

CANADIANS FAVOUR STIFF PENALTIES FOR ATHLETES CAUGHT USING PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS

Nik Nanos



Two in three Canadians favour lifetime bans or stiff four-year suspensions for athletes found using performance-enhancing drugs at the Olympics. Nearly three Canadians in four intend to watch the sporting events of the Vancouver Winter Games in February 2010. Two Canadians in three plan to watch the opening ceremonies.

These are the principal findings of a Nanos Research-*Policy Options* poll conducted at the same time as our annual *Mood of Canada* survey, between November 7 and November 10, 2009.

One Canadian in three, 32.7 percent, favours a lifetime ban from competition for athletes caught using performance-enhancing drugs (question 1). Another third of the population (33.7 percent) favours a stiff four-year suspension, while one-fourth of Canadians, 26.4 percent, favours a lighter one-year suspension. Altogether, 92.8 percent of Canadians favour severe sanctions in one form or another, while only 3.2 percent said there should be no penalty, and the remaining 4.1 percent were unsure.

In essence, there is virtually zero tolerance among Canadians for athletes using performance-enhancing drugs at the Olympics.

Regionally, support for a lifetime ban runs higher in the Prairie provinces, at 39.5 percent, and is comparatively lower in Quebec, at 29.2 percent.

When we asked Canadians whether they thought the use of performance-enhancing drugs was “on the decline, is the same or is on the increase” (question 2), Canadians were somewhat divided in their views.

A quarter of Canadians, 25.5 percent, thought the use of performance-enhancing drugs was on the increase, even though the creation of regulatory and oversight authorities such as the World Anti-Doping Agency in the last decade has made it easier to catch cheaters. Nearly four Canadians in ten, 38.3 percent, thought illegal drug use has remained stable. Only one Canadian in five, 19.6 percent, thought the use of illegal performance-enhancing drugs was on the decline.

Factoring in those who think the use of performance-enhancing drugs is on the increase (25.5 percent) and those that believe it is on the decrease (19.6 percent), the research shows that Canadians are skeptical about whether efforts to

catch cheaters are having any effect on reducing the use of performance-enhancing drugs.

When we asked Canadians whether they planned to watch the Olympics in Vancouver, the answer was clearly in the affirmative. It is quite possible that the Vancouver Olympics will be among the most watched sporting events in Canadian history.

Three Canadians in four, 73.8 percent, said they were likely to watch some of the sporting events at the Vancouver Games (question 4).

There was a slight gender gap here, with 77.2 percent of males saying they were likely to watch Olympic sporting competitions, while 70.4 percent of females said they intend to watch the Games.

Regionally, there was no significant variation, except British Columbia, where the number of respondents intending to watch the Games registered at 68.4 percent, compared with 76.2 percent in Ontario, 75.5 percent on the Prairies, 74.2 percent in Quebec and 70.6 percent in Atlantic Canada. While this seems somewhat counter-intuitive, the discrepancy might be explained by British Columbians intending to attend the Games, rather than just watching them on television.

Another two Canadians in three, 68.4 percent, are likely to watch highlights and daily recaps of the Olympics at the end of the day (question 5). Three in ten, 29.9 percent, said they were unlikely to do so.

Finally, two Canadians in three, 66.3 percent, said they intended to watch the opening ceremonies, while only 31.2 percent said they were unlikely to do so (question 3). Another 58.6 percent said they were likely to watch the closing ceremonies, while 38.6 percent said they were unlikely to do so (question 6).

Another way to contextualize the research — more Canadians are likely planning to watch the opening ceremonies in Vancouver than voted in the last federal election.

