

# Analysis of the NHL players by country of birth

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This paper looks at NHL hockey players according to their country of birth and calculates the relative importance of each country, as well as changes over time. The study is based on official data by the NHL for the 2005-06 season.

**Table 1: Number of NHL players (goalies included) by country of birth.**

country of birth	number of players	percent of total
Canada	516	53.6
USA	178	18.5
Czech Republic	66	6.9
Sweden	45	4.7
Russia	41	4.3
Finland	39	4.1
Slovakia	31	3.2
Germany	8	0.8
Ukraine	7	0.7
Kazakhstan	6	0.6
Latvia	3	0.3
Belarus	3	0.3
Austria	3	0.3
Poland	3	0.3
All others	13	1.4
total	962	

**Table 2: Data broken down by 25 years periods.**

Country of birth	Born before 1980		Born after 1980		Percentage change
	number	% of all	number	% of all	
Canada	290	52.8	226	54.7	1.9
Slovakia	15	2.7	16	3.9	1.1
Germany	3	0.5	5	1.2	0.7
Kazakhstan	2	0.4	4	1.0	0.6
Belarus	1	0.2	2	0.5	0.3
Austria	1	0.2	2	0.5	0.3
Czech Republic	37	6.7	29	7.0	0.3
Russia	23	4.2	18	4.4	0.2
Finland	22	4.0	17	4.1	0.1
Ukraine	4	0.7	3	0.7	0.0
Poland	2	0.4	1	0.2	-0.1
Latvia	3	0.5	0	0.0	-0.5
USA	105	19.1	73	17.7	-1.5
Sweden	32	5.8	13	3.1	-2.7
All others	9	1.6	4	1.0	-0.7
total	549		413		

**Table 3: National productivity (taking into account population size).**

Country of birth	number of players	population (millions)	number of players per million population
Canada	516	32.5	15.9
Finland	39	5.1	7.6
Czech Republic	66	10.2	6.5
Slovakia	31	5.3	5.8
Sweden	45	9.1	4.9
Latvia	3	2.3	1.3
USA	178	299	0.60
Belarus	3	9.8	0.31
Russia	41	145	0.28
Austria	3	8.2	0.37
Kazakhstan	6	16.8	0.36
Ukraine	7	46.7	0.15
Germany	8	82.5	0.10
Poland	3	37	0.08
All others	13		

## Remarks and conclusions

- This analysis is by 'country of birth' only and does not take into account where the player grew up and developed. Most often they are the same, but some players born in the USA developed in Canada, and vice-versa, for example.
- The study is a good indicator of each country's performance. While not all the best players chose to play in the NHL, economic incentives makes it by far the largest employer of top talent.
- The Big Three: 80% of all NHL players come from three nations, namely Canada, the USA or the Czech Republic.
- The Big Seven: 95% of all NHL players come from the Big Three plus Sweden, Russia, Finland and Slovakia.
- In terms of relative importance, Canada and Slovakia have gained the most (and significantly) over the past 25 years, while the USA and Sweden have lost the most. Other countries have remained about the same.
- When taking the population into account, the most productive countries are Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, Slovakia and Sweden.