

White Paper

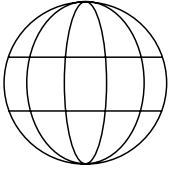
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# Beyond the field The influence of sport on sustainability and social change

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UNICEPTA



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A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's hand holding a tennis racket. The hand is wearing an orange wristband. A yellow tennis ball is resting on the strings of the racket. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue.

# 01

# Foreword

Sport Positive supports the global sports industry to increase action on climate, sustainability, biodiversity and environmental justice, to both safeguard the future of professional and grassroots sports, and unlock the power and influence of sport to tackle these pressing issues of our time.

That influence is difficult to define. From grassroots and recreation to professional and elite, from sport business and brands to fandom and fashion. Sport's true global reach and impact defies the purely quantitative, but we know it's unparalleled.

UNICEPTA's expertise lies in providing insights from digital intelligence to serve organisations and industries. This collaboration and report firstly shines a light on what sport's influence looks like online, by looking at a one-year period of mainstream and social media, to set a baseline of the space sport holds. It then primarily seeks to uncover how that influence is currently manifesting around sustainability, environmental, social and community matters for ten major sports.

Put simply, in these pages we seek to begin answering the question - what level of influence do sporting organisations and athletes truly have, and how can that influence be further leveraged for good across society?

# OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

## Primary research question

What level of influence do sporting organisations have, and how can sporting organisations influence change across society at large?

## Secondary research questions

Three additional research questions will also be given consideration throughout the course of the research, and will be addressed as and when possible. Unlike the primary research question, the secondary research questions do not necessarily have entire sections of the report dedicated to them, but will be discussed where appropriate throughout the report.

1. How does level of influence differ when comparing sports generically, sporting organisations or individual stars? Do people connect more with individuals than organisations? How can sports organisations or individuals better wield influence? Should clubs be better harnessing the power of their sports stars for positive change?
2. What narratives do sports communicators promote and what issues do sporting audiences engage with? What types of content create the highest engagement?
3. Is there a difference in language, messaging and approach used by different groups or different sports? Who is communicating and how are they communicating on sustainability and / or social and community matters within their sports?

# HOW IS INFLUENCE DEFINED?

In terms of digital content, UNICEPTA perceives highly influential content to be that which people care about, talk about

and engage with, which is measurable by the level of online engagement with that content.

# METHODOLOGY, SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

UNICEPTA's research encompassed quantitative and qualitative analysis of digital content (online news and social media) based around ten sports:

- Football
- Rugby
- Cricket
- Motorsport
- Golf
- Athletics (all disciplines combined)
- Sailing
- Basketball
- Tennis
- American Football

For each of the ten sports listed above, UNICEPTA created searches to retrieve content in three contexts:

1. overall
2. in sustainability-focused contexts
3. in contexts focusing on social and community matters.

Our "social and community matters" search encompassed 25 keywords and concepts as follows: diversity, equity, inclusion/ inclusivity, nature, food banks, CSR, ESG, community, gender equality by announcing, wellbeing, physical health, physical activity, mental health, children's participation, active lifestyle, poverty, integrity, women in sport, safety, accessibility/access, advocacy, anti-discrimination, youth engagement, fair play, underserved communities.

UNICEPTA's quantitative analysis enabled detailed evaluation of each sport, for each of the three contexts

- outlined above, by comparing the following metrics:
- volume of content – the number of individual pieces of content (sourced from online news and social media)
- sum total reach – the total followers or readers potentially reached by the post/ articles
- sum total engagement - the number of shares/reactions on social media in response to the articles/posts.
- average reach per item - the total reach for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.
- average engagement per item - the total number of engagements for all articles/ posts divided by the
- volume of articles/posts.
- sustainability-focused coverage as a percentage of overall content
- social and community matters coverage as a percentage of overall content
- breakdown of volume of posts/articles by geography

## SCOPE

UNICEPTA's research drew on media coverage based on the following parameters:

- data source: online news and social media (both combined)
- geography: global (no location filters)
- search creation: Boolean search strings created in English-language (no non-English language searches)
- language filters: none
- date range to analyse: 12 months – 1 May 2023 to 30 April 2024

# LIMITATIONS

No research methodology is without its faults. During the conduct of this study, we identified some limitations to our approach that impact the generalisability of the results.

## Social media is not a monolith.

While some platforms have become almost ubiquitous around the world, the social media landscape is highly diverse with new, emerging players bursting onto the scene. With media intelligence tools often slow to catch up, this makes it challenging to capture, or even talk about "social media conversation" at large. Adding to that, the media intelligence industry must work with highly varying data access rules, with some social media platforms much more open and transparent with user content than others. This means that our datasets are often skewed towards X (formerly known as Twitter), which provides more comprehensive access to data than other platforms. We recognise this as a limitation while also observing that X / Twitter is a prime forum where many relevant debates play out and therefore feel that this does not overly compromise our results.

## Global English bias.

This research has been conducted based on English-language Boolean searches. We acknowledge that the findings and outputs will, to a point, be rooted primarily in those geographies and cultures where English is widely used.

## No keyword search is 100% watertight.

This research aims to surface content relating to sustainability and social and community matters in relation to ten specific sports, to draw out the most prevalent themes, topics, interests, stories and protagonists relating to those subjects. To isolate such conversations in online discourse, we incorporated relevant keywords into search strings that use Boolean logic. However, it is important to acknowledge the vast proliferation of different ways in which people express themselves in online media, which make it difficult to achieve complete coverage. Additionally, it was not possible to include the name of every single player / team / club / league within the searches we built, and while our searches do include the names of tournaments, competitions and governing bodies within our ten tracked sports, they remain relatively broad searches. This said, we are confident that our techniques have enabled us to

capture social media conversations that are representative of people's opinions on these subjects and online news coverage reporting on the subject matter in question, and therefore give rise to interesting insights that can point to wider trends.

## Location is self-reported.

Geolocation data is retrieved directly from users' social media profiles – which means it is only as accurate as they are, and not necessarily always perfect or up to date.





