

# Public Opinion in Olympic Cities: From Bidding to Retrospection

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## Abstract

Whereas traditionally hosting the Olympics was viewed as a top-down decision with little public input, public opinion is becoming more important in assessing and evaluating the merits of hosting the Games. Using bid documents from 2010 to 2020, the formal role that public opinion officially plays in the bid phase following the International Olympic Committee (IOC) procedures is examined. Public opinion in the preparation stage is reviewed, which demonstrates the problem of seeking simple declarations of support (Yes/No) that obfuscate important local issues (cost, traffic, urban priorities). Shifts in public opinion during the Games themselves, as well as one and four years after the Games, provide a new perspective on resident attitudes. Using retrospective data from Vancouver 2010 and London 2012, multivariate analysis demonstrates that participation in Olympic-related events (sporting and nonsporting) was the most important predictor of attitudes toward the Games and that concerns over costs were the only concerns that were justified.

## Keywords

host city residents, public opinion, London Olympics, Vancouver Olympics, post-Games surveys

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## **Introduction**

The notion of elitism in the analysis of the Olympic movement runs deep. From the perception that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) is itself a self-perpetuating elitist organization, to the fact that the Olympics represents competitions between elite athletes, to the role that local elites play in pursuing the status of being a host city for the Olympics—all of these points lead critics to question the whole Olympic movement (Boykoff 2013; Lenskyj 2000, 2008). The question that could be asked is, where do local residents fit in the context of the Games? Are they merely passive but eager recipients of decisions made by elites who have defined what is in the public interest? Are citizens merely consumers of the Olympics as a grand spectacle with little personal scrutiny over what takes place?

The question of host city public reaction to the Olympics has grown in importance, particularly in nations with strong democratic traditions. In recent years, referendums and polls have played an increasing role in the decision of whether cities should put forward a bid (Chappelet 2002). One of the most startling expressions of citizen input was the decision by voters in Denver, Colorado, in 1972 to reject hosting the 1976 Winter Games even after they had been awarded the Games in 1970 (Childers 2012; Olson 1974). For the 2010 Games, the city of Berne, Switzerland, had been short-listed as a host city, but the bid had to be withdrawn when a referendum defeated this initiative. Referendums seeking public input have not been typical of most bids, but the competition to host the 2022 Winter Games was heavily impacted by referendums that reduced the field of bidding cities. Munich, Germany; St. Moritz/Davos, Switzerland; and Krakow, Poland, all held referendums in 2013 to 2014 that failed to support 2022 Olympic bids that had already been mounted. In Oslo, Norway, a referendum was held in 2013 that narrowly approved the bid (55% Yes), but then one year later, as a response to increasing political pressure and flagging public opinion polls, Oslo pulled their bid. This occurred in spite of the fact that Oslo had already been short-listed by the IOC as a candidate city, the city was ranked highly by the Advisory Working Group to the IOC, and the city withdrew merely nine months before the IOC made their final decision, thereby reducing the field of bid cities to only two. Another dramatic withdrawal took place in Boston in 2015 where concerted citizen opposition to hosting the 2024 Games was intense (Lauermaun 2016) and also by referendum in Hamburg with the prospect of even more referendums in other bid cities, which suggests that we have entered a new era in public input about hosting the Games. Citizen activism has created considerable uncertainty about the Olympic brand from a host city perspective and has already

contributed to reform of IOC expectations and procedures in host city selection. Whereas the model for mounting an Olympic bid has typically involved only minimal public input, it is clear that local residents are increasingly playing a role in bid decisions—at least in some Western democracies.

The question of how local residents respond to the Olympic initiative cannot just be confined to the bid decision. Even when a city has been selected to host the Games, further questions can be raised about how residents are impacted by or interact with the Games, as preparation evolves and the Games take place. The reason why this is important is that residents of a host city encounter the Games much more directly than is often recognized. As a civic project, the Games dominate the urban agenda and intrude into urban spaces over at least seven years. Whether the opinions of local residents matter or not may depend upon the political context. Nations with strong democratic traditions may be more likely to elicit public responses, whereas people residing in nations with more autocratic governments may be unaccustomed to expressing their views about such issues (Foley, McGillivray, and McPherson 2011). Activist opposition to successful bids whether in Vancouver or London, street demonstrations in Rio de Janeiro where public opposition to spending on World Cup and Olympic projects emerged after bids were won, or public opposition to the Olympic stadium issue in Tokyo after the Games were awarded makes it clear that at least in some polities, public opinion about hosting such events is playing a significant role. And what about during the Games themselves and the attitudinal legacy they leave? How do local residents assess the Olympics after the Games are over?

The objective of this article is to examine public opinion in the Olympic cycle from bid to post-event. The emphasis in Olympic studies frequently utilizes political economy approaches situating the Games in a global context with a focus on costs, benefits, and hard legacies and minimizes the role of host city residents, with perhaps the exception of resistance movements (Boykoff 2014). This article seeks to refocus attention on local residents through the use of public opinion data. In the first section, the role of public opinion in the bid process will be discussed utilizing bid documents. The second section “The IOC and the Changing Context of Local Decision Making” reviews studies of public opinion during the pre-event preparatory period and during the Games themselves. The third section “Public Opinion in the Bid Process” breaks new ground by providing retrospective data one year and four years after the London and Vancouver Games, which demonstrate how host city residents view the Games in hindsight.

## The IOC and the Changing Context of Local Decision Making

It is important to note that the IOC has been evolving as an organization at the same time that the Olympics have been evolving as a movement (Parent 2013). In its modern phase, the IOC initially consisted of a small group of volunteer elites who followed their own dream of how the Olympics should be organized (MacAloon 1981). Eventually, pressure from the sport federations and the national Olympic committees along with athletes themselves have contributed to change in the structure of the organization, which has now become a complex system with multiple additional stakeholders, even including corporate sponsors and professional sport leagues (Chappelet and Kubler-Mabbott 2008). These internal changes were also prompted not only by external public pressures created by criticisms of the IOC as a closed, unelected body but also by charges of corruption and doping, which increasingly led to calls by public bodies for greater accountability. The adoption of Agenda 21 as the result of developments in the 1990s made the environment the third pillar of Olympism, and the utilization of terms, such as legacy and sustainable development, made it clear that the IOC was evolving in response to public pressures in civil society (IOC 2012b).

The concept of legacy, in particular, played a formidable role in raising the question of how cities would benefit from having hosted the Games, which then brought into sharper relief the further question of who would benefit from hosting the Games (Ziakas 2015). The rationales and motivations for hosting the Games were viewed with suspicion and provoked a critique by local residents who attacked the Olympics over the fiscal costs of the Games as well as social and environmental costs. While Denver's withdrawal from hosting the 1976 Olympics after having been awarded the Games represented the first clearest expression of public pressure in opposition to hosting the Games, and Toronto's 2000 bid stimulated one of the strongest contemporary resistance movements in the bid phase (Kidd 1992; Lenskyj 1996), there has been an increasing expression of opposition articulated particularly in the bid phase. Whereas negotiations between the IOC and host cities were previously essentially undertaken with the city's political and business elites, there has been a growing demand for citizen consultation at grassroots in the bid phase.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, the primary issue has been lack of trust over cost projections and the matter of fiscal priorities given other pressing needs. This trend has been supported by anti-Olympic activists who criticize the corporate model underlying the contemporary Olympics (Lenskyj 2008). From a host city point of view, then, the contemporary bid process lacks democratic legitimacy. Following regime theory, the growth politics and goals of elites often

clash with local residents, some of whom react positively to the powerful symbolism of the Olympics while others respond negatively (Burbank, Andranovich, and Heying 2001). Potential host cities, particularly in more democratic countries, have increasingly become battlegrounds about the Games fueled by ideology, political differences, and fiscal priorities.<sup>2</sup> The old model of host city negotiation with the IOC as being a process of negotiation between elites both at the IOC and in the host city is, thus, in crisis.

