

Insight driving innovation and impact

# Olympics and Paralympics 2021 – The power to inspire a generation

6<sup>th</sup> September 2021

# Background

Fresh from their heroics in Tokyo, Team GB Olympians and Paralympians are now set to lift the spirits of a generation of young people through a nationwide programme of school visits.

Youth Sport Trust (YST) will be organising more than 100 athlete visits to get into classrooms this autumn and build on the inspiration and positivity children felt from watching them compete at this summer's Olympic and Paralympic Games.

It comes following new research which reveals the positive impact this summer's events had on young people.

YST commissioned YouGov to conduct a survey of young people around their views on this summer's Olympic and Paralympic Games. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 862 children aged 10 to 18. Fieldwork was undertaken between 27th - 31st August 2021. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all 10 to 18-year-olds

## Executive Summary

47% of children and young people watched at least some of the Olympic or Paralympic Games this summer (more than 3.1 million) with a further 37% (2.5 million) being aware of the games taking place.

With more athletes speaking out about wellbeing at this summer's events, 38% of young people who watched the Games agreed it had made them think about their own mental health. Over half of viewers (55%) felt that Athletes should talk openly about their mental health and almost one-in-ten (9%) young viewers cited athletes speaking openly about their mental health as their favourite thing about the Games.

The research highlights the powerful potential that big sporting events like the Olympics and Paralympics have to build a lasting positive impact on young people. Among those who watched:

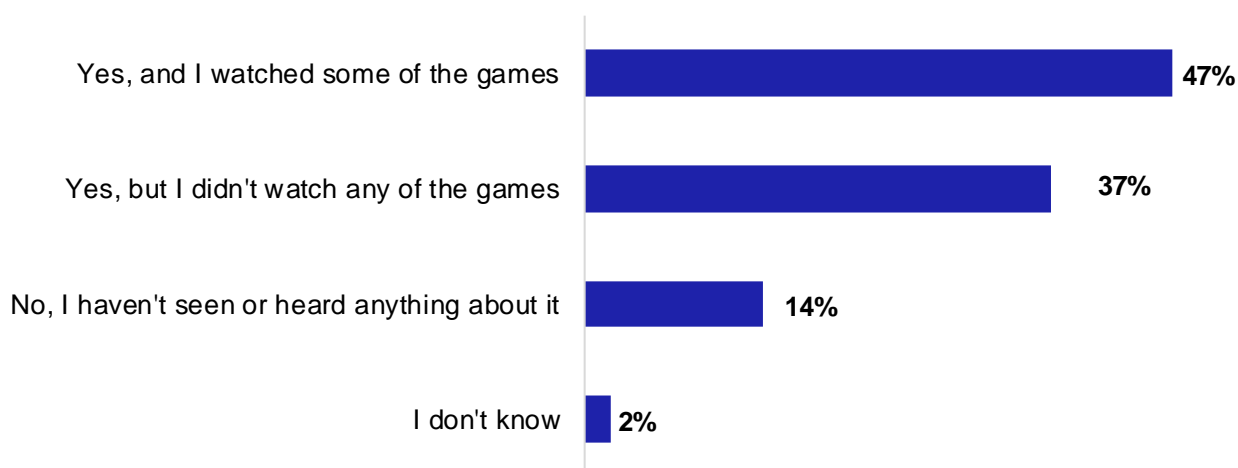
- Four in five 82% agreed it made them feel happy.
- 71% agreed that it made them feel inspired to work hard at whatever they do.
- 28% agree it had made them want to try a new sport, with a similar number (26%) saying that seeing new sports was their favourite thing about watching the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Our research shows that 47% of young people believe that athletes are important role models who can inspire them and their generation. One in four young people (24%) say that hearing athletes' stories and how they have overcome challenges can help them in their lives.

## Detailed findings

### Almost half of all 10–18-year-olds watched the games

47% (more than 3.1 million) of young people aged 10-18 watched at least some of the Olympic or Paralympic Games this summer, with a further 37% (2.5 million) being aware of the games taking place. Only 14% hadn't seen or heard anything. Only 2% hadn't seen or heard anything.