02

# Key Findings

# OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

- Reach increased when sustainability or social and community-related topics were discussed: in other words, media are engaging with these topics.
- The opposite was true for engagement: when these two elements were detected in digital content mentioning the ten sports, for the most part the level of engagement actually declined. This suggests that while the media may be happy to publish on these subjects, the general public is showing less interest, and these themes, stories and issues may not be resonating well enough for people to react or respond.
- When looking at absolute numbers, football led on every metric (volume, reach engagement) in every search category (overall, sustainability-related content, Social & Community Matters content), with basketball also strong in multiple metrics. However, the picture looks quite different when looking at average reach and average engagement – in which sailing and motorsport in particular performed strongly, despite trailing on volume.
- In percentage terms, sailing and tennis saw the greatest proportion of their content focused on sustainability & social and community matters.
- Content about football (overall) generated greater reach than content about the Gaza crisis, and additionally generated more than four times more engagement on average.
- Each of the ten sports we tracked in this study generated higher average engagement figures than the seven socio-political issues we compared them against in this study – suggesting that people appear to have greater interest in engaging with sport than with socio-political issues and underscoring sport's potency as a medium for impactful discourse and positive societal change.
- Video is a popular format of consumption of sporting content. Many of the highest engagement influencers produce content on TikTok and YouTube (as opposed to X/Twitter, Instagram or Facebook).
- Peaks in conversation volume and engagement often arose from discussions orientated around sporting events and initiatives, but criticism and discussion of negative issues were just as likely to be conversation starters – sometimes resulting in positive outcomes.
- Message dissemination can be boosted by cross-sport collaborations (which are highly impactful in digital conversations), engagement with local press and humour (but the latter is a delicate course to navigate given widespread trivialisation and climate hoax beliefs).
- Engagement was also well amplified by influencer involvement – typically seen more strongly from teams/organisations than from individuals. However, individual athletes can also be incredibly powerful (Vinicius Jr, Harry Kane, Lewis Hamilton, Sebastian Vettel, Serena Williams and David Rudisha serve as standout examples) and leadership on climate change appears to be broadly welcomed.
- Popular subjects of interest discussed across multiple sports included:
  - disruption and protests
  - emissions/transport/scheduling/logistics
  - innovation/technology/facilities
  - re-usage and upcycling of materials such as trophies, stages, equipment
  - sponsorships and ownership
  - the BBC Green Sport Awards





# 03

## CROSS-SPORT COMPARISON

In this section, we compare the volume, reach and engagement generated by content for each sport. We assess these datapoints for each sport overall, in sustainability-related contexts and in social and community-related contexts.

In some senses, the data findings are as you might expect – football achieved the highest sum total scores in all metrics. However, when we look at average reach and average engagement, the picture changes significantly, and surfaces some high performant sports.

# 03

Football ranked first on every metric in absolute terms... but not when average reach or average engagement are considered.

Football generated the highest coverage volume, reach and engagement in all three categories of search - overall, sustainability-related coverage and social and community-related coverage. However, while it led on absolute volume, it failed to achieve the highest average reach or highest average engagement in any category.

While basketball generated the second highest volume of coverage overall and second highest on social and community matters, it generated only the seventh highest volume of coverage on sustainability.

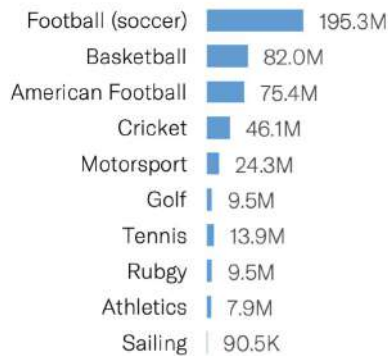
On volume of sustainability coverage, it was golf that ranked second behind football, primarily due to concerns about the level of resource required to maintain golf courses.

On sustainability and social and community matters, cricket generated the second highest engagement after football – whereas its level of overall engagement ranked only fifth.

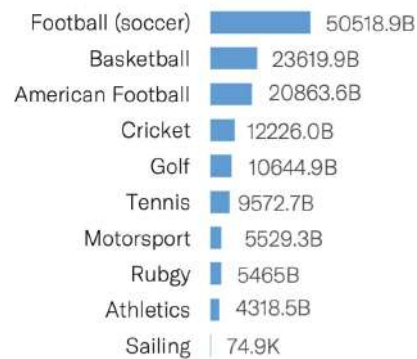
Sailing had the lowest volume of coverage, lowest reach and fewest engagements in all three categories of search – but fared well when these factors were evaluated as average rather than as absolute figures (see next slides).

# 03

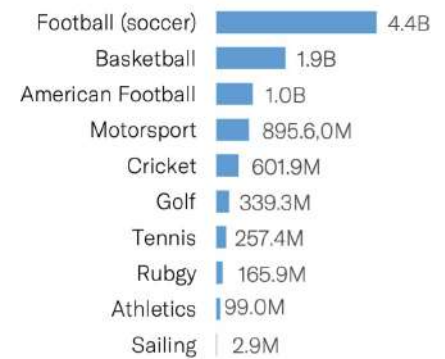
## Overall Volume



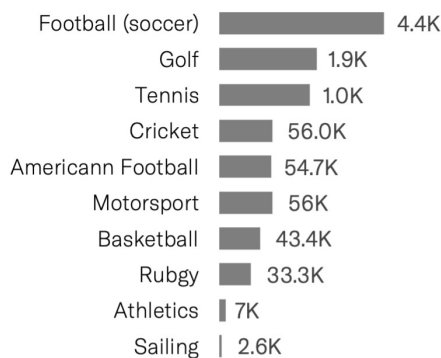
## Overall Reach



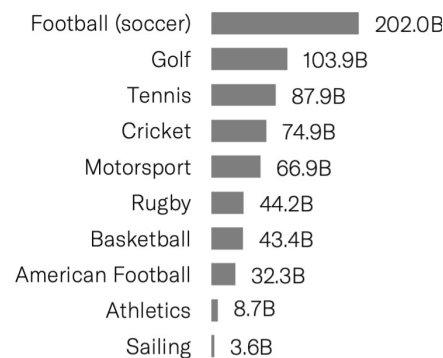
## Overall Engagement\*



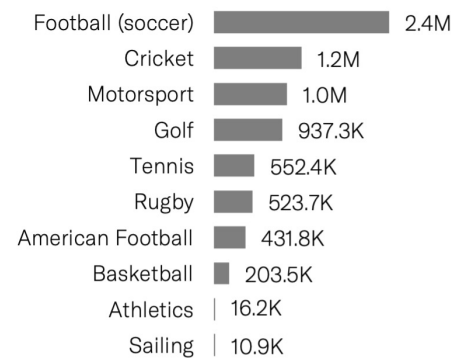
## Sustainability Volume



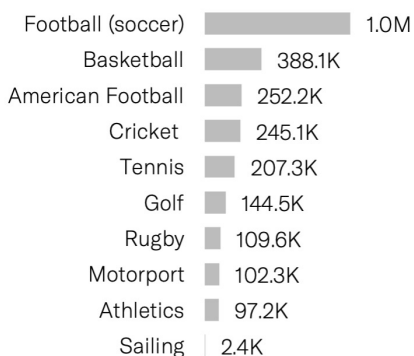
## Sustainability Reach



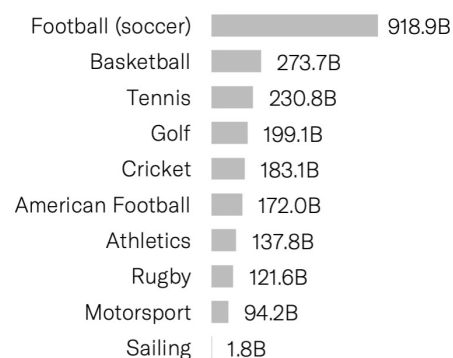
## Sustainability Engagement\*



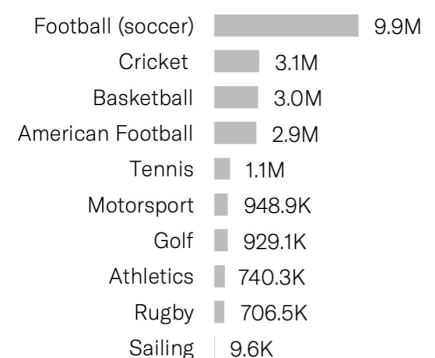
## Social and Community Matters Volume



## Social and Community Matters Reach



## Social and Community Matters Engagement\*



\*Engagements refers to the number of shares, likes, comments or reactions that content gains on social media.