From the perspective of the IOC, it was largely assumed that political elites were spokespersons for citizens even though other elites were usually also part of the bid decision. Bid committees were usually composed of elites from various sectors of society (including sport elites) to give the impression of widespread support. A bid is not viable from the perspective of the IOC unless it has government backing or the support of elected elites. What has changed in recent years is the perception that the decision to host the Games should not be a decision made by elites (whether elected or not) without public input. The primary catalyst to the arousal of opposition has revolved around the opportunity costs of hosting such an event in the face of other needs which local residents consider more imperative. The assumption that the spectacle itself and the global acclaim that it produces served as a sufficient rationale for hosting the Games was no longer adequate. The complexity of the contemporary Games with world-class facility requirements for high performance athletes, unpredictable budgets and security costs, and the need to address a wide range of sustainability issues from the environment to legacies for low-income residents has made the Olympics into a controversial albatross for host cities. In short, the honorific appeal of hosting the Games is constantly challenged by perceptions of risk by local residents (Jennings 2012), which create both opposition and suspicion.

## **Public Opinion in the Bid Process**

The typical process of proceeding with an Olympic bid involves a bid committee standing at some distance from government taking the initiative to develop a bid, which is then followed by government announcing that it is endorsing the bid effort without significant public consultation (Armstrong, Hobbs, and Lindsay 2011; Newman 2007).<sup>3</sup> Because a bid is only a bid, there is a sense in which the uncertainty of a successful bid makes detailed discussion and debate somewhat hypothetical. On one hand, this may minimize the need for careful political consultation. But, on the other hand, the bid becomes an announced policy consideration that is open to debate. Bid documents and other discussions are replete with estimates of costs and benefits, and much of the debate occurs outside normal legislative structures such as in the

media. In most cases, and until recently, governments have not sought more definitive public input into the decision about whether to bid for the Games and simply announce their support for the bid.

However, somewhat contrary to this approach is the fact that the IOC has been eager to know the extent of public support in the bid process as a tool in evaluating the bid. One of the requirements is that the bid book must include public opinion data on the extent of support for the bid. This has been done in two ways. The bid committee is required to submit the results of a poll, which it commissions, but which is required by the IOC to be carried out by a reputable polling firm. As a check and balance, the IOC also commissions its own poll. Until the changes instituted by Agenda 2020, this procedure was followed both in the screening of “applicant cities” and in the bid adjudication among “candidate cities.”<sup>4</sup> In the first phase of the bid process eight years before a specific Games was to be held, cities bidding at this point were called “applicant cities.” Their bid files were reviewed by an IOC appointed Working Group, which filed a report that was submitted to the IOC Executive Board, which then narrowed the field of bidding cities to a shorter list of “candidate cities.” In the second phase, candidate cities were required to submit a full candidature file, which was then reviewed by an IOC appointed Evaluation Commission, which submitted their report as well as the candidature files to the IOC for final adjudication and a vote by all members of the IOC. In both stages of the bid city submissions, the degree of public support had to be reported with polling results.

There are two questions that emerge from this requirement and the polling reports. First, to what extent are these polling results accurate and comparable? Second, what role does this request for public input play in the bid decision? In regard to the first question, it is important to note that there is no standard required question that all bid cities must ask. Every city uses its own wording to monitor support, and many cities did not even report the exact wording of the question. Some cities use simple Yes/No responses, and other cities use a 5-point scale. What also varied considerably are the size and location of the sample. Some bids report little about the sample; some have samples of 500 or so, and others report samples of 2,000. Some report samples that include just the city, others include the region, and still others report survey results for the entire nation. Reports from the nation are often included when national results are higher than the bid city results. There also seems to be a difference in the degree to which residents are prepared for such a survey in that their knowledge of the Olympic bid varies greatly, often depending on the communication program which a bid committee may have established. For example, low bid support in Tokyo for its 2020 bid might potentially be explained by the lack of public knowledge about the bid as 30% of survey

respondents had no opinion about it (IOC 2012). It could also be argued that most surveys asked simple questions about support for the bid without any qualifications about issues, such as costs, which then really means that the poll is just a general measure of support.

In contrast to the polls carried out by the Bid Committees, those paid for by the IOC and carried out by contracted polling organizations all use a standard question: “To what extent would you support or oppose [CITY] hosting the Olympic Games in [YEAR]?” The responses to this question are measured on a 5-point scale. It needs to be pointed out that these surveys often indicate many who are neutral or have no opinion on the question of hosting the Games. Note again, however, that the question is general and does not acknowledge consideration of the implications of such a decision.

Table 1 compares the results of Bid Committee surveys with the results of IOC surveys for both Winter and Summer Olympic Games from 2010 to 2020. In 19 of the 21 cities under consideration, bid committee polls (BidC) demonstrated higher percentages of support for hosting the Olympics than the IOC polls. Sometimes, the difference was considerable (e.g., Moscow 2012: BidC 90%, IOC 76%), and in other cases, the difference was minor. In comparing public support as an applicant city with support one year later as a candidate city, there is no clear pattern. Some cities found that support increased—for example, Rio de Janeiro 2016 from 78% to 82% (BidC) and 77% to 85% (IOC)—while others revealed that support went down—for example, Vancouver 2010 from 80% to 62%. In some cases, the BidC polls went up (e.g., Tokyo 2016 from 60% to 69%), while the IOC polls went down (59%–56%) for the same Games. Even IOC results fluctuated from the first reported poll to the other with no consistency, as about half went up from one year to the next while half declined. A few cities like PyeongChang and Madrid were consistently high in all polls.

Table 1 also reports on the extent of variation in the polling results from the BidC figures in the applicant stage to the IOC figures in the candidate stage as a way of assessing changes in support. This comparison was chosen because “Applicant City” scores were almost always higher than IOC scores. Overall, far more cities saw a decline in support as evidenced by the minus in the variation factor column. From this, one might predict that Vancouver, Annecy, and London would be at a disadvantage in winning the bid. Yet, Vancouver had the lowest level of popular support among bid cities for 2010 and the strongest decline in the variation factor and still won the bid. Similarly, London had the lowest level of popular support for 2012 (along with New York) and a strong negative variation factor, and yet still won. Conversely, Paris and Madrid had strong levels of popular support and positive variation scores and, in spite of this, they still did not win. PyeongChang bid three

**Table 1.** Reported Poll Results of Support for Hosting the Olympics in Bid Cities as “Applicant” and “Candidate,” 2010–2020.

Bid Cities	Applicant		Candidate		Variation
	BidC	IOC	BidC	IOC	Factor
Winter Olympic Games					
2010					
PyeongChang	97%	78%	94%	85%	-12
<b>Vancouver</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>-22</b>
Salzburg	83%	68%	76%	76%	-7
2014					
<b>Sochi</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>-5</b>
Salzburg	60%	46%	61%	42%	-18
PyeongChang	97%	96%	96%	91%	-6
2018					
Munich	76%	70%	71%	60%	-16
Annecy	81%	74%	74%	51%	-30
<b>PyeongChang</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>-1</b>
Summer Olympic Games					
2012					
Paris	75%	72%	77%	85%	+10
New York <sup>a</sup>	73%	68%	64% <sup>a</sup>	59%	-14
Moscow	90%	76%	90%	77%	-13
<b>London</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>-14</b>
Madrid	88%	85%	90%	91%	+3
2016					
Chicago	76%	74%	77%	67%	-9
Tokyo	60%	59%	69%	56%	-4
<b>Rio de Janeiro</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>+7</b>
Madrid	87%	90%	89%	85%	-2
2020					
Istanbul	87%	73%	94%	83%	-4
<b>Tokyo</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>+5</b>
Madrid	75%	78%	77%	76%	+1

Source. Working Group Reports published by the IOC in the adjudication of “applicant” cities and Evaluation Commission Reports of “candidate” cities for both summer and winter games from 2010 to 2020.

