

## Community support for winter olympics in Alt Urgell: the impact of sociodemographic and sport-related variables

### Análisis del apoyo comunitario a los juegos olímpicos de invierno en Alt Urgell: influencia de las variables sociodemográficas y deportivas

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**Abstract.** This study explores how sociodemographic and sport-related factors affect public support for a Winter Olympic bid in Alt Urgell, Catalonia, Spain, focusing on the role of direct democracy mechanisms, such as referendums, in shaping local opinions on hosting major sporting events. A mixed-methods approach was employed, including Computer-Assisted Web Interviews (CAWI), Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI), and face-to-face surveys. Data from a stratified sample of 416 residents aged 18 and older were analyzed using Pearson Chi-Square, Likelihood Ratio tests, Gamma, and Kendall's Tau-b to examine associations between sociodemographic factors, sports participation, and support for the bid. The analysis indicates that civil status significantly influences support for the bid, with people in relationships and with children showing greater enthusiasm. Higher sports participation and outdoor sports participation correlate with reduced interest in community involvement with the Olympics, while belief in regional involvement strongly predicts favorable attitudes. Other factors, such as age, gender, years of residency, and attendance at sports events, were not significant. This research enhances understanding of public engagement with major sporting events by highlighting the complex relationships between sociodemographic factors, sports involvement, and bid support. It emphasizes the need for policymakers to address environmental, economic, and social concerns to gain support.

**Keywords:** major sports Events, Winter Olympic bid, referendum, event impact.

**Resumen.** Este estudio explora cómo los factores sociodemográficos y los relacionados con el deporte afectan al apoyo público a una candidatura olímpica de invierno en el Alt Urgell, Cataluña, España, centrándose en el papel de los mecanismos de democracia directa, como los referendums participativos, en la formación de opiniones locales sobre la organización de grandes eventos deportivos. Se empleó un método mixto que incluía entrevistas web asistidas por ordenador (CAWI), entrevistas telefónicas asistidas por ordenador (CATI) y encuestas personales. Los datos de una muestra estratificada de 416 residentes mayores de 18 años se analizaron mediante Chi-cuadrado de Pearson, pruebas de razón de verosimilitud, Gamma y Tau-b de Kendall para examinar las asociaciones entre factores sociodemográficos, participación deportiva y apoyo a la candidatura. El análisis indica que el estado civil influye significativamente en el apoyo a la candidatura, mostrando mayor entusiasmo las personas con pareja e hijos. Una mayor participación deportiva y la práctica de deportes al aire libre se correlacionan con un menor interés en la participación de la comunidad en los Juegos Olímpicos, mientras que la creencia en la participación regional predice fuertemente las actitudes favorables. Otros factores, como la edad, el sexo, los años de residencia y la asistencia a acontecimientos deportivos no resultaron significativos. Esta investigación mejora la comprensión del compromiso público con los grandes acontecimientos deportivos al poner de relieve las complejas relaciones entre los factores sociodemográficos, la participación en los deportes y el apoyo a las candidaturas. Subraya la necesidad de que los responsables políticos aborden las preocupaciones medioambientales, económicas y sociales para obtener apoyo.

**Palabras clave:** grandes eventos deportivos, Candidatura olímpica de invierno, referéndum, impacto del evento.

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## Introduction

The present article examines the potential relationship between sociodemographic variables of the population of Alt Urgell and their opinions on the organization of a major sporting event and the participation of their territory in it.

