

# THE SOCIETAL IMPACT OF ELITE SPORT IN FLANDERS



Conducted by the SPLISS research group at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel  
On behalf of Sport Vlaanderen  
De Bosscher, V., Descheemaeker, K., Van Roey, A., De Rycke, J., Derom, I.

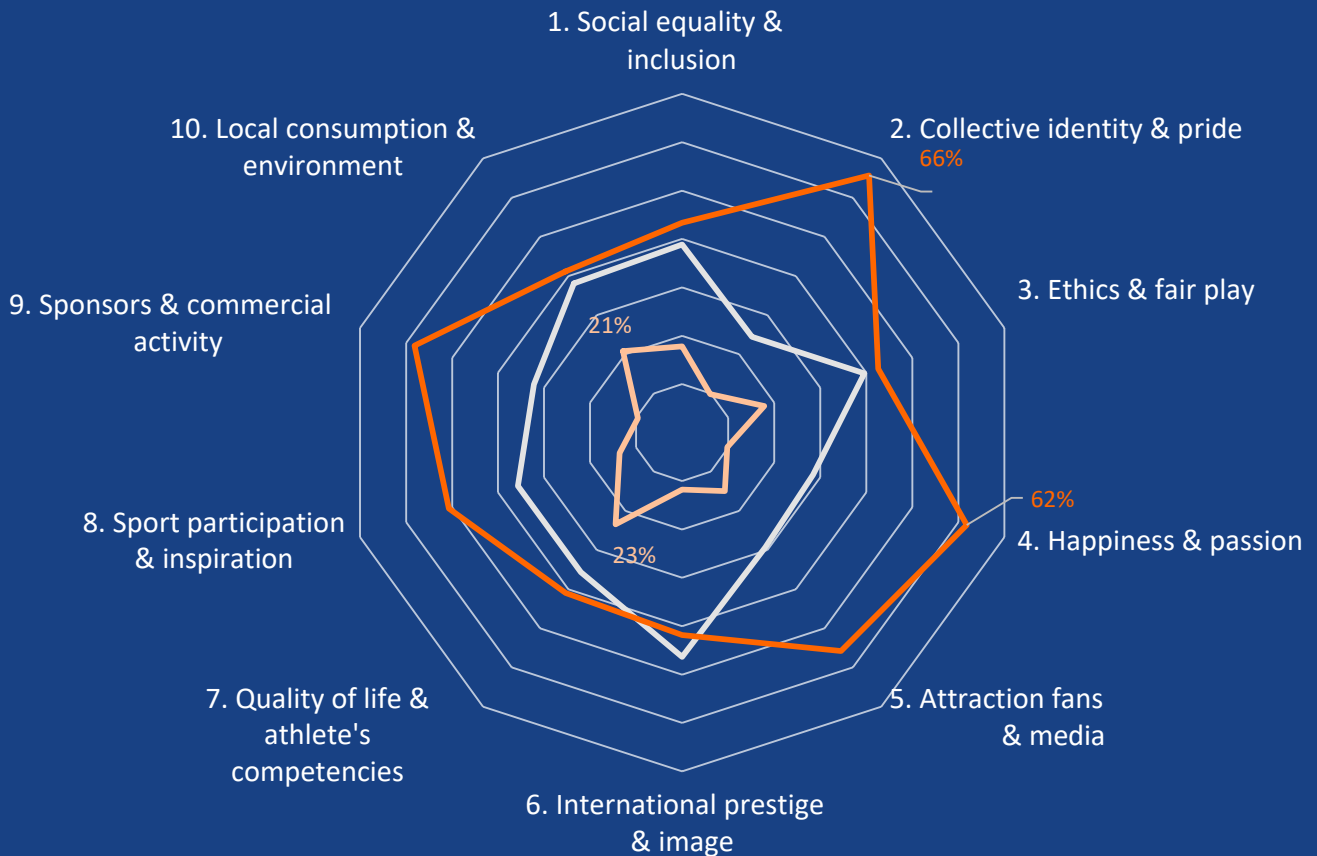
This project, commissioned by Sport Vlaanderen, aimed to evaluate **the societal value of elite sports** according to the Flemish population. There is a growing need to justify a country's investment in elite sports. The population, through taxes, is the main sponsor of elite sports. Therefore, it is of policy interest to gain insight into how the population perceives the potential societal impact of elite sports. Furthermore, this project aims to encourage federations and other stakeholders to use elite sports as a tool for sport promotion, for example.

