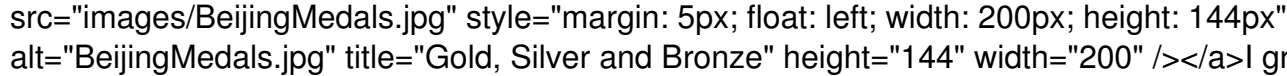


## The Beijing Medal Count: Another Perspective | Allan Besselink

Written by Allan Besselink

Friday, 05 September 2008 19:00

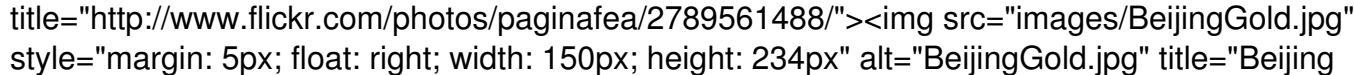
---

[http://www.flickr.com/photos/geckoam/2723280142/](images/BeijingMedals.jpg "http://www.flickr.com/photos/geckoam/2723280142/")I grew up a mile away from the United States. If you turned on the television, you found the obligatory Canadian TV stations. You also found the inundation of U.S. television stations - ABC, NBC, and CBS - from locales in New York or Michigan.

Every four years, we bear witness to the Summer Olympics. And every four years, we're subjected to what seems like an exceedingly nationalistic and biased view of the Olympics. Of late, it's been NBC's prerogative to show us any sports in which the U.S. might be dominant.

Every four years, as a born-and-raised Canuck, I have an ongoing debate about the seeming lack of medals attained by my homeland - as compared to the treasure trove of medals attained by the United States.

So before we go any further, let's put the raw data out there:

[http://www.flickr.com/photos/paginafea/2789561488/](images/BeijingGold.jpg "http://www.flickr.com/photos/paginafea/2789561488/")United States: 36 gold, 38 silver, and 36 bronze - for a total of 110 medals.

Canada: 3 gold, 9 silver, 6 bronze - for a total of 18 medals. The third best Summer Olympics in Canadian Olympic history which, compared to those 107 medals, doesn't sound too prospective.

The United States has 6.11 times the number of medals!

I think that instead of raw medal count, we should look at medals per capita.

United States: 305 million people - or 0.000000361 medals per person

Canada: 33 million people - or 0.000000545 medals per person

Oh Canada - they win! They have 1.5 times the medals - per person.

I think that to limit the nationalistic fervor a bit, we could set up a point scoring system, then look at medal points per capita. Let's face it, if you have one billion citizens (i.e. China), I would like to think that there is a modest chance of finding some good athletes (and medals) in there!

How about three points for a gold, two points for a silver, and one point for a bronze?

United States: 220 points for those 305 million people - 0.000000721

Canada: 33 points for those 33 million people - 0.000001 ... or 1.4 times the points per capita compared to the United States!

This is getting interesting! As I always say, just about anyone can win depending on how you spin the numbers.

Or what about using the point system and comparing it to Gross National Product? Of course, based on this premise, a country like the U.S should have a lot of medals - it's the richest country in the world!

United States: 10,533 billion dollars ... for 220 points ... or 48 billion dollars per point

Canada: 760 billion dollars ... for 33 points ... or 23 billion dollars per point.

Even with the current exchange rate, Canada still wins from a dollars per medal category!

The New York Times published a great visual tool for assessing the medal counts over the years. You can find it [here](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2008/08/04/sports/olympics/20080804?MEDALCOUNT?MAP.html "Olympic Medal Count Map").

Now we need to look at countries like Togo and Afghanistan ...