Direct democracy mechanisms, such as referendums, can be (if properly designed) important means to bring ordinary citizens into processes of constitution-making, educate the general public on fundamental questions, promote ownership of rights traditions and so on (Chambers, 2018). Critics argue that referendum outcomes may not represent the preferences of the population. The Code of Good Practice on Referendums (2022) proposed by the Venice Commission states a list of principles that every referendum must endorse. In recent years, the

use of referendums as a tool for direct citizen participation has gained significant traction worldwide (Butler & Ranney, 1994; Setälä, 1999). According to (LeDuc, 2015; Qvortrup, 2005) this trend reflects a broader movement towards enhancing democratic engagement by involving citizens directly in decision-making processes on critical issues. The increasing prevalence of referendums underscores their importance in legitimizing government decisions and fostering public trust (Altman, 2010; Setälä, 2011). Studies have shown that the use of referendums has expanded across various regions, with notable increases in Europe (Silagadze & Gherghina, 2018) and North America (Topaloff, 2017). For instance, a comprehensive analysis by Qvortrup (2005) highlighted the surge in referendums from the late 20th century to the early 21st century, marking a shift towards more participatory forms of

governance (Hobolt, 2006). Additionally, research indicates that referendums can bridge the gap between the electorate and policymakers, ensuring that the voices of citizens are heard and considered in significant policy decisions (Bowler & Donovan, 2019). Font & Navarro (2013) consider that referendums are also seen as a mechanism to address the democratic deficit, providing a direct line of communication between the public and their representatives.

Referendums on sport events, particularly those with high stakes such as the Olympic Games, have become a focal point of this trend (Elisabeth et al., 2022). The timeline of referendums concerning sport events reveals an evolving landscape of public opinion and civic engagement.

These instances highlight a critical shift where communities are increasingly weighing the benefits and drawbacks of hosting international sporting events, demanding greater transparency and accountability through the referendum process (McGillivray et al., 2019; Nunkoo et al., 2018). Research suggests that referendums on sport events can serve as a barometer for public sentiment, providing insights into community priorities and concerns. Attitudes towards mega-events have also been studied by Styliadis (2016) who identified a number of predictors that influence residents' perceptions of impacts and their support.

At this moment, projects to host the Olympic Winter Games have been subject to local referendums on at least 31 occasions, many more than for the summer Olympics. More than half of these referendums (18) have produced negative results (Chappelet, 2021). Public referenda on hosting the Olympic Games have frequently resulted in negative outcomes, reflecting growing public opposition to these mega-events. A study by Chappelet (2021) found that more than half of all referendums concerning the Winter Olympics ended unfavorably, leading to changes in the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) host city selection process. Streicher et al., (2019) analyzed factors influencing voter turnout in such referendums and concluded that voter turnout decisions could distort the outcomes, leading to a misrepresentation of minority opinions. Similarly, Könecke et al., (2016) highlighted how concerns over event legacies and the damaged brand image of international sports organizations were pivotal in the Munich referendum's negative vote against hosting the 2022 Winter Olympics. Additionally, Preuss et al., (2020) explored the failed bid to host the 2018 Winter Games in Munich, finding that changing public attitudes and perceptions of the event's benefits contributed to the bid's rejection. Castilho & Dias (2023) conducted a geopolitical analysis and revealed that the increased use of referendums in the Olympic bidding process has significantly altered the landscape of host city selection, leading to the withdrawal of several bids throughout the selection process. The results of Olympic referendums have significantly influenced the bidding decisions of candi-

date cities. Chappelet (2021) found that the increasing frequency of negative referendum results has prompted the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to alter its host city selection procedures, demonstrating the impact of public opinion on the bidding process. Hiller, (2021) highlighted the case of Calgary's 2026 Olympic bid, where emotions such as fear and confusion among local residents led to a plebiscite vote against the bid, further underscoring the significant influence of local referendums on Olympic bids.

Johnston et al., (2021) suggest that referendums to host a sports event can favor community support for the event, certain outcomes such as attitudes toward event hosting, quality of life and resident support.

Although consulting the local population is increasingly common (Chappelet, 2021), there are still bidding processes to host major events that do not consult the affected population (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006). We have to take into consideration the inclusion of the whole community in sporting events, as Gamonales et al., (2022) points out. Thus, the consultative mechanisms also respond to the important challenge of involving all stakeholders in the decision-making process.

