

Number of hockey fans saying they'll support any of Canada's teams in playoffs reaches a 10-year high

Maple Leafs (22%), Jets (19%), Oilers (16%) seen as Canada's best chance to end 32-year losing streak

April 25, 2025 – It was easy for Canada to come together for the [4 Nations Face-Off in February](#), with the maple leaf firmly emblazoned on their team's chest and a bubbling resentment against the stars and stripes on the other end of the ice.

It's a whole other game, however, to have Flames fans cheering for the Oilers or Habs fans cheering for the Leafs. After 32 years without a Canadian Stanley Cup winner and with [national unity rising](#), we may be inching toward that place.

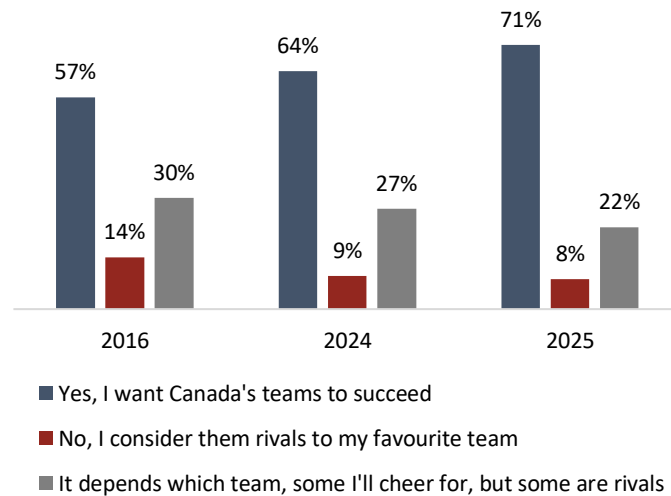
New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds an increase in the number of Canadian hockey fans who want "any" Canadian team to win the Stanley Cup, not just their own. Seven-in-10 (71%) now say they will cheer for this, representing a seven-point increase over the past year and a 14-point increase since 2016.

That's not to say that Canadians don't have preferences.

Canada has five representatives in the Stanley Cup Playoffs – Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal. Among those teams, the Maple Leafs and Canadiens share the most support, chosen as the preferred team by three-in-10. One-in-five (18%) are cheering for the Oilers, 15 per cent for the Jets, and six per cent for the Senators in Canada's capital.

Who they're cheering for does not necessarily represent Canadians' best bet to break the Stanley Cup drought. On this question both the Leafs and Jets are chosen by one-in-five, while fewer think the Oilers (16%) or Canadiens (14%) will raise Lord Stanley's mug first. Notably, just two per cent of Canadians say no Canadian team will ever win the Cup again – this proportion peaked at 5 per cent in 2021.

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?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from April 21 - 24 2025, among a randomized sample of 1,607 Canadian adults who are members of Angus Reid Forum. The sample was weighted to be representative of adults nationwide according to region, gender, age, household income, and education, based on the Canadian census. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2 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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More Key Findings:

- Once named in the Top 10 “[Greatest Canadians](#)”, the Great One, Wayne Gretzky, has seen his reputation suffer due to his time spent with members of the Trump administration, including [visiting the President at Mar-a-Lago](#) and attending a Washington Capitals game [next to FBI Director Kash Patel](#). Gretzky’s favourability among Canadians is 47 per cent, while 45 per cent view him unfavourably. In 2011, Gretzky was [viewed unfavourably by one-in-16](#).
- Commissioner Gary Bettman, also seated with Gretzky during that same game in Washington, D.C., has a 14 per cent favourability, with a 43 per cent unfavourable overall. Among diehard hockey fans his favourability rises (27%), but so does his unfavourability (70%).

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.

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The Hockey Fan landscape

The NHL landed on a ratings hit when it paused its season in February for the 4 Nations Face-Off, a short international tournament which replaced the league’s annual all-star game. It was the first best-on-best hockey tournament since the 2016 World Cup of Hockey, and [more than 10 million Canadians](#) watched the final which Canada won in overtime over the United States. That makes it the most watched hockey game [since the 2010 Winter Olympics](#).

