

Written evidence submitted by the British Paralympic Association (BPA)

Executive Summary

1. The British Paralympic Association (BPA) is the National Paralympic Committee for Great Britain. It is the BPA's responsibility to select, prepare, enter, fund and manage the Great Britain and Northern Ireland team at each Paralympic Games. ParalympicsGB is the name of the team that compete at both Winter and Summer Paralympic Games.
2. The BPA is responsible for fostering the aims and ideals of the Paralympic movement throughout the United Kingdom in accordance with the principles and rules of the International Paralympic Committee.
3. The BPA's vision is "through sport, inspire a better world for disabled people". The BPA firmly believes that Paralympic athletes have the ability to inspire and to change perceptions of disability, thus having a tangible positive social impact.
4. The BPA commissioned ComRes to conduct qualitative and quantitative research with the British public immediately prior, during and post the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games.
5. The ComRes research demonstrates that watching the performances of the ParalympicsGB team is seen as inspirational and that the Paralympics can operate as a platform for disabled people to challenge perceptions of what is possible for disabled athletes. There is also emphasis on its role as a global sporting event and an opportunity for people of different backgrounds to come together. In fact, disabled and non-disabled adults are equally likely to say they find the Paralympic Games very inspirational (55% each). The Paralympics are also, according to the research, seen as a platform to enable disabled people to participate in sport, rather than perceived purely as a sporting spectacle.

Impact of the Paralympics on perceptions

6. The Games have an extremely broad appeal, permeating parts of the population generally less interested in sport, such as older Britons, women and disabled people - bar the Olympics, its appeal is broader than any other major sporting event.
7. There is evidence from the data collected that the Paralympic Games can be inspiring and particularly to younger adults between 18-34. This is because younger adults are more likely to associate Paralympic athletes with being great role models than older adults, potentially due to greater familiarity with the personalities who emerged through London 2012 and Rio 2016.
8. Additionally, Paralympic athletes are particularly likely to be associated with inspiring people with disabilities (55%), more so than inspiring people without disabilities (23%) or inspiring young people (21%).
9. Half of Britons (54%) report that the ParalympicsGB team's performance at Rio 2016 led to an increase in their national pride, the same proportion who say this of Team GB's Olympic performance.
10. Almost half of Britons (48%) say the best thing about Rio 2016 was that it showcased the amazing things that disabled people can do.
11. The qualitative research revealed a perceived inequality in how disabled people are supported by their countries. The number of ParalympicsGB athletes sent to the Games, and

their achievements are seen to illustrate Britain having a more progressive attitude towards disability in general.

12. Prior to the Rio 2016 Games, less than two thirds of British adults (63%) said they thought it was important that the Paralympic team performed well in Rio 2016 and scored highly in the medals table as it did in London 2012. After the Rio 2016 Games, the proportion saying this increased to seven in ten (70%). It may be that over the course of the Games, people became more aware of potential knock-on effects from the success of Paralympics GB. For example, at a national level, participants in the online community mentioned performance could influence factors such as future funding available to the team and the profile of disability in the UK. At a more personal level, a few respondents mentioned disabled friends/family trying out new sports or having heard of such effects via social and traditional media.
13. When thinking of the best thing about Rio 2016, a substantial proportion of British adults (48%) say that – of those tested - the best thing about Rio 2016 was that it showcased the amazing things disabled people can do. In contrast, just 8% mention that it provided enjoyable entertainment to watch, and 11% reference the performance of ParalympicsGB in the medals table. This suggests that the Paralympics is more likely to be seen to highlight disability, providing a platform for disabled people to participate in sport, rather than perceived purely as a sporting spectacle.
14. A strong majority of British adults say that the performance of the British team at the Paralympics does influence people's perceptions of disabled British people, with a slight increase in the proportion expressing this sentiment over the course of the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games (Pre-Paralympics: 66%, Post-Paralympics: 70%).

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