Note. Only “applicant” cities accepted as “candidate” cities are included in this table. BidC refers to results submitted by the bid committee, and IOC refers to poll results reported by the IOC. The variation factor represents the difference between surveys of public support in the bidding host city reported by the bid committees as an “Applicant City” and conducted eight years before the designated Games, and the survey conducted by the IOC one year later, seven years before the designated Games. Figures for the winning cities or bids are in boldface. BidC = bid committee polls; IOC = International Olympic Committee.

a. New York did not report a single survey result but noted that nine different surveys were carried out over four years with a range of support from 64% to 79%.



times and each time had the highest level of support among their competitors and they did not win until their third bid. Tokyo had the lowest level of support for 2020 and yet still won their bid.

All of this leads to the question about whether levels of popular support as measured by these polls actually make a difference in the decision-making process. The Working Group Reports on applicant cities use a numerical matrix system to weight all the factors in the bid. The category of “Government, Legal Issues and Public Support” has a weighting of 2 in comparison with “Finance” (3) and “Infrastructure and Accommodation” (5). Even under “Government, Legal Issues and Public Support,” government support is valued much more highly in this category (65%–70%) than public support (15%). Clearly, while the measurement of public support is part of the bid process, it is not valued highly in the final decision. This is particularly evident in the Evaluation Commission Report on candidate cities, where no weighting system is utilized, and public opinion polls are rather quickly mentioned with a far greater emphasis on government support and guarantees. There is little evidence that public opinion has been an important part of host city selection by the IOC or, until recently, even in the decision by a city to bid.

The difficulties in consulting the public as part of the bid process can be illustrated by the experience of Vancouver. A new mayor was elected in 2002 who had campaigned on giving the people an opportunity for input about hosting the 2010 Olympics, even though the bid was already finalized. A plebiscite<sup>5</sup> was held in 2003 just days before the Evaluation Commission visited the city and only a few months before the IOC vote. This was rather late in the bid process, but the campaigning involved in the plebiscite had the effect of legitimating the Games as controversial, creating opposing sides, and galvanizing opposition (“No Games 2010,” “Olympics Resistance Network”) to hosting the Games (Shaw 2008). In spite of the fact that the “Yes” side tallied 64% of the votes, controversy continued throughout the preparation period after the Games had been awarded to the city (Alexander 2005; Hiller 2012, pp. 39–44). Granting the Games to Vancouver even though there was opposition implied that most of the IOC members acknowledged that overwhelming support was not a critical factor in host city decisions.

The decision to hold referendums or plebiscites regarding the Olympics is not new (Innsbruck: Socher 1997; Utah: Andranovich, Burbank, and Heying 2001; Switzerland: Sueur 2007; Sapporo: Chappelet 2008), although votes of this nature as well as polls have played a bigger role in the decision of cities to bid in recent years. When residents have been consulted, it has been in relation to financial issues supporting the Olympics—considerably different from a general question about hosting the Games. Consulting residents at an earlier stage is becoming more of an issue, as already noted for the 2022 and 2024 Games. Even in these situations, the pattern is similar in

that bid boosters mount the bid campaign and prepare the bid only to consult residents late in the process. To what extent this consultation is based on full information devoid of political entanglements and persuasive communication is debatable. As Burbank, Heying, and Andranovich (2000) argued, the informal coalition of business and political leaders who form the growth regime promoting the bid usually hold the balance of power, which means that resistance or opposition tends to be only piecemeal. Yet, the evidence is clear that when residents are given the opportunity to formally vote, their support cannot be taken for granted.

### **Public Opinion in the Pre-Event and Event Phase**

If the bid is successful, there is little incentive for Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (OCOGs) or IOC to monitor public opinion as primary attention is given to Games preparation. Occasionally, local polling firms add Olympic-related questions to omnibus surveys they are conducting for other purposes, and London seemed to generate a number of such surveys (Hiller and Wanner 2015). Whatever public opinion is sought through the preparation period has been done primarily by academics (for a review of surveys in host cities, see Guala 2009; Guala and Turco 2012). The most comprehensive longitudinal community-based studies took place in Calgary (1988) and Torino (2006) with annual surveys up to and including the year of the Games, as well as an immediate post-Games survey. The monitoring of public opinion in Calgary was called “Olympulse” and covered the period between 1982 and 1988. It asked a wide range of questions, measuring local interest and support, knowledge of costs, and ratings of the performance of levels of government and the organizing committee (J. R. B. Ritchie and Aitken 1984; J. R. B. Ritchie and Lyons 1987). The second major series of surveys was done over the period of 2002 to 2007 for the 2006 Torino Games that examined a wide range of issues relating to the host population such as perceptions of hosting the Games and benefits and problems expected (Guala 2006, 2009; Guala and Turco 2012). Both of these survey initiatives reported only simple frequencies in data presentations without sophisticated statistical analyses.

Other studies undertaken during the preparation period include work by Zhou and Ap (2009), who distinguished between embracers and tolerators in Beijing; Mihalik and Simonetta (1999), who measured expected participation and perceived costs and benefits in Atlanta; Waitt (2001), who examined levels of enthusiasm for hosting the Games in Sydney; Müller (2012), who examined coordinates of support for the Olympics in Sochi before the Games through residents’ knowledge of and sense of participation in the planning process; B. W. Ritchie, Shipway, and Cleeve (2009), who studied residents in

a satellite region to the London Games where sailing events were to be held; and Prayag et al. (2013), who examined overall attitudes to the Games in London as mediated by perceived positive and negative impacts to sociocultural, environmental, and economic indices. Atkinson et al. (2008) used an economic model of “willingness to pay” to assess intangible impacts perceived by London residents some years prior to hosting the Games. There is no evidence that such studies served as feedback to OCOGs or the general public (Chien et al. 2012).

Hiller and Wanner (2011) broke new ground by surveying the residents of Vancouver every three days *during* the Games rather than just before or after. The results of this research provided quantitative evidence for the first time about what can transpire in a city as the Games evolve. Their statistical models demonstrated that attitudes toward hosting the Olympics improved remarkably, primarily as a result of residents becoming involved in free events associated with the Games, such as street activity in the downtown core, free concerts, and attendance at live sites, which then had an impact on positive post-Games perceptions.

J. R. B. Ritchie and Lyons (1990) surveyed Calgary residents immediately after the Games and were able to ascertain the extent to which residents became involved in the event. For example, their data showed that public participation was high at the medal ceremonies at the downtown Olympic Plaza and at downtown events, overall satisfaction with the Olympic experience was high, and there was an overwhelming sense that the Games were a financial success. Support for hosting the Games went from 84.7% in 1983 to 97.8% in 1988 (the year of the Games). Waitt (2003) surveyed Sydney residents before and after the 2000 Games and found that enthusiasm increased in relation to perceptions of the contribution of the Games to community spirit. Kaplanidou (2012) examined resident perceptions of legacy outcomes after the Games in Atlanta, Sydney, Athens, and Beijing and found that emotional outcomes were valued more in Atlanta and Sydney, but that infrastructural legacies were identified as more significant in Athens and Beijing. Karadakis and Kaplanidou (2012), utilizing a small sample in Vancouver, concluded that residents rated the psychological legacies as much higher than the economic impact, and Liu, Broom, and Wilson (2014) came to a similar conclusion when examining legacy in a nonhost Olympic city (Shanghai).

