

Knowledge of Sports History in Canada

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In his book *Sports History: A Practical Guide*, Martin Polley (2007) identifies three interrelated but distinct definitions of sports history. First, everything that happened in the past related to sports. Second, the narrative of those events across sports history and/or the telling of the story is often done chronologically and tends to document such things as peoples and teams. It's very often classified as "popular" or "non-academic". The third definition envisions sports history as the contextual analysis of events. Academic historians will employ this approach to provide insight into what sports were like in relation to the broader society in which they took place. In effect they examine how sports are situated within the social, political, religious, economic and cultural trends of a given period.

Observers often contend that sports serve to transcend our domestic differences and provide a rallying point around which Canadians take pride. A June 2015 Leger survey for the Association for Canadian Studies reveals that some 80% of Canadians take great pride in the country's accomplishments in sports. It might be assumed that such pride is rooted in knowledge about historic achievements in sports in Canada. But what do Canadians really know about the history of sports in the country? That which follows seeks to address these issues by inviting insight from Canadians through a detailed public opinion survey (the survey was conducted by the firm Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies with some 1500 Canadians via web panel between June 15 and 19 with a probabilistic margin of error of 3.9 percent 19 times out of 20).

A majority of Canadians agree that sports break down linguistic and cultural barriers and unite Canada more than anything else. That view is held most strongly by Canadians over the age of 65.

More than anything else, sports unites Canadians across language and ethnic differences												
	Total	Gender		Age						Mother Tongue		
		M	F	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	FR	ENG	OTH
NET AGREE	75%	77%	74%	63%	76%	79%	72%	77%	80%	76%	76%	74%
Strongly agree	28%	29%	27%	21%	32%	31%	25%	28%	29%	27%	28%	29%
Somewhat agree	47%	48%	47%	42%	44%	48%	48%	49%	51%	50%	48%	45%

More than one in three Canadians agree that they have a good knowledge of the history of sports in Canada. But less than one in ten strongly affirm possessing such knowledge. There are important variations in the assessment of one's knowledge of such history on the basis of gender. Men are twice as likely as women to agree that they possess a good knowledge of sports history.

English Canadians are more likely than francophones and allophones to agree they possess such knowledge. There is little difference across the age spectrum in the assessment of knowledge of the history of sports.

I have a good knowledge of the history of sports in Canada												
	Total	Gender		Age						Mother Tongue		
		M	F	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	FR	ENG	OTH
NET AGREE	37%	50%	25%	37%	39%	37%	40%	33%	35%	32%	42%	28%
Strongly agree	8%	12%	5%	12%	12%	11%	7%	6%	2%	5%	9%	8%
Somewhat agree	29%	38%	20%	25%	26%	26%	33%	28%	33%	27%	33%	20%
NET DISAGREE	56%	42%	69%	56%	54%	57%	54%	60%	56%	63%	53%	57%
Somewhat disagree	36%	29%	42%	28%	32%	36%	35%	43%	39%	45%	32%	37%
Strongly disagree	20%	14%	27%	28%	22%	21%	19%	17%	17%	18%	21%	20%
I don't know	6%	7%	5%	6%	7%	5%	5%	6%	7%	4%	4%	12%
I prefer not to answer	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%

If, however, Canadians feel that they have a good knowledge of the history of sports in Canada, they report very low rates of reading books about the history of sports in the country. Women were less likely than men to report having recently read a book about the history of sports in Canada. Francophones were less likely than non-francophones to report having recently read a book about the history of sports in Canada as were those over the age of 35.

I recently read a book about the history of sports in Canada												
	Total	Gender		Age						Mother Tongue		
		M	F	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	FR	ENG	OTH
NET AGREE	8%	11%	6%	10%	14%	11%	4%	6%	4%	4%	9%	9%
Strongly agree	3%	4%	3%	5%	7%	4%	2%	1%	1%	1%	3%	4%
Somewhat agree	5%	7%	3%	5%	7%	7%	3%	5%	3%	3%	6%	5%
NET DISAGREE	84%	81%	86%	87%	77%	83%	90%	84%	81%	86%	85%	80%
Somewhat disagree	15%	16%	14%	13%	17%	11%	20%	14%	13%	20%	12%	18%
Strongly disagree	69%	65%	72%	75%	60%	72%	70%	70%	68%	66%	73%	62%
I don't know	6%	6%	6%	1%	6%	4%	5%	8%	10%	7%	5%	8%
I prefer not to answer	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	5%	3%	1%	3%