



UNITED AGAINST ONLINE ABUSE

COALITION TO STOP HATE SPEECH IN SPORT

Research Statistics for Social Media Usage

Note to Readers: Please utilise these facts and figures to amend the social media templates provided. Next to each item you will see the academic reference (AUTHOR, YEAR) – please ensure you cite this reference in any articles or social media captions where you quote the content.

FIA University Observations

Please quote all of the below with the reference (FIA University, 2023)

- In the last 12 months respondents identified **competitors/ athletes** as being the primary target of online abuse when compared to all others engaged in their sports, e.g., referees, officials, volunteers etc.
- The most common form of online abuse suffered by athletes/ competitors and others engaged in sport is '**flaming**', which is the sending of threatening, abusive or rude messages to an identified target.
- Some 90% of all respondents 'strongly' or 'rather' agreed that online abuse directed at athletes/ competitors had the **potential to result in them withdrawing** from participating altogether, if not addressed.
- In an overwhelming endorsement of a coalition of sporting bodies to address this issue, **some 85% of respondents agreed that sporting bodies working collectively** represented the most impactful way to address this insidious problem.
- Over three in every four respondents to our survey agreed that athletes who are the target of online abuse are subject, specifically, to **threats to harm them or their dependents**.
- Some 85% of respondents either 'strongly' or 'rather' agreed that **online service providers are not sufficiently active** in supporting the fight against online abuse in sport.
- Nine out of ten respondents believe that **online service providers 'should, under certain circumstances, be obliged by law to detect, remove and report online abuse in sport.'**



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Dublin City University Observations

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Out of the 70 academic publications that DCU reviewed and analysed:

- Over 77% of papers address racism (37%), misogyny (24%) or homophobia (16%) as forms of online abuse in sport.
- Over 70% of papers focus on Twitter (41%), Facebook (19%) or Instagram (13%) as key platforms.
- 80% of research focuses solely on athletes meaning other core stakeholders are underrepresented in the field.
- 50% of all published research focuses on two sports: Soccer (39%) and American Football (11%). The remainder is split between 8 sports and general (25%) meaning large portions of the industry are under researched.
- 46% of papers focus on just two markets the USA (24%) and the UK (22%); meaning that online abuse research is a largely "western discourse".

Qualitative Observations:

- Academics need to engage with a wider number of stakeholders in their research, in particular sporting governing bodies. This points to the lack of primary data and narrow focus of sports studied in research.
- There is a lack of cohesion amongst the research conducted, calling for a need to develop a disciplinary identity.
- There is a lack of [a] primary research data, [b] focus on perpetrators and [c] a limited number of sports studied.
- Most of the studies focus on racism. There is a lack of focus on ableism, islamophobia, and other types of hate speech in the industry.
- Most studies focus on a small number of social media platforms and almost none focus on non-textual forms of hate (emojis, photos, memes, videos).



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Industry Wide Observations

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- During the 2022 World Athletics Championships, female athletes received 60% of all online abuse via Twitter and Instagram (World Athletics, 2022)
- Sporting events have been increasingly identified as significant flashpoints for online abuse and hate (Kearns et al., 2022)
- There 41% of teenagers don't report online abuse for fear of retribution (Microsoft Digital Civility Index, 2020)
- 49% of girls aged 11-21 say fear of abuse online makes them feel less able to share their views (Girlguiding, 2020)
- Online Hate Speech has increased by 20% in the UK since the start of the pandemic (Ditch The Label Research, 2021)
- 35% of respondents reported online harassment related to their identity-based characteristics (Anti-Defamation League, 2020)
- 36% of those who have been harassed reported stopping, reducing, or changing online behaviour (Office of National Statistics, 2020)
- 43% of Premier League players in the study experienced targeted and explicitly racist abuse (PFA Report, 2020)
- 50% of the total online abuse recorded was received by just three players, who called out racial abuse during Project Restart (PFA Report, 2020)
- 29% of racially abusive posts came in emoji form (PFA Report, 2020)
- 30% of female sportswomen said they had suffered trolling - a figure that has doubled in the past five years (Women's Sports Week, 2015)