Guala and Turco (2012) reviewed what is known about public opinion in host cities by identifying four phases in resident responses to hosting the Games, although these phases were not developed or defined in any detail. Pride in being selected in the first stage is countered by issues and controversies (e.g., concerns over security, traffic, government debt) in the second phase, all of which occurs in both phases in the midst of both opposition and

apathy. The third phase, they argue, is one of happiness and euphoria during the Games, and the fourth phase after the Games were over has a nebulous unspecified character in their discussion. How residents in the post-Games period (one year later or longer) evaluate having hosted the Olympics remains an open question.

## **The Olympics in Retrospect**

The evidence introduced so far suggests that the emphasis in most studies on public opinion in host cities focuses on the preparatory period and the year in which the Games were held. What is missing is a longer term view to determine how local residents evaluate the whole Olympic experience after more time has elapsed, normality has been reestablished, the consequences of having hosted the Games become clearer, and an opportunity for reflection has occurred. One of the problems in reviewing survey results pertaining to the Olympics is that the questions asked vary so much from study to study. We offer a partial remedy for that by asking a set of similar questions in post-Games surveys in two Olympic cities.

### *The Two Host City Contexts*

Vancouver and London are very different cities with different histories and roles in the global economy but residents in both cities were subject to much public debate about hosting the Games. As already noted, Vancouver held a referendum in the bid phase that supported hosting the Games but which provided a symbolic moment of how controversial hosting the Games was. In fact, the referendum may have even created more questions in the minds of local residents who later reacted to cost overruns of supporting mega-projects such as the Convention Centre/Media Centre and fiscal problems with the Athlete's Village (Hiller 2012). The fact that a new airport rapid transit line was rushed to be finished in time for the Games made it another symbol of huge Olympic expenditures, even though it played a major role in reducing traffic congestion to the downtown core, with benefits continuing long after the Games. The existence of vocal protest groups, such as No Games 2010 (Shaw 2008), provided counterpoint opinions to actions by VANOC who tried to prepare the city for the Games by announcing lane closures, restrictions on signage and liberties, and increasing costs for security which aroused public scorn. No significant displacement was to occur as the result of Olympic venue construction but the existence of an area of poverty and marginalized people known as the Downtown Eastside and quite close to major Olympic venues prompted pressures to ensure that persons living in this area

would benefit from hosting the event—much of which never materialized (VanWynsberghe, Surborg, and Wyly 2013).

London, in contrast, built its bid on the premise that the Olympics would play a major role in the regeneration and renewal of the East End, which was an old industrial area with high levels of environmental degradation and socioeconomic deprivation (Evans 2012). It is often thought that this urban objective played a major role in shifting IOC votes toward London and away from rival Paris as a way of demonstrating how the Olympics could play a role in urban redevelopment beyond sport. While some displacement occurred as a result of this transformation, the bigger issue was that the area was rebranded for leisure consumption as represented by the newly built Westfield Stratford City shopping mall, thereby contributing to the gentrification of the area and providing an uneasy fit for the remaining population and the existing retail outlets. Controversy was elevated by announcements that a missile launch would be located on the roof of a local apartment building for security purposes, as well as protests against Olympic sponsors, such as Dow Chemical and Adidas, for their policies in third world countries, which also served as a catalyst to Olympic debate (Boykoff 2014; Giulianotti et al. 2014). In both London and Vancouver, however, considerable efforts were made to ensure that the Olympics did not leave a public debt even though public funds were needed to address infrastructural requirements.

## *Method*

As part of a larger project assessing public opinion in host cities, an identical set of questions was asked in Vancouver four years after the 2010 Winter Games (January 2014) and one year after the 2012 Summer Games in London (July 2013). While these are two different points in post-Games time, they provide a sense of how the Games are viewed in retrospect. Questions were developed that reflected concerns expressed by local residents as found in the literature in the preparatory phase. These included concerns of local residents about costs, security, protests, and traffic, and the extent to which they participated in Games-related activities. But it also included a range of personal/emotional responses to the Games. Rather than ask simple questions of support for the Games, it was decided to tap mood or emotions (“happy,” “apathetic,” “excited,” “opposed”) as a way of uncovering deeper feeling. Under our direction, the data were gathered by the Angus Reid/Vision Critical organization that maintains online panels of respondents in both Canada and the United Kingdom and has an established procedure for response targets by comparing their database to Census results in terms of age, gender, and region. The online panel is a representative sample (not a random sample)

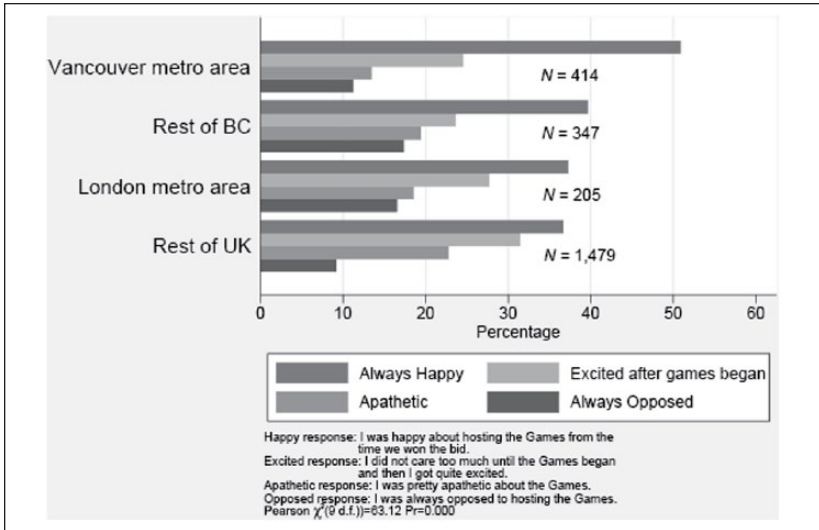
used for multiple purposes and was not just created for this study, meaning that a self-selection bias was unlikely. The sample also takes into consideration the fact that response rates vary for different groups of people by means of probability weights that were used in all analyses reported here. We discovered that the age ranges in the two Olympic cities did not match, with the minimum age in Vancouver being 18 and the maximum 88, while the London data included some cases with age under 18 with a maximum of 72. We adjusted for this by declaring any cases under age 18 or over age 72 to be missing, slightly reducing the sample size. The size of the random sample for the London Olympics was 1,711 respondents, of which 195 were from the London metropolitan area (and the remaining from other parts of the United Kingdom), and the Vancouver sample size was 733, of which 392 were from metro Vancouver (and the remaining from other parts of the province of British Columbia).

There are problems with retrospective data—especially when it is impossible to have a panel study involving the same participants, which would facilitate comparisons at different points in time. But memory decay is also a potential problem, which is why recalling the fine details of their Olympic experience is less important in this instance than general overall observations and conclusions. What we are measuring in this study, then, is a summary evaluation in hindsight.

### *Measures of Variables*

Respondents were given four choices to the question, “What was your personal reaction to the Olympics?” as noted in Figure 1. For purposes of the logistic regression models, the dependent variables were defined as indicator (dummy) variables by contrasting a positive response (happy or excited) to the combined negative responses (apathetic or opposed) and a negative response to the combined positive responses. This made more sense substantively than the conventional method of estimating a multinomial logistic regression with a single reference category when the dependent variable has more than two categories. Although these categories are not arrayed on a continuum, the “happy” and “excited” responses are both positive, while the “apathetic” and “opposed” responses are negative, or perhaps neutral in the case of “apathetic.” To create a scale of these responses is not possible, hence our use of the contrasts defined above.