But the sport is still mired in scandal overall, as a group of hockey players including former NHLers take the stand [in a sexual assault trial](#) coinciding with the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Related:

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

The proportion of Canadians who describe themselves as diehard fans has declined from 2019, but at least seven-in-10 say they have some interest in hockey:

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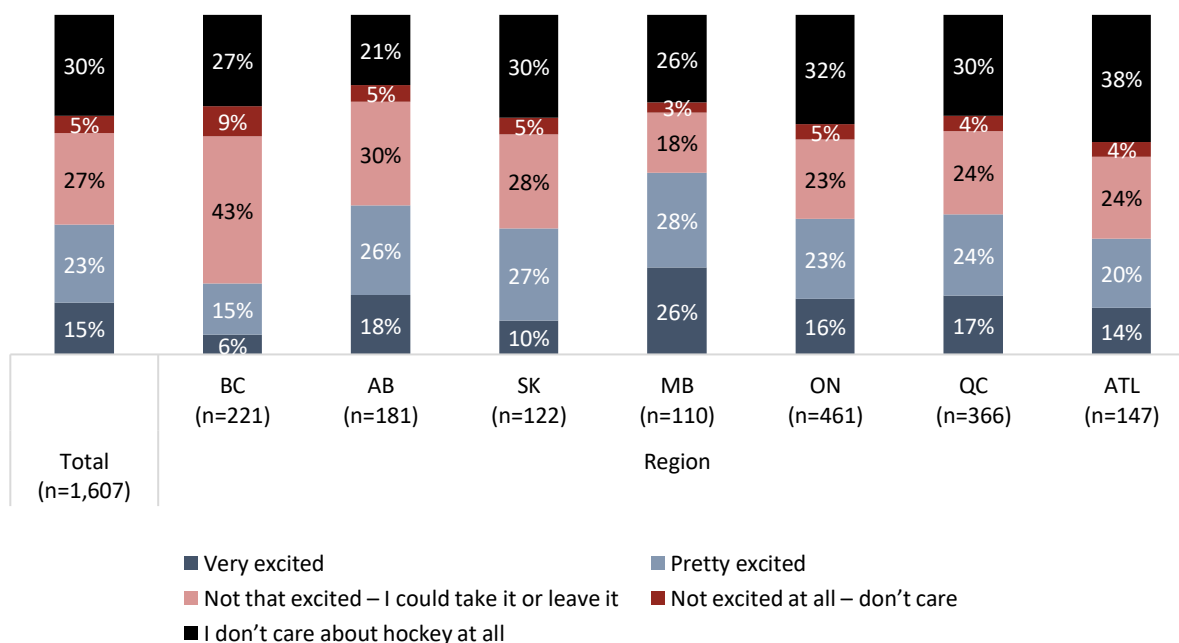
First, how important is professional hockey played at the NHL level to you, personally?					
	2016	2019	2021	2024	2025
I'm a diehard fan	9%	16%	12%	11%	11%
I'm a fan	24%	22%	22%	29%	27%
A lot of other interests come before hockey	31%	33%	34%	31%	32%
I don't care about hockey at all	36%	30%	31%	30%	30%

Two-in-five excited about this year's playoffs

This year's NHL playoffs features five of the seven Canadian teams, the most since 2017. Two-in-five (38%) Canadians describe themselves as excited to watch the postseason, while one-third (32%) say they're not as enthused.

Excitement is highest in Manitoba (56%), where the Winnipeg Jets will hope to make a deep run after securing the President's Trophy as the league's top regular season team. Those in B.C. are least thrilled with this year's edition of the playoffs after the Canucks failed to qualify:

What about this year's playoffs, which have just begun, how excited would you say you are to watch this?



