

At least 1 in 10 athletes injured during 2010 Winter Olympics

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At least one in 10 athletes sustained an injury and a further one in 14 fell ill during the 2010 Winter Olympics, held in Canada, reveals research published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*.

Relatively little is known about the injury rate during [winter Olympics](#), say the authors, especially as many of the competitive events, such as snowboarding and freestyle skiing, are fairly recent additions.

And the findings, which are based on reports from the lead doctors for each of the national Olympic committees, and daily returns from designated medical centres in Vancouver and Whistler, are likely to be an underestimate, they suggest.

In all, 82 doctors, looking after 2567 athletes, took part in the study. They reported a total of 287 injuries and 185 illnesses, equivalent to 111.8 injuries (11%) and 72.1 illnesses (7%) per 1000 registered athletes during the Games.

The highest risk sports were bobsleigh, ice hockey, short track, alpine freestyle and snowboard cross, for which between 1 in 8 (15%) and more than one in three (35%) athletes either sustained an injury or fell ill.

Almost one in four injuries (22%) resulted in the inability to train or compete.

The lowest risk sports were the Nordic skiing events, which include the biathlon, cross country skiing, ski jumping and Nordic combined, as well as luge, curling, speed skating and free style moguls. Although one athlete died during training for luge, fewer than one in 20 athletes in these low risk sports were injured/fell ill.

The most common injury sites were the head, spine, and knees, which were almost as likely to be sustained during training (46%) as they were during competition (54%). But three out of four injuries for snowboarding, freestyle cross skiing, short track, figure skating, skeleton and biathlon were sustained during training.

Bruising (contusions), ligament and muscular sprains were the most common types of injury. One serious tendon rupture occurred in a cross country skiing competitor.

One athlete died, the circumstances of which are currently under investigation.

The injury rate was higher among women athletes (131.1/1000) than it was among the men (93.3/1000). Every fifth female athlete taking part in bobsleigh, ice hockey, snowboard cross and in freestyle cross and aerals sustained an [injury](#).

Almost one in three men (just under 28% of registered male athletes) were injured during short track, while 17% were injured during bobsleigh, and just under 16% while playing ice hockey.

One in every 10 [athletes](#) taking part in the skeleton, figure and speed skating, curling, snowboard cross and biathlon succumbed to at least one illness, almost two thirds of which (62%) were respiratory infections.

While participation in the reporting scheme was high, cross checking against other monitoring systems indicates that not all injuries were reported, prompting the authors to suggest that the figures might be

higher.

Further steps need to be taken to create safer sports arenas and improve training facilities, they conclude.

Provided by British Medical Journal

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