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Canadians favour stiff penalties for athletes caught using performance-enhancing drugs

QUESTION 1. WHEN AN ATHLETE AT THE OLYMPICS IS FOUND WITH PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS, WHAT SHOULD BE THE PENALTY?

| | | Total N | Banned for life from competition % | Suspended for 1 year from competition % | Suspended for 4 years from competition % | There should be no penalty % | Unsure % |
|--------------|----------------|------------|---|--|---|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Region | Canada | 1,005 | 32.7 | 26.4 | 33.7 | 3.2 | 4.1 |
| | Atlantic | 100 | 31.0 | 36.7 | 25.3 | 2.4 | 4.6 |
| | Quebec | 254 | 29.2 | 24.0 | 39.4 | 4.7 | 2.7 |
| | Ontario | 302 | 30.6 | 29.3 | 33.0 | 3.0 | 4.2 |
| | Prairies | 201 | 39.5 | 26.0 | 27.4 | 3.3 | 3.9 |
| | BC | 149 | 34.8 | 18.3 | 39.4 | 1.5 | 6.0 |
| Gender | Male | 508 | 32.8 | 27.5 | 31.1 | 4.2 | 4.4 |
| | Female | 498 | 32.5 | 25.2 | 36.3 | 2.2 | 3.7 |
| Age | 18 to 29 | 198 | 30.4 | 32.6 | 31.9 | 3.0 | 2.2 |
| | 30 to 39 | 193 | 31.5 | 23.8 | 35.7 | 4.2 | 4.8 |
| | 40 to 49 | 217 | 35.5 | 25.4 | 32.0 | 4.1 | 3.0 |
| | 50 to 59 | 172 | 31.0 | 28.8 | 35.0 | 1.3 | 4.0 |
| | 60 plus | 225 | 34.2 | 22.3 | 34.2 | 3.2 | 6.1 |
| Home | Own | 731 | 33.1 | 26.5 | 34.2 | 2.5 | 3.8 |
| | Rent | 234 | 32.4 | 25.6 | 33.4 | 4.8 | 3.7 |
| | Refused | 40 | 26.7 | 29.3 | 26.4 | 6.4 | 11.3 |
| Vote profile | Liberal | 235 | 28.9 | 28.1 | 36.1 | 3.6 | 3.4 |
| | Conservative | 310 | 36.5 | 25.4 | 33.2 | 2.2 | 2.7 |
| | NDP | 146 | 30.5 | 31.0 | 33.5 | 2.7 | 2.4 |
| | Bloc Québécois | 76 | 23.7 | 23.1 | 43.8 | 6.4 | 2.9 |
| | Green | 48 | 42.6 | 20.4 | 32.3 | 1.6 | 3.1 |
| | Undecided | 191 | 33.8 | 25.3 | 27.9 | 4.0 | 9.1 |

QUESTION 2. DO YOU THINK THE ILLEGAL USAGE OF PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS BY ATHLETES AT THE OLYMPICS IS ON THE DECLINE, IS THE SAME OR IS ON THE INCREASE?

| | | Total N | Is on the decline % | Is the same % | Is on the increase % | Unsure % |
|--------------|------------------|------------|------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Region | Canada | 1,005 | 19.6 | 38.3 | 25.5 | 16.5 |
| | Atlantic | 100 | 21.1 | 43.4 | 20.9 | 14.7 |
| | Quebec | 254 | 15.4 | 35.6 | 38.8 | 10.3 |
| | Ontario | 302 | 21.2 | 45.2 | 17.3 | 16.3 |
| | Prairies | 201 | 22.3 | 36.1 | 22.4 | 19.1 |
| | British Columbia | 149 | 19.0 | 28.7 | 27.1 | 25.2 |
| Gender | Male | 508 | 20.1 | 39.1 | 26.6 | 14.2 |
| | Female | 498 | 19.1 | 37.6 | 24.5 | 18.8 |
| Age | 18 to 29 | 198 | 17.8 | 40.0 | 25.9 | 16.3 |
| | 30 to 39 | 193 | 16.1 | 41.7 | 26.2 | 16.1 |
| | 40 to 49 | 217 | 26.4 | 39.1 | 24.9 | 9.6 |
| | 50 to 59 | 172 | 21.7 | 38.1 | 24.8 | 15.5 |
| | 60 plus | 225 | 16.2 | 33.5 | 25.9 | 24.5 |
| Home | Own | 731 | 20.1 | 37.8 | 26.7 | 15.3 |
| | Rent | 234 | 18.6 | 41.8 | 22.0 | 17.7 |
| | Refused | 40 | 16.6 | 27.0 | 24.5 | 31.9 |
| Vote profile | Liberal | 235 | 22.0 | 42.9 | 22.6 | 12.6 |
| | Conservative | 310 | 24.7 | 37.1 | 23.3 | 14.8 |
| | NDP | 146 | 18.5 | 36.3 | 24.9 | 20.3 |
| | Bloc Québécois | 76 | 11.3 | 36.0 | 45.6 | 7.1 |
| | Green | 48 | 12.6 | 45.9 | 28.5 | 13.1 |
| | Undecided | 191 | 14.4 | 35.2 | 24.6 | 25.7 |

