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Canada should be winning even more Olympic gold

By **RICHARD FLORIDA** Opinion

Thu., Feb. 22, 2018



Canada has had much to celebrate during these Winter Games — a gold in ice dancing for Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir, a remarkable bronze for Mark McMorris in slopestyle snowboard, only months after a life-threatening accident, and the unbelievable [tie for the gold](#) by Justin Kripps and Francesco Friedrich in the two-man bobsled.

With just two days to go in the Pyeongchang Winter Games, Canada is on track for its best showing since Vancouver. As of Thursday morning when I am writing this, Canada ranks third in both gold medals and total medals, trailing just Norway and Germany in both of these categories.



Canadians Justin Kripps, right, and Alexander Kopacz celebrate their tie with Germany for the gold medal after the men's two-man bobsled finals at the 2018 Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea on Sunday. (JONATHAN HAYWARD / THE CANADIAN PRESS)

But counting total medals can be misleading, as I noted in these pages about the [Rio Summer Games](#). Some countries are much bigger than others, and field much bigger teams. Simple medal counts don't necessarily provide a meaningful measure of how a country's Olympic team stacks up.

With the help of my colleagues at the University of Toronto's Martin Prosperity Institute, Patrick Adler and Charlotta Mellander, we ranked Canada's, and each nation's Olympic medal performance relative to their population, size of their economy and number of athletes on their Olympic teams.

So, how does Canada's performance measure up on metrics like these?

Canada falls much further down the list when we consider its medal haul as a function of the size of its population. Canada ranks seventh with this metric, with 5.8 medals per 10 million people. That's about the same as the Slovak and Czech Republics. And it's more than 10 times less than Norway, which has taken home medals at a rate of more than 60 per 10 million people. If you think that's a poor performance, the U.S. ranks even further behind on this metric, in 24th place with roughly half (0.5) a medal per 10 million people

Canada falls even further when we consider medals based on the size of its economy: Canada ranks 12th with roughly one medal per \$100 billion of economic output, or GDP. This is again far behind Norway, which has hauled in about nine medals per \$100 billion of GDP, and also behind Belarus, Latvia, and the Slovak and Czech Republics. If it's any solace,

again the U.S. lags much further behind in 26th with less than 0.1 medals per \$100 billion of GDP.

But medal performance ultimately turns on how many athletes a country fields. How successful were the athletes Canada brought to the Winter Games in winning medals? OK, but not great. Canada ranks eighth on this metric, taking home just about one medal per 10 Olympians. This is again far behind top performing nations like the Netherlands with five medals per 10 Olympians and Norway with three and even Spain with 1.5 medals per 10 Olympians. But it's still considerably better than the U.S. in 16th place.

Canada is a big country with mountain ranges and winter trails and Olympic facilities. So where do Canada's Winter Olympians come from — which cities and metros send the most athletes to the games? And how does Toronto stack up?

A look at the clustering of the current cities of residence for Team Canada athletes shows 51 per cent of team members live near the former Olympic host sites that currently house training centres. Fifty-five Olympians (24 per cent) live in Calgary metro, another 17 (7 per cent) are in Canmore, near the cross-country training centre, 11 (4.9 per cent) are in Whistler, 7 (3.1 per cent) are down the mountain in Vancouver, and 32 (14 per cent) in Montreal.