

Does the Medal Count Matter?

Is it important to average Americans that the United States win the most Olympic medals? The public divides evenly on the question - about the same as it was in 2000 and 1996, and far from its level in the last Olympics of the cold war, in 1988.

There's been speculation that post-9/11 patriotism could cause more people to take a stake in the medal count, but it's not so. Fifty percent say it's important to them that the United States win more medals than any other country, compared to 51 percent in 2000 and 55 percent in 1996 (both summer games). Just 17 percent call it "very important."

It was 62 percent, by contrast, in the 1988 summer games, the last Olympics for the Soviet Union. Those hopes were unanswered: The U.S. team won 94 medals, the Soviets, 132.

	Winning the most medals:	
	Important	Not important
Today	50%	49
2000*	51	48
1996*	55	44
1988**	62	36

*Gallup
**AP/Media General

The United States was the overall medals winner once in a winter Olympics, in 1932.

GROUPS - While men are customarily seen as more competitive, it's women who are somewhat more likely to call the medal count important - 54 percent do so, compared to 45 percent of men. The medal count's also more important to less-educated Americans.

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News.com survey was conducted by telephone Feb. 6-10, 2002, among a random national sample of 1,026 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:

<http://www.abcnews.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

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Here are the full results:

135. Thinking about the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah - how important is it to you that the United States win more medals than any other country - very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all?

-----Important----- -----Not important----- No

	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not too	Not at all	op.
2/10/02	50	17	33	49	25	24	1
9/13/00*	51	17	34	48	28	20	1
6/19/96**	55	21	34	44	25	19	1
7/2/88***	62	21	41	36	22	14	2

*Gallup: Asked of 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia.

**Gallup: Asked of 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia.

***AP/Media General: Asked of 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, Korea. "...the United States Olympic team wins more medals than any other nation's team? Is it of great importance, some importance, little importance, or no importance?"

END