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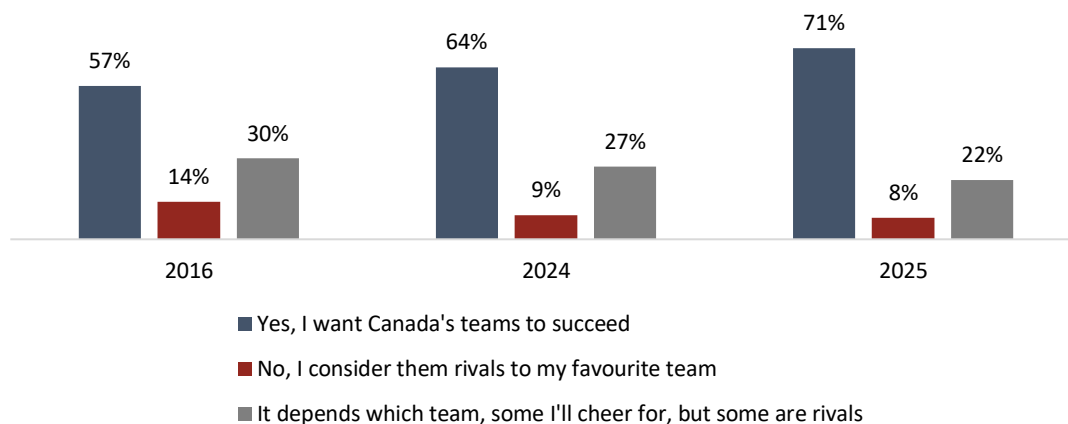
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Canadians rally in hopes of ending 32-year curse

Canadian teams' lack of success in pursuing the Stanley Cup has provided fertile ground for advertisers during the playoffs, and also perhaps a reason to watch for fans whose team failed to make the postseason. Over the past decade, a majority say they generally want Canada's teams to succeed. And that majority has grown over time, with 71 per cent now saying they are cheering for the Leafs, Oilers, Senators and Canadiens to succeed because they are Canadian:

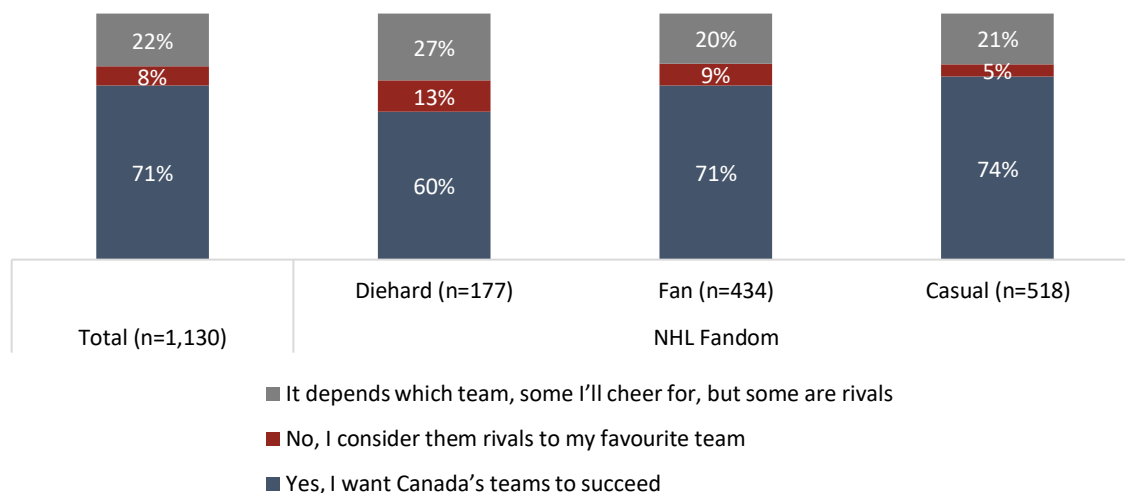
**Generally speaking, when your favourite team gets eliminated from the playoffs, do you find yourself cheering for the other Canadian teams because they're Canadian?
(Among those interested in hockey)**



The bitter pill of cheering for a potential rival lifting the Stanley Cup is apparently more difficult to swallow for those who are diehard fans of the NHL. But still a majority (60%) say they want Canada's teams to succeed during the NHL playoffs. Casual fans are more likely to want a Canadian team to lift the Stanley Cup:

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?