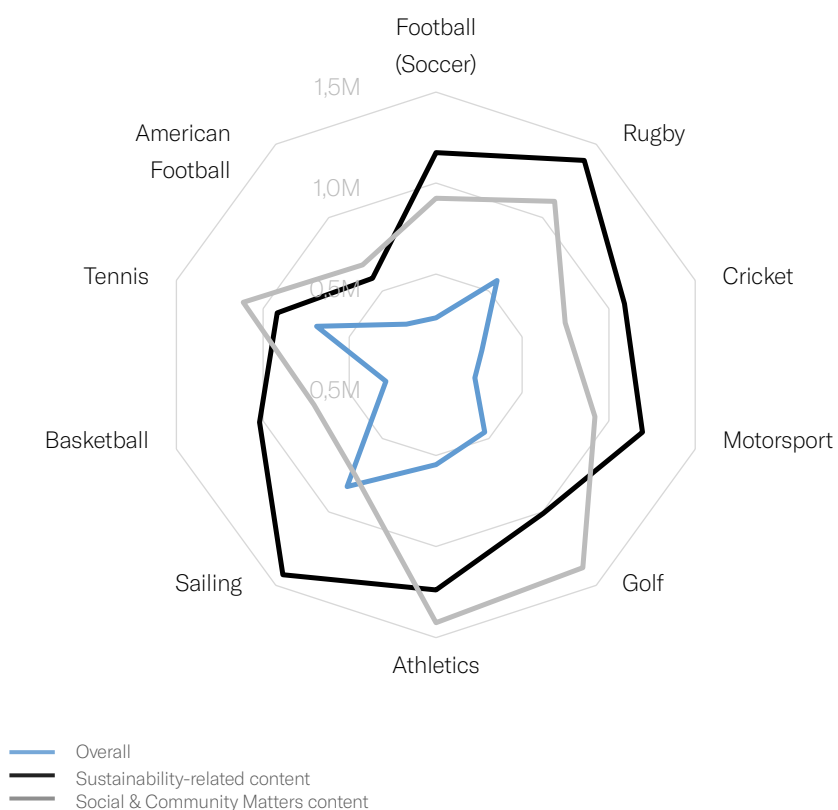


# 03

While average reach increased when sustainability or social & community matters were discussed, average engagement actually decreased.

Football led on every metric in every search category when looking at absolute numbers, with basketball also strong in multiple metrics. However, the picture looks quite different when looking at average reach and average engagement.

Average reach per piece of content



In general terms, average reach increases when content discusses sustainability or social and community matters. In other words, higher value media outlets were more likely to be interested in talking about any given sport alongside these subjects than talking about the sports in general terms without these subjects.

Sailing was the one slight exception to this: content about sailing overall generated marginally higher average reach than sailing content about social and community matters. This said, sailing content referencing sustainability generated the highest average reach of sport and content set, averaging 1.4M per piece of content.

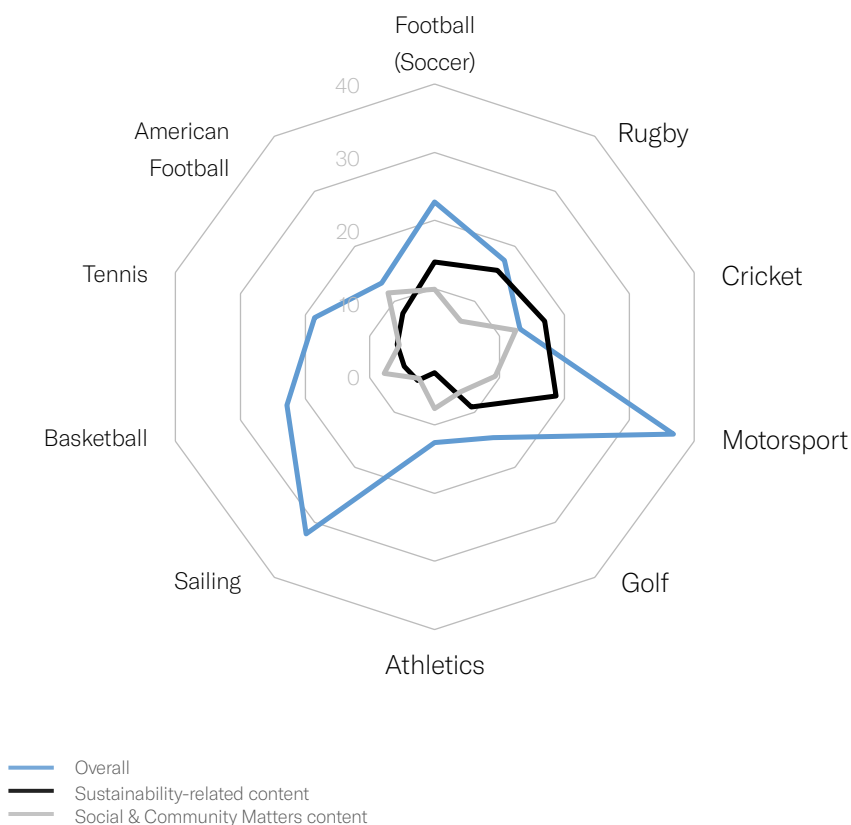
Golf and athletics content referencing social and community matters also attracted similarly high reach, again averaging 1.4M per piece of content.

For six of the ten sports, average reach per item was highest when sustainability topics were discussed within media coverage. For four sports (tennis, American Football, golf and athletics), average reach was highest when social and community matters were discussed.

\*Engagements refers to the number of shares, likes, comments or reactions that content gains on social media.

Cricket was the only sport for which engagement increased if sustainability or social and community topics were discussed.

Average engagements\* per piece of content



While reach increases if sustainability or social and community matters are present, the opposite was true for engagement: when these two elements were detected in digital content mentioning the ten sports, for the most part engagement actually declined.

Cricket was the only sport for which engagement increased if sustainability or social and community topics were discussed.

(While engagement with sustainability topics was largely driven by response to climate protests, engagement with social and community topics was driven by proactive outreach from the ICC, namely action to tackle [gender equality](#) by announcing prize parity for the men's and women's games, and establishing a [community initiative](#) with UNICEF.)

This suggests that, cricket excepted, while the media may be well engaged and keen to publish content on these subjects, the general public is showing less interest. As such, these themes, stories and issues may not resonate well enough for people to react, respond or engage with it.