The analysis of the impact of events is often studied from the perspective of Social Exchange Theory (Huang et al., 2016). Social Exchange Theory explains social behavior in terms of the costs and benefits of interactions, where individuals seek to maximize rewards and minimize costs (Blau, 2017; Homans, 1958). In the context of event hosting, residents' support is influenced by their perception of the benefits versus the drawbacks of the event (Ap, 1992). This theory aims to help understand community reactions to hosting major events like the Olympics, where perceived economic and social benefits must outweigh the costs (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006).

Keskin et al., (2024) point out that there is a need for more and broader scientific publications related to the economic impact of sport events. In other circumstances, some authors such as Cabanilla et al., (2021) point to the validation by residents to perform sporting events.

The Winter Olympic Games have multifaceted impacts on host regions. Economically, they provide short-term boosts but do not guarantee long-term benefits (Kim et al., 2021; Wood & Meng, 2020). Socially, they can enhance community development (Deccio & Baloğlu, 2002) and cultural exchange, though public support varies (Kim et al., 2021). Environmentally, the games present significant challenges, including the need for extensive technical services and infrastructure, which can lead to ecological degradation (Cerezo-Esteve et al., 2022; Popelářová & Janiga, 2012). Climate change remains a critical threat to the future viability of the Winter Olympics.

The difference between the actual impact that an event causes versus the perceived impact by society is relevant (Cerezo-Esteve et al., 2022; Fredline, 2004).

### Study design and methodology

The quantitative information collection instrument consists of three sections: 1) Sociodemographic data, which allow us to categorize the sample. 2) A validated survey of sports habits in Spain (CSD, 2022) and 3) Queries planned for the referendum on the Winter Olympic Games Barcelona-Pyrenees (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2022).

The sociodemographic variables proposed by the National Institute of Statistics were used. In consideration of the sports habits survey (CSD, 2022), chapters 1,3,4,5 and 6 are included. The referendum (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2022) addressed two questions, firstly whether “Does the Government have to apply for the Winter Olympics and Paralympics?” and secondly “Do your region have to be involved in the project linked to the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games of 2030?”

The included subjects voluntarily agreed to participate in this study without any compensation. The data collection method was mixed, combining CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing), CATI (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing), and face-to-face interviews. This method approach helps to ensure comprehensive data collection and mitigate biases associated with any single method (Couper, 2017). Ethical protocols were adhered to, and consent was obtained from the Clinical Research Ethics Committee of the

Sports Administration of Catalonia (017/CEICGC/2022). The procedure was probabilistic and stratified by age ranges.

A total of 416 participants residing in the Alt Urgell region were included, of whom 212 are male and 204 are female, with ages ranging from 18 to 83 years (M<sub>age</sub> = 43, SD = 16.6). The study was conducted with a 95% confidence level and a 4.8% margin of error. Table 1 presents the data related to age group, gender, and sample frequency. The inclusion criteria were residency in the Alt Urgell region and being 18 years or older.

Table 1. Sample Frequencies by Age and Gender

	Total (n=416)	Male (n=212)	Female (n=204)
15 to 24 years	73	40	33
25 to 34 years	71	36	35
34 to 44 years	69	38	31
45 to 55 years	84	47	37
More than 55 years	119	51	68

### Results and Data analysis

The distribution of responses for the primary variable, along with selected sociodemographic and sport-related variables, is summarized in Table 2. This summary includes both the frequency of responses and their percentage distribution, categorized as No, Yes, or No/NA.