The project includes several large measurements (**orange arrows**), with the Olympic Games in between. The monthly omnibuses (**blue arrows**) are short and targeted samples to map and monitor evolutions in detail. All measurements are carried out among 1000 inhabitants of Flanders.



# MESSI

— Negative impact    — Neutral    — Positive impact



The MESSI scale shows the perception of the Flemish people on the societal impact of elite sports. Respondents can, per item, assign a negative or positive value to elite sports. Afterwards the results are clustered in ten dimensions that show possible impact of elite sport.

More than 60% of Flemish people think that elite sports have a **positive impact** on following dimensions:

- **Collective identity & pride** (dimension 2)
- **Happiness & passion** (dimension 4)

The highest **negative perceptions** are seen in following dimension:

- **Quality of life & athlete's competencies** (dimension 7) (23%)
- **Local consumption & environment** (dimension 10) (21%)

## DIMENSION 1. SOCIAL EQUALITY & INCLUSION

I believe that elite sports ..... the gap between rich and poor people.



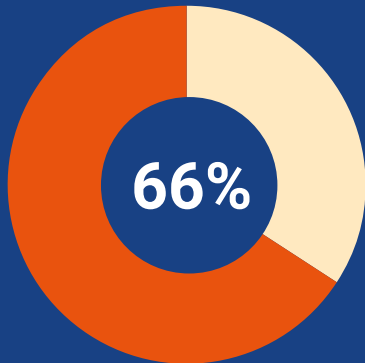
I believe that elite sports ..... the inclusion of people with disabilities.



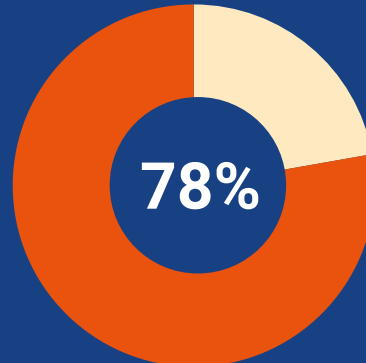
I believe that elite sports ..... people of different religions, cultures and origins .....



## DIMENSION 2. COLLECTIVE IDENTITY & PRIDE



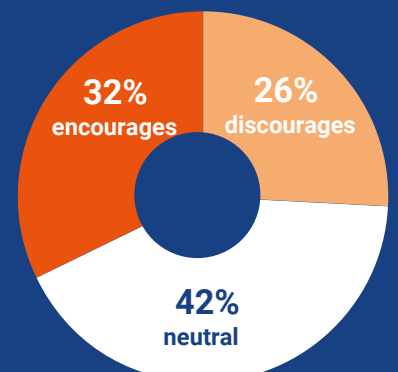
66% of the Flemish people are proud of the achievements of Belgian **Olympic athletes** (n = 20 000).



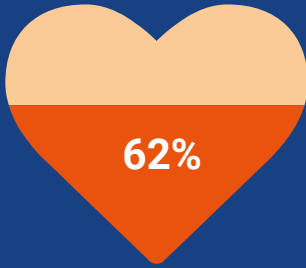
78% of the Flemish people are proud of the achievements of the Belgian **Paralympic athletes** (n = 5 000).

## DIMENSION 3. ETHICS & FAIR PLAY

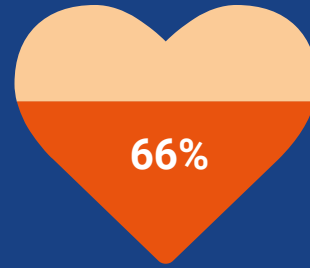
I believe that elite sports encourages/discourages the amateur use of performance-enhancing drugs.