In the post-Olympic surveys, respondents were asked about whether they attended Olympic sporting events, events of the Cultural Olympiad, Olympic victory ceremonies, or Olympic-related events, such as free concerts, local community activities, “live sites,” or Olympic “houses,” and



**Figure 1.** Response to the question “What was your personal reaction to the Olympics?” Vancouver 2014, London 2013.

pavilions set up by participating countries and sponsors. Responses were recorded as either yes or no, with a yes response coded 1 and a no response coded 0. The reference category was defined as not attending any Olympic-related events.

The demographic variables included were age, gender, and household income. Age is measured continuously as years of age. Measured in this way, we are assuming that age has a linear effect on all dependent variables. We tested this assumption by comparing models in which age was measured continuously with models in which age was measured using either three or six indicator variables. In all cases, the models with a linear effect of age were preferred. Gender is an indicator variable coded 1 for females or 0 for males, the reference category. Household income is measured by means of a rank order variable, represented by two indicator variables, because of the currency differences in the two countries. High income is household incomes greater than or equal to £60,000 in the United Kingdom or Can\$125,000 in Canada; medium income in the United Kingdom is between £20,000 and £59,999, while in Canada, it is incomes between Can\$35,000 and Can\$124,999; low income in the United Kingdom is defined as incomes less than £20,000, and in Canada, less than Can\$35,000. Because of differences in coding in the two countries, this is not an exact mapping of the two currencies, but it is



reasonably close. In the models, two indicator variables represent household income rank, one for low income (=1) and one for middle income (=1), with high income serving as the reference category. Finally, an indicator variable measures residence in the Vancouver metropolitan area or British Columbia (=1) compared with residence in the London metropolitan area or the United Kingdom outside London.

In the model for evaluation of concerns, the dependent variable is coded 1 for respondents who said that their concern was “overdrawn,” 0 if they said that it was “justified.” The “not sure” response shown in Figure 3 is coded as missing. In addition to the three categories of predictors described above, this model also includes the types of concerns. Six indicator variables each coded 1 if respondents said that this was their biggest concern and 0 for any other response. The reference category is “I never had any concerns about the Games.”

After presenting the univariate and bivariate results of the survey, a series of multivariate logistic regression models is used to predict what respondent characteristics influenced their attitudes. There has been limited research on public opinion about hosting the Olympics that utilizes some form of multivariate modeling (Prayag et al. 2013; B. W. Ritchie, Shipway, and Cleeve 2009; Zhou and Ap 2009), and all utilize pre-Game samples. Liu, Broom, and Wilson (2014) did carry out post-Games research on a nonhost city measuring general impact effects, whereas the selection of predictor variables for this study was based largely on the results of our previous research in which predictor variables were more personal and participatory (Hiller and Wanner 2011, 2015). In those studies, by far the strongest effects on opinions and feelings about hosting the Olympics were associated with variables measuring participation in Olympic-related events, both ticketed and nonticketed.<sup>6</sup> In addition, age, gender, and income had significant effects on some attitude measures, but these effects tended to be weaker.

## Results

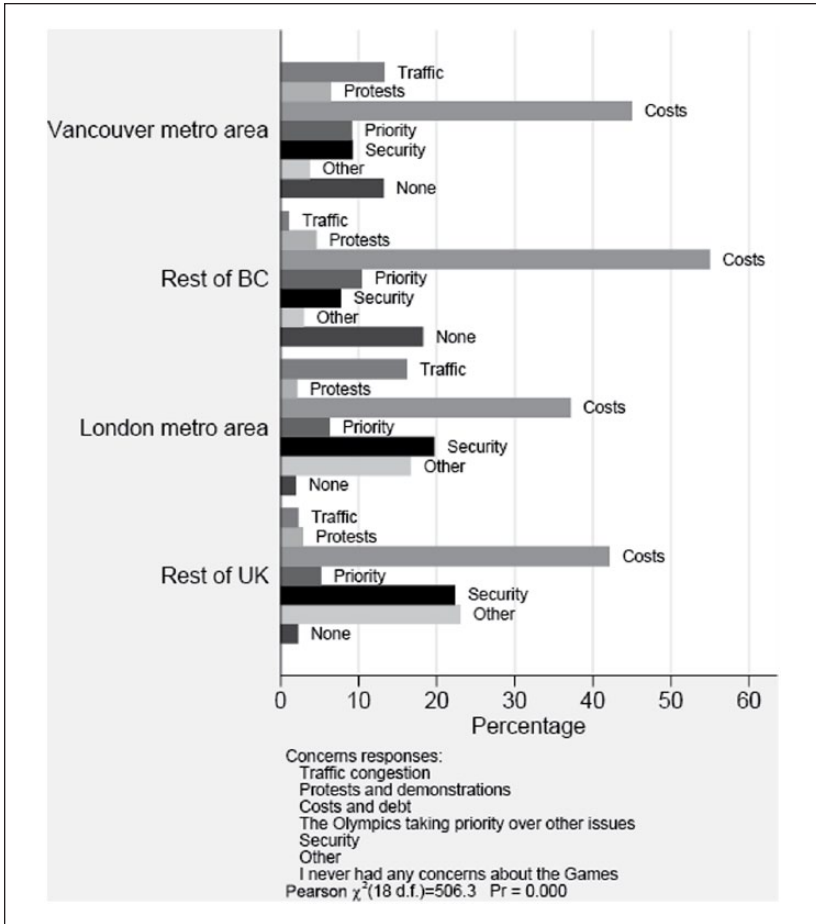
### *Bivariate Results*

Figure 1 reports retrospective responses to the question, “What was your personal reaction to the Olympics?” and identifies four possible responses, from happy about hosting the Games from the beginning, to being excited about hosting only after the Games began, to apathy and opposition. Based on the chi-square value shown in Figure 1, the association between respondents’ reaction and their geographic location is significant beyond the .001 level. For both host cities, support for the Games from the start was moderate at



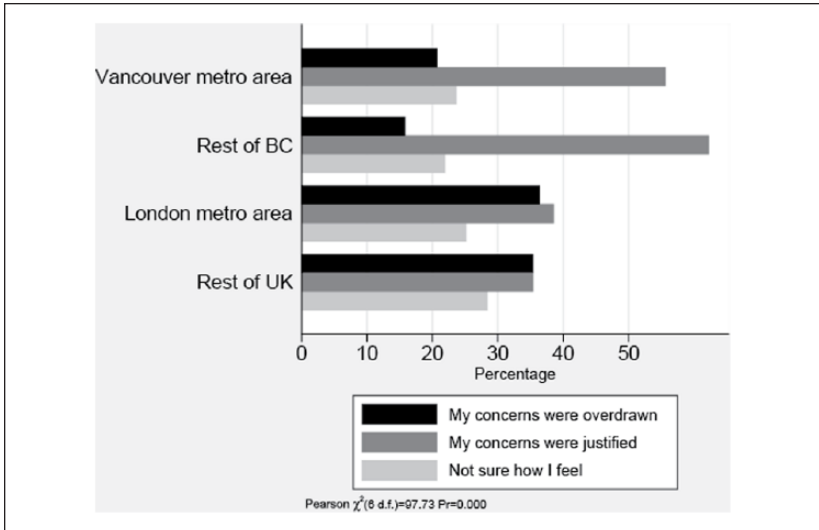
best, although this was the dominant category. Vancouver and British Columbia residents were considerably more likely to report that they were happy about hosting the Games from the time their bid was successful than were either London or other U.K. respondents. However, London and other U.K. respondents were more likely to report becoming excited about the Games after they had begun. In both cities, support for the Games picked up considerably after the Games actually began and produced more excitement. A smaller but significant category was apathetic about the Games, which was strongest outside of both metro areas but particularly strong outside London (nearly 23%). A still smaller category was those who opposed the Games. Opposition to the Games was just 11% in Vancouver and just over 16% in London, with the lowest level outside the London metro area.

