

People around the world, and in Australia, are divided on whether the Tokyo Olympics should go ahead – Ipsos survey

Australians most interested in aquatics and athletics while most around the world interested in football/soccer and athletics

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Six in ten Australians (59%) say that the Tokyo Olympic Games should not go ahead and 45% of Australians are not interested in the Games, according to a new Ipsos survey

As the postponed 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics due to begin on 23rd July 2021 approaches, Ipsos asked people in 28 countries their views on the event: including whether the Games should go ahead; how interested are they in the Games, and what the impact of the Games is on wider society.

Overall, global support for the Olympics taking place in summer 2021 is muted, due in part to concerns over COVID-19. On average across the 28 countries surveyed, 43% say the event should go ahead, compared to 57% who say it shouldn't.

Those in host nation Japan are among the most doubtful with 22% saying that the Olympics should go ahead while 78% say it shouldn't; and 68% of Japanese are not interested in the Games.

Key Australian findings

In Australia, the key findings were as follows:

- Four in ten (41%) say the event should go ahead, while 59% say it shouldn't
- Six in ten (61%) agree that the Olympics will be an important opportunity for the world to come together following the pandemic
- More than three quarters (77%) agree the Olympics inspire tomorrow's generation to participate in sport
- Two thirds agree the Games have a unifying impact in their country – 65% agree that the Olympics bring their country together
- More Australians claim to be not very/not at all interested (45%) than very/somewhat interested (55%)
- Australians are most interested in aquatics, which includes diving, swimming, synchronised swimming and water polo, (36%) and are second only to Hungary (37%) in interest in these events
- Our next most popular events were athletics/track and field (27%) and gymnastics (25%)
- While not necessarily of strong interest to a large proportion of people, Australians are somewhat unsurprisingly among the most interested in rowing, surfing, rugby sevens, and skateboarding.

Among Australians other perceived impacts of the Olympics on society include:

- Six in ten (62%) approve of government funding being used to support the performance of their country's Olympic athletes
- Two thirds (66%) agree that Olympic athletes should be given priority COVID-19 vaccinations

- Opinion is split regarding whether there is too much nationalism on display at the Olympics (48% agree and 52% disagree).

Ipsos Australia Public Affairs Deputy Managing Director, David Elliott, said: “While we like to think of ourselves as a sports mad nation, we could be considered lukewarm in our interest levels for the Tokyo Olympics. Further, in comparison to others around the globe our interest level is indeed average. No doubt this lack of interest is driven by the current situation with the global COVID-19 pandemic, as only four in ten Australians believe the Games should go ahead.

“This lack of interest might be of concern for those media organisations who have the broadcast rights, but no doubt they will be waiting to see if interest improves and heats up once the Games begin. We saw last year in the midst of the first pandemic wave how sports like the AFL and rugby league become a welcome distraction for many, so it wouldn’t be a surprise to see the Tokyo Olympics play a similar role.”

Global Findings

Support for Tokyo 2020

Overall, support for the Olympics taking place in summer 2021 is muted, due in part to concerns over COVID-19. On average across the 28 countries surveyed, 43% say the event should go ahead, compared to 57% who say it shouldn’t. There is greatest support for the Olympics taking place as scheduled in Turkey (71%), Saudi Arabia (66%), Russia (61%) and Poland (60%).

Those in host nation Japan are among the most doubtful: 22% say the Olympics should go ahead while 78% say it shouldn’t. South Korea shows the lowest levels of support for the Games taking place (14%).

However, 62% worldwide agree that the Olympics will be an important opportunity for the world to come together following the pandemic. Turkey and Saudi Arabia once again show the highest levels of agreement with this statement (81% in both). South Korea, Japan and Germany are the only countries where fewer than 50% say that the Olympics presents this opportunity to come together.

Ipsos also found that there is widespread agreement among the public that the Olympics generally speaking has a uniting power. Two-thirds (65%) agree that the Games ‘bring my country together’, rising to 92% in China and 84% in India. But this falls to 36% in Japan and 37% in Germany.