## DIMENSION 4. HAPPINESS & PASSION



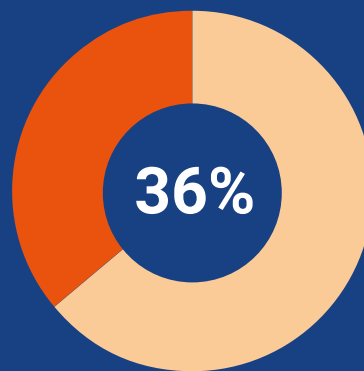
indicate that the performances of our athletes make them happy (n = 20 000).



indicate that the performances of our Paralympic athletes make them happy (n = 9 000).

## DIMENSION 5. ATTRACTION FANS & MEDIA

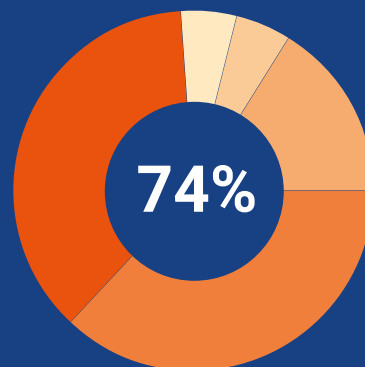
More than one in three consider themselves a fan/supporter of Team Belgium.



■ Fan of Team Belgium

## DIMENSION 6. INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE & IMAGE

The past month our athletes provided us with positive exposure in Belgium and abroad (n = 20 000).



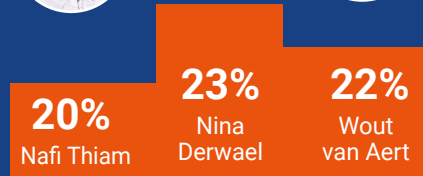
■ Completely disagree ■ Somewhat disagree  
■ Agree/disagree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Completely agree

## DIMENSION 7. QUALITY OF LIFE & ATHLETE'S COMPETENCIES



of the Flemish people think that our Olympic athletes are rolemodels for the youth.

The three most favourite athletes are:



## DIMENSION 8. SPORT PARTICIPATION & INSPIRATION

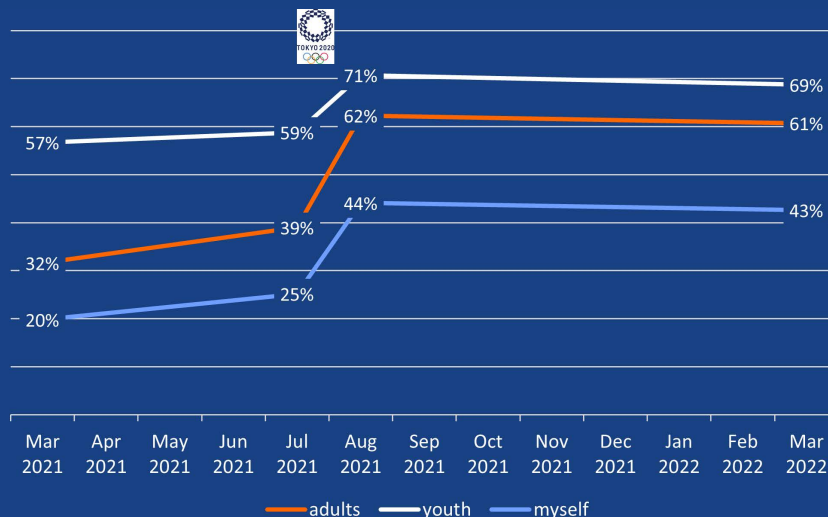


56% of the Flemish people play sports at least 1 time per week (n = 5000).



30% of the Flemish people indicate not having played sports the past year (n = 5000).

