



# 2019 UCI Road World Championships

## Social Impact Evaluation





# Introduction



In September 2019, Yorkshire hosted the UCI Road World Championships (RWC), the pinnacle event in the international road cycling annual calendar.

Held in the UK after a gap of 37 years, the RWC was secured on the basis of a successful joint bid by British Cycling, UK Sport, Welcome to Yorkshire and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Some £12m of Exchequer and National Lottery funding was invested into delivering the RWC, with another £15m committed by Government over a period of three years to a dedicated event legacy programme – Places to Ride – aimed at developing cycling facilities in England. The Doncaster Cycle Track – which opened in September 2019 – was the first major capital investment made via this programme.

The RWC included 11 races over eight days of competition between 22nd and 29th September that started in different areas throughout Yorkshire and finished in the main competition town of Harrogate. A UCI sanctioned international para-cycling event also took place alongside the RWC. Beyond the elite cycling and para-cycling races, various legacy activities were planned to maximise the potential of the event. The significant investment in the Places to Ride programme, alongside the delivery of other British Cycling campaigns and initiatives around the event as well as local activations, presented a unique research opportunity

to examine the extent to which legacy activity of this type can be used to harness the platform created by a major sporting event to deliver lasting impacts beyond the duration of the event itself.

The RWC 2019 legacy vision was concerned with maximising public engagement with the event to:

**Inspire more people, from all backgrounds, to engage with cycling in their community and be inspired to ride a bike.**

The Sport Industry Research Centre (SIRC) at Sheffield Hallam University was appointed by UK Sport and its partners (DCMS, Sport England and British Cycling) in June 2019 to lead a programme of research designed to capture the social impact of the event and associated legacy activity in relation to the outcome areas in the Government's strategy for sport<sup>1</sup>. The central question underpinning this evaluation was:

**Does an event with a funded legacy programme<sup>2</sup> create better conditions for positive social benefits than events and legacy programmes funded independently?**

This report presents the findings emerging from the research and the learning and implications for future major event evaluations.

<sup>1</sup> Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation

<sup>2</sup> The term 'legacy programme' here refers to a series of interventions that are initiated or accelerated through a major event stimulus, which increases public and organisational engagement, urgency and awareness to produce tangible and intangible benefits.



# Approach

The focus of this evaluation was on examining the impacts among those who interacted with the event or were affected by it, rather than among the organisational partners and stakeholders.

The evaluation has been developed with clear reference to the concept of proportionality, reflecting the reality that resources are limited. Existing data have been used where possible and questions were added to existing surveys to address the research requirements. Bespoke data collection was undertaken only in instances where essential data could not be gathered using existing instruments. The principal data sources for this evaluation are outlined below.

- Three waves of British Cycling's market tracker incorporating a RWC module – one during the event in September 2019 and two post-event in December 2019 and March 2020 – which yielded cross-sectional time-series data from a nationally representative sample of around 5,000 UK adults per wave.
- Pre and post event data were captured from the residents of four RWC host locations – Harrogate, Doncaster, Leeds and Craven. The pre-event data collection was conducted using an online survey during August-September 2019 and yielded 1,478 responses. During March-April 2020, the pre-event sample was invited to complete a follow-up online survey, resulting in 385 'matched pairs'.

- Various one-off surveys and interviews were conducted to gather relevant data from specific groups including spectators, volunteers and legacy activity participants.
- The Active Lives Adult Survey.

In order to answer the central research question, the interactions captured using survey instruments were classified as being 'event' or 'legacy activity' as per the criteria presented in Table 1.



**Table 1: Classification of interactions**

<b>Interaction</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Legacy activity</b>
Visited a start/finish location to watch the event	✓	
Watched the event from one or more locations along the route	✓	
Followed the event on TV or other media	✓	
Visited a fan zone* or attended another community celebration event	✓	✓
Yorkshire 2019 volunteer	✓	
Took part in the Official Sportive		✓
Took part in and/or supported the delivery of activities/ programmes organised in connection with the event		✓
Saw or heard of the national legacy campaign #OwnTheRide		✓
Visited the Doncaster Dome		✓

\* In addition to providing attendees with the opportunity to interact with the RWC, the Championship Fan Zone in Harrogate incorporated some British Cycling led legacy activity for children and young people. Hence, this type of activity has been recorded as a composite interaction.



# Findings

## Awareness and interaction

Overall 34% of the adult population in the UK were aware of the 2019 RWC and 22% reported having interacted in some way with the event and/or legacy activity. The host region, Yorkshire, had higher levels of awareness and interaction than the rest of the country. Awareness and interaction were both heightened within host communities in Yorkshire, particularly in Harrogate.

