

HOW WILL WE KNOW IF THE GAMES BENEFIT YOUNG PEOPLE?

- › Legacy area: **EDUCATION**
- › Policy focus: **MEASUREMENT**

› THE EVIDENCE:

The only effective way to find out if the Games benefit young people is to ask them

› THE BIG THREE DEBATES:

1.

Is it possible to find out whether the Olympic and Paralympic Games have benefitted young people?

2.

Should Games organisers and politicians tell us more about how they are going to measure whether they have delivered their promises?

3.

Why is using London 2012 to benefit young people important? Isn't organising Games that people enjoy watching enough?

HOW WILL WE KNOW IF THE GAMES BENEFIT YOUNG PEOPLE?

› WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SAY?

Central to London's bid for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games was its promise to [reach and inspire the young people of London, the UK and the world](#). Young people, from primary schools to those in further and higher education, are central to London 2012's promises about [sport](#), [culture](#) and [education](#). But how will we know if the Games benefit young people? One way could be to count the number of young people doing sport, engaged with culture, or volunteering, and then see if those numbers increase after the Games. But there are two problems with doing this. Firstly, the UK has been trying to use the 2012 Games to benefit young people since they were awarded to London in 2005, so some changes might have already taken place. Secondly, counting numbers before and after the Games doesn't tell us whether it is the Olympic and Paralympic Games that have caused any changes, or whether it is something else. So the best way to find out if the Games have affected young people is to ask children and young people and their teachers and families how the Games have affected them. With one year to go until London 2012, the research evidence suggests that:

- Regardless of how much they say they like sport in the first place, primary school children like the opportunity to try new Olympic or Paralympic sports.
- Both primary and secondary teachers say that Olympic and Paralympic themes in the curriculum improve the learning and the behaviour of children and young people.
- Further and higher education institutions feel the Games will leave a sport participation legacy among their students, but that they could have had more access to volunteering opportunities.

› HOW WAS THE EVIDENCE GATHERED?

SPEAR has conducted a [worldwide review of evidence about the impact of previous Olympic and Paralympic Games](#) which looked at the best 53 studies around the world conducted since 1990 about generating and measuring Games' impacts. This review showed that counting how many people are doing something (for example, playing sport) before the Games, and comparing that with how many people are doing it after the Games, is a very bad way to measure legacies. SPEAR's research funded by the [Economic and Social Research Council](#) showed that [the best way to measure legacies is to research how people think the Games affect their lives](#) and the lives of those around them.

Doing research into the best ways to evaluate legacies has helped SPEAR to collect important data about whether the Games benefit children and young people. SPEAR has researched the impact of the Olympic and Paralympic themes in [National School Sport Weeks](#) in England, Scotland and Wales in 2010 and 2011 by asking over two and a half thousand teachers, parents and pupils about the impact they have had on their enjoyment, learning and behaviour. Researching [Change 4 Life School Sport Clubs](#) has also allowed SPEAR to ask over 1,000 children and young people who don't usually participate in sport whether the Olympic and Paralympic Games have encouraged them to play more. Finally, SPEAR has [collected data in over 300 organisations working in further and higher education](#) about how they say the Games are affecting their students.

› WHO WAS THE AUDIENCE?

The [Department of Health](#) and the [Economic and Social Research Council](#) funded SPEAR's work because they felt it was important to know both what the impacts of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games could be, and what would be the best ways to measure them. The work among young people was funded by the [Youth Sport Trust](#), [LloydsTSB](#), [Bank of Scotland](#) and [Podium](#) because these organisations wanted to know whether children and young people and their teachers and families really do feel that the Games benefit them. This is much more useful and robust data than simply counting how many young people are playing sport or taking part in cultural activities that may or may not have been caused by Olympic and Paralympic themes and programmes.

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› THE BIG THREE DEBATES

Although it is very easy to count whether there are more or less young people playing sport, taking part in cultural activities, or volunteering after an event like the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, it is much more difficult to find out whether any changes in these numbers have been caused by the Games. Because so many promises have been made by both Games organisers and politicians about how the Games will inspire children and young people, simply counting how many people are participating in various activities before and after the Games could be attractive to Games organisers and politicians. This is because if the numbers go up, they can claim that the Games have inspired young people, and if they go down they can claim that something else has caused the drop in participation.

THE BIG THREE DEBATES ABOUT THE GAMES AND YOUNG PEOPLE...

- 1 Is it possible to find out whether the Olympic and Paralympic Games have benefitted young people?
- 2 Should Games organisers and politicians tell us more about how they will know whether their promises to use the Games to inspire young people have been fulfilled?
- 3 Why has London 2012 focussed so much on benefitting young people? Isn't it good enough to simply organise Games that people enjoy watching?

› FURTHER RESOURCES AND READING

- Weed M, Coren E, Fiore J, et al. (2009) A Systematic Review of the Evidence Base for Developing a Physical Activity and Health Legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/Research/Centres/SPEAR/ResearchProjects/OlympicAndParalympic/OlympicPhysicalActivity.aspx>
- Weed, M. (2010) How will we know if the Olympics and Paralympics benefit health?: <http://www.bmj.com/content/340/bmj.c2202.extract>
- Weed M, Wellard I, Dowse S, Mansfield L, Swain, J & Gubby L. (2011) The Engagement of Further and Higher Education with the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. <http://www.podium.ac.uk/resources/download/203/the-engagement-of-further-and-higher-education-with-the-london-2012-olympic-and-paralympic-games.pdf>
- SPEAR (2009) Leveraging London 2012 in the Regions. SPEAR bulletin: <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/Research/Centres/SPEAR/ResearchProjects/Documents/SPEAR%20Issue%201.pdf>
- Youth Sport Trust: <http://www.youthsporttrust.org/>
- National School Sport Weeks: <http://schoolsportweek.org/> / <http://schoolsportweekscotland.org>
- The Department of Health: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/>
- Economic and Social Research Council: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk>
- Podium: <http://www.podium.ac.uk>

CREDITS

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