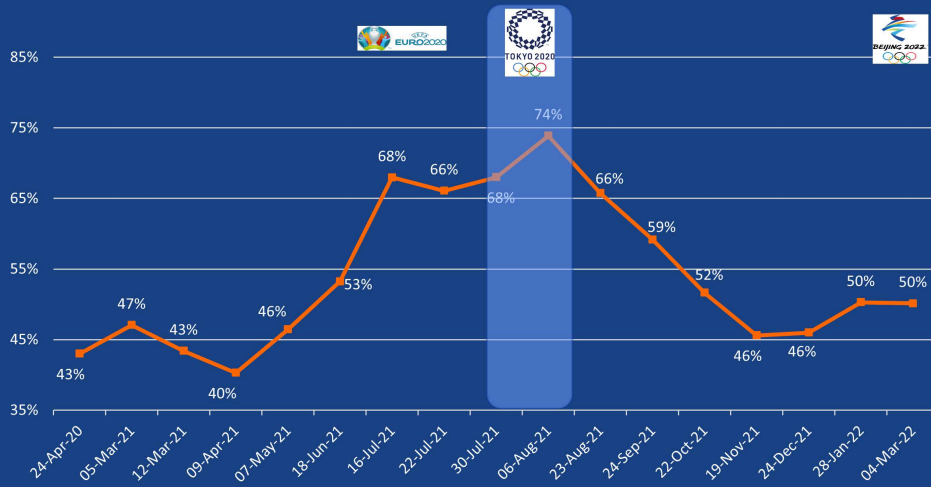
I think that good elite sport achievements encourage non-sporters to start with sport.



The perceptions of the Flemish people change after the Olympic Games. There is an increase in Flemish people that think that elite sport achievement encourage non-sporters to start with sport.

## DIMENSION 9. SPONSORS & COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

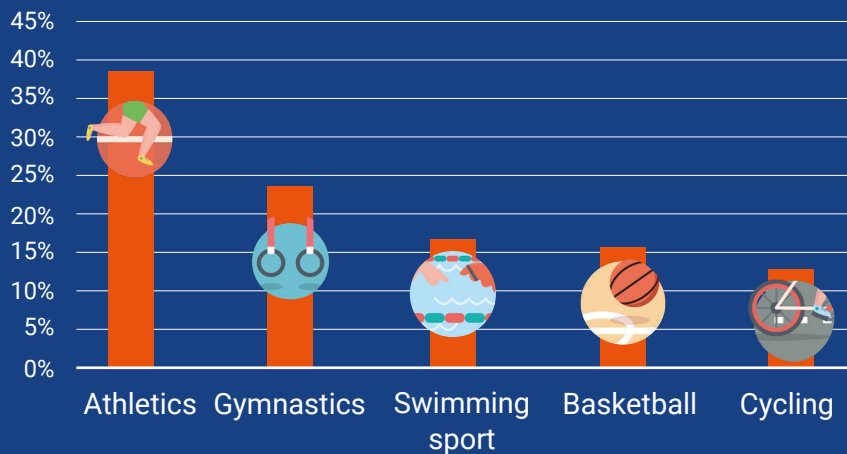
To what extent did you watch, read or listen to sports in the past month?



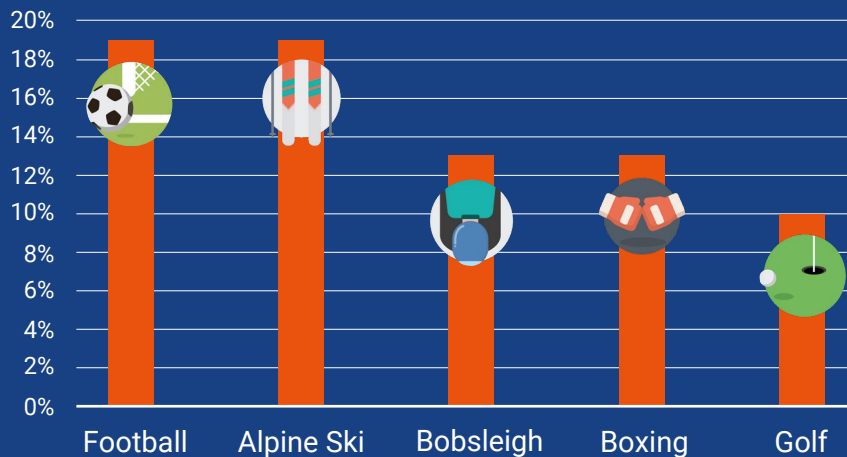
Major elite sporting events, such as the European Championships and the Olympic Games, attract more viewers.