“It was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see such a concentration of elite cyclists, in a single location, in such a short space of time.”

Harrogate resident

## Reach

The estimated cumulative global television audience for the RWC was 329 million, including 59 million in the UK. The aggregate spectator attendance during the event was around 1 million (including some 0.2 million unique spectators) and as of December 2019 British Cycling's national legacy campaign linked to the RWC – #OwntheRide – had generated some 1.25 million impressions.

The audience reached via the event and legacy activity varied according to the different ways of interacting. For example, British Cycling's Go-Ride and Ready Set Ride sessions at the Championship Fan Zone in Harrogate were targeted specifically at children and young people, whereas event spectating had a wider demographic appeal.





## Perceived impacts

UK adults who had any interaction with the event or legacy activity reported experiencing a range of positive impacts – see Figure 1.

**“ The feeling of being part of a global event still gives me a good feeling every time I think about it.”**

**Harrogate resident**

**Sense of pride in where we live on the day.”**

**Doncaster resident**

Interaction was also associated with positive self-reported impacts on communities in Yorkshire (see Figure 2) and cycling provision in the region (Figure 3).

**“ The event brought out people in our village and we interacted with them more than normal.”**

**Leeds resident**

**There are now a lot more cycle friendly businesses in the region.”**

**Harrogate resident**



There were also some negative consequences of the RWC expressed by host community residents surveyed, particularly in Harrogate, where respondents were critical of the inconvenience and disruption due to the prolonged road closures compared with other host locations such as Doncaster and Leeds.

**“ It was too big an event for too long a period for our town to sustain.”**

**Harrogate resident**

Another sticking point in Harrogate was the damage caused to a section of The Stray – a protected public area of green space – where the Championship Fan Zone was located.

**“ The stray was trashed by the building of the fan zone. Six months later it is still fenced off and unusable.”**

**Harrogate resident**

**Figure 1: Perceived positive impacts of interaction on individuals**



Source: British Cycling market tracker (December 2019 and March 2020)

**Figure 2: Perceived positive impacts of interaction on communities in Yorkshire**



Source: British Cycling market tracker (December 2019 and March 2020)



**Figure 3: Perceived positive impacts of interaction on cycling provision in Yorkshire**



Source: British Cycling market tracker (December 2019 and March 2020)

## Sporting Future outcomes

The key findings for the central research question are presented below and organised by the Sporting Future outcome areas.

### Physical wellbeing

Among UK adults surveyed in the post-RWC period, having any form of interaction with the event or the legacy activity was associated with:

- more positive attitudes towards sport and exercise; and,
- higher levels of cycling as well as lower levels of inactivity.

For those who experienced both the event and legacy activity, the association with these attitudes and behaviours in the post-RWC period was typically amplified – see Table 1.

**“ my participation definitely increased in the months leading up to the event...I have kept up my training programme from leading up to the sportive.”**

**RWC sportive participant**

Against a national backdrop of a marginal decline in cycling participation by adults nationally during October-November 2019 compared to the corresponding period in 2018, there was indicative evidence of a small post-event spike in cycling levels in Yorkshire and in some RWC host locations – see Table 2.

**Table 1: Post-RWC attitudes and behaviours of UK adults by type of interaction**

<b>Sport-related attitudes/ behaviours</b>		<b>None<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Any<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Both<sup>3</sup></b>
<b>Attitudes</b>	I feel that I have the ability to be physically active	<b>64%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>81%</b>
	I feel that I have the opportunity to be physically active	<b>63%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>75%</b>
	I find sport/exercise enjoyable	<b>47%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>Behaviours</b>	Cycled at least twice in the last 28 days	<b>25%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>70%</b>
	Not physically active in the last week	<b>26%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>3%</b>

<sup>1</sup>No interaction at all   <sup>2</sup> Any interaction with the event or legacy activity

<sup>3</sup> Interaction with the event and legacy activity

Source: British Cycling market tracker (December 2019 and March 2020)

**Table 2: Cycling participation by adults during October-November**

<b>Location</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>16.9%</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	<b>-1.4%</b>
<b>Yorkshire</b>	<b>14.9%</b>	<b>17.1%</b>	<b>+2.2%</b>
<b>North Yorkshire</b>	<b>18.0%</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>-3.6%</b>
<b>Doncaster</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>18.1%</b>	<b>+8.2%</b>
<b>Leeds</b>	<b>14.6%</b>	<b>27.5%</b>	<b>+12.9%</b>

Source: Active Lives Adult Survey (cycled at least twice in the last 28 days)

Acknowledging the caveat of small monthly sample sizes at sub-regional level, the post-event increase in cycling in Doncaster (18.1% v 9.9%) coincided with the opening of the Places to Ride funded cycle track at Doncaster Dome at that point in time.



