

# Tokyo 2020: Pandemic Games

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The 2020 Olympic Games are scheduled to be held between 23 July to 8 August in Tokyo, Japan. The Games were intended to be held in 2020, as their name suggests, but were delayed by a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Eight years in the IOC's (International Olympic Committee) 2013 session in Buenos Aires, Turkey, Japan, and Spain fought to host the event. However, Istanbul lost to Tokyo in the last round of voting. Today, the 2020 Olympics are seen as a big, expensive waste that's already proven more harmful than beneficial for Japan and the rest of the world before the games began. Why did such a drastic change of opinion happen? We can list many factors such as the treatment Sha'Carri Richardson received over her anti-doping test, Olympic bans against (primarily Black) female athletes over their testosterone levels, Japan's inability to vaccinate its population and contain the COVID outbreak in its borders, the Games' multi-billion dollar budget and we are going to go over some of these and see why Tokyo 2020 is about to become one of the most controversial Olympics events in recent history.

The first issue to address is the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic increased uncertainty regarding how the Games would proceed as it spread like wildfire around the globe last year. Not wanting to dump all the preparation already done, the organizers decided to postpone the Games to the summer of 2021 while keeping the official name of the Games as Tokyo 2020 for marketing purposes. The uncertainty didn't subside when 2021 came around since Japan only managed to vaccinate less than 12% of its population against COVID<sup>1</sup> while athletes and fans were planning to travel from various countries with various COVID risks. With this in mind, the Japanese Government announced they wouldn't be letting non-Japanese fans in venues. This was a significant blow to the stakeholders of the Games as the financial success of events like these depends on how many foreign travelers visit the host country and increase tourism income.

Further devastation followed as a state of emergency for Tokyo was announced for the duration of the Games, meaning no spectators would be allowed for most venues. As it becomes apparent only athletes and officials will be involved with the Games this year, the Japanese people doubt the expenses made with no return. Is hosting the Olympics in the middle of a pandemic with no spectators still worth it?

The questions about the extravagant nature of hosting the Olympics can be applied to other Games too. There's a growing movement called #NOlympics in Los Angeles, the 2028 host, which argues that hosting the Olympics costs too much, harms residents by forcing them out of their homes to make space for flashy buildings that won't be used after the Olympics, and doesn't provide the economic and social improvements promised to a city as the events end up becoming white elephants. A similar movement in Japan also exists and has called to cancel the Games to stop the COVID risk that will result from mingling around 11,000 athletes from 206 nations.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations?country=OWID\\_WRL](https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations?country=OWID_WRL)

Some alternatives proposed to having to pick a new city every four years that has only seven years to prepare is to have several permanent host cities spread around the world that will rotate every Olympics, to have Greece be a permanent host (at least for the summer games) as the Olympics originated from that country or not have the Games at all. While we don't know what lies ahead for the Olympics, it's not a secret that the IOC's already struggling to find host cities as several of the bids for the 2022 winter games were withdrawn due to a lack of public support and the 2024 and 2028 events had to be awarded to Paris and Los Angeles at the same time way ahead of the normally expected date for the 2028 games' selection.