Table 2. Responses for the main variable with frequencies and percent

Categories	Variable	No	Yes	NO/NA	Freq. (%)
Gender	Male	61.8%	29.9%	8.3%	204 (49%)
	Female	52.4%	35.8%	11.8%	212 (51%)
Age group	From 15 to 24 years	54.8%	23.3%	21.9%	73 (17.5%)
	From 25 to 34 years	60.6%	28.2%	11.3%	71 (17.1%)
	From 35 to 44 years	62.3%	29.0%	8.7%	69 (16.6%)
	From 45 to 55 years	59.5%	36.9%	3.6%	84 (20.2%)
	More than 55 years	51.3%	41.2%	7.6%	119 (28.6%)
Civil status	Married or in a relationship with at least one child aged 18 or older living at home.	62.1%	37.9%		29 (7%)
	Married or in a relationship with at least one child under 18.	59.6%	38.6%	1.8%	57 (13.7%)
	Married or in a relationship with children aged 18 or older who do not live at home.	48.8%	41.5%	9.8%	82 (19.7%)
	Married or in a relationship without children.	54.0%	25.4%	20.6%	63 (15.1%)
	Single and independent, divorced, separated, or widowed without children (includes shared accommodation).	61.9%	31.7%	6.3%	126 (30.3%)
	Single without children living at parents' home.	54.8%	19.0%	26.2%	42 (10.1%)
	Single, divorced, separated, or widowed with dependent children.	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	4 (1%)
Years of residency	Others	69.2%	30.8%		13 (3.1%)
	Less than one year	52.4%	33.3%	14.3%	42 (10.1%)
	Between 1 and 3 years	60.5%	18.6%	20.9%	43 (10.3%)
	Between 4 and 6 years	60.0%	35.0%	5.0%	20 (4.8%)
	Between 7 and 9 years	76.5%	11.8%	11.8%	17 (4.1%)
	Between 10 and 15 years	42.9%	52.4%	4.8%	21 (5%)
Sport practice	16 years or more	56.8%	34.8%	8.4%	273 (65.6%)
	Never	81.3%	14.6%	4.2%	48 (11.5%)
	Rarely	65.1%	31.7%	3.2%	63 (15.1%)
	Sometimes	51.4%	40.5%	8.1%	111 (26.7%)
	Frequently	50.0%	37.2%	12.8%	86 (20.7%)
	Very Frequently	52.8%	30.6%	16.7%	108 (26%)

Sport Event Attendance	Never	62.6%	29.2%	8.2%	171 (41.1%)
	Rarely	56.1%	37.8%	6.1%	82 (19.7%)
	Sometimes	47.5%	40.0%	12.5%	80 (19.2%)
	Frequently	60.7%	26.8%	12.5%	56 (13.5%)
	Very Frequently	44.4%	33.3%	22.2%	27 (6.5%)
Federative sport license	No	57.1%	34.6%	8.3%	324 (77.9%)
	Yes	56.5%	27.2%	16.3%	92 (22.1%)
Outdoor Sports	No	56.4%	38.5%	5.1%	234 (56.3%)
	Yes	57.7%	25.8%	16.5%	182 (43.8%)
Winter Sports (ski, snow...)	Never	56.6%	36.3%	7.1%	281 (67.5%)
	Annually	51.1%	28.9%	20.0%	45 (10.8%)
	Monthly	64.7%	23.5%	11.8%	34 (8.2%)
	Weekly	58.9%	25.0%	16.1%	56 (13.5%)
Mountaineering, hiking or climbing	Never	57.8%	33.9%	8.3%	277 (66.6%)
	Annually	38.5%	38.5%	23.1%	13 (3.1%)
	Monthly	50.0%	33.9%	16.1%	56 (13.5%)
	Weekly	62.9%	27.1%	10.0%	70 (16.8%)
Winter Sport Events attendance	No	56.7%	33.7%	9.6%	374 (89.9%)
	Yes	59.5%	26.2%	14.3%	42 (10.1%)
Do you think that your region should be involved in the project linked to the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games?	No	89.2%	10.0%	0.8%	240 (57.7%)
	NO/NA	7.5%	2.5%	90.0%	40 (9.6%)
	Yes	14.7%	82.4%	2.9%	136 (32.7%)

In order to investigate the relationship between various sociodemographic variables and support for the Winter Olympic bid, a series of Chi-square tests and Goodman and Kruskal's Gamma, Kendall's Tau-b tests were conducted. Specifically, Chi-square tests were applied to analyze the variables of Gender, Personal Situation, Federative Sports License, Outdoor Sports Practice, and Attendance at Winter Sports Events.

