

# One Half (47%) of Canadians 'Agree' The Montreal Canadiens are 'The Greatest Hockey Team in History'

*One in Three Canadians (33%) and Two in Three Quebecers (65%) Consider the Canadiens to be 'Canada's national hockey team'*

Public Release Date: November 30, 2009, 6:00 AM EDT



**Ipsos Reid**



*Ipsos Reid is Canada's market intelligence leader and the country's leading provider of public opinion research. With operations in eight cities, Ipsos Reid employs more than 300 research professionals and support staff in Canada. The company has the biggest network of telephone call centres in Canada, as well as the largest pre-recruited household and on-line panels. Ipsos Reid's Canadian marketing research and public affairs practices are staffed with seasoned research consultants with extensive industry-specific backgrounds, offering the premier suite of research vehicles in Canada—including the Ipsos Trend Report, the leading source of public opinion in the country—all of which provide clients with actionable and relevant information. Ipsos Reid is an Ipsos company, a leading global survey-based market research group. To learn more, visit [www.ipsos.ca](http://www.ipsos.ca)*

*For copies of other news releases, please visit  
<http://www.ipsos-na.com/news/>*

---

© Ipsos Reid

*Washington λ New York λ Chicago λ Minneapolis λ Seattle λ San Francisco  
Vancouver λ Edmonton λ Calgary λ Winnipeg λ Toronto λ Ottawa λ Montreal*



# **One Half (47%) of Canadians ‘Agree’ The Montreal Canadiens are ‘The Greatest Hockey Team in History’**

*One in Three Canadians (33%) and Two in Three Quebecers (65%)*

*Consider the Canadiens to be ‘Canada’s national hockey team’*

**Toronto, ON** - In celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Montreal Canadiens hockey franchise, a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Historica-Dominion Institute has revealed that one half (47%) of Canadians ‘agree’ (17% strongly/30% somewhat) that the ‘Montreal Canadiens are the greatest hockey team in history’. In comparison, less than half as many Canadians, just two in ten (20%), ‘agree’ (3% strongly/16% somewhat) that ‘the Toronto Maple Leafs are the greatest hockey team in history’.

Over its 100 year history, the Montreal Canadiens have build a dynasty that has won 24 Stanley Cups and thrilled Canadians of all ages on regular broadcasts of Hockey Night in Canada, from the legendary Montreal Forum to the new Bell Centre. Even the book *The Hockey Sweater* by Roch Carrier – which depicts a small boy and his Montreal Canadien Jersey – is a standard in many schools across the country, both English and French, and an excerpt from the story is featured on the back of the five-dollar bill.

The poll of over 1,000 Canadians found that more Canadians consider the Montreal Canadiens to be ‘Canada’s national hockey team’ (33%) than the Toronto Maple Leafs (25%). Comparatively few believe that distinction belongs to the Ottawa Senators (5%), the Vancouver Canucks (4%), the Calgary Flames (2%) or the Edmonton Oilers (2%). Three in ten (28%) say that none of these teams should be considered Canada’s national hockey team.



Regardless of which team they're cheering for, most (89%) 'agree' (58% strongly/31% somewhat) that 'Canada is the greatest hockey nation in the world'.

Two in three Canadians (65%) also agree (24% strongly/41% somewhat) that 'the Montreal Canadiens are to hockey what the New York Yankees are to baseball'.

### *Canadiens vs. Maple Leafs*

One of the greatest rivalries in all of sport is between the Habs and the Leafs – Montreal vs. Toronto. Although these teams play in the same Conference in the National Hockey League, if it were still possible for them to meet in the Stanley Cup final, and they did, 44% of Canadians say they'd cheer for the Canadiens, while slightly fewer (38%) would cheer for the Leafs. Two in ten (18%) wouldn't cheer for either team.

The Toronto Maple Leafs are experiencing a drought of epic proportions, not having won a Stanley Cup since 1967. The Montreal Canadiens are having a little more success, but still haven't won since 1993. Thinking about which team will win the Cup first, three quarters (73%) of Canadians believe that the Habs will win first, while one quarter (27%) thinks that the Leafs will emerge victorious first.

In fact, four in ten (43%) believe that the Canadiens will win their next Cup within the next five years, while a similar proportion (42%) thinks it will take between 5 and 10 years before they once again hoist the Cup. Just one in ten (9%) maintain that it will take more than 10 years, while 6% think they will never again win the coveted Stanley Cup.



## ***The Golden Years***

Six in ten (56%) agree (18% strongly/38% somewhat) that 'the Montreal Canadiens best years are behind them', but 44% 'disagree' (9% strongly/35% somewhat) that this is the case.