Respondents were also asked what their biggest concern was prior to the Games. As Figure 2 makes clear, by far the most prominent issue was the costs associated with the Games and debt that might be incurred by various levels of government, although the percentage of respondents citing this concern was higher for Vancouver and the rest of British Columbia. Once again, the chi-square statistic indicates that the association between type of concern and geographic location is significant. This difference between the two cities was undoubtedly a consequence of the fact that the next most frequently mentioned concern, particularly for London, was security. The terrorist bombings in London in 2005 on the day after the announcement of the city being selected to host the Olympics and the repeated media discussions about the threat of terrorism during the Games throughout the preparation period created an uneasiness that is probably reflected in the higher concern about security perhaps displacing fiscal matters as the biggest concern. Concerns about costs were in the 45% to 55% range for the Vancouver games but only in the 37% to 42% range for London. Concerns about security were in the 20% to 22% range for London but less than 10% for Vancouver. These results may be somewhat skewed by the fact that respondents were asked to identify only their "biggest" concern rather than rank order or identify more than one concern. Traffic and protests were lesser concerns than costs and security in both cities, though it was not unexpected that traffic would be a bigger concern for residents in the cities themselves than in respondents residing in the nonmetropolitan regions. Protests were more of a concern in Vancouver than in London, which would be consistent with the media attention given to protests in the Canadian city. More people claimed that they had no concerns before the Games began in Vancouver (more than 13%) than in London (less than 2%). In contrast, respondents in relation to the London Games were more likely to report "other" concerns which, upon examination of their write-in options, tended to be restatements of items such as costs or security.



**Figure 2.** Response to the question “What was your biggest concern, if any, before the Games?” Vancouver 2014, London 2013.

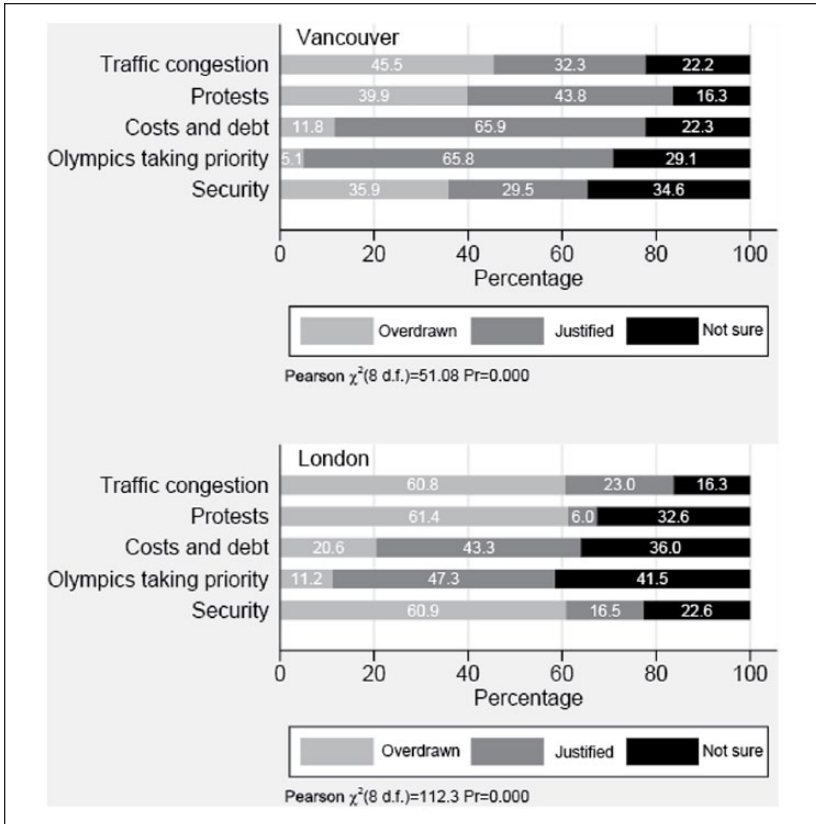
Respondents were then given an opportunity to state whether their pre-Games concerns were overdrawn or justified (or whether they were unsure) in retrospect, one year later in the case of London and four years later for Vancouver (Figure 3). The most striking difference between the two cities is the large percentage of respondents who felt that their concerns (more than 55%) were justified in relation to the Vancouver Games. In comparison, respondents were considerably less likely to say that their concerns were justified for London (36%–38% range) and more thought that their concerns



**Figure 3.** Evaluation of concerns after the Games, Vancouver 2014, London 2013.

were overdrawn (35%–36% range). Based on the chi-square statistic at the bottom of the figure, these differences are statistically significant.

How can this difference be explained? Figure 4 graphically represents a cross-tabulation of the concerns before the Games by evaluation of those concerns after the Games in both cities. The percentages were calculated after deleting cases with no concerns or other unspecified concerns. As a result of the lack of serious security breaches during the London Games, nearly 61% of Londoners who chose this concern said that their concern was overdrawn. A majority of Londoners who were initially concerned about traffic congestion also described that concern as overdrawn, as did over 45% of Vancouver respondents. However, Vancouver respondents whose concern was costs and debt overwhelmingly felt that their concern was justified four years later. As well, more than 43% of Londoners felt justified in their concern about costs and debt. Of those who were concerned that the Olympics would take priority over other issues, 47% of London respondents and two-thirds of those in Vancouver felt that their concern was justified in light of subsequent developments. These results at least somewhat parallel Guala’s (2007) surveys about nine months after the Torino Games that showed that residents’ assessment of the Games and their impact on the city were still positive, that many of the fears that they had of negative outcomes were unfounded, and that at least some of the expected benefits, such as more employment and economic growth, had not materialized as expected.



**Figure 4.** Concerns before the Games by evaluation of concerns after the Games, Vancouver 2014, London 2013.

*Multivariate Results*

In developing multivariate logistic regression models to predict respondents’ reactions to hosting the Games and the evaluation of their concerns, predictors were divided into four categories: variables measuring attendance and participation in Olympic-related events, demographic variables, types of pre-Games concerns, and a variable representing residence in the Olympic regions.<sup>7</sup> Although it is necessary to designate one variable as a response (dependent) and others as predictors (independent), this does not imply that the models confirm this causal order. We use causal language in describing our results, but it is just a reasonable assumption without experimental data.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in the Analysis by Olympic City.

Variables	Vancouver		London	
	M	SD	M	SD
<b>Dependent variables</b>				
Concern overdrawn	0.241	0.428	0.493	0.500
Happy compared with apathetic or opposed	0.603	0.490	0.532	0.499
Excited compared with apathetic or opposed	0.444	0.497	0.490	0.500
Apathetic compared with happy or excited	0.188	0.391	0.247	0.431
Opposed compared with happy or excited	0.167	0.373	0.129	0.335
<b>Participation</b>				
Tickets to Olympic sporting events	0.124	0.330	0.067	0.250
Events of the Cultural Olympiad	0.094	0.292	0.023	0.149
Free concerts and community activities	0.239	0.427	0.054	0.226
Visited one of the live sites	0.218	0.413	0.044	0.206
Did not participate in any activities	0.525	0.500	0.807	0.395
<b>Demographic variables</b>				
Age	45.5	14.7	38.9	12.3
Female	0.513	0.500	0.514	0.500
Low income	0.249	0.433	0.397	0.489
Middle income	0.665	0.472	0.533	0.499
High income	0.086	0.281	0.069	0.254
<b>Pre-Games concern</b>				
Traffic congestion	0.077	0.267	0.040	0.195
Protests and demonstrations	0.056	0.230	0.028	0.164
Costs and debt	0.495	0.500	0.415	0.493
Games taking priority	0.097	0.297	0.053	0.224
Security	0.085	0.280	0.220	0.414
Other concerns	0.034	0.181	0.222	0.416
No concerns	0.155	0.362	0.022	0.146
Observations	733		1,711	

Note. Means of indicator (dummy) variables are equivalent to the proportion in each category.