However, this cannot be said unanimously, and there are many nuances, exceptions and success stories, which will be examined in the following pages.

\*Engagements refers to the number of shares, likes, comments or reactions that content gains on social media.

# 03

## Sailing had the largest proportion of content focused on sustainability and social & community matters.

In various analyses we have undertaken for the corporate sector, UNICEPTA has typically seen the proportion of a given organisation's content focused on sustainability (or climate change) range from 0.3% to 1% - which provides an interesting benchmark against which the ten sports we track in this research can be compared.

Most notably, sailing demonstrated a somewhat higher emphasis on sustainability - and was also the only sport to have more of its content focusing on sustainability than on social and community matters.

Tennis placed second on both metrics.

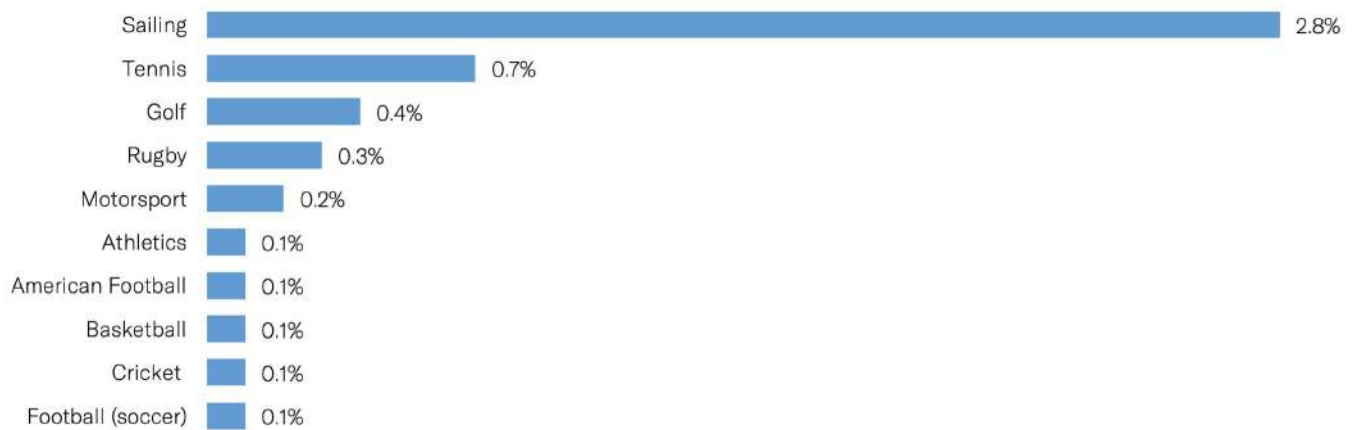
Golf ranked third on sustainability but fifth on social and community matters - with issues relating to its presence in Saudi Arabia very much front of mind.

Conversely, athletics ranked fifth on sustainability and third on social and community matters. The participation of transgender athletes was often a key driver of coverage in the latter.

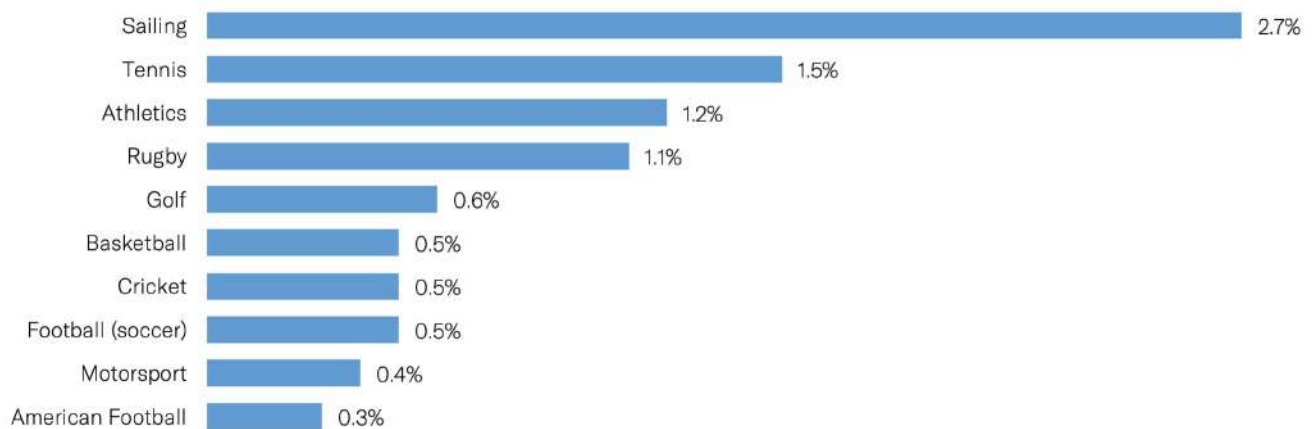


# 03

## Sustainability-related coverage as a percentage of overall content



## Social & Community Matters coverage as a percentage of overall content



## SPORT IN FOCUS: FOOTBALL

	VOLUME	AVERAGE REACH	AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT
Overall	195,291,735	258,684	22.7
Sustainability-related content	173,109	1,167,074	13.9
Social & Community Matters content	1,003,014	916,144	9.9

### Key topics of conversation

- Strong focus on air travel, transport and scheduling.
- Scrutiny on 2022 Qatar World Cup carbon neutrality claims and concerns about sustainability at future World Cups.
- Strong theme of leadership and setting examples.
- High engagement around Liverpool FC's sustainability stories and with Vinicius Jr.

# 04

## Major events were the catalyst for sustainability-oriented conversations.

Football's sustainability coverage was primarily orientated around major events such as the FIFA Men's and Women's World Cups. The highest peak in sustainability coverage coincided with the release of a [report](#) assessing how the climate crisis could impact the 2026 World Cup, which is to be held across Canada, USA and Mexico. This report sparked widespread [discussion](#) on X (formerly Twitter) about the FIFA's role in sustainability in its tournaments. The conversation emphasised the importance