Many talented players have gone through the Habs' franchise, but there emerges one player who is mentioned most often by Canadians as the greatest Habs player of all time: 45% believe that Maurice "The Rocket" Richard is the best of all time, while two in ten believe Guy Lafleur (19%) has earned that title. Others think the crown goes to Patrick Roy (13%), Jean Béliveau (13%), Jacques Plante (4%) or Ken Dryden (1%).

Even with a distinguished list of stars from the past, a slim majority (53%) of Canadians 'agree' (16% strongly/37% somewhat) that 'hockey players are better today than ever before', while 47% 'disagree' (14% strongly/33% somewhat) with this position.

*These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between November 24 to 26, 2009, on behalf of The Historica-Dominion Institute. For this survey, a national sample of 1,015 adults from Ipsos' Canadian online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/-3.1 percentage points 19 times out of 20 of what the results would have been had the entire population of adults in Canada been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.*

## *Ontario vs. Quebec*

While the data did reveal that Canadiens and Leafs fans were often divided down provincial lines, this isn't always the case:

- A majority (54%) of Quebecers believe the Canadiens are the best hockey team in history (compared to 46% of Ontarians), while only 22% of Ontarians believe the Leafs are the best team of all time (compared to 15% of Quebecers).
- A majority (65%) of Quebecers consider the Canadiens to be Canada's national hockey team, while only 43% of Ontarians believe the distinction falls to the Leafs, and only 8% of Ontarians believe the Senators should be considered Canada's national hockey team.
- If the Leafs and Habs were to meet in the Stanley Cup final, eight in ten (78%) Quebecers would cheer for the Canadiens while only six in ten (56%) Ontarians would root for the Leafs. In fact, three in ten (28%) Ontarians would cheer for the Canadiens, while only 6% of Quebecers would side with the Leafs.
- Ontarians (75%) and Quebecers (76%) alike are united in their belief that the Canadiens will win their next Stanley Cup first.
- A majority (62%) of Quebecers believe that Rocket Richard is the best Habs player ever, while only 44% of Ontarians believe the same. Ontarians were more likely (17%) than Quebecers (9%) to suggest that Jean Béliveau is the best player ever.
- While six in ten (57%) Ontarians agree that hockey players are better today than ever before, two in three (64%) Quebecers disagree with this notion.

- Interestingly, most (69%) Quebecers believe that the Montreal Canadiens' best years are behind them, while only 53% of Ontarians believe this to be true.

## *Generational Divide*

The data revealed some interesting differences in opinion based on age:

- Older Canadians (53%) are more likely than middle-aged (43%) and younger (44%) Canadians to believe that the Habs are the greatest hockey franchise in history.
- Canadians aged 18 to 34 were more likely (38%) than those aged 35 to 54 (33%) or 55+ (29%) to consider the Montreal Canadiens Canada's national hockey team.
- Younger Canadians (56%) are more likely than middle-aged (42%) or older Canadians (37%) to say they'd cheer for the Canadiens if they met with the Leafs in the Stanley Cup final. Conversely, older (42%) and middle-aged folks (40%) are more likely to cheer for the Leafs than younger (29%) adults.
- Older individuals are most likely (61%) to believe that the Canadiens best years are behind them, while younger (57%) and middle-aged (50%) individuals are less inclined to believe this.

## *Battle of the Blades or Battle of the Sexes*

The data suggest that men and women aren't necessarily on the same page – at least not to the same degree – when it comes to the Leafs-Habs rivalry:



- Men (79%) are significantly more likely than women (68%) to say the Canadiens will win their next Stanley Cup first.
- Men (58%) are by far more likely than women (36%) to suggest that the Canadiens are the greatest hockey franchise in history.
- Men (71%) are more inclined than women (58%) to agree that the Canadiens are to hockey what the Yankees are to baseball.
- Men (63%) have a higher propensity than women (49%) to believe that the Canadiens' best years are behind them.
- Men (59%) are more likely than women (48%) to believe that hockey players are better today than ever before.

-30-

**For more information on this news release, please contact:**

*John Wright*  
*Senior Vice President*  
*Ipsos Reid*  
*Public Affairs*  
*(416) 324-2002*

*Andrew Cohen*  
*President*  
*The Historica-Dominion Institute*  
*(613) 875-2576*  
[\*acohen@historica-dominion.ca\*](mailto:acohen@historica-dominion.ca)

*Marc Chalifoux*  
*Executive Vice-President*  
*The Historica-Dominion Institute*  
*(416) 601-9721*  
[\*mchalifoux@historica-dominion.ca\*](mailto:mchalifoux@historica-dominion.ca)

*For full tabular results, please visit our website at [www.ipsos.ca](http://www.ipsos.ca). News Releases are available at: <http://www.ipsos-na.com/news/>*