

HOCKEY

Canadians, Hockey Fans Want to Ban Head Shots from the Game

After watching the Zdeno Chara hit, respondents overwhelmingly believe that the player got off easy.

[OTTAWA – Mar. 18, 2011] – A large proportion of Canadians and fans of professional hockey believe it is time to ban head shots from the game, a new Vision Critical / Angus Reid poll conducted for *Maclean's* has found.

The online survey of a representative sample of 1,021 Canadian adults also outlines some striking differences in the way the general population and hard-core hockey fans feel about the possibility of authorities investigating on-ice incidents.

Injuries and Violence

Nine-in-ten Canadians (90%) identify hockey as a sport that carries a significant risk of head injuries—more than boxing (83%), football (71%) or mixed martial arts (53%). One third of all respondents (33%)—and almost half of self-described professional hockey fans—know a person who has sustained a concussion or serious head injury as a result of playing hockey.

Three-in-five Canadians (60%) believe that professional hockey has become a more violent sport over the past five years, a view shared by almost half (48%) of hockey fans. About a third of Canadians would actually consider encouraging their kids to avoid playing hockey (34%), watching fewer hockey games than they currently do (34%) and refraining from buying products from companies that sponsor professional hockey (29%).

KEY FINDINGS

- **60% of Canadians and 48% of hockey fans believe professional hockey has become a more violent sport over the past five years**
- **After watching a video of the recent incident involving Zdeno Chara and Max Pacioretty, 66% of Canadians and 69% of hockey fans think the league was too lenient**
- **81% of Canadians and 83% of hockey fans believe the game would be better off if head shots were banned**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From March 9 to March 11, 2011, Vision Critical / Angus Reid conducted an online survey among 1,021 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

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Both Canadians (56%) and hockey fans (57%) rate the NHL's efforts in looking after the safety of players as "bad" or "very bad."

The Chara Hit

Respondents of this survey were shown a [video](#) of the recent incident involving professional hockey players Zdeno Chara and Max Pacioretty.

After watching the video, two-thirds of Canadians (66%) and hockey fans (69%) thought that the NHL's decision to not suspend Chara was too lenient. While a majority of Canadians (68%) and hockey fans (56%) agree with Air Canada threatening to withdraw its sponsorship from the NHL unless the league addresses concerns about head shots, the two groups did not agree on the issue of a police investigation into the matter. More than half of Canadians (52%) agree with looking into possible assault charges against Chara, while three-in-five hockey fans (61%) disagree with this course of action.

Head Shots and Fights

The appetite for cracking down on head shots is equally high among Canadians and hockey fans, with 81 per cent of all respondents—and 83 per cent of hockey fans—believing that the game would be better off. However, the disagreement is palpable on the issue of on-ice fights. Two-in-five Canadians (41%) believe in banning fighting, while half of hockey fans (49%) believe the game would be worse off.

Analysis

In a poll conducted after Chris Simon's [stick attack in 2007](#), 48 per cent of Canadians said that hockey was becoming a more violent sport. That perception has increased by 12 points in four years. Indubitably, the Chara hit on Pacioretty, and the ongoing discussion about the health of Sidney Crosby, have brought the issue of head injuries and concussions to the forefront.

Canadians think hockey carries the most risk of concussions than any other sport tested, including boxing. A large proportion of Canadians know someone who has suffered a head injury playing hockey. Even hard-core hockey fans rate the NHL's efforts to protect players as insufficient, and—after watching the video—a majority feel Chara got off easy.

There are two issues where the average Canadian is at odds with the hard core hockey fan: the intervention of authorities to settle issues that occur on the ice and the future of fights in professional hockey. However, on the topic that has dominated the sport for the past few years the message is clear: respondents and hockey fans alike would like to see head shots banished from the professional game.

Full tables for this survey are available [here](#).

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Vision Critical is a global research and technology firm that creates software and services solutions for over 600 clients, including one third of the world's top 100 brands. The company has offices across North America, Europe and Australia as well as a Global Partner Program that provides other research companies and consultants with access to top-of-the-line technology. Its Sparq™ product is the most widely adopted community panel platform on the planet.