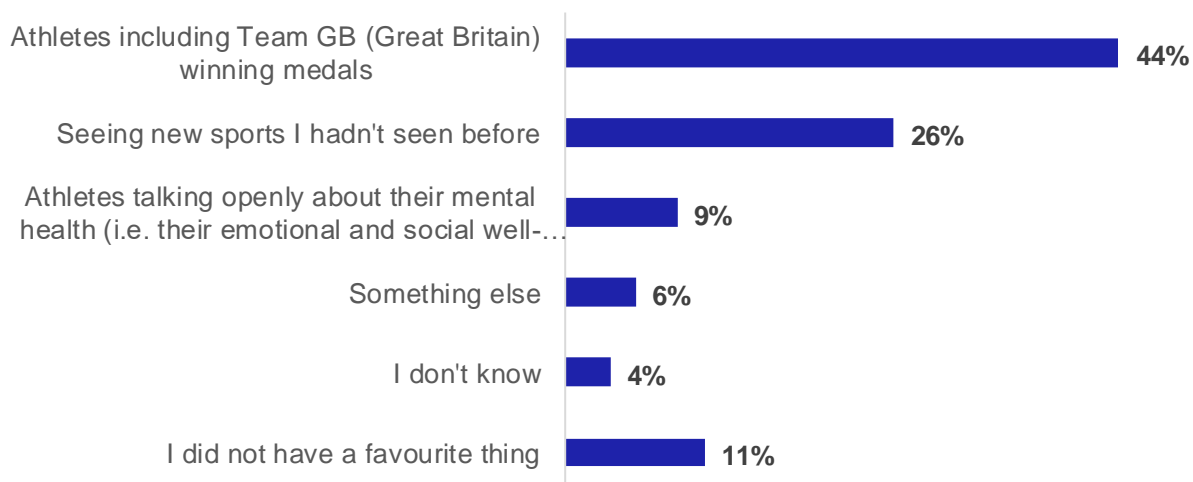


Base: 862 GB Children aged 10-18

### More than medals..

Whilst 44% of viewers said that “athletes including Team GB winning medals” was their favourite thing about the games, over a quarter (26%) picked “seeing new sports I hadn't seen before” and around one-in-ten (9%) chose to highlight “athletes speaking openly about their mental health”.

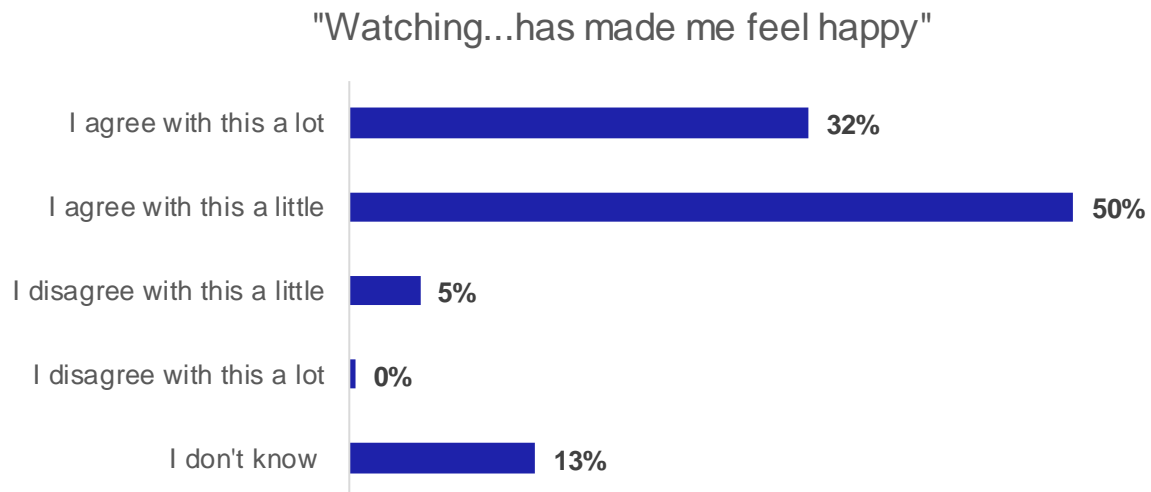
### Which one of these was your favourite thing about this summer's Olympic or Paralympic Games?



Base of 402 children aged 10-18 who had watched at least some of the Olympics and/or Paralympic Games – weighted to represent GB