Goodman and Kruskal's Gamma and Kendall's Tau-b tests were employed for the variables of Duration of Residence, Sport Practice, Attendance at Sporting Events, Frequency of

Winter Sports Activities, Frequency of Mountaineering, Hiking, and Climbing Activities, Age Group, and Belief in Regional Involvement.

The objective was to test the following hypotheses: the Null Hypothesis (H0) posits that there is no association between the sociodemographic variable and support for the Olympic bid, while the Alternative Hypothesis (H1) suggests that there is an association between the sociodemographic variable and support for the Olympic bid.

The results shown in table 3 indicated that one sociodemographic variable, civil status, showed a significant association with support for the Winter Olympic bid ( $p = .001$ ).

Table 3. Associations between Winter Olympic bid support and sociodemographic variables.

Variable	Pearson Chi-Square (Value, df, p-value)	Likelihood Ratio (Value, df, p-value)	Gamma (Value, p-value)	Kendall's Tau-b (Value, p-value)
Gender	3.963, 2, .138	3.975, 2, .137	-	-
Civil status	37.979, 14, .001	39.878, 14, .000	-	-
Years of residency	-	-	-.032, .691	-.018, .691
Sports practice	-	-	.150, .015	.099, .015
Sport Events attendance	-	-	.098, .131	.063, .131
Federative Sports License	5.703, 2, .058	5.265, 2, .072	-	-
Outdoor Sports	18.069, 2, < .001	18.262, 2, < .001	-	-
Winter Sports (ski, snow...)	-	-	-.094, .226	-.051, .226
Mountaineering, hiking or climbing	-	-	-.067, .412	-.036, .412
Winter Sport Events attendance	1.510, 2, .470	1.471, 2, .479	-	-
Age group	-	-	.105, .091	.070, .091
Do you think that your region should be involved in the project linked to the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games?	-	-	0.884, 0.000	0.731, 0.000

Sports practice (Gamma = .150,  $p = .015$ ; Tau-b = .099,  $p = .015$ ) showed a weak but statistically significant positive association with support for the Winter Olympic bid. Although the association is not strong, it is positive. Additionally, outdoor sports practice was significantly associated with support ( $p < .001$ ). The belief that the region should be involved in the project demonstrated a strong positive association with support for the Olympic bid (Gamma = .884,  $p < .001$ ; Tau-b = .731,  $p < .001$ ).

Several sociodemographic variables did not show a significant association with support for the Winter Olympic bid. Specifically, gender identity ( $p = .138$ ), years of residence (Gamma = -.032,  $p = .691$ ; Tau-b = -.018,  $p = .691$ ), and age group (Gamma = .105,  $p = .091$ ; Tau-b = .070,  $p = .091$ ) were not significantly associated with support.

The following sport-related variables as attendance at

sporting events (Gamma = .098,  $p = .131$ ; Tau-b = .063,  $p = .131$ ), and holding a federative sports license ( $p = .058$ ,  $p = .058$ ) were not significantly associated with support. Similarly, the frequency of winter sports activities (Gamma = -.094,  $p = .226$ ; Tau-b = -.051,  $p = .226$ ), the frequency of mountaineering, hiking, and climbing activities (Gamma = -.067,  $p = .412$ ; Tau-b = -.036,  $p = .412$ ), and

attendance at winter sports events ( $p = 0.470$ ) also showed no significant associations.

Finally, the variable related to regional involvement in the potential games showed significant associations ( $\Gamma =$

$0.884, p < .001$ ;  $\tau\text{-}b = .731, p < .001$ ).

Table 4 summarizes the results only considering the variables who had shown significances.