## DIMENSION 10. LOCAL CONSUMPTION & ENVIRONMENT

In which sports do Flemish people want to invest more?



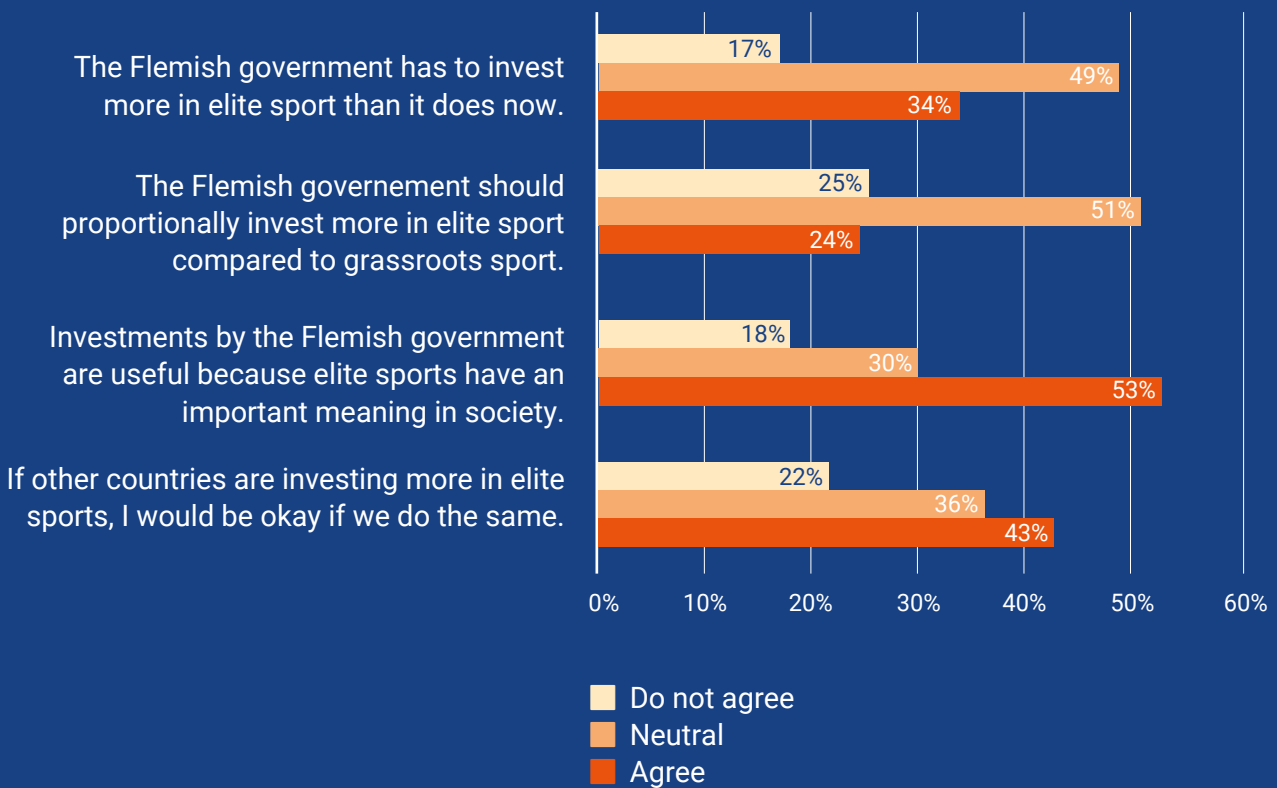
In which sports do Flemish people want to invest less?



## WILLINGNESS TO PAY



Flemish people would like to spend 3,2 euro per person annually on elite sport.



Reference: De Bosscher, V., Descheemaeker, K., Van Roey, A., De Rycke, J., Derom, I. (2022). De maatschappelijke impact van topsport. SPLISS. Onderzoek in opdracht van Sport Vlaanderen & Baillet Latour. Brussel: VUB. ISBN: 9789072325136

Thanks to