Table 2 reports means and standard deviations for the dependent and independent variables included in the models shown in Tables 3 and 4, separately for the London and Vancouver samples. Without controls, these results suggest that respondents in London and the United Kingdom were more likely to view their earlier concerns as overdrawn and to be more apathetic about hosting the Olympics prior to the games. Vancouver respondents, in contrast, were more likely to be either happy about hosting the games or opposed to

**Table 3.** Logistic Regressions of Reactions to the Olympics on Type of Participation, Demographics, and Olympic City.

Predictor Variables	Happy <sup>a</sup>	Excited <sup>b</sup>	Apathetic <sup>c</sup>	Opposed <sup>d</sup>
<b>Olympic participation</b>				
Tickets to Olympic sporting events	6.305*** (4.40)	2.298 (1.71)	0.220** (-3.18)	0.214* (-2.48)
Events of the Cultural Olympiad	1.846 (1.21)	1.396 (0.61)	0.914 (-0.18)	0.223 (-1.47)
Free concerts and community activities	4.798*** (5.13)	2.927*** (3.33)	0.217*** (-4.01)	0.299** (-3.13)
Visited one of the live sites	3.834*** (3.81)	3.631*** (3.47)	0.221*** (-3.56)	0.388* (-2.13)
<b>Demographic variables</b>				
Age	0.995 (-0.83)	0.990* (-1.99)	1.006 (1.23)	1.009 (1.43)
Female	0.939 (-0.47)	1.298* (2.01)	1.004 (0.03)	0.710* (-2.10)
Low income	0.677 (-1.50)	0.921 (-0.30)	1.304 (1.00)	1.212 (0.62)
Middle income	0.768 (-1.06)	1.366 (1.21)	0.960 (-0.16)	0.978 (-0.07)
<b>Pre-Games concern</b>				
Traffic congestion	1.653 (1.21)	2.942* (2.37)	0.567 (-1.43)	0.125 (-1.95)
Protests and demonstrations	7.323*** (3.76)	4.500* (2.43)	0.111*** (-3.33)	0.230 (-1.82)
Costs and debt	0.425*** (-3.53)	1.672 (1.69)	0.893 (-0.44)	2.115* (2.06)
Games taking priority	0.239*** (-4.38)	0.609 (-1.35)	2.330** (2.64)	4.997*** (3.86)
Security	4.553*** (4.90)	6.621*** (5.24)	0.210*** (-4.72)	0.108*** (-3.97)
Other concerns	1.162 (0.54)	1.576 (1.34)	0.844 (-0.58)	0.353* (-2.14)
<b>Olympic city</b>				
Vancouver	1.152 (0.84)	0.709* (-2.12)	0.851 (-0.95)	1.257 (1.23)
Observations	1,528	1,271	1,872	1,698
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	.227	.106	.124	.207

Note. See Figure 1 for full text of reaction responses. Coefficients are odds ratios; t-statistics in parentheses.

a. Happy compared with apathetic or opposed.

b. Excited compared with apathetic or opposed.

c. Apathetic compared with happy or excited.

d. Opposed compared with happy or excited.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Table 4.** Logistic Regressions of Evaluation of Concerns (Overdrawn Compared with Justified) After the Games on Type of Concern, Type of Participation, Demographics, and Olympic City.

Predictor Variables	Vancouver	London	Both Cities
<b>Olympic participation</b>			
Tickets to Olympic sporting events	1.234 (0.48)	2.305* (2.31)	1.733* (1.99)
Events of the Cultural Olympiad	2.403 (1.91)	0.904 (-0.15)	1.452 (0.86)
Free concerts and community activities	1.514 (1.23)	2.248 (1.91)	1.922* (2.48)
Visited one of the live sites	1.471 (1.01)	0.775 (-0.58)	1.183 (0.59)
<b>Demographic variables</b>			
Age	1.003 (0.35)	1.017* (2.17)	1.013* (2.08)
Female	0.685 (-1.36)	1.282 (1.43)	1.083 (0.54)
Low income	1.228 (0.31)	0.755 (-0.72)	0.904 (-0.30)
Middle income	1.250 (0.36)	0.991 (-0.02)	1.124 (0.36)
<b>Type of concern</b>			
Traffic congestion	14.72** (3.17)	3.351* (2.23)	5.414***a (3.82)
Protests and demonstrations	13.49** (2.96)	20.07*** (3.48)	10.48*** (4.96)
Costs and debt	2.009 (0.89)	0.772 (-0.57)	0.997 (-0.01)
Games taking priority	1.407 (0.37)	0.590 (-0.99)	0.765 (-0.59)
Security	14.94** (3.12)	6.099*** (3.93)	7.672*** (5.20)
<b>Olympic city</b>			
Vancouver			0.246*** (-7.46)
Observations	402	889	1,291
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	.217	.197	.227

Note. See Figure 2 for full text of concern responses. “Other concerns” variable dropped from models due to perfect collinearity. A BIC value of 62.9 provides strong support for the main effects model for both cities (Raftery 1995). Coefficients are odds ratios; t-statistics in parentheses. BIC = Bayesian information criterion.

a. Vancouver and London coefficients significantly different at  $p < .05$ .

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

the games. Vancouver respondents were also considerably more likely to have participated in some way in Olympic-related activities, though they were much less likely to have had pre-Games concerns.

For purposes of the logistic regression models predicting reactions to the Games, the dependent variables were defined as indicator (dummy) variables by contrasting a positive response (happy or excited) to the combined negative responses (apathetic or opposed) and a negative response to the combined positive responses. Table 3 shows the results from a series of binary logistic regression for the categories of response to the Olympics and reported as exponentiated coefficients, generally known as odds ratios and may be interpreted as direct effects net of all the other predictors, with an odds ratio of 1 indicating no effect.

A quick glance at Table 3 reveals that by far the most important predictors of reaction to the Olympics are participation or attendance at an Olympic-related event, as well as pre-Games concerns. Those who held tickets to Olympic events were more than six times more likely to have been happy about hosting the Games from the time their city won its bid, and approximately one-fifth as likely to be apathetic or opposed. Attending free concerts and local community activities and visiting one of the live sites also produced positive responses as well as a much lower level of negative responses.

Unlike the participation variables, the demographic characteristics had fewer significant effects on reactions to the Games, and those effects are smaller in magnitude. Older respondents were significantly less likely to have been excited about hosting the games. A gender effect is also present. Women are about 1.3 times more likely to say they became excited about the Olympics after they began than were men and considerably less likely to have been opposed. Despite concerns about the impact of the games on low-income persons and families, there is no evidence here that income affects reaction to the Olympics.

Are the effects of the participation and demographic variables different in Vancouver and London? Models that included interactions between the Olympic city variables and all others suggest that they were not. Although a few interaction terms were statistically significant, Bayesian information criteria (BICs; Raftery 1995) for the main effects models compared with models containing all possible interactions suggested that the best fitting models are those containing only the main effects (i.e., those reported in Table 3). In other words, there is no evidence that the effects of the participation and demographic variables differ across the host cities. The only main effect of host city shows that residents of Vancouver and British Columbia were less likely to have been excited about hosting prior to the games.