Table 4.  
Responses for the variable shown significance with frequencies and percent

Categories	Variable	No	Yes	NO/NA	Freq. (%)
Civil status	Married or in a relationship with at least one child aged 18 or older living at home.	62.1%	37.9%		29 (7%)
	Married or in a relationship with at least one child under 18.	59.6%	38.6%	1.8%	57 (13.7%)
	Married or in a relationship with children aged 18 or older who do not live at home.	48.8%	41.5%	9.8%	82 (19.7%)
	Married or in a relationship without children.	54.0%	25.4%	20.6%	63 (15.1%)
	Single and independent, divorced, separated, or widowed without children (includes shared accommodation).	61.9%	31.7%	6.3%	126 (30.3%)
	Single without children living at parents' home.	54.8%	19.0%	26.2%	42 (10.1%)
	Single, divorced, separated, or widowed with dependent children.	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	4 (1%)
Sport practice	Others	69.2%	30.8%		13 (3.1%)
	Never	81.3%	14.6%	4.2%	48 (11.5%)
	Rarely	65.1%	31.7%	3.2%	63 (15.1%)
	Sometimes	51.4%	40.5%	8.1%	111 (26.7%)
	Frequently	50.0%	37.2%	12.8%	86 (20.7%)
Outdoor Sports	Very Frequently	52.8%	30.6%	16.7%	108 (26%)
	No	56.4%	38.5%	5.1%	234 (56.3%)
Do you think that your region should be involved in the project linked to the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games?	Yes	57.7%	25.8%	16.5%	182 (43.8%)
	No	89.2%	10.0%	0.8%	240 (57.7%)
	NO/NA	7.5%	2.5%	90.0%	40 (9.6%)
	Yes	14.7%	82.4%	2.9%	136 (32.7%)

## Discussion

Valuable insights into the public's stance on the Winter Olympic bid in the Alt Urgell region were gained, revealing that sociodemographic characteristics and individual interests significantly influence levels of support. The diverse range of opinions and notable opposition underscore the complexity of public attitudes towards such large-scale events.

The main result of this study indicates that 32.7% of the population supports the bid, 57.7% opposes it, and 9.6% are undecided. This shows that a substantial portion of the population is against participating in the Olympics.

### Sociodemographic Influences

The findings of this study highlight a significant association between a sociodemographic variable and support for the Winter Olympic bid in the Alt Urgell region. Specifically, civil status is significantly associated with support for the bid, with participants who have children or dependents showing more support. These findings align with previous research indicating that married participants with children, particularly those living at home, may be more cautious about supporting large-scale events due to concerns about potential disruptions and impacts on family life, as noted by Ouyang et al., (2017). All other sociodemographic variables did not show a significant association with support for the

Winter Olympic bid. Although we did not find an association between age and attitudes toward the event, previous research has indicated that older participants tend to have a more positive perception of such events (Chi et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2013; Vegara-Ferri et al., 2020).

No significant association was found between gender and support for the bid; however, the literature has identified differences in support based on gender. (Ma et al., 2013; Ma & Rotherham, 2016).

The number of years residents have lived in the area did not significantly affect their support for the Olympic bid. However, perceived quality of life (QOL) plays a significant role in influencing residents' support for such events, with its importance increasing over time (Ouyang et al., 2019).

### Influence of Sport-Related Variables

It has been demonstrated that there is an association between the level of sports practice and opinions about hosting the event. Specifically, as the frequency of sports practice increases, the percentage of people interested in their community being involved in the Olympics decreases slightly.

Participation in outdoor sports is significantly associated with not supporting the Olympic bid; a higher number of individuals are not interested in having their community involved in the Olympics, regardless of their involvement in outdoor sports. These findings suggest that the general trend of skepticism toward Olympic involvement also includes

those who actively participate in outdoor sports. The findings contrast with earlier studies that highlighted greater support among outdoor enthusiasts (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002; Wilson et al., 2009). Additionally, the strong correlation between regional pride and support for the Winter Olympic bid (Liu et al., 2017) underscores that a sense of local engagement remains a crucial factor in shaping attitudes toward major events. Although these studies were conducted several years ago, contemporary research may provide further insights into how attitudes have evolved in the current context.

Our analysis has found that the variables of Federative Sports License, participation in Winter Sports, Mountaineering, Hiking or Climbing, and attendance at Winter Sport Events do not exhibit significant associations with the research question. The participation in winter sports activities was not significantly associated with support for the Olympic bid (De Nooij, 2014) in other studies. This lack of significance suggests that these factors alone are insufficient to explain variations in support or opposition to the Olympic bid.

