



Since the modern-day Summer Olympic Games began back in 1896, they have only ever been cancelled three times: once during World War I, in 1916, and twice during World War II, in 1940 and 1944. They've gone ahead as planned every 4 years through a myriad of world events...the Tlatelolco Massacre in Mexico in 1968, the terrorist attack in Munich in 1972 - captured on the world stage and played out across the globe - even terrorist attacks at the 1996 games in Atlanta couldn't prevent them from going ahead.

But for the first time in its 124-year history, in peacetime, the Olympic Games have been postponed.

The 2020 Summer Olympic Games, due to be held in Tokyo, have been rescheduled to 2021. We all know why, so I won't dwell on the reasons. Instead, what we'll look at is what lessons we can learn from the previous Olympic Games; what the spirit of the Olympics stands for, and what we have learnt from the legacy the Games have left behind.

The slogan for 2020's postponed summer games was 'Discover Tomorrow'. And we thought, what better way to discover tomorrow than to examine what has come before, after all, 'those who do not learn from history, are doomed to repeat it.' In this case, casting our minds back to when the Olympic Games were held on our fine island, Great Britain, for the London 2012 games, and what lasting impact these had on our sporting heritage.

# SPORTING HERITAGE

## “Learning from a legacy”

With this in mind, we surveyed over 3,000 of our panellists on our dedicated consumer panel, TLF Panel, to find out just what sporting legacy the 2012 Olympics left behind, and if it was in line with what the media has been telling us.

First, we wanted to gauge how many of our panellists had attended the games in person, or even watched them on TV, so we could gather a general feeling of how popular the games actually were. And it turns out, they were very popular! With a whopping 74% of people surveyed saying that they watched some kind of 2012 Olympic event on the telly, and a further 22% saying they attended at least one event in-person. A great turnout by any standard.



**74%**

watched the 2012 Olympics on the TV



**22%**

attended the 2012 Olympics in person

When we break these down by demographics things get even more interesting...

Although nearly the same percentage of men and women attended an event in-person, men were 8% more likely to have watched some kind of event on the TV.

Also interesting is that the opposite is true when we split by age. Roughly the same percentage of each age group watched an event on the telly, but for people attending an event in person, this differs greatly with age – 32% of those aged 18-44 attended in-person, compared to just 9% of those aged 45 and up.

As expected when we break it down geographically, those in the South East were far more likely to have attended in-person (31%). But that's not to say that some die-hard fans from each region didn't make the pilgrimage down...an impressive 20% of Scots surveyed made it down, and 15% of those from Northern England also, proving the draw of the Olympics at a national level. Although, perhaps surprisingly, only 37% of Londoners attended an event in person.

One of the lasting memories many people have of the London Olympics, myself included, was the camaraderie it created amongst us Brits. Usually quite content to go about our business with nary a single word said to our fellow countrymen, people were stopping and talking to strangers in the street about the games. When shopping or otherwise out and about, conversations would be struck up with complete unknowns about how we were doing, and the usually silent, eye contact-less commutes became hotbeds of debate, conversation and, quite often, celebration.

When dealing with anything, from buying a chocolate bar right up to attending an international sporting event, people regularly forget the logistics of each

transaction – what they bought, what time they were there, what the weather was like etc. – but what people often remember, and quite strongly, is how they felt at the time – were they happy they got a good deal, angry the customer service was terrible, or sad that their team lost. So we asked our panel to think back to how they felt whilst the 2012 Olympics were on, and whether they thought that the Games brought the country together for the 2 weeks they were on.

Pleasingly, 68% said yes, they thought the country really came together for the fortnight. With only 18% saying a definitive no, and the remaining 14% not sure. When broken down by gender, age and location these results remain roughly the same, so the sentiment was shared equally amongst all generations, sexes and regions: a true nationwide feeling.



**68%**

agreed that the 2012 Olympics brought the country together



**18%**

said that the 2012 Olympics did **not** bring the country together

With these previous questions looking back to 2012, we wanted to dive forward in time to today. At the time of the Games they were touted as just the first step in a

sporting legacy to inspire generations of sportsmen & women to come. But, with the benefit of hindsight, has this actually been the case?

We put it to the panel openly, and asked them ‘Do you think that the 2012 Olympics has had a lasting impact on sport in the UK?’ The results were mixed:



**39%**

said ‘Yes, they had a lasting impact’



**32%**

‘They did at the time, but now it’s faded’



**19%**

said ‘No, they had no lasting impact’

So, a sizeable 70% said that the Games did have a lasting impact, but almost half of them said that this has now faded...only 8 years later. Maybe the ‘inspiring *generations*’ tagline should be downgraded to ‘inspiring a *generation*’!

It’s not all bad news – when you look at the results generationally, as intended, 44% of those aged 18 to 34 said a definite ‘Yes – the Games left a lasting impact’, compared to 33% of those aged 55 to 64. So as this younger generation ages perhaps they will pass down this sporting legacy to their children?

Often around the Olympics, as with any major sporting event, the phrase ‘grassroots’ is thrown around – getting people into sport, particularly from a young age. It makes sense – you need time and practice to nurture skill, so the younger the start, the better. With this in mind, we asked the panel if they felt that enough was being done at school to encourage children into sport, or were we just hearing lip-service from academies and politicians?

Well...it’s not good news for the heritage makers. Only 34% of people surveyed (this question was only asked to parents of children at school age) think enough is being done to promote sport in school. 44% were a resounding no, and 23% didn’t know.



**34%**

said yes, enough is being done to promote sport in schools



**44%**

said no, not enough is being done to promote sport in schools

But of course the grassroots level is just the beginning of the journey. You can encourage people to start getting into a sport relatively easily if there’s even just a spark of interest. After all, it’s new, it’s exciting, people want to test their abilities. Where the next hurdle lies is keeping them interested enough to continue playing, long into adulthood. And this is where the results get even worse...

Only 28% of those surveyed (for this question, everyone over 18 was asked) felt like enough was being done to encourage adults to continue playing sport. 52% said not enough was being done, and 20% didn’t know.



**28%**

said yes, enough was being done to encourage adults to continue playing sport



**52%**

said no, enough was not being done to encourage adults to continue playing sport

So, clearly people felt that the encouragement to play sport as an adult wasn’t there. But that doesn’t mean that adults were playing sport less, simply that

the help to do so wasn’t there. We wanted to know just how active adults are, and this, perhaps, is the light at the end of the tunnel, and a measure to judge whether the sporting heritage set by the 2012 games has been a success...

We asked people two things:

- **On average, how much sport do you watch per month?**
- **On average, how much sport do you participate in each month?**

And the results are positive. Overall, the average amount of time watching sport each month was 7.9 hours, and the time spent playing sport was 8.2 hours. So very close, but actually playing sport just pips watching it to the post.



**7.9hrs**

spent watching sport



**8.2hrs**

playing sport

We knew going in that we would never get a definitive answer to whether the sporting legacy set by the London Games was a success or not – that’s up to each of us on a personal level to decide. But what we do know is that the Games were a huge financial, international and cultural success, with the blueprint of how future Games are run cemented by the fantastic Organising Committee of The Games. And we look forward to seeing what Japan will take from our sporting legacy to help their Games run as smoothly, and successfully, as ours did... whenever they eventually get to go ahead.



**Tom Kiralfy**  
Panel Manager  
TLF Panel

[tom@tlfpanel.com](mailto:tom@tlfpanel.com)