(Among those interested in hockey)

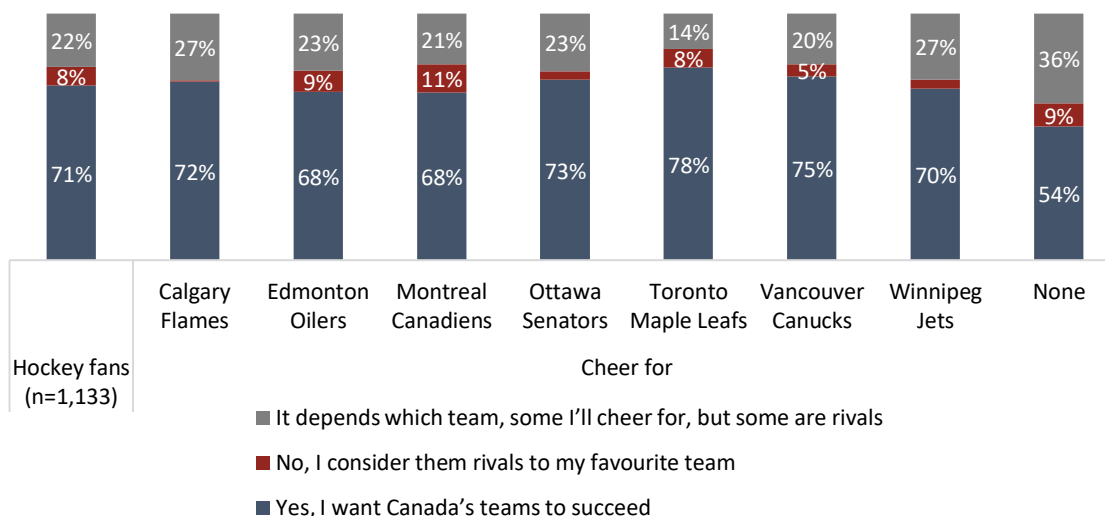


At least seven-in-10 fans of Canadian teams say they want the other Canadian teams to succeed. Those who cheer for none of the Canadian teams are less likely to say that's the case.

At least one-in-12 Oilers fans (9%), Canadiens fans (11%) and Leafs fans (8%) say they don't cheer for other Canadian teams because they consider them rivals, the most among Canadian team fanbases:

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?

(Among those interested in hockey)



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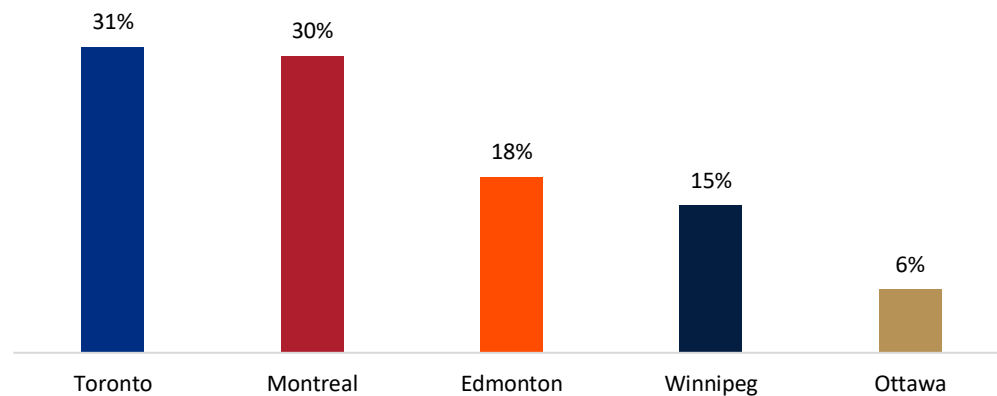
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Canada's team(s)

As two of the Original Six NHL franchises, the Toronto Maple Leafs and Montreal Canadiens are two of the most popular teams historically and currently apparently. Both are the most popular options when it comes to which teams' hockey fans would most want to see lift the Cup. The Oilers (18%), Jets (15%) and Senators (6%) trail in popularity.