### ***Implications for Policy and Further Research***

The opposition to hosting mega sport events is multifaceted and it likely influenced by concerns over environmental impacts (Cerezo-Esteve et al., 2022; Deccio & Baloglu, 2002; Giulianotti et al., 2015; Schnitzer et al., 2021), economic costs (Dowse & Fletcher, 2018; Hayduk, 2019; Jie, 2012; Ouyang et al., 2019), potential disruptions to local communities (Giulianotti et al., 2015; Horne, 2018; Lauermann, 2019), lack of local benefits (Giulianotti et al., 2015; Jie, 2012) and ethical concerns (Dowse & Fletcher, 2018).

There is skepticism towards the promises of long-term benefits and legacy, leading to political opposition and protest movements (Lauermann, 2019).

The higher the perceived costs and lower the perceived benefits of hosting the Olympics, the stronger the opposition tends to be (Gauthier, 2011; Mitchell & Stewart, 2015). This is corroborated by the findings of Nooij (2014) and Wilson et al. (2009), who highlight the economic and political complexities of bidding for major sporting events. Support from local residents has been identified as one of the most critical determinants of successful tourism development (Gursoy et al., 2010; Sharma et al., 2008).

The multifaceted opinions on hosting mega sports events underscores the need for comprehensive policy measures that address environmental, economic, social, and ethical concerns. Policymakers must carefully evaluate the long-term impacts (Dionísio et al., 2021; Martínez et al., 2021; McCartney et al., 2010; Perić, 2018; Solberg & Preuss, 2007; Tomino et al., 2020) and ensure that the benefits of hosting such events are equitably distributed and aligned with local community interests.

Effective communication and transparent planning (Jilka, 2019; Nunkoo et al., 2018; Walzel & Eickhoff, 2023) can

help mitigate skepticism and build public support. Future research should investigate how various aspects of public perception and specific concerns about these events interact to shape attitudes. Investigating strategies for enhancing local benefits and reducing perceived costs could provide valuable insights for future bid processes and contribute to more sustainable and widely accepted mega sporting events. Additional investigation should explore the underlying reasons for opposition and develop strategies to address these concerns, aiming to achieve a more balanced public perspective.

### **Conclusions**

The analysis of public opinion regarding the Winter Olympic bid for the Alt Urgell region reveals significant opposition, with 57.7% of participants opposing the bid, 32.7% supporting it, and 9.6% remaining undecided. This distribution underscores substantial skepticism and concern about the potential impacts of hosting the games.

The study identifies key sociodemographic factors influencing support levels. Participants with children or dependents are more supportive of the bid, suggesting that perceived family-related benefits play a role in shaping favorable opinions. In contrast, opposition is higher among older residents, those who are married or in relationships, and individuals who do not engage in outdoor sports. These factors highlight the importance of demographic characteristics and personal interests in shaping public sentiment.

Sport-related factors also show a correlation with support levels. Those who regularly participate in outdoor sports tend to support the bid more, indicating that personal engagement in sports may enhance positive perceptions of the event. However, attendance at sporting events or participation in winter sports does not significantly impact support levels, suggesting that these factors alone do not determine public opinion.

These findings emphasize the need for a nuanced approach to addressing public concerns and increasing support. Consulting the population through mechanisms such as referendums or community consultations is crucial for ensuring that residents' voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes. Engaging the community directly can help address their concerns, provide transparent information, and foster a sense of involvement in the planning and evaluation of major projects.

Future research should delve deeper into the underlying reasons for strong opposition and investigate strategies to address concerns and increase support. A thorough understanding of community perspectives, combined with inclusive consultation practices, will be essential for managing public opinion and securing broad-based support for hosting significant events. The cross-sectional nature of the study precludes examining changes in attitudes over time. Further investigations

should address these limitations by incorporating longitudinal data and broader, more diverse samples. Investigating the impact of specific local concerns and refining communication strategies can enhance understanding and support for mega sports events.

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