## Mental wellbeing

UK adults who had any interaction with the event or legacy activity had higher (better) wellbeing scores in the post-RWC period for three of the four Office for National Statistics' (ONS) personal wellbeing measures than those who had no interaction. This association was strongest when the two interactions were combined – see Table 3.

The self-reported happiness of spectators surveyed during the event was higher in comparison with their general happiness levels. The post event-survey of Yorkshire 2019 volunteers revealed a net positive impact on the mental wellbeing of this cohort associated with their RWC volunteering experience.

**“ I didn’t have any previous experience of volunteering at events and I signed up by myself, it was a big thing for me, and I was really happy to be accepted.”**

**Yorkshire 2019 volunteer**



**Table 3: Post-RWC subjective wellbeing scores (out of ten) for UK adults by type of interaction**

Measure	None <sup>1</sup>	Any <sup>2</sup>	Both <sup>3</sup>
How happy did you feel yesterday?	6.6	7.2	7.4
To what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?	6.6	7.2	7.3
How satisfied are you with your life nowadays?	6.4	7.1	7.3

<sup>1</sup> No interaction at all <sup>2</sup> Any interaction with the event or legacy activity <sup>3</sup> Interaction with the event and legacy activity

Source: British Cycling market tracker (December 2019 and March 2020)



## Individual and community development

UK adults who had any interaction with the event or legacy activity were more likely to report in the post-RWC period (relative to those who had no interaction) feeling that:

- they can achieve their personal goals (self-efficacy); and,
- people in their local area can be trusted (social trust).

The self-efficacy and social trust scores were highest among those who experienced both types of interaction – see Table 4.

“The experience I had has certainly boosted my confidence [to volunteer at future major sporting events].”

Yorkshire 2019 volunteer

“community came together to enjoy a free event...Our voluntary group made new friends as a result of the free activities and gifts we engaged them with.”

Doncaster resident



**Table 4: Post-RWC self-efficacy and social trust scores for UK adults by type of interaction**

Measure	None <sup>1</sup>	Any <sup>2</sup>	Both <sup>3</sup>
<b>Self efficacy:</b> I can achieve most of the goals I set myself	<b>59%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>69%</b>
<b>Social trust:</b> Most people in your local area can be trusted	<b>48%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>68%</b>

1 No interaction at all 2 Any interaction with the event or legacy activity

3 Interaction with the event and legacy activity

Source: British Cycling market tracker (December 2019 and March 2020)



# Learning and recommendations

Major events like the RWC present opportunities and challenges. During the course of this research, we found positive self-reported impacts and positive associations between interaction and the Sporting Future outcomes. Conversely, the event was seen to have had a major disruptive impact on the community in Harrogate, which is illustrated starkly by Harrogate Borough Council's decision to refrain temporarily from hosting major events of this type.

Overall this research has provided tentative evidence that an event with targeted legacy activity can create better conditions for stimulating positive social benefits, partly because of the small sub-sample sizes on which certain findings are based. Moreover, due to the largely associative nature of the findings, the possibility of 'reverse causality' cannot be ruled out. What this means is that the event might simply appeal to individuals who already exhibit certain desirable characteristics. Understanding whether a cause and effect relationship exists requires robust cohort studies to be designed. As a general rule of thumb, future event legacy research should be underpinned by the following questions:

- Who will be impacted?
- Where and over what time frame will the impacts be felt?
- What does 'success' look like?
- Who is charged with delivering the legacy outcomes?

Real life does not take place in a vacuum and it is not possible to isolate any changes in outcomes like participation behaviour associated with the RWC from that of other sporting events that took place

in England during 2019 (e.g. the Cricket World Cup) leading up to the RWC and the performances of British athletes and teams in those events. Similarly, the outbreak of Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown would have had a significant bearing on the attitudes and/or behaviours of individuals across the country that were measured during the latter part of this research.

A key component of the RWC legacy activity - the Places to Ride programme - has not been fully operational during the lifespan of this research. Therefore, it may take several years for the true scale of the legacy activity impact to be assessed. This major capital investment in cycling facilities by Government would not have taken place in the same form without Yorkshire hosting the RWC. So while future users may not associate the facilities with the event, their availability is a part of the event legacy (as are any associated impacts).