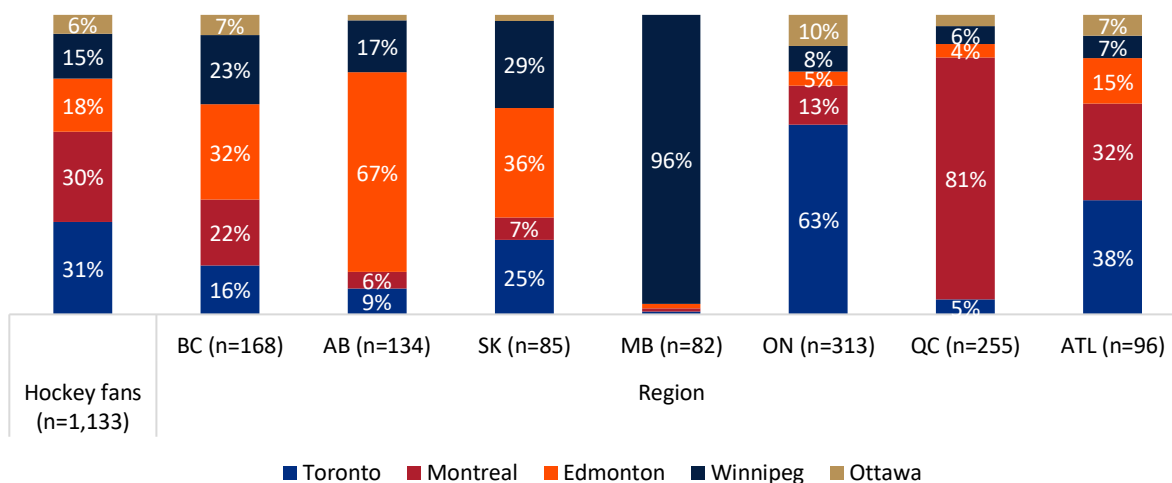
**Five Canadian teams are competing for the Stanley Cup this year. Ottawa, Montreal, Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Toronto. Of those options, which would you like to see win the Cup?
(Among those interested in hockey)**



Even in Ontario, the Senators are not very popular. More in that province want to see Montreal win (13%) than Ottawa (10%).

The Jets (96%) are the overwhelming favourite in Manitoba, while the Canadiens (81%) are also very popular in their own province. Two-thirds (67%) in Alberta would like to see the Oilers win, while the Leafs are slightly less popular than that in their home province of Ontario:

**Five Canadian teams are competing for the Stanley Cup this year. Ottawa, Montreal, Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Toronto. Of those options, which would you like to see win the Cup?
(Among those interested in hockey)**



Who Canadians say will actually break the Stanley Cup drought

With the benefit of its population advantage the Toronto Maple Leafs are often the top choice to break this multi-generational curse. That said, though low in population, the results the Winnipeg Jets generated in the regular season are clearly respected. Finishing with the best record in the NHL, the Jets are close to the Leafs this year as the team chosen to win Canada’s first Stanley Cup in more than three decades:

It has now been 32 years since a Canadian team (the Montreal Canadiens in 1993) won the Stanley Cup. Which of the 7 Canadian teams do you think will be the first one to break this streak and win the Cup? (Among those interested in hockey)					
	2016	2019	2021	2024	2025
Toronto Maple Leafs	11%	31%	26%	21%	22%
Winnipeg Jets	3%	18%	5%	5%	19%
Edmonton Oilers	10%	3%	7%	20%	16%
Montreal Canadiens	26%	10%	21%	9%	14%
Vancouver Canucks	8%	3%	5%	14%	3%
Ottawa Senators	8%	2%	2%	2%	3%
No Canadian team will ever win the Cup again	3%	3%	5%	4%	2%
Calgary Flames	5%	10%	4%	2%	2%

The “Great Once” no longer revered. Sid the Kid takes the mantle as hockey hero

Wayne Gretzky has been a fixture in Canadian conversations since the 1970’s. The son of Walter was a phenom and a national hero, and despite being passed for first in career goals by Alex Ovechkin earlier

