

Public support for an Olympics legacy grows

With the London Olympics now less than a year away the role of sport and the impact of the Games has become increasingly at the centre of the news agenda. Completion of the main stadiums a year before time and below budget together with sell out audiences in prospect is reflected in growing public optimism about the Games.

Regular research carried out for JGFR by GfK NOP since before the bid was won in June 2005 finds more people (40%) than in any of the previous seven surveys believe that winning the Olympic bid has boosted confidence about the prospects for the UK economy.

Since March there has been a pick up in the impact of the Olympics on the mood of the nation. Over a half of adults (54%) believe that the London Olympics will 'bring the country together and make us all feel happier' compared to 46% in March. The most support is among 35-44 year olds (65%) and lowest among 45-54 year olds (41%). There are big regional differences between the East Midlands (65% in support), Wales (61%) and the North East (60%) with Northern Ireland (48%) and Scotland (46%) having lowest level of support.

Just over 3 out of 5 adults believe there will be a sporting legacy

Images of violence in the inner cities broadcast throughout the world have created a very difficult start to the final pre-Olympics year. Now more than ever there is a need to bind the country together and improve social cohesion if the key strategic priority of the coalition government through sport - to deliver a safe and successful Olympics and Paralympic Games in 2012 and to help deliver a genuine and lasting legacy throughout the country - is to be achieved.

With focus increasingly on the legacy of the Olympics consumers are increasingly optimistic that the Games will leave a lasting sporting legacy. A higher proportion of adults (62%) than in March (54%) and in September 2010 (58%) and December 2009 (56%) believe there will be a sporting legacy. Around two-thirds of younger people under 34 believe in a lasting sporting legacy – compared to around 60% of over 45s.

Some 4 million people seek tickets from corporate sponsors

Massive public demand for Olympics tickets resulting in millions being disappointed has put the spotlight on corporate sponsors and their ticket allocations. Several have introduced promotions with the opportunity for people to win tickets. The research by GfK for JGFR found some 4 million people (8% of adults) will be trying to get Olympics tickets from a corporate sponsor. Nearly a quarter of expected applicants are young people aged 16-24. For corporate sponsors this is a big opportunity to enhance their relationships with young people, and to help to achieve the government's goal of a genuine and lasting legacy throughout the country.

Big jump in the proportion of people who would support sports charities

At the same time far more focus is being given to the role of sport in social policy development. Events earlier in the month have made the role of charities now ever more important in dealing with a rudderless generation turning to gangs rather than their communities.

The latest research finds over three-fifths of adults would support a charity that makes a difference to young peoples' lives through sport. This represents a big jump from 39% in 2010 and 31% in 2008. Around two-thirds of 25-54 year olds would support sports charities – some 20 points higher than a year ago.

Regionally, people living in Northern Ireland (80%), London (75%) and the North West (68%) are the most likely to support sports based charities. The biggest year-on-year gain in support is in London (up 37 points) and the South East (up 33 points), both likely to be boosted by the Olympics effect, more than in other regions.

Most leading professional sports clubs now have community-led inclusion schemes that seek to engage with disadvantaged young people and charities such as The Football Foundation, A Chance to Shine, Wooden Spoon, The Lords Taverners, Greenhouse, Cricket for Change and the Youth Sport Trust are involved in sports development / social cohesion programmes.

In May the Commission for Social Justice launched a report '*More than a Game: harnessing the power of sport to transform the lives of disadvantaged young people*'. This report highlighted the distinction between sport for its own sake and sport as a vehicle for improving the lives of disadvantaged young people.

Commented John Gilbert, Chief Executive of JGFR:

"Sport has a key role to play in improving the mood of the nation – with the London Olympics increasingly capturing the public's attention. Events in the past week show clearly the need to address social cohesion, with the work of sports charities essential in changing the lives of young people. While the country's medal haul will be the most cited statistic in judging the Games a success, the impact of sport in improving the lives of disadvantaged children, and improving social cohesion in inner cities, will be the most important legacy."

Notes for Editors

Contact: John Gilbert 0208 944 7510 / 07740 027968

GfK NOP carried out the research between 5-7 August 2011. Interviews took place by telephone with 1,000 adults aged 16+, representative of the UK population.

Similar surveys have been undertaken in nearly every year since June 2005. The results of the research will be produced in a forthcoming briefing by JGFR : 'Consumer Attitudes towards the London Olympics and to Sports Charities'

Links to major sports charities:

The Football Foundation (footballfoundation.org.uk)
A Chance to Shine (www.chancetoshine.org)
Wooden Spoon (www.woodenspoon.com)
The Lords Taverners (www.lordstaverners.org)
Greenhouse (www.greenhousecharity.org)
Cricket for Change (www.cricketforchange.org.uk)
Youth Sport Trust (www.youthsporttrust.org)

The Commission for Social Justice report: '*More than a Game: harnessing the power of sport to transform the lives of disadvantaged young people*'
(http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/client/downloads/20110523_CSJ_More_than_a_Game_web.pdf)

