



2023 Alumni Attitude Study Summary

Background

The 2023 USOPA Alumni Attitude Survey was sent to 5,494 Olympians and Paralympians in August 2023. Responses were received from 537 individuals (9.8% response rate). The 2019 alumni survey had responses from approximately 330 individuals. A comparison of the overall population of USOPA alumni to the 2023 survey respondents suggests the survey represents the overall population.

	USOPA Overall	2023 Survey Respondents
Summer	76%	77%
Winter	24%	23%
Female	43%	40%
Male	57%	57%
Olympian	89%	85%
Paralympian	11%	15%
Age range	17-102	22-102
1st games qualified	1936-2022	1936-2022

NOTE: Gender information was missing for three percent of the survey respondents due to anonymous responses.

Respondents were asked to respond to 22 core questions about USOPA and 7 additional demographic questions. This includes five open-ended questions. The responses to those open-ended questions along with comprehensive statistical tables are in separate documents. The 22 core questions addressed the following:

- Life status since the Olympics/Paralympics,
- Familiarity with USOPA,
- Involvement with their sport, community, USOPA, and other organizations,
- Personal qualities of Olympians and Paralympians,
- Engagement with other Olympians and Paralympians,
- Connection with and opinion of USOPA,

- Promotion of USOPA,
- Motivation to engage with USOPA,
- Local USOPA chapters and interests,
- Communication from USOPA,
- Services USOPA can provide,
- Reasons for lack of engagement, and
- USOPA priorities

Key Findings

- **A profile of Olympians and Paralympians reveals they see themselves as hardworking (62%), team-oriented (19%), and focused (19%).** Analysis of the terms they used to describe themselves fall into these three categories. The top five terms across all alumni segments are hardworking, dedicated, goal-oriented, passionate, and persistent. Paralympians are more likely than Olympians to describe themselves as adaptable.
- **Four key indicators of USOPA familiarity, opinion, experience, and connection reveal a decline from familiarity to connection.** The majority (80%) of alumni are familiar with USOPA. Significantly fewer have positive opinions (69%), positive experiences (61%), or a strong connection (23%) with USOPA. The decline from familiarity to connection suggests a relationship between these and the lack of promotion of USOPA to other Olympians and Paralympians. Only 17% promote USOPA regularly or all the time. Forty-five percent indicate they never promote USOPA and 38% only promote it occasionally.
- **There are few differences between most segments of the survey respondents.** The statistically significant exceptions are follows:
 - **Familiarity** (% Very aware)
 - Summer Olympians 46% vs. Winter Olympians 31%
 - Olympians 45% vs. Paralympians 28%
 - Females 46% vs Males 39%
 - **Opinion** (% Excellent/Good)
 - Summer Olympians 72% vs. Winter Olympians 63%
 - Females 74% vs Males 66%
 - **Connection** (& Very/Extremely)
 - Summer Olympians 25% vs. Winter Olympians 16%
- **Age drives differences in familiarity, opinion, connection, and promotion of USOPA.** Younger Olympians and Paralympians are less likely than their older alumni to be very familiar (63%) with USOPA, hold positive opinions of USOPA (66%), feel connected (28%) or promote USOPA (45%). The percentages indicating more positive views increase with age. *It is important to note that these differences and others cited in this report might also be due to differences in generations rather than as a result of aging.*

- **Olympians and Paralympians are very involved in their communities (71%), but significantly fewer report they are involved with the Olympic/Paralympic Movement (34%) or USOPA (20%).** Olympians and Paralympians under age 38 are significantly more likely to be in the Olympic/ Paralympic Movement (43%), but less likely to be involved with USOPA (12%).
- **Awareness of local chapters is low and significantly lower for younger Olympians and Paralympians.** Overall, 35% of the survey respondents indicate they are unaware (“Don’t know what this is”) of local chapters. Conversely 29% indicate they are generally aware or very aware of local chapters. These percentages vary significantly by age. Fifty-five percent of young respondents indicate they are not aware of local chapters compared to 35% of the next older cohort (ages 39 to 54), and 32% of the oldest cohort (ages 73 or older). Level of awareness about USOPA is much lower for Paralympians (67%) and 60% of the Paralympians say they are unsure how to get involved with USOPA alumni activities.
- **When asked specifically about their interest in local chapters 81% of all respondents say they would like to be more involved in the chapters.** Respondents under age 63 are more interested in getting involved in their local chapters (88% to 94% depending on their age) if the chapters were more active. In addition, 98% of the youngest respondents indicated they would be more involved if their chapters were structured around alumni interests, such as sport, Olympic/Paralympic year, or profession.
- **Indicators of life since the Olympics or Paralympics reveal younger respondents have more needs.** Six attributes of life since their participation in the Olympics or Paralympics were asked of all respondents: Overall well-being, financial well-being, career opportunities, adjustment to life after sport, physical health, and mental health. Some of these indicators are mitigated by the perspective of age (e.g., overall well-being, financial well-being, and adjustment to life after sport). Yet the data suggest that younger Olympians and Paralympians are having some challenges. For example, 45% of the youngest respondents describe their overall well-being as excellent compared to 73% of the oldest respondents.
- **Mental health is a significant issue for the youngest Olympians and Paralympians.** Only 19% of these youngest respondents report their mental health is excellent compared to 35% of the next oldest respondents, 46% of respondents ages 55 to 63, 66% of respondents ages 64 to 72, and 78% of the oldest respondents (ages 73 or older).
- **When asked how well the Olympics or Paralympics prepared them for specific areas of their lives, the younger respondents are less likely to report they are well-prepared.** These areas include overall well-being, current work status, career opportunities, commitment to personal development, continuing education, and contributions to their community. As cited above, some of these are mitigated by the perspective of age. However, for each of these areas younger athletes are more likely to report their Olympic or Paralympic experience did not prepare them for life.