QUESTION 3. ARE YOU LIKELY OR UNLIKELY TO WATCH THE OPENING CEREMONIES DURING THE VANCOUVER OLYMPICS?

| | | Total N | Likely % | Unlikely % | Unsure % |
|--------------|------------------|------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| Region | Canada | 1,005 | 66.3 | 31.2 | 2.5 |
| | Atlantic | 100 | 63.6 | 35.6 | 0.8 |
| | Quebec | 254 | 66.0 | 31.5 | 2.5 |
| | Ontario | 302 | 70.8 | 25.1 | 4.0 |
| | Prairies | 201 | 64.3 | 33.1 | 2.6 |
| | British Columbia | 149 | 62.4 | 37.1 | 0.5 |
| Gender | Male | 508 | 64.0 | 33.5 | 2.6 |
| | Female | 498 | 68.8 | 28.8 | 2.5 |
| Age | 18 to 29 | 198 | 69.6 | 28.9 | 1.5 |
| | 30 to 39 | 193 | 61.9 | 36.3 | 1.8 |
| | 40 to 49 | 217 | 67.0 | 30.5 | 2.5 |
| | 50 to 59 | 172 | 58.4 | 37.6 | 4.0 |
| | 60 plus | 225 | 72.7 | 24.5 | 2.9 |
| Home | Own | 731 | 65.8 | 31.6 | 2.6 |
| | Rent | 234 | 70.8 | 28.0 | 1.1 |
| | Refused | 40 | 49.9 | 40.8 | 9.3 |
| Vote profile | Liberal | 235 | 74.6 | 24.5 | 1.0 |
| | Conservative | 310 | 65.2 | 32.3 | 2.5 |
| | NDP | 146 | 65.7 | 33.7 | 0.6 |
| | Bloc Québécois | 76 | 67.7 | 30.2 | 2.1 |
| | Green | 48 | 51.8 | 44.9 | 3.2 |
| | Undecided | 191 | 61.7 | 32.4 | 5.9 |

QUESTION 4. ARE YOU LIKELY OR UNLIKELY TO WATCH SPORTING EVENTS DURING THE VANCOUVER OLYMPICS?

| | | Total N | Likely % | Unlikely % | Unsure % |
|--------------|------------------|------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| Region | Canada | 1,005 | 73.8 | 23.8 | 2.4 |
| | Atlantic | 100 | 70.6 | 27.8 | 1.6 |
| | Quebec | 254 | 74.2 | 24.0 | 1.8 |
| | Ontario | 302 | 76.2 | 19.6 | 4.2 |
| | Prairies | 201 | 75.5 | 23.5 | 1.0 |
| | British Columbia | 149 | 68.4 | 29.3 | 2.3 |
| Gender | Male | 508 | 77.2 | 20.2 | 2.6 |
| | Female | 498 | 70.4 | 27.4 | 2.2 |
| Age | 18 to 29 | 198 | 76.3 | 22.2 | 1.5 |
| | 30 to 39 | 193 | 77.4 | 21.4 | 1.2 |
| | 40 to 49 | 217 | 74.1 | 23.4 | 2.5 |
| | 50 to 59 | 172 | 67.7 | 28.8 | 3.5 |
| | 60 plus | 225 | 73.0 | 23.7 | 3.2 |
| Home | Own | 731 | 75.1 | 22.1 | 2.7 |
| | Rent | 234 | 71.3 | 27.9 | 0.8 |
| | Refused | 40 | 64.8 | 29.6 | 5.6 |
| Vote profile | Liberal | 235 | 79.1 | 18.1 | 2.8 |
| | Conservative | 310 | 74.9 | 22.7 | 2.4 |
| | NDP | 146 | 70.4 | 28.4 | 1.3 |
| | Bloc Québécois | 76 | 82.5 | 16.5 | 1.0 |
| | Green | 48 | 71.8 | 23.5 | 4.7 |
| | Undecided | 191 | 65.4 | 31.8 | 2.8 |