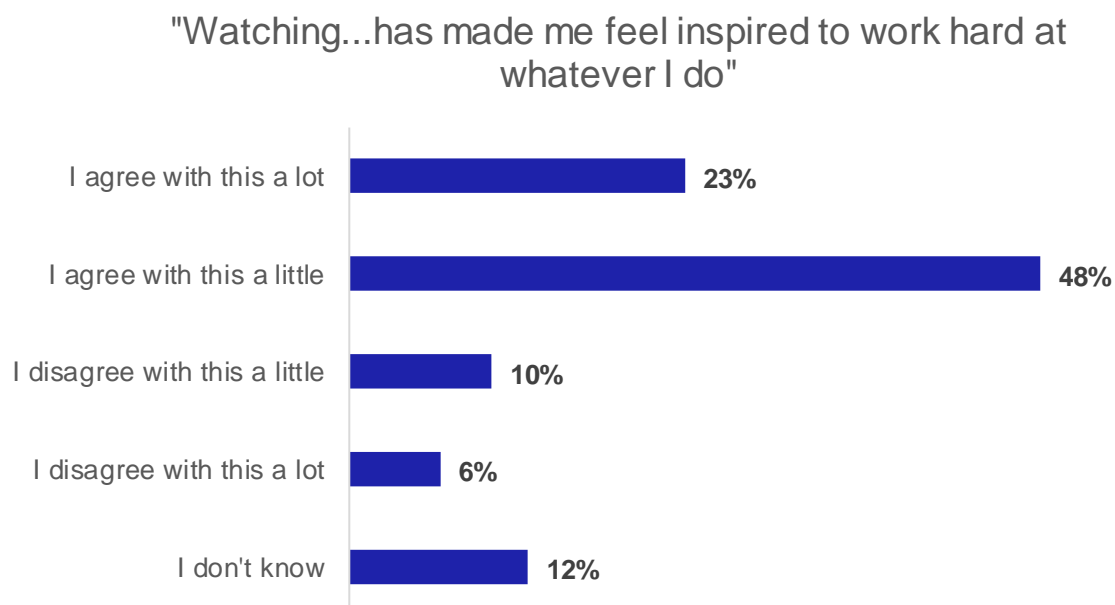
## The Games have powerful potential to bring a lasting positive impact on young people

Four in five children (82%) said that the games had made them feel happy.



Base of 402 children aged 10-18 who had watched at least some of the Olympics and/or Paralympic Games – weighted to represent GB

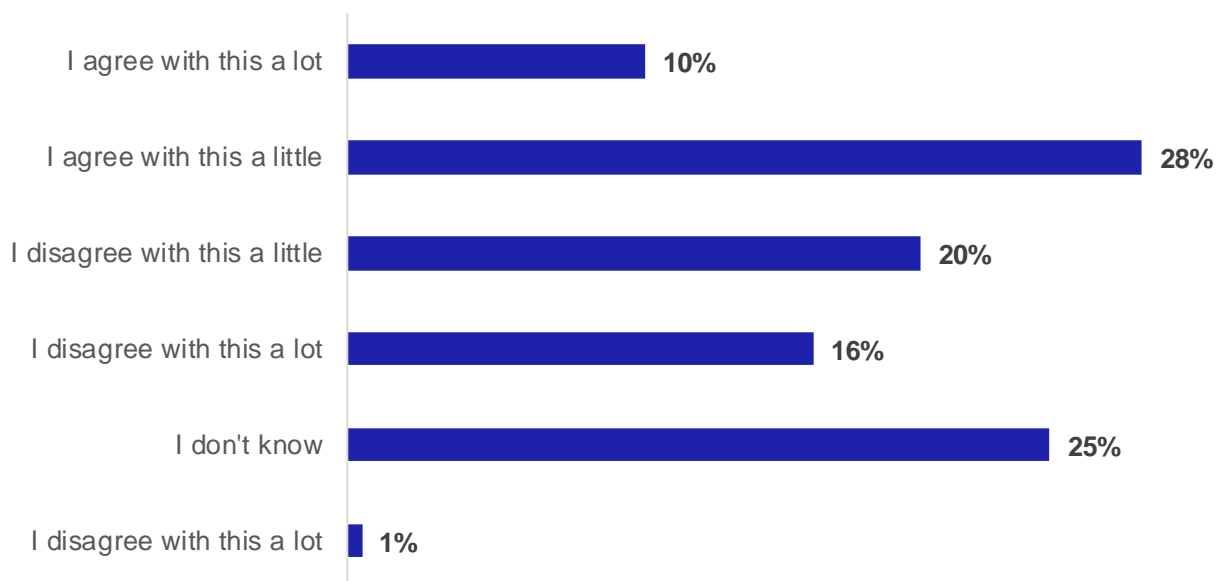
Additionally, more than 7 in 10 (71%) said that it had made them feel inspired to work hard at whatever they do.



Base of 402 children aged 10-18 who had watched at least some of the Olympics and/or Paralympic Games – weighted to represent GB

With more athletes speaking out about wellbeing at this summer's events, 38% of young people who watched the Games agreed it had made them think about their own mental health.

