

DATA DIVE WITH NIK NANOS

HOCKEY FACES A NATIONAL RECKONING

A new survey suggests many Canadians feel there is a sexual-misconduct problem in the sport, and people are angry about the use of player registration fees to pay out settlements

OPINION

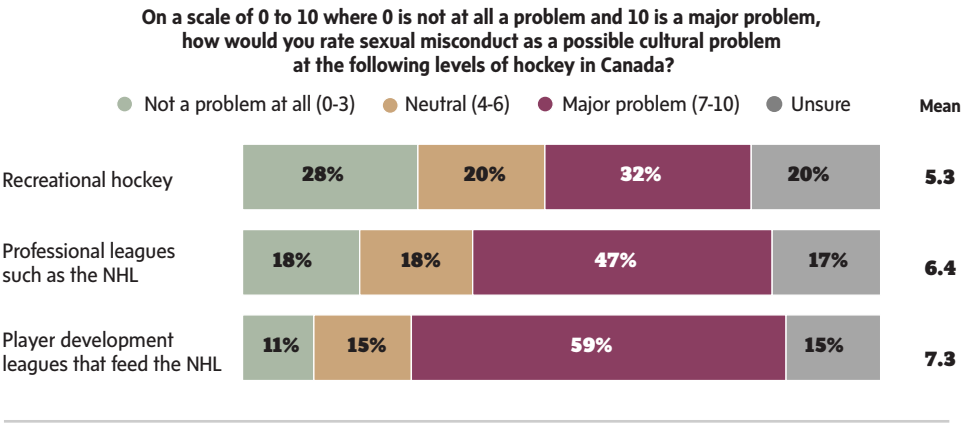
Nik Nanos is the chief data scientist at Nanos Research, a global fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington and the official pollster for The Globe and Mail and CTV News.

To say that hockey is an iconic and proud part of the Canadian identity is an understatement. Our country has been nurtured in storied hockey experiences. In 1972, the Canada-USSR Summit Series was not just a battle for hockey supremacy, it was a clash of ideologies. Paul Henderson’s winning goal in the final seconds of the final game is etched in the national spirit. Canada’s women’s hockey team, led in the past by players such as Hayley Wickenheiser, Caroline Ouellette and Jayna Hefford, have been leaders in the sport, have won numerous world titles and inspired a generation of young people. How is the beloved national sport doing today? Not great. Allegations that some members of the 2018 Canadian men’s World Junior hockey team assaulted a woman after a Hockey Canada fundraising gala in London, Ont., in addition to another alleged assault involving members of the 2003 team in Halifax, have put a negative spotlight on hockey. Canadians are concerned. A new national survey for The Globe and Mail and CTV News by Nanos suggests that many feel there is a sexual-misconduct problem in hockey and people are angry about the use of player registration fees to pay out settlements.

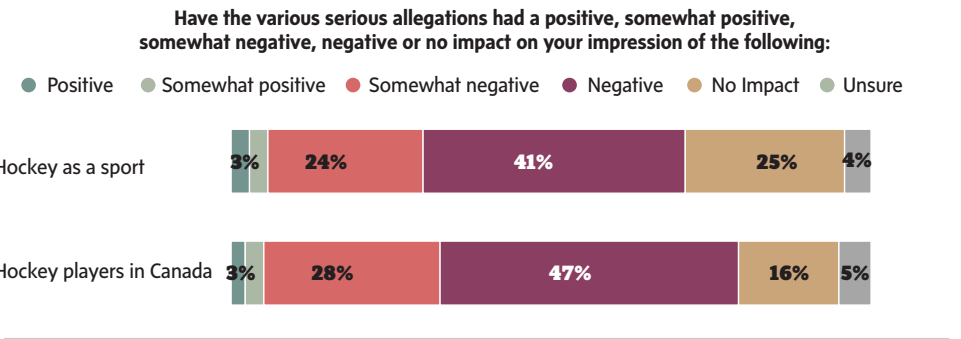
When asked how much of a cultural problem sexual misconduct is in hockey, views differed depending on the level of play in question. One in three Canadians felt it was a problem in recreational hockey, but this rose to 59 per cent in the player development leagues that feed the NHL – such as the Ontario Hockey League, the Western Hockey League and the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League. It’s not a matter of whether a problem exists but rather just how big it is.