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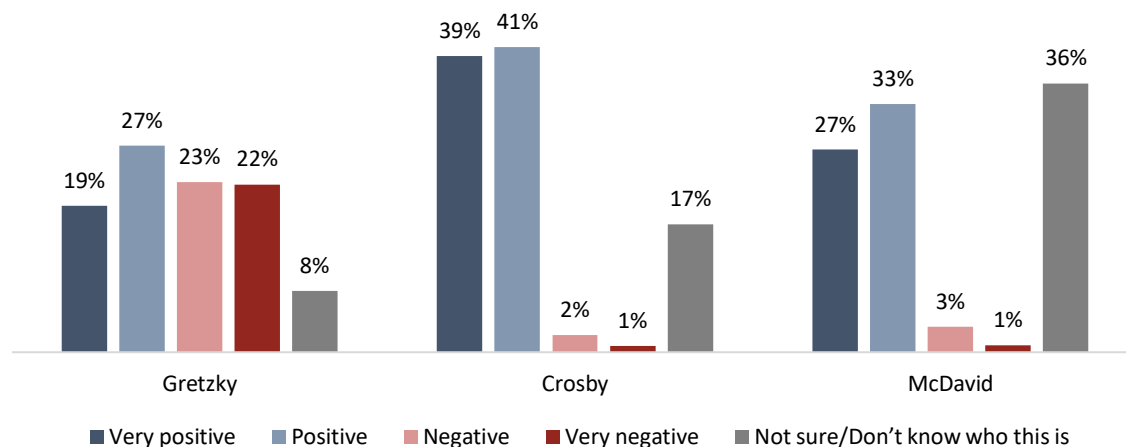
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this month, still has more career assists than any other NHL player in history has points. Gretzky's [friendship with U.S. President Donald Trump](#) has become a source of controversy in this country after Trump ramped up threats to annex Canada and implemented tariffs on this country. Gretzky has lived in the United States since 1988, but [many have called](#) on him to stand up for his country of birth. Amid this, 45 per cent of Canadians have a negative view of Gretzky, nearly same number as have a positive one (47%). In 2011, [a Harris-Decima poll](#) found only one-in-16 Canadians had an unfavourable view of the Great One, ranking him as the country's most positively viewed athlete.

Notably, he placed above Sidney Crosby in that poll but now trails well behind. Crosby is viewed positively by 80 per cent and negatively by just three per cent. Crosby recently led Canada to a thrilling Four Nations Tournament victory over the United States, and scored among the most famous goals in hockey history, winning the gold medal in the 2010 Vancouver Olympics:

Would you say you have a positive or negative view of the following people?
(All respondents, n=1,607)

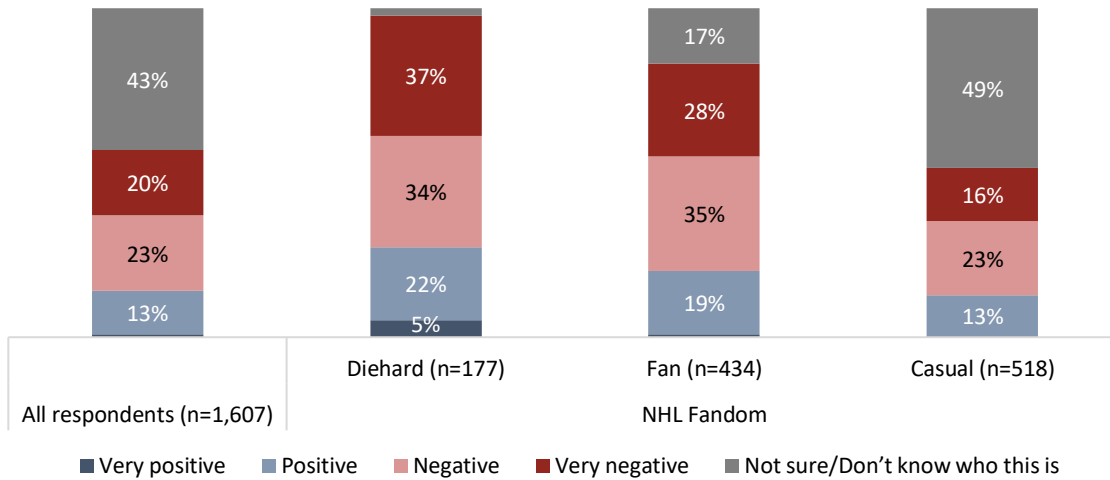


NHL Commissioner viewed negatively

The tenure of NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman began in February 1993 and has run in parallel with Canadian teams' ill fortunes. Bettman has overseen significant growth as the NHL has expanded into non-traditional U.S. markets and added multiple franchises. Franchise values [have increased exponentially](#) during this period. Bettman has also presided over three lockouts, including the complete cancellation of the 2004–05 season, and faced criticism for his handling of player safety issues, [particularly concussions](#). More recently Bettman introduced a largely [unpopular playoff format](#) – one that has seen the Edmonton Oilers and L.A. Kings now meet four consecutive years.

For fans, the negatives evidently outweigh the positives. Among die hard fans, views are approximately three times as likely to be negative (70%) than positive (27%):

Would you say you have a positive or negative view of
NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman?



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