

Leveraging a mega sporting event to address public health outcomes



BACKGROUND

Mega sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup, Olympics and Commonwealth Games are often lauded for their ability to leave wide reaching public health legacies including population level increases in sport and physical activity, improved sporting and non-sporting infrastructure, and increased employment opportunities.

In reality, most such events leave a legacy of both positive and negative public health outcomes, and can be funded at the expense of other public health initiatives leaving vulnerable populations at risk of being further marginalised (Weed, 2016).

Despite mixed results of the legacies of previous events, organizers envisioned the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics and Paralympics would leave a lasting legacy of increased physical activity, and reduced health disparities in BC and particularly in the host communities.

METHODS

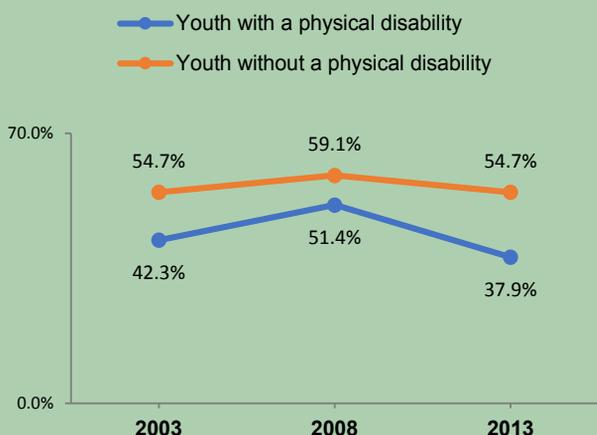
This study drew on results obtained from two self-report surveys of BC adolescents aged 12-19: the BC Adolescent Health Survey (2003, 2008 & 2013) and the Homeless and Street Involved Youth Survey (2006 & 2014). The surveys included some of the province's most marginalised young people, including those who are homeless or who have a physical disability (who were anticipated to benefit from accessibility upgrades and changes in attitudes as a result of the hosting of the Paralympics).

RESULTS

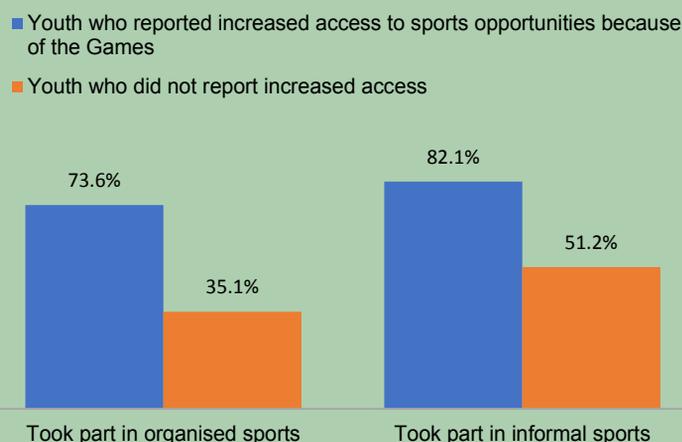
Across BC, **youth with a physical disability** appeared to benefit pre-Games when there was investment in disability sports and accessible physical activity. However, this was not sustained post-Games, as infrastructure legacies appeared to have little impact on this population, and there were no decreases in discrimination experiences. Also in 2013, youth with a physical disability in host regions were more likely to report barriers to participating in extra-curricular activities than their peers in non-host regions.

For **homeless youth**, those in host communities were no more likely to report positively on the Games' impact than those in non-host communities, and they were more likely to report negative impacts both before and after the event.

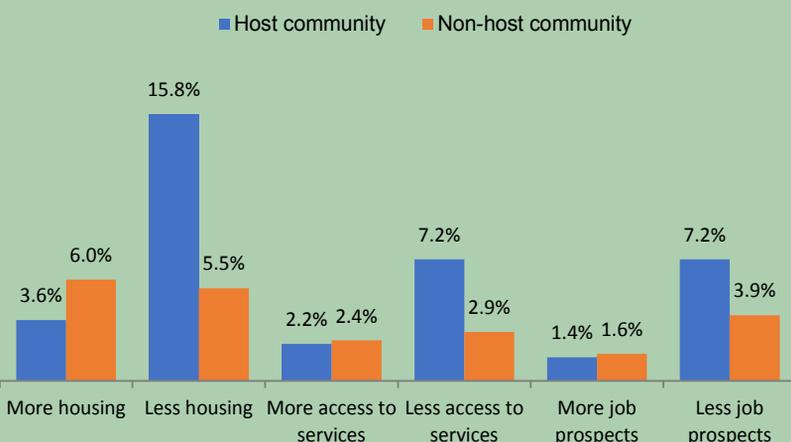
Participation in organised sports 2003–2013



Participation in sports among youth with a physical disability (2013)



Legacy of the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympics on homeless youth in BC (2014)



Note: The differences for 'more access to services' and 'more job prospects' were not statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

Mega sporting events continue to be heralded as an opportunity to engage disenfranchised young people and to remove barriers to social inclusion (Girginov, 2011; Preuss, 2015). Yet some youth are clearly missing out on potential positive legacies of mega sporting events.

Future events in BC should do more to engage marginalised populations. This is particularly important given the study found a number of positive health benefits among young people who reported they had benefited from infrastructure legacies such as increased access to sports opportunities.

References:

Girginov, V. (2011). Governance of the London 2012 Olympic Games legacy. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 47(5), 543–558.

Preuss, H. (2015). A framework for identifying the legacies of a mega sports event. *Leisure Studies*, 34 (6), 643-664.

Weed, M. (2016). Should we privilege sport for health? The comparative effectiveness of UK Government investment in sport as a public health intervention. *International Journal of Sports Policy and Politics*, 8(4), 559-576.