Game misconduct

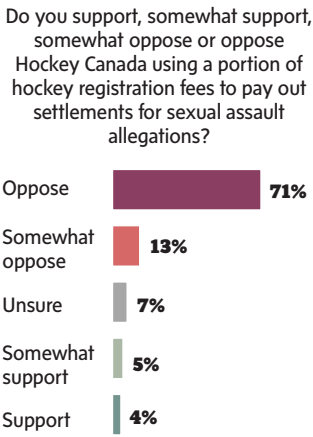
IMPRESSION OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AS A CULTURAL PROBLEM AT FOLLOWING LEVELS



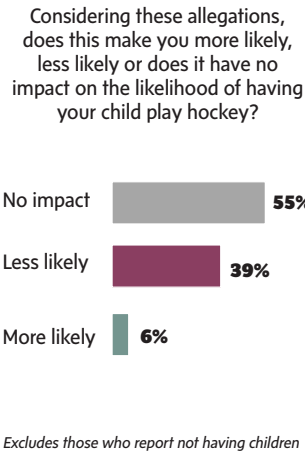
IMPACT OF ALLEGATIONS



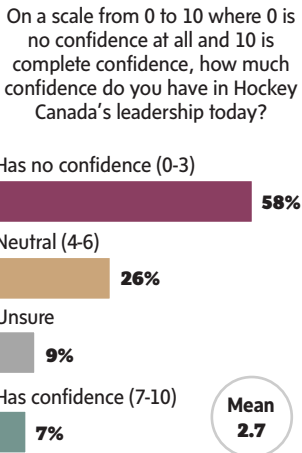
SETTLEMENTS



HAVING CHILD PLAY HOCKEY



CONFIDENCE IN LEADERSHIP



Note: Weighted to the true population proportion. Charts may not add up to 100 due to rounding.
JOHN SOPINSKI / THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: NANOS RESEARCH

Three of four respondents said the allegations of sexual assault and Hockey Canada’s use of registration fees to pay out victims has had a negative or somewhat negative impact on their impression of hockey players, while two in three said it has had a negative impact on the sport itself. A majority of both men and women have soured on hockey, but the intensity of negativity among women is noticeably higher than among men. People are about 2½ times more likely to believe there is a bigger cultural problem (63 per cent) than see it as something involving an isolated handful of players (26 per cent). Women are more likely to believe this is a bigger cultural problem (72 per cent) than men (53 per cent). Hockey Canada should be troubled not only by these findings but by the potential longer-term effect on the sport. A majority of people with children (55 per cent) said the allegations will have no effect on the likelihood of their child playing hockey. However, more than one in four parents (39 per cent) said it will have a negative effect. Disgust isn’t reserved for the players. In the court of public opinion, the use of registration fees to pay out victims puts into question the leadership and governance of Hockey Canada. Canadians overwhelmingly reject the use of a portion of hockey registration fees to pay out settlements (71 per cent oppose, while 13 per cent somewhat oppose), and 73 per cent said anger is the top feeling they have about the use of fees in this manner. We are at a place where Hockey Canada has failed both the sport and the players. It is not fair to negatively characterize all hockey players, but it is fair to put a spotlight on hockey culture. This story is about the victims, above all – the sport comes second. Healing will only start by recognizing the problem. That begins with Hockey Canada. After that, Canadians who love their national sport will need to know what will be done to root out bad behaviour and ensure that our players are role models both on and off the ice. Will it be difficult? Yes. Must it be done? Absolutely.

For the world’s top chess players, a supercomputer – not the queen – is the most important piece

KENNETH ROGOFF

OPINION

Former chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, now a professor of economics and public policy at Harvard University

