

Beyond Policy Interventions: Can Community Sport Events Foster Individuals' Healthier Choices?

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Abstract

This study explores the potential of large-scale urban events, specifically marathons, to promote healthier behaviors in local populations. Focusing on the 2023 New York City Marathon, we examine how both active participation and passive exposure to such events impacts physical activity levels in the surrounding community. Using GPS tracking data, we find that residents living along the marathon route significantly increase their physical activity, showing an average 35% rise in weekly visits to sports-related locations. Event-study estimates indicate that this increase persists throughout the post-event observation window. The study highlights the role of public events in enhancing the salience of sport through urban transformation and nudging exposed individuals toward more active lifestyles. Our findings suggest that marathons and similar large-scale events can serve as effective, non-coercive complements to traditional policybased public health interventions in urban settings.

Track: Methods, Modelling & Marketing Analytics