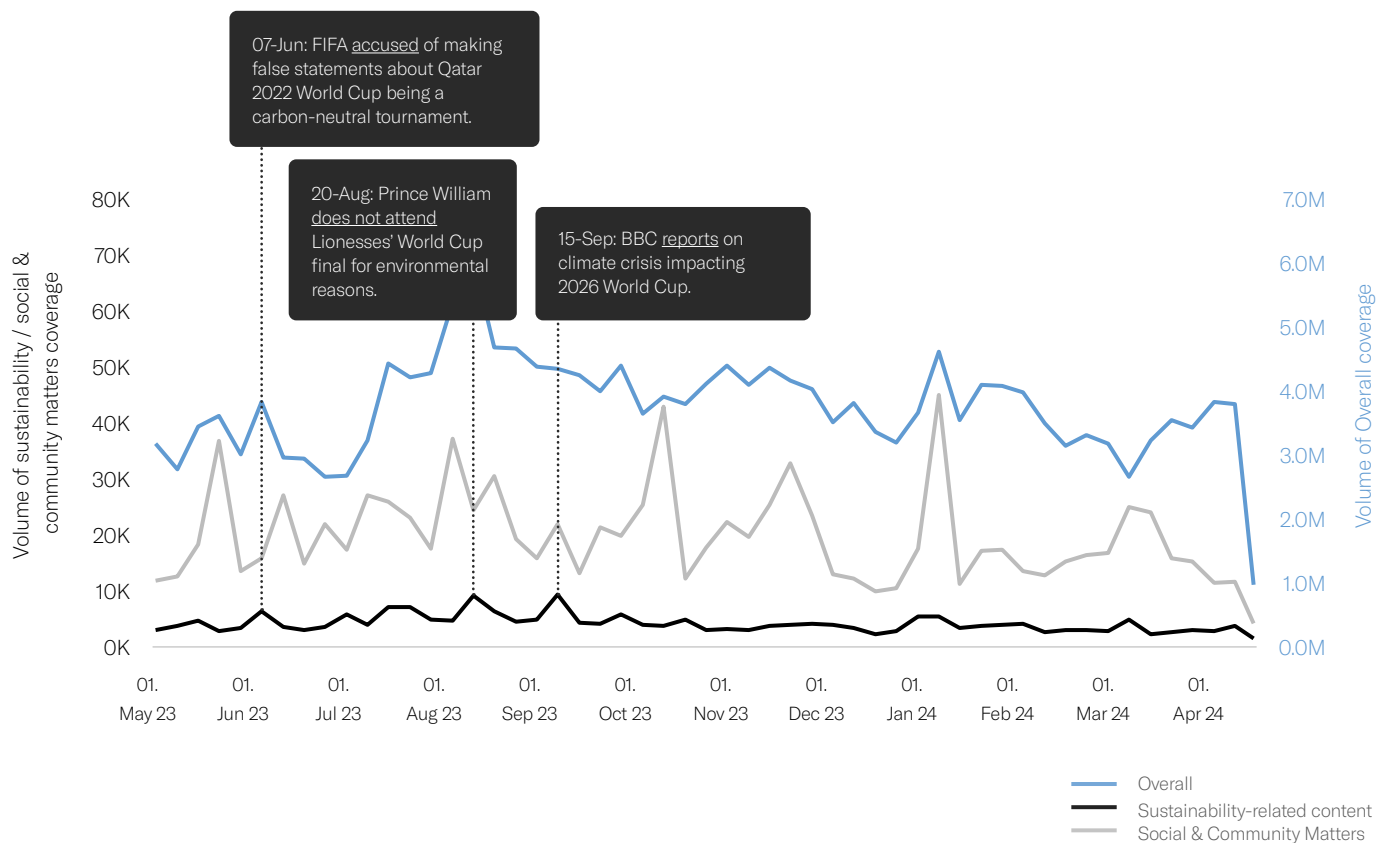
of [climate leadership](#) after BBC pundit Gary Lineker [spoke out](#) on the issues.

A similarly high peak in coverage in mid-August 2023 was driven by content in both [online news](#) and [social media](#) touching on Prince William's decision not to fly, owing environmental reasons, to Sydney to watch the England Women's team play in the World Cup final. While attracting [criticism](#) for not supporting the England team in person, he also generated [support](#) on

account of his consciousness of the cost of carbon footprint to view one game on the other side of the world.

The FIFA Men's World Cup continued to drive sustainability coverage with online news reports [questioning](#) the decision to hold the 2030 World Cup across six countries, amid concerns about environmental repercussions.

Volume of online news and social media coverage over time





# 04

## Footballer Vinicius Jr and Liverpool FC achieved high levels of both reach and engagement.

Despite having a lower volume of content compared to some other prevalent football organisations, Liverpool FC generated the second-highest average reach and engagement.

In the context of sustainability, this was largely driven by the club [winning](#) a sustainability award at the Football Business Awards in May 2023, recognising its ongoing sustainability strategy, coined “The Red Way”.

However, Liverpool FC was also [recognised](#) for its donation to Arsenal FC’s matchday foodbank collection, which helps minimise food waste among football supporters. This was part of the Green Football Weekend initiative, which ran from 2-5 February 2024.

In terms of social media amplification, it was notable that both of these stories originated from [liverpoolfc.com](https://liverpoolfc.com), with relatively little reporting from other media outlets. Given that the











links and stories pushed by Liverpool FC travelled well on social media to generate this high engagement, it can be inferred that the club has a strong fanbase which is well tuned in to these initiatives, and that its website is a trusted source of news and information (or at the very least, that the club has a successful strategy to direct web traffic towards its website). Mirroring Liverpool’s strategy of having a named, defined, quasi-branded sustainability policy may yield success for other clubs looking to replicate high levels of resonance amongst fans.

# 04

## FIFA outscored UEFA on volume of content and engagement levels.

Despite having the third highest volume of content on sustainability or social and community matters, UEFA registered the lowest average engagement - suggesting the messaging it has deployed may not be resonating as well as that of other organisations (FIFA included). Online news outlets reported on UEFA [launching](#) a carbon footprint calculator to help European clubs lower emissions, as well as it [encouraging](#) teams to avoid flying between matches during Euro 2024.

Who is most prevalent (by volume) in football's sustainability and social/community-related content?

		Average reach*	Average engagement*
FIFA (incl. World Cup mentions)	 190.901	1.9M	17.1
Premier League	 109.872	1.9M	11.8
UEFA	 41.442	2.4M	9.6
La Liga	 34.043	1.5M	13.0
Arsenal FC	 28.883	2.7M	10.4
Real Madrid	 24.762	3.2M	12.8
Manchester United	 22.776	3.4M	19.9
Liverpool FC	 22.602	3.7M	21.0
Kick It Out	 16.653	2.0M	13.1
Vinicius Junior	 15.899	4.8M	22.0

Real Madrid's Brazilian forward Vinicius Junior generated only tenth highest volume of content relating to social and community matters and sustainability content, yet achieved highest average reach and highest average engagement.

Analysis of those high engagement stories references Vinicius becoming a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Education for All

in February 2024, joining FIFA's anti-racism committee in June 2023, and praising Sevilla for ejecting a racist fan in October 2023. That Vinicius, often the target of racial abuse himself, has shown engagement on these issues demonstrates perfectly how influential high-profile athletes can be in driving change in such areas.