Levels of interest - overall

There is a mixed picture in terms of levels of interest in the Olympics, as majorities in 13 of the 28 countries surveyed are very/somewhat interested in the Olympics, but majorities in 15 countries are not very/not at all interested.

India, South Africa and China are most interested, while Belgium, South Korea and Japan are least engaged.

Looking at demographics, male respondents are split 50:50 in terms of their interest in the Olympics while more women say they are not interested (59% vs. 41%). Older generations also express less interest in the Games (59% of those aged 55-74 are ‘not interested’ vs. 50% of 18-35 year olds).

Levels of interest - events

Looking across the various Olympics events, we find that most people are interested in following football/soccer, followed by athletics/track & field, aquatics (encompassing swimming, diving, synchronized swimming and water polo), then gymnastics.

Top 5 (global country average):

1. Football/soccer (30%)
2. Athletics/Track & field (27%)

3. Aquatics* (22%)

4. Gymnastics (21%)

*Swimming, diving, synchronized swimming and water polo.

Completing the top 10 are volleyball, tennis, basketball, cycling, boxing, and badminton.

Impact of the Olympics on society

We also asked people what they think of the Olympics in a wider sense. Some highlights include:

- A majority worldwide (80%, global country average) say that the Olympics inspire younger generations to participate in sport
- Two-thirds (67%, global country average) approve of government funding being used to support the performance of their country's Olympic athletes
- Seven in 10 (71%, global country average) agree that Olympic athletes should be given priority COVID-19 vaccinations. Agreement is highest in China (92%), Saudi Arabia (89%), India (88%) and Turkey (87%) but less decisive in Germany (50%), Great Britain (52%), Belgium (54%) and the Netherlands (56%)
- Opinion is split regarding whether there is too much nationalism on display at the Olympics (55% agree and 45% disagree, according to the global country average).

Note to editors:

This study did not have any external sponsors or partners. It was initiated and run by Ipsos, because we are curious about the world we live in and how citizens around the globe think and feel about their world.

These are the results of a 28-market survey conducted by Ipsos on its Global Advisor online platform. Ipsos interviewed a total of 19,510 adults aged 18-74 in the United States, Canada, Malaysia, South Africa, and Turkey, and 16- 74 in 23 other markets between 21st May and 4th June 2021.

The sample consists of approximately 1,000 individuals in each of Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, mainland China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Spain, and the U.S., and 500 individuals in each of Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, India, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, and Turkey.

The samples in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, and the U.S. can be taken as representative of their general adult population under the age of 75.

The samples in Brazil, mainland China, Chile, Colombia, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey are more urban, more educated, and/or more affluent than the general population. The survey results for these countries should be viewed as reflecting the views of the more "connected" segment of their population.

The data is weighted so that each market's sample composition best reflects the demographic profile of the adult population according to the most recent census data.

"The Global Country Average" reflects the average result for all the countries and markets where the survey was conducted. It has not been adjusted to the population size of each country or market and is not intended to suggest a total result.

Where results do not sum to 100 or the 'difference' appears to be +/-1 more/less than the actual, this may be due to rounding, multiple responses or the exclusion of "don't know" or not stated responses.

Sample surveys and polls may be subject to sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error. The precision of the online surveys conducted is measured using a Bayesian Credibility Interval. Here, the Australian results have a credibility interval of +/-3.5 percentage points. For more information on the Ipsos use of credibility intervals, please go to:
https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/2017-03/IpsosPA_CredibilityIntervals.pdf

The publication of these findings abides by local rules and regulations.

As a foundation member of the Australian Polling Council Ipsos complies with the Council's Code of Conduct. The purpose of the Code is to provide journalists and the public with greater confidence and trust in publicly released polling and survey data. We strongly encourage the inclusion of methodological details in any reference to published Ipsos results.

This study is compliant with the Australian Polling Council Code of Conduct. The Long Methodology Disclosure Statement for the study will be available at https://www.ipsos.com/en-au/disclosure_statements within two business days.

Further information can be found at: <https://www.ipsos.com/en-au>

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Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. We serve more than 5000 clients across the world with 75 business solutions.

Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1st, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120 and the Mid-60 index and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

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