

# Social impact and legacy of major sporting events



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

APRIL 2023

The rationale that major sporting events create legacies such as city regeneration and economic growth has repeatedly been used to justify event bids. Whilst these types of legacies have been researched extensively, the benefits and interests of local communities and particularly those individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds (CIDBs) remain relatively understudied.

Analysis undertaken by the University of Birmingham highlights the imperative of devising an inclusive, sustainable, and transformative legacy model for major events, which catalyses the well-being of all individuals and revolutionises their impact on communities, in order to drive profound, positive change within communities.

### Background

In the summer of 2022, Birmingham hosted the 22nd Commonwealth Games, the largest multi-sport event to be held in England in 10 years, featuring thousands of athletes and over 1.5 million spectators. Home to more than 180 nationalities, Birmingham 2022 was promoted as a '*Games for everyone*', and like all major sporting events, significant levels of investment were spent with ambition to generate economic, social and environmental legacy for a city in which 90% of wards face greater deprivation than the national average.

Communities and individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds (CIDBs) refers to a group of people who are socially, culturally or financially disadvantaged in comparison to the majority of society. Through a systematic review and analysis of the academic literature as well as documents such as official bids and legacy and impact reports from major sporting events, it was found that major sporting events rarely benefit CIDBs. While CIDBs were often identified as a priority group who would benefit from the legacy of hosting these large sporting events, the desired positive legacies, whether set or measured, tended to be intangible.

### Key Findings

- Through pre and post-Games focus group inter-

views with CIDBs, they recognised that hosting the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham increased civic pride and improved city branding.

- However, to many CIDBs, the Games felt distant and appeared to them to be 'for the chosen few'. They also expressed their frustration at the lack of community engagement and the fact that their voices were largely unheard.
- Various barriers and challenges limited the involvement and participation of CIDBs in the Games such as not possessing the adequate IT skills to complete the online volunteering portal application or not being able to afford the cost of a ticket.
- CIDBs were not regarded as an integral part of the event-hosting cycle, nor were any resources ringfenced for this group to create opportunities for them to engage with the Games in a meaningful way.

### Recommendations

- Local communities, particularly those from disadvantaged areas, must be listened to and meaningfully involved in all decision-making relevant to major events throughout the process (including planning, bidding, delivery and legacy).
- Additional support in terms of resources should be provided to equip CIDBs with the skills and knowledge to enable them to participate and benefit from the opportunities created by hosting major sporting events such as volunteering roles and jobs.

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