\*Average reach is the total reach for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

Average engagement is the total number of engagements for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

# 04

## Fan interests are front of mind and political involvement carries influence.

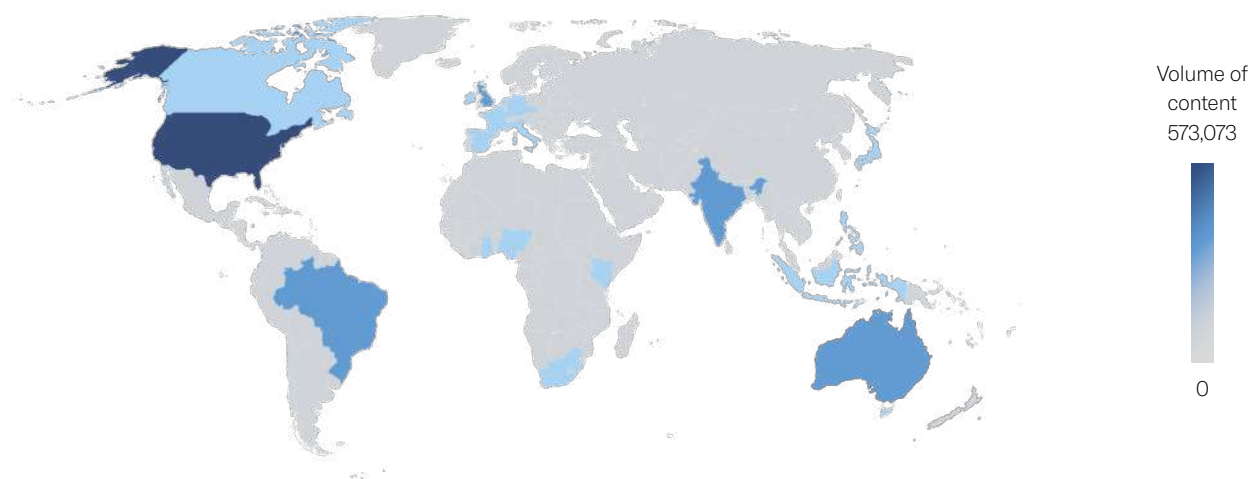
The highest engagement influencers for sustainability and social and community matters in football surfaced on TikTok and X (formerly Twitter). The greatest level of impact was achieved by a high engagement TikTok [post](#) by former France President François Hollande, which showed him playing football with the Banlieues Climat group (an association whose goal is to unite, raise awareness and inspire populations in working class neighborhoods on environmental and climate issues).

Content relating to Liverpool FC was prominent, with two high engagement X accounts ([Anfield Watch](#) and [Liverpool FC](#)) posting about the club's sustainability achievements.

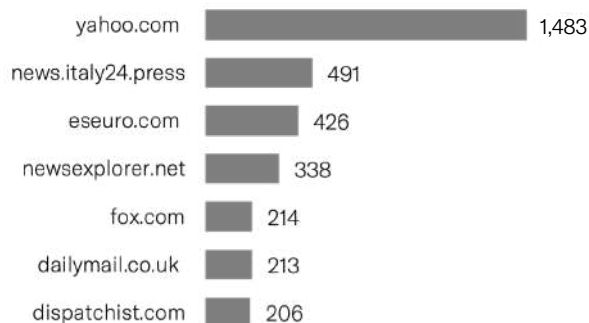
The X account of journalist David Philips created high engagement amongst social media users by [criticising](#) the sustainability efforts of the Premier League and broadcasters, particularly during Green Football Weekend, for scheduling fixtures that prevented travelling fans from using public transport.

# 04

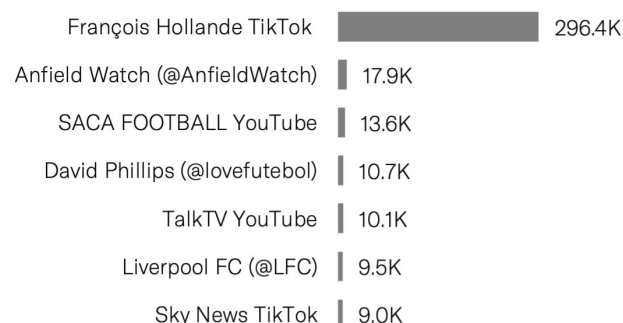
Heat map: where is football-related sustainability coverage and/or social/community matters coverage (combined) most discussed?



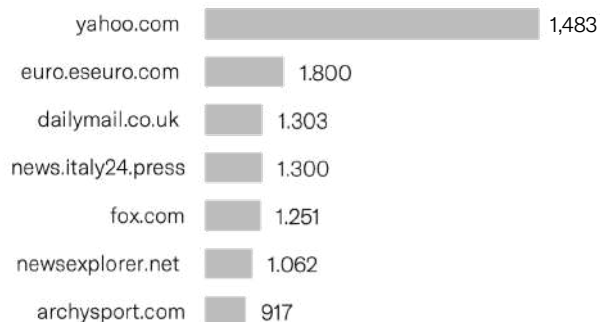
Top online news outlets publishing sustainability content (volume)



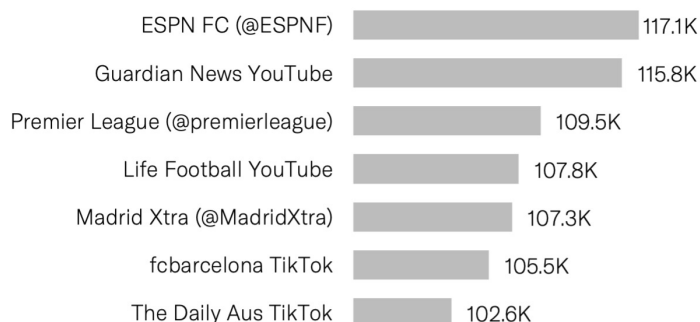
Top social media influencers publishing sustainability content (engagement)



Top online news outlets publishing social/community matters content (volume)



Top social media influencers publishing social/community matters content (engagement)





## SPORT IN FOCUS: RUGBY

	VOLUME	AVERAGE REACH	AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT
Overall	9,532,451	573,306	17.4
Sustainability-related content	573,306	1,387,903	15.7
Social & Community Matters content	17.4	1,109,033	6.4

### Key topics of conversation

- Air travel, transport, sustainable travel.
- Sustainability conversations peaked around calendar events such as World Cup, Premiership Final.
- Interest in disruption caused by Just Stop Oil.
- Focus on sponsorships (most notably Scottish Gas and TotalEnergies).
- Demonstration that frequent posts and strong local presence helped Scottish Rugby to solidify and enhance reputation.

