

Olympics Committees Reach Decision on Social Distancing, Mask Mandates for Attendees

The Olympics, a celebration of worldwide sports and athletics hosted by various cities every four years, was slated to happen in Tokyo, Japan, in 2020. The coronavirus pandemic, however, postponed the international competition to 2021.

As the world slowly reopens and vaccination rates allow for the removal of masks, the fear of the spread of infection is a concern for the planners of the Olympics. In-person sporting events in the United States have returned somewhat to pre-COVID attendance levels, but the same is not true around the world.

The International Olympic and Paralympic committees, Tokyo 2020, the Tokyo metropolitan government and the government of Japan recently met virtually and made their decision regarding the amount of spectators that will be allowed to attend in-person at the sporting venues.

The joint Olympic committees ruled that the crowd will be capped at "50% of venue capacity, up to a maximum of 10,000 people." There are quite a few qualifiers in who would classify as an Olympic spectator. Students in the Japanese schools' spectator program and their supervisors will not be counted against the 10,000 person limit as they are not considered spectators.

VIPs such as sponsors and sporting federation officials will not be considered spectators either. AP News reports the actual number of people at the events could be as high as 20,000 in total.

International travelers have already been denied access to the Olympics, so the crowd will be made up of primarily Japanese spectators.

For those able to attend in person, masks will be required at all times. Loud cheering and shouting will be prohibited. Attenders will have staggered arrival and departure times and are strongly encouraged to travel directly from home to the sporting venue and back again to avoid any potential COVID exposure or transmission.

The Olympics Planning Committee has also set up a plan if infection rates rise due to the scheduled events and will be monitored vigilantly.

Out of concern for his country where only 6.5% of the people have been vaccinated, Japan's top medical adviser advocated that the safest way to host the event in the island nation would be without spectators at all.

Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said he seriously considered the medical recommendation but ultimately decided against it.

"If a state of emergency is necessary, I will be flexible and open to no fans in order to achieve that the Games give top priority to safety and security for the people," Suga told The Associated Press.

Suga isn't alone: Poll numbers are growing in favor of allowing fans at the Olympic games.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games are scheduled to begin Friday, July 23, 2021. {eo}

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