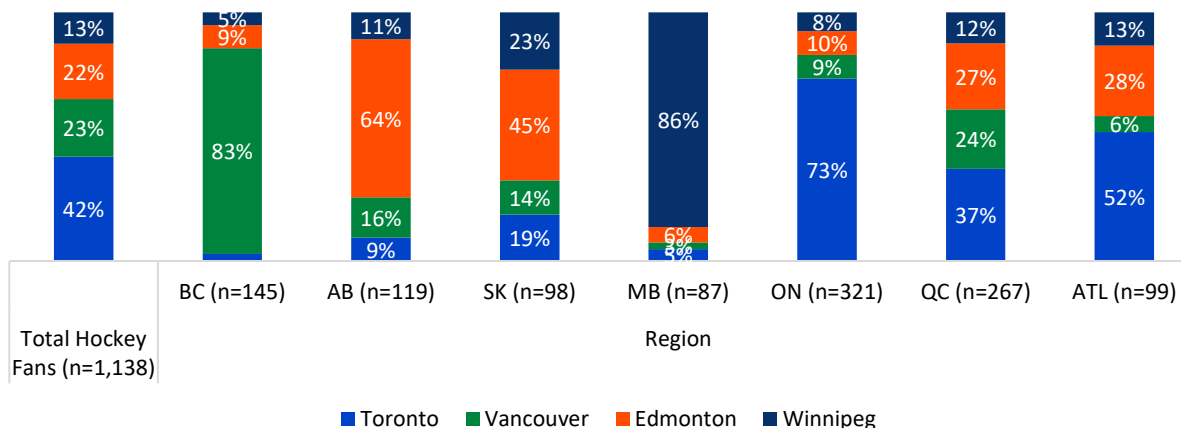
**Which of the 7 Canadian teams do you think will be the first one to break this streak and win the Cup?
(Among those that pay any attention to the NHL)**



Which team is “Canada’s Team”?

Looking at this another way, ARI asked Canadian hockey fans which team they would *like* to see win the Stanley Cup this year. Forced to choose, the largest number say the Toronto Maple Leafs, buoyed by Ontario’s larger population. Equal numbers say Vancouver (23%) or Edmonton (22%), while Winnipeg receives the support of 13 per cent:

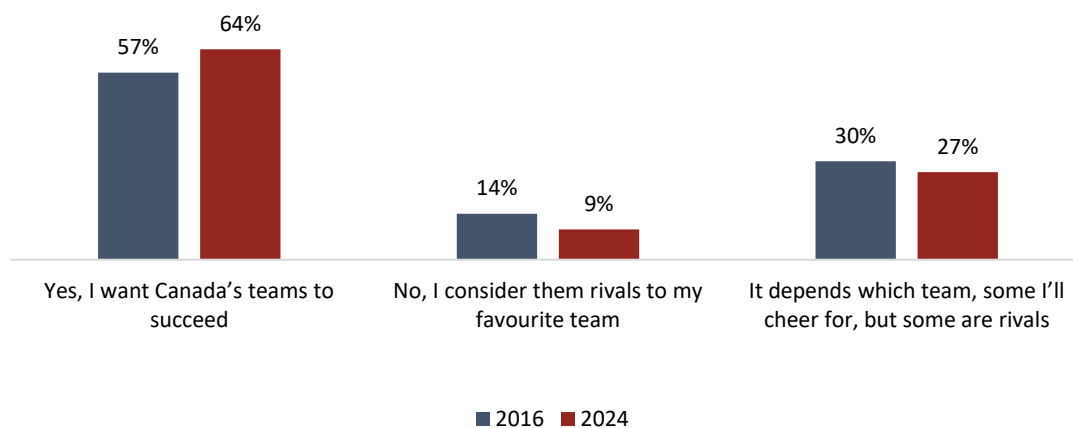
**Four Canadian teams will be competing for the Stanley Cup this year.
Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Toronto. Of those options, which would
you like to see win the Cup?**



As Stanley Cup drought grows, more say they'll cheer for any Canadian team

Many Canadians hold their allegiance close and say that there are only certain Canadian teams they will cheer for because of rivalries. That said, this proportion may be shrinking under the pressure of the three-decade Stanley Cup drought. Compared to responses from 2016, the proportion of Canadians saying they will cheer for any Canadian team has grown by seven points:

Generally speaking, when your favourite team gets eliminated from the playoffs, do you find yourself cheering for the other Canadian teams because they're Canadian?



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

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org