Canadians favour stiff penalties for athletes caught using performance-enhancing drugs

QUESTION 5. ARE YOU LIKELY OR UNLIKELY TO WATCH DAILY RECAPS OF HIGHLIGHTS DURING THE VANCOUVER OLYMPICS?

| | | Total N | Likely % | Unlikely % | Unsure % |
|--------------|------------------|------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| Region | Canada | 1,005 | 68.4 | 29.9 | 1.7 |
| | Atlantic | 100 | 70.2 | 26.8 | 3.0 |
| | Quebec | 254 | 67.9 | 31.5 | 0.6 |
| | Ontario | 302 | 67.2 | 29.6 | 3.2 |
| | Prairies | 201 | 74.0 | 26.0 | 0.0 |
| | British Columbia | 149 | 63.0 | 35.2 | 1.8 |
| Gender | Male | 508 | 70.7 | 27.8 | 1.5 |
| | Female | 498 | 66.1 | 32.0 | 1.9 |
| Age | 18 to 29 | 198 | 67.4 | 31.9 | 0.7 |
| | 30 to 39 | 193 | 69.6 | 29.2 | 1.2 |
| | 40 to 49 | 217 | 70.1 | 27.9 | 2.0 |
| | 50 to 59 | 172 | 67.3 | 31.0 | 1.8 |
| | 60 plus | 225 | 67.6 | 29.9 | 2.5 |
| Home | Own | 731 | 69.7 | 28.3 | 2.0 |
| | Rent | 234 | 66.4 | 33.1 | 0.5 |
| | Refused | 40 | 56.8 | 40.3 | 2.9 |
| Vote profile | Liberal | 235 | 74.9 | 23.4 | 1.6 |
| | Conservative | 310 | 70.3 | 28.1 | 1.6 |
| | NDP | 146 | 64.6 | 34.6 | 0.8 |
| | Bloc Québécois | 76 | 63.3 | 35.6 | 1.0 |
| | Green | 48 | 65.3 | 31.4 | 3.4 |
| | Undecided | 191 | 63.2 | 34.5 | 2.4 |

QUESTION 6. ARE YOU LIKELY OR UNLIKELY TO WATCH THE CLOSING CEREMONIES DURING THE VANCOUVER OLYMPICS?

| | | Total N | Likely % | Unlikely % | Unsure % |
|--------------|------------------|------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| Region | Canada | 1,005 | 58.6 | 38.6 | 2.8 |
| | Atlantic | 100 | 57.4 | 41.0 | 1.6 |
| | Quebec | 254 | 55.8 | 42.1 | 2.2 |
| | Ontario | 302 | 60.2 | 34.3 | 5.5 |
| | Prairies | 201 | 58.4 | 40.0 | 1.7 |
| | British Columbia | 149 | 61.2 | 38.3 | 0.5 |
| Gender | Male | 508 | 56.4 | 40.3 | 3.3 |
| | Female | 498 | 60.8 | 37.0 | 2.2 |
| Age | 18 to 29 | 198 | 54.1 | 44.4 | 1.5 |
| | 30 to 39 | 193 | 53.6 | 43.5 | 3.0 |
| | 40 to 49 | 217 | 60.9 | 37.1 | 2.0 |
| | 50 to 59 | 172 | 52.2 | 42.9 | 4.9 |
| | 60 plus | 225 | 69.4 | 27.7 | 2.9 |
| Home | Own | 731 | 58.8 | 38.5 | 2.7 |
| | Rent | 234 | 62.5 | 35.0 | 2.4 |
| | Refused | 40 | 32.0 | 62.4 | 5.6 |
| Vote profile | Liberal | 235 | 64.4 | 33.0 | 2.6 |
| | Conservative | 310 | 60.9 | 36.0 | 3.1 |
| | NDP | 146 | 53.4 | 45.8 | 0.8 |
| | Bloc Québécois | 76 | 54.0 | 45.0 | 1.0 |
| | Green | 48 | 44.6 | 52.1 | 3.2 |
| | Undecided | 191 | 56.9 | 38.5 | 4.6 |