About the Vision Critical Public Affairs practice

The Vision Critical Public Affairs practice is headed by Dr. Angus Reid: an industry visionary who has spent more than four decades asking questions to figure out what people feel, how they think and who they will vote for. A team of talented and experienced practitioners with a unique and profound understanding of global issues conduct high quality research throughout the world on a daily basis for corporations, governments, academic researchers, and non-profit organizations.

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**For more information, please contact
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

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Hockey

Which of the following professional sports, if any, do you feel carry a significant risk of head injuries?
Please select all that apply.

	All Canadians	Self-described professional hockey fans
Hockey	90%	94%
Boxing	83%	78%
Football	71%	79%
Mixed Martial Arts	53%	60%
Rugby	39%	43%
Soccer	15%	15%
Baseball	12%	9%
Basketball	5%	6%
None of these	0%	0%
Not sure	1%	0%

Hockey

Have you, or someone you know, ever sustained a concussion or serious head injury as a result of playing any of the following sports? – “Yes” listed

	All Canadians	Self-described professional hockey fans
Hockey	33%	46%
Football	18%	26%
Boxing	12%	21%
Rugby	8%	8%
Mixed Martial Arts	7%	11%
Baseball	6%	7%
Soccer	5%	6%
Basketball	3%	2%

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Hockey

In your view, has professional hockey become a more violent sport over the past five years?

	All Canadians	Self-described professional hockey fans
Yes	60%	48%
No	30%	50%
Not sure	11%	2%

Hockey

Would you consider taking any of the following actions as a result of recent violent incidents in hockey? – *“Definitely would” and “Probably would” listed*

	All Canadians	Self-described professional hockey fans
Encourage your kids to avoid playing hockey	34%	19%
Watching fewer hockey games than you currently do	34%	17%
Refrain from buying products from companies that sponsor professional hockey	29%	21%

Hockey

How would you rate the NHL’s efforts in looking after the safety of its players?

	All Canadians	Self-described professional hockey fans
Very good	6%	10%
Good	28%	32%
Bad	28%	30%
Very bad	28%	27%
Not sure	10%	2%

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Hockey

Please watch this [video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBEaY_k8pMA) of a recent incident involving professional hockey players Zdeno Chara and Max Pacioretty.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBEaY_k8pMA



The NHL awarded a penalty to Zdeno Chara immediately after the hit but has decided to not suspend him. All things considered, do you think the NHL's decision is too harsh, too lenient or about right?

	All Canadians	Self-described professional hockey fans
Too harsh	2%	4%
About right	26%	26%
Too lenient	66%	69%
Not sure	6%	2%

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Hockey

Do you approve or disapprove of the following actions that have taken place as a result of the recent incident involving professional hockey players Zdeno Chara and Max Pacioretty? –

An investigation by Montreal police into possible assault charges against Zdeno Chara

	All Canadians	Self-described professional hockey fans
Approve	52%	37%
Disapprove	43%	61%
Not sure	5%	2%

Hockey

Do you approve or disapprove of the following actions that have taken place as a result of the recent incident involving professional hockey players Zdeno Chara and Max Pacioretty? –

Air Canada threatening to withdraw its sponsorship from the NHL unless the league addresses concerns about head shots

	All Canadians	Self-described professional hockey fans
Approve	69%	56%
Disapprove	26%	42%
Not sure	4%	2%

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Hockey

In your view, what impact, if any, would the following actions have on the game of hockey? –

Banning head shots

	All Canadians	Self-described professional hockey fans
Hockey would be better off	81%	83%
Hockey would be no better or worse off	12%	13%
Hockey would be worse off	2%	2%
Not sure	4%	2%

Hockey

In your view, what impact, if any, would the following actions have on the game of hockey? –

Banning fighting

	All Canadians	Self-described professional hockey fans
Hockey would be better off	41%	13%
Hockey would be no better or worse off	26%	34%
Hockey would be worse off	27%	49%
Not sure	6%	3%

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