"Watching...has made me think about my mental health  
(ie. my emotional and social wellbeing)"



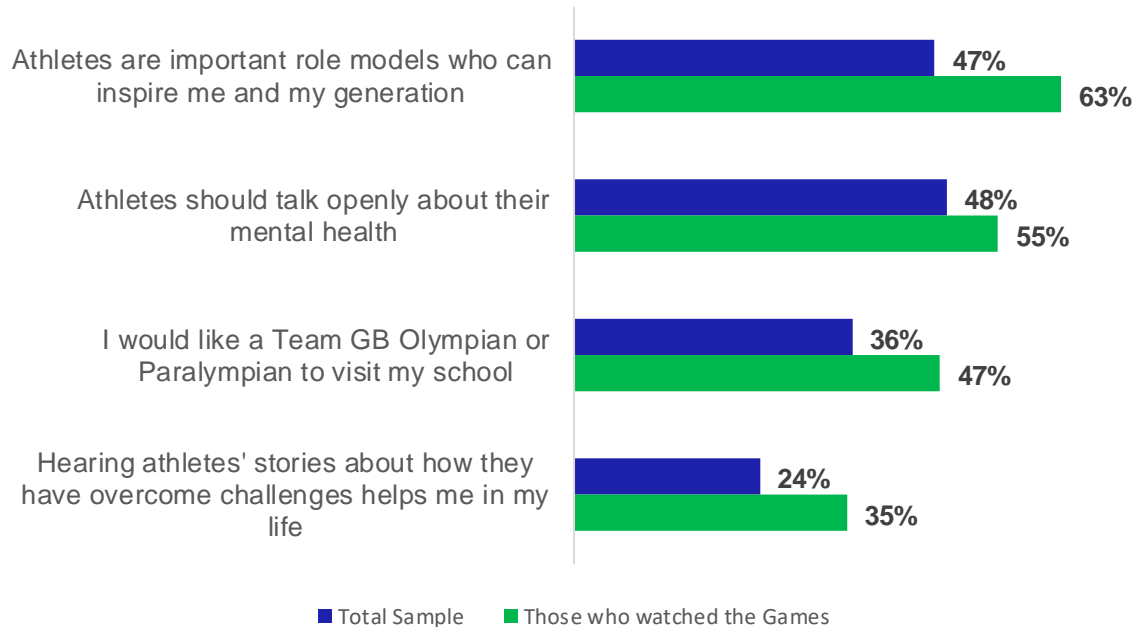
Base of 402 children aged 10-18 who had watched at least some of the Olympics and/or Paralympic Games – weighted to represent GB

Additionally, over half of those viewing the games (55%) felt that Athletes should talk openly about their mental health

### **Athletes are important role models who can inspire young people**

Irrespective of whether they had seen the games or not, our research found that 47% of all young people agree that athletes are important role models who can inspire them and their generation, over a third (36%) would like a Team GB Olympian or Paralympian to visit their school and around a quarter of young people (24%) say that hearing athletes' stories and how they have overcome challenges can help them in their lives.

## % agreeing



Those who watched the games: Base of 402 children aged 10-18 who had watched at least some of the Olympics and/or Paralympic Games – weighted to represent GB  
Total Sample: Base of 862 GB Children aged 10-18

## How Youth Sport Trust will be using this research:

Youth Sport Trust will be working with UK Sport, British Olympic Association and British Paralympic Association to seize on this opportunity and build a lasting legacy from the inspiration young people have felt this summer.

Having pioneered the concept of using athlete mentors as role models to inspire young people, YST will be supporting British Olympians and Paralympians to co-ordinate a programme of wellbeing-themed schools visits this term where they will talk to children about recovery, rebuilding confidence, aspirations, resilience and empathy. The stars will be supported by experienced YST Athlete Mentors to help bring their stories to life.

**ALI OLIVER MBE, CEO OF THE YOUTH SPORT TRUST, SAID:**

“The performances of Team GB and ParalympicsGB this summer in Tokyo were inspiring, uplifting, and reunited a nation after the challenges and restrictions of the last 18 months. The team thrilled us on the track, in the gymnasium and field of play, but also showed us what it means to be courageous, resilient, and aspirational. They reflected the diversity of our communities more than any other Games and gave children and young people a new set of heroes, heroines and role models.

“The inspiration young people felt from watching Team GB and ParalympicsGB this summer offers a golden opportunity. We are inviting athletes to join us on a mission to improve young people’s wellbeing and raise the profile of sport as a powerful tool in tackling many of the issues facing young people today such as anxiety, a lack of self-confidence and social isolation.”

## YST RESEARCH

The Youth Sport Trust (YST) is a national children's charity passionate about creating a future where every child enjoys the life-changing benefits that come from play and sport. YST Research offers research, analysis, insight and evaluation services to organisations with an interest in the wider children and young people's sector. Our research expertise is focussed on improving the wellbeing of children and young people through sport and physical activity.

Our specialisms include:

- Education, PE and school sport
- Community sport / clubs
- Early years settings
- Life skills and employability
- Activism and volunteering
- Health (physical, social and emotional)

For our latest research findings, visit <https://www.youthsporttrust.org/news-insight/research-papers>

By working with us, you are supporting us to achieve our mission to improve children's lives and their future.





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