# 04

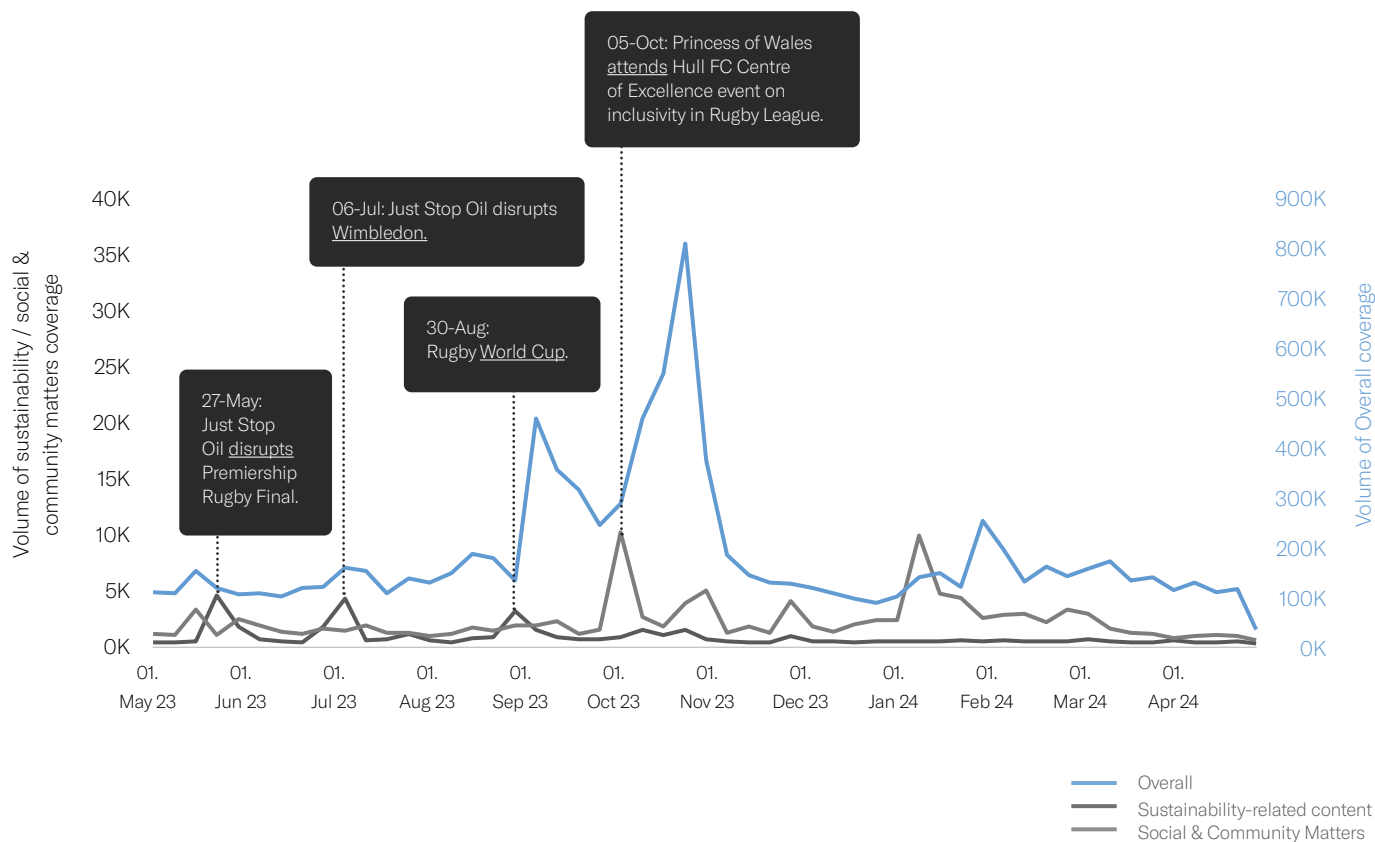
## Disruption triggered peaks in content about sustainability in rugby and tennis.

Sustainability coverage relating to rugby was driven by [discussion](#) of climate protesters at rugby events, particularly coverage of Just Stop Oil activists disrupting the Premiership Rugby final in May 2023. Similarly, a peak in content on sustainability in July derived from Just Stop Oil action disrupting [Wimbledon](#), with articles and posts connecting to the previous disruption at the Premiership Rugby final.

While rugby organisations, leagues and teams were most prevalent in terms of volume of mentions, reach and engagement, TotalEnergies featured heavily in sustainability-focused content at the end of August and in early September 2023 as a sponsor of the Rugby World Cup. Greenpeace was the most active critic on social media, posting 14 times on X (formerly Twitter). This included [condemnation](#) of

the Rugby World Cup and [claims](#) that fossil fuel companies sponsor sporting events to distract from destruction to the environment.

Volume of online news and social media coverage over time













# 04

## The Springboks drew on a broad range of stories relating to sustainability and social/community matters.

The Springboks were the most mentioned organisation in sustainability and social/community-related content, though this was overwhelmingly driven by social media content, primarily [highlighting](#) a speech from captain Siya Kolisi calling on the government of South Africa to “use our diversity a bit more”. The Springboks captain also [featured](#) in content discussing his participation in a TotalEnergies PR campaign for its solar-powered service stations. In September 2023, World Rugby [highlighted](#) that it won the IOC Climate Action Award 2023 for Innovation for its work alongside the Springboks to make the 2022 Rugby World Cup Sevens more sustainable. While this discussion was reasonably limited in terms of volume and engagement, [tone](#) was distinctly positive.

Who is most prevalent (by volume) in football’s sustainability and social/community-related content?

		Average reach*	Average engagement*
The Springboks	 7.347	1.3M	8.7
World Rugby	 5.906	2.9M	14.0
Owen Farrell	 5.088	5.4M	5.4
England Rugby	 4.215	2.7M	12.7
Rugby Football Union	 3.805	6.1M	8.5
Rugby Football League	 3.701	1.8M	8.0
Wallabies	 2.981	2.3M	8.4
Welsh Rugby Union	 2.642	5.5M	13.3
All Blacks	 2.276	3.2M	12.4
TotalEnergies	 2.106	430.9K	6.9

\*Average reach is the total reach for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

Average engagement is the total number of engagements for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.



# 04

Earth Day provided a key platform to launch communications platforms" in rugby and in basketball.

World Rugby, the second most mentioned organisation, [featured](#) in articles discussing national teams travelling sustainably to the Rugby World Cup. On Earth Day, [World Rugby](#) and the UN Environmental Programme [highlighted](#) the “[Rugby for Nature](#)” initiative, designed to limit the game’s environmental impact and preserve biodiversity. International days such as Earth Day are likely to provide a strong platform to launch and spotlight environmental initiatives by other teams and individuals.

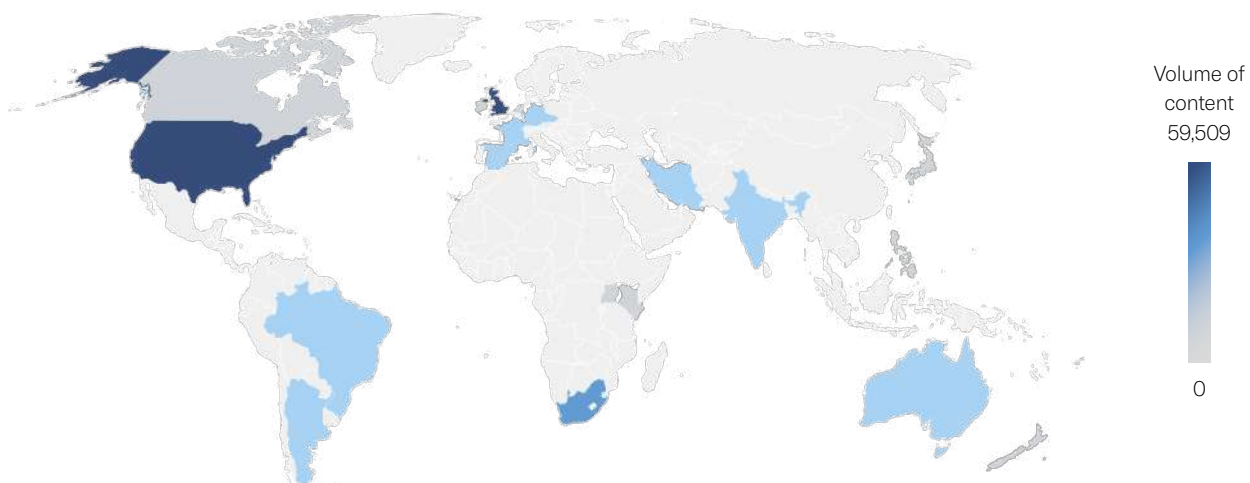
World Rugby did, however, receive [criticism](#) due to opposition to TotalEnergies as a World Cup sponsor. For instance, the [Irish Independent](#) reported World Rugby had tried to stop the release of a Greenpeace video featuring an Irish comedian criticising the sponsorship.



