

# Strong teams attract crowds for international cricket

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The strength of the team—not the promise of a close contest—is the biggest draw to crowds in international cricket, new research has found.

The findings from the study, published in the journal *Applied Economics*, appear to contradict previous research which suggested that attendance is largely determined by how closely matched the two teams are during a game.

Economists Dr Abhinav Sacheti and Professor David Paton from Nottingham University Business School, in collaboration with Dr Ian Gregory-Smith from the University of Sheffield, analysed the number of spectators at around 400 Test matches that took place in England, Australia and New Zealand between 1980 and 2012.

The new research found that the closeness of contest has only a small

effect and the most important factor affecting crowd numbers is the absolute strength of teams.

The findings come hot on the heels of recently agreed changes to the structure of [international cricket](#) which have placed more power in the hands of the national boards of India, England and Australia.

Dr Sacheti explained: "Our results suggest that [crowds](#) want to watch good players even if the match ends up being an unequal contest. So, from the point of view generating crowds, you are better off having a strong team play a weak team than two mediocre teams playing each other.

"While the attraction towards strong home teams is unsurprising, the interest in strong away teams suggests fans are interested in watching high quality [cricket](#) even if the team they support may be likelier to lose. This result holds up even when we control for other factors such as ground size, weather conditions, timing of the games and income levels."

To illustrate the actual effect of team strength, the economists report that an increase in 10 points (using the official ICC ranking system) for the away team leads to more than 500 extra spectators per day on average. An increase of 10 ranking points for the home team leads to about 1,400 extra spectators per day.

The findings have implications for the way in which Test cricket might be restructured. One idea which has frequently been proposed in recent years is to split Test cricket into two tiers. Although such a split is likely to lead to more contests between teams of similar strengths, the latest research suggests this would have little impact on crowds. Indeed, by depriving weaker teams of games against the strongest opposition, the disparity between crowds across countries may well increase.

**More information:** Uncertainty of Outcome or Strengths of Teams: An Economic Analysis of Attendance Demand for International Cricket by Abhinav Sacheti, Ian Gregory-Smith and David Paton is published in *Applied Economics* at [www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00036846.2014.892203](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00036846.2014.892203)

Provided by University of Nottingham

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