For centuries, chess has been a metaphor for war in myth and in literature. In the next world championship match, which will take place in 2023 between Russia’s Ian Nepomniachtchi and China’s Ding Liren, the comparison may be more apt than ever, with the outcome likely to be decided as much by superiority in multipurpose supercomputing as by individual human ingenuity in chess. And while the Russian military’s dismal early performance in Ukraine hardly suggests an ability to benefit from artificial intelligence in warfare, China is the real deal on that front. The match between “Nepo” and “Ding,” as the chess world calls them, has arisen because the world No. 1 and defending champion, Magnus Carlsen of Norway, has decided that, having won the world title five times since 2013 (not always easily), he is ready to step down at age 31. (Nepo is 32, and Ding is 29.) Nepo, who, like many Russian athletes, must forgo the Russian flag to compete internationally, has spoken out clearly against the Ukraine war, and was one of 44 leading Russian chess players who signed an open letter to President Vladimir Putin in early March. “We are against any mili-

tary action on the territory of Ukraine and call for an immediate ceasefire and a peaceful decision to the conflict through the path of dialogue and diplomatic negotiations,” they wrote. “For us, it is unbearably painful to see the catastrophe that is happening these days with our people.” Few commentators or top players expected Mr. Carlsen to relinquish his title, but his decision is understandable. He has already staked a claim to be considered the best chess player of all time (alongside the Russian Garry Kasparov and the American Bobby Fischer), and has established a successful chess platform. He did not want to contest another world championship match without the necessary steely focus, involving an extraordinary level of memorization, more so than even 10 years ago. (Ironically, Nepo’s name in Russian means “forgetful person”; he is anything but.) Preparations for head-to-head championship chess matches have become increasingly tense, with computers playing an ever-bigger role – more so than for normal multiplayer “all-play-all” tournaments. In a normal competition, doing months of expensive computer-supported research to win a single game against a strong opponent is generally not worth it. There are too many games and too many tournaments, and the element of surprise fades once a new idea is employed prominently even once. But in short world championship matches (the most recent one in 2021 between Nepo and Mr. Carlsen was set for up to 14

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games), one early win can have a huge effect because the leader can then afford to draw all the remaining games. While a single win does not confer a decisive edge, it means much more than in a normal tournament, where at least a few more wins than losses are usually needed to prevail. Mr. Carlsen won the 2021 world title match decisively in the end, but only after his opponent, playing in his first championship,

cracked after losing Game 6. Over the first five games, Nepo, who had been able to test his new ideas on the Russian Zhores supercomputer, was on the verge of winning twice, but couldn’t quite convert against Mr. Carlsen’s brilliant defence. For next year’s Nepo-Ding match, Ding will most likely receive enormous help from the Chinese tech community. Whether Nepo can still get similar support from Russia is less clear, even if Mr. Putin’s chess world view is that it is Russia’s destiny to be on top once again. That said, Nepo still has a great deal of material in hand from his 2021 title match with Mr. Carlsen – material he used to resoundingly win the recent candidates tournament in Madrid to determine who would challenge the champion. With Mr. Carlsen stepping down, the second-place finisher in Madrid, Ding, gained the right to play the title match. Ding, who might well be a better player than Nepo, came to the candidates tournament woefully underprepared because he had been unable to travel freely to compete since the COVID-19 pandemic began. But the soft-spoken Chinese player just edged out Hikaru Nakamura, which greatly disappointed the American’s devoted fans. Mr. Nakamura, who is famously quick-witted both in chess moves and conversation, has become a Twitch superstar, gaining 1.5 million followers by simultaneously playing high-level speed chess and opining intelligently on everything from what kind of car to buy to dating to AI.

Had Mr. Nakamura only drawn his last-round game against Ding in Madrid, he would have become the third American since Mr. Fischer in 1972 to play in a championship match. Mr. Fischer made global headlines by defeating Boris Spassky to win the world title, thereby single-handedly ending the hegemony of the Russian chess juggernaut. Although Mr. Nakamura is very much a self-made player, one imagines that Google’s DeepMind, which has pushed the boundaries of AI, might have decided to lend him help had he faced a Russian opponent in the world championship. Chess is going gangbusters globally. Online chess exploded during the pandemic and, although the surge has faded somewhat, metrics such as membership in the leading virtual playing sites indicate that interest remains well above the level of three years ago. The success of *The Queen’s Gambit*, which was the most successful Netflix series of all time when it aired in 2020, and won an Emmy for best limited series, certainly helped. While the miniseries is not exactly for children, it nonetheless attracted a new generation of young girls into the game, as Jennifer Shahade discusses in her insightful new book *Chess Queens*. By the way, I predict that Ding will be the next world champion, though it has taken longer than I thought back in 2018. If he loses, it will tell us not only something about Nepo’s character but also that Chinese supercomputing is perhaps not as advanced as we think.