# 04

High frequency posting on local issues helped to build a positive presence online for Scottish Rugby.

Heat map: where is rugby-related sustainability coverage and/or social/community matters coverage (combined) most discussed?



Rugby conversation was particularly prevalent in the UK. Key social media influencers often focused on Just Stop Oil disrupting the Premiership Rugby Final, with UK media outlets [reporting neutrally](#) and sharing footage; Just Stop Oil social media accounts also [shared](#) footage and asked for donations in the caption alongside warnings about global emissions.

Though it was not one of the most frequently mentioned organisations, Scottish Rugby was amongst the standout organisations in terms of positive sentiment on sustainability issues. This was largely down to its proactive promotion of its environmental efforts in collaboration with the Royal Bank of Scotland on TikTok; key posts included RBS ambassadors Jim Hamilton (former Scotland international) and Caroline Blair (TV presenter) [opening](#) a day of climate action in August 2023, a [video](#) showing national players detailing how clubs can be more eco-friendly, and a [feature](#) on local clubs embarking on their climate journey.

While there was lower engagement on this content than on discussion of climate protests (which, naturally, is typically a polarising subject), that Scottish Rugby published multiple posts on the same subject on the same platform will have helped to create perception of sustained interest and seriousness on the subject of sustainability. Further, given that Scottish Rugby is the only rugby team or organisation we could find to post on TikTok on sustainability during the reporting period, it suggests there is significant opportunity for teams, organisations and individuals to reach a broader audience via this platform.

While Scottish Rugby positively highlighted its [partnership](#) with Scottish Gas to address carbon emissions at Scottish Gas Murrayfield, some responses denounced the partnership as “[greenwashing](#)” by Scottish Gas.

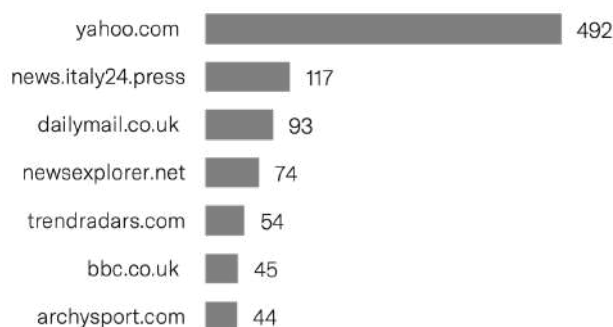
# 04

Regional press featured amongst the most impactful outlets publishing social and community-related coverage.

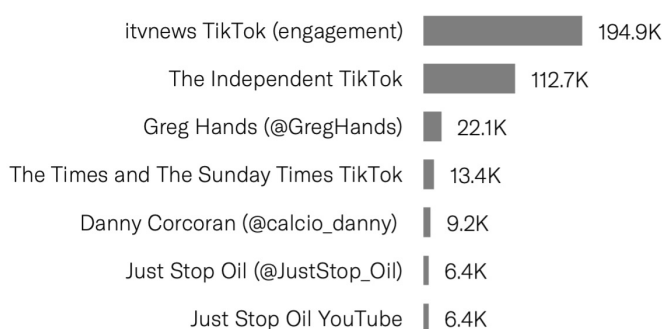
In terms of discussion on both sustainability and social and community matters, the highest engagement influencers published on TikTok. The top social and community-related influencers often focused on LGBTIQ+ participation in rugby, with Sport Bible [highlighting](#) statements by the first openly gay rugby league player.

The appearance of regional news website walesonline.co.uk (alongside larger national and international outlets) in the top online news outlets for social and community matters demonstrates the important role of local media. Local outlets often report (positive) local news stories, which can combine and amplify to tell powerful stories. As Scottish Rugby demonstrate (see previous slides), local engagement can be a winning strategy.

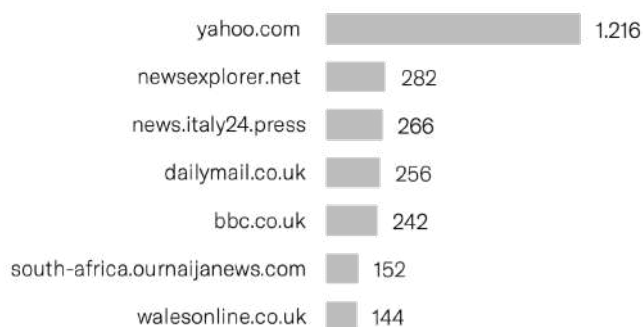
Top online news outlets publishing sustainability content (volume)



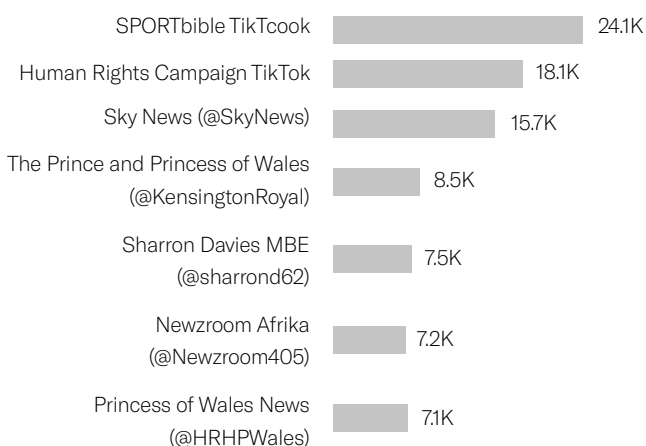
Top social media influencers publishing sustainability content (engagement)



Top online news outlets publishing social/community matters content (volume)



Top social media influencers publishing social/community-related content (engagement)



## SPORT IN FOCUS: CRICKET

	VOLUME	AVERAGE REACH	AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT
Overall	46,086,538	265,284	13.1
Sustainability-related content	68,745	1,089,965	16.9
Social & Community Matters content	245,075	747,027	12.5

### Key topics of conversation

- Largely positive tone thanks to theme of leadership and recognition of climate change efforts.
- Polarised views on effectiveness of disruption.
- Equality and gender parity.

# 04