- **Olympians and Paralympians see USOPA as a resource to meet their needs and interests.** The alumni were asked to indicate the importance of priorities in member services, engagement, and visibility/communication. Member services stood out as the most critical priority for USOPA alumni. All the alumni tended to agree that advocacy of athlete's rights, safety and wellness was the most important priority. They all agreed that transparency of USOPA decisions, and promotion of Olympism and Paralympism were top priorities.
- **As expected, the needs of younger alumni reflect how they perceive their life and their preparation for life.** Fifty-seven percent of the youngest alumni see a critical need for mental health support from USOPA (vs. 39% of older alumni). Forty-six percent of the youngest alumni expressed a critical need for USOPA to provide career services and 49% want USOPA to address diversity and inclusivity.
- **Younger alumni want more communication.** Email and invitations to USOPA activities are most important to alumni. Older alumni are generally happy with the level of communications from USOPA, but younger alumni want more invitations and email. To a lesser degree, they are also interested in more information from the website and presence on LinkedIn.
- **Strong beliefs about belonging to a broader community of Olympians/Paralympians are shared by most alumni.** USOPA alumni were asked to indicate their agreement to five statements of belonging. These beliefs reflect their needs and interests in engaging with USOPA. All Olympians and Paralympians are in near equal agreement that they would like to find ways that Olympians/Paralympians can be more involved with USOPA. Alumni under age 54 are more likely (65%) than older alumni to indicate they would like to meet more often with other Olympians/Paralympians, find ways that Olympians/Paralympians can be supportive of each other in their lives, and know more about what Olympians/Paralympians do in their careers.
- **In contrast, the youngest alumni (48%) are least likely to feel they are a part of the family of Olympians/Paralympians.** Sixty-nine percent of their next oldest peers (ages 39 to 54) report they feel a part of this family.
- **Pride and interest in networking are key motivators for engagement with USOPA.** Pride is the leading motivator for alumni over age 39 followed by maintaining existing connections with their fellow Olympians and Paralympians. Since younger alumni are least likely to feel they are part of this fellowship, they are more interested in making new connections within the community of Olympians/Paralympians.
- **Time and uncertainty of how to get involved are the leading barriers to engagement with USOPA.**

The following comments are based on AI-generated summaries of the responses to open-ended questions. We recommend that you read through the comments keeping in mind the general findings and the AI-generated summaries. The open-ended responses provide a good way to better understand the survey responses. The purpose of a comprehensive alumni survey is to develop a clearer understanding of alumni thinking in general and the open-ended responses are anecdotal. They are best used to provide more insight into the overall findings and should not be singled out individually as meaning more than what one person thought at a given point in time.

Based on the text, the top 5 action items to prioritize for maximum impact to help USOPA be more effective in supporting and engaging Olympic and Paralympic athletes are:

1. Increase support for athletes' health and well-being, including health check-ups and mental health support.
2. Improve communication about local, regional, and national events to keep athletes informed and engaged.
3. Develop youth programs and support minor sports to ensure a pipeline of athletes for the Olympics.
4. Enhance support for athletes' transition to post-sport careers, including job opportunities and training.
5. Strengthen the connection and engagement with Olympian and Paralympian alumni, including setting up the USOPA as a fully recognized member of the USOPC organizational family.

SWOT Analysis:

Strengths:

1. Strong sense of community and camaraderie among Olympians and Paralympians.
2. Opportunities for networking and mentorship within the Olympic movement.
3. Support for athletes' mental health and well-being.
4. Focus on career development and post-athletic transition.
5. Recognition and celebration of past Olympians and their achievements.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of communication and irregularity in providing information to athletes.
2. Limited financial support for athletes, especially in less popular sports.
3. Inadequate support for grassroots and development programs in certain sports.
4. Limited resources and opportunities for involvement for retired athletes.
5. Lack of clarity and transparency in decision-making processes.

Opportunities:

1. Increased involvement in local communities and youth sports programs.
2. Leveraging the unique experiences of athletes to promote Olympic sports and values.

3. Collaboration with National Governing Bodies (NGBs) to ensure alignment of values and support for athletes.
4. Expansion of career mentorship and internship opportunities for athletes.
5. Building a stronger network of Olympians to facilitate connections and support.

Threats:

1. Outside influences and political issues that may impact the integrity and fairness of Olympic competition.
2. Lack of financial support and endorsement opportunities for athletes.
3. Inequality and discrimination in sports, particularly regarding transgender athletes.
4. Corruption and scandals within NGBs that may undermine the trust and reputation of the Olympic movement.
5. Limited media coverage and public awareness of Olympic sports, especially those with less attention.

Q23: If you had 10 minutes with senior USOPC leadership, what would you tell them USOPA's most important priorities should be?



Q9: What is the most meaningful support you can receive as an Olympian/Paralympian over the next 5-10 years?