The models shown in Table 4 are logistic regressions in which the dependent variable contrasts the two main responses to the item asking about respondents' evaluation of their concerns: "overdrawn" or "justified." These models are estimated separately for the Vancouver and London sample, then pooled to permit assessing an Olympic city effect. Participation in Olympic-related events increased the likelihood that respondents perceived their concerns as overdrawn, though in this case this is true only of having tickets to Olympic events and attending free events when the samples are pooled.<sup>8</sup> The sole demographic variable that affects the evaluation of concerns is age, with older respondents being more likely to see their concern as overdrawn. Consistent with the bivariate results shown in Figure 4, being concerned about traffic congestion, protests and demonstrations, and security result in a greater likelihood of responding that these concerns were overdrawn. In other words, the worst fears of these respondents about hosting the games were not realized. Finally, respondents living in the Vancouver metropolitan area were considerably less likely to see their concerns as overdrawn, controlling for the other predictors in the model, also consistent with the results shown in Figure 3. As in the case of the models for reactions to the Olympics shown in Table 3, the effects of participation, the demographic variables, and types of concerns did not differ for respondents in London and Vancouver according to the BIC, which indicated strong support for the main effects model.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The thrust of this article has been to examine local attitudes about the Olympics in host cities. It has been shown that while public opinion has a formal role and is mandated in the bid process, its role is minor in official IOC evaluations. What has changed is that while broad public consultation has not been typical in bid cities in the past, referendums are being mounted outside of the formal bid process in some cities as local residents demand input into bid decisions. Outside of the bid process, however, there is no evidence publicly available that OCOGs systematically monitor public opinion in the preparation phase as the single focus is on implementation of plans for an event that is no longer in question. Public opinion is sometimes reported in the local media as a news item as the result of surveys by polling organizations using random samples in the event preparation and Games phase. OCOGs may selectively react to these expressions of public opinion but it appears that they do not proactively seek this form of public input. It is left then to independent researchers to examine public opinion through studies as reported earlier. There is little coordination among these studies that have

examined a multiplicity of issues, and there has been little consistency in methodology that would facilitate comparisons between cities.

One thing that is clear from all these studies is that hosting the Olympics is fraught with significant concerns, controversy, and even opposition. While the dominant question in the bid phase is the debate over whether to host the Games, the preparation phase moves questions to the next level of implementation that more concretely has a local impact. It is in this phase where questions about costs, traffic, and reprioritizing the urban agenda become most acute and apprehension and conflict builds. It was significant then to find quantitative evidence for shifts in attitudes toward the Olympics as the result of experiencing the Games in the host city. What remained an open question, however, was how local residents came to evaluate the Games after the euphoria of the event was over and time had elapsed for more sober reflection. By asking questions about the concerns residents had before the Games and how they evaluated those concerns in retrospect, it was possible to contribute to a more longitudinal understanding of the impact of the Games.

Our data do confirm that there is considerable apprehension in anticipating the Games, particularly in relation to cost, but that some of those fears (e.g., traffic or security) may be alleviated if the event is judged to unfold without incident and the concerns are then considered overdrawn. Furthermore, this article has shown that the most critical factors in positive assessments of the Games are participatory in nature, not only as measured by holding tickets to Olympic events but in participating in Olympic-related and often free events which support casual mingling and interaction in ways not typical of ordinary urban life. It is not surprising then that OCOGs have attempted to make the Olympics an inclusive festival for the host city in that such participation plays an important role in creating positive perceptions (the “feel-good” factor) for residents about hosting the Games, even though questions of costs still exist (Hiller and Wanner 2015; Prayag et al. 2013).

While local opinion has not been a significant factor in the host city selection made by the IOC, it is becoming increasingly important in the local politics of the decision to bid. The idea of bidding may be conceived by elites who also put the bid organization together but it is the next step where the bid plan is made public that local residents become drawn into debates about the justifications and merit of the bid. It is the large number of unknowns (costs, impact, benefits) (Horne 2007) connected to the bid that justifies both caution, suspicion, and opposition in addition to questions about the value of the Olympics as an appropriate urban project in the first instance. Adopting the Olympics as an urban policy option is only to ensure that it will be evaluated politically much like any other policy option.

Measuring public opinion about the Olympics is a challenging task because the Games evoke such a wide range of feelings which are also clouded by other factors such as political allegiances and policy priorities. As in so many other things, evaluations may also be mixed with positive and negative feelings coexisting at the same time—depending on the issue, or changing at different points in time. Our survey questions reflect some of these ambiguities in their wording and limited response options—particularly when trying to ascertain emotional responses to the Games. Different wording or response options may produce a different result. Clearly, a more in-depth set of questions would be preferable as well as a panel study that followed the attitudes of the same respondents over time rather than our data, which represent a series of cross-sections at various time periods.

When post-Olympic reaction is compared with pre-Olympic sentiments, it is clear that negative opinions still exist after the event although they are considerably muted. With the exception of Montreal, where the civic debt became a highly public albatross for 30 years after the 1976 Games (Patel, Bosela, and Delatte 2013), a more critical attitude toward the Games and their legacy has been more typical of academic evaluations than evaluations done by local residents. This would suggest that local residents prefer to recall the positive aspects of the Games experience that produce both positive memories and reflect positively on the city than the controversies of the preparation phase. It is for this reason that Games organizers know that a successful event plays the most critical role in post-Games evaluations where the energy and urgency for critiques are reduced. Furthermore, the media who have thrived on the social drama and controversies of the preparation period and whose rhetoric has reached a crescendo of even more drama in the event phase move on to other stories in the post-event period, essentially leaving local residents with their memories of the spectacular aspects of the Games as the final arbiter (Farrell 1989).

Public opinion data give us a sense of attitudes in the city as a whole and can serve as a significant corrective to those who assume subgroups (e.g., opposition groups) represent a larger share of the population than they really do. However, such data also make us aware that divergent attitudes toward the Games also exist in spite of the fact that organizers claim widespread support and benefits. Whether polling provides an accurate representation of the nuances of what people are thinking is a debatable question, but it is at least an established instrument that provides a window on public opinion that broadens our understanding beyond simply the advocacy efforts of small interest groups. Neither the IOC, OCOGs, nor local governments have shown much interest in measuring public opinion after the Games are over or in making such data an important part of more recent Olympic Games Impact (OGI) reports. Yet, if public opinion is important in the bid phase, it should

also be an important part of the overall evaluation of the event, or, as Jennings (2012) put it, in risk management. However, it could easily be argued that concern about local reaction and event perceptions has played a role in the call for a more community-based planning approach rather than the usual top-down planning (Zhou and Ap 2009). In other words, if there is concern about how the Games are viewed after they are over, the planning itself will be done differently before the Games, which has already been reflected in some of the proposals in Agenda 2020.

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### **Notes**

1. Michael Payne, former director of marketing for the International Olympic Committee (IOC), understood this problem and thought that negotiations should be completed with the host city leaders before being selected because “the danger otherwise is that local politics will get in the way” (Payne 2006, p. 191). In reality, what has emerged more recently is the public demand for input even in the decision to bid.
2. Elsewhere (Hiller, forthcoming) it is argued that from an urban point of view, the Olympics should be considered a mega-project (and not just a mega-event) like other mega-projects with all the issues of cost overruns and controversies which they engender.
3. The Tokyo 2020 candidature file (Vol. 1, pp. 32–34) claims that 90% of elected government representatives from multiple parties voted to support the bid while polls showed that only 65% of the population of the city supported the bid—a significant gap between political support and popular support. It was also acknowledged that this level of public support was only possible because of deliberate efforts to develop “social momentum” for the bid.
4. The bid process was amended for the 2024 Games by removing the “Applicant City” label and creating a new role for the Evaluation Commission Working Group to recommend to the IOC Executive Board that they either defer a city’s candidature or confirm the candidature to the next stage of a three stage process (IOC 2015).
5. In comparison with a referendum, a plebiscite is usually considered nonbinding.
6. See Chapelet (2014) for a discussion of the spectator experience in host cities and how the IOC is shifting to consider spectators as clients.

7. A description of the coding procedures used is available from the authors.
8. It must be noted that the significance tests can be strongly affected by sample size, so we should not be surprised if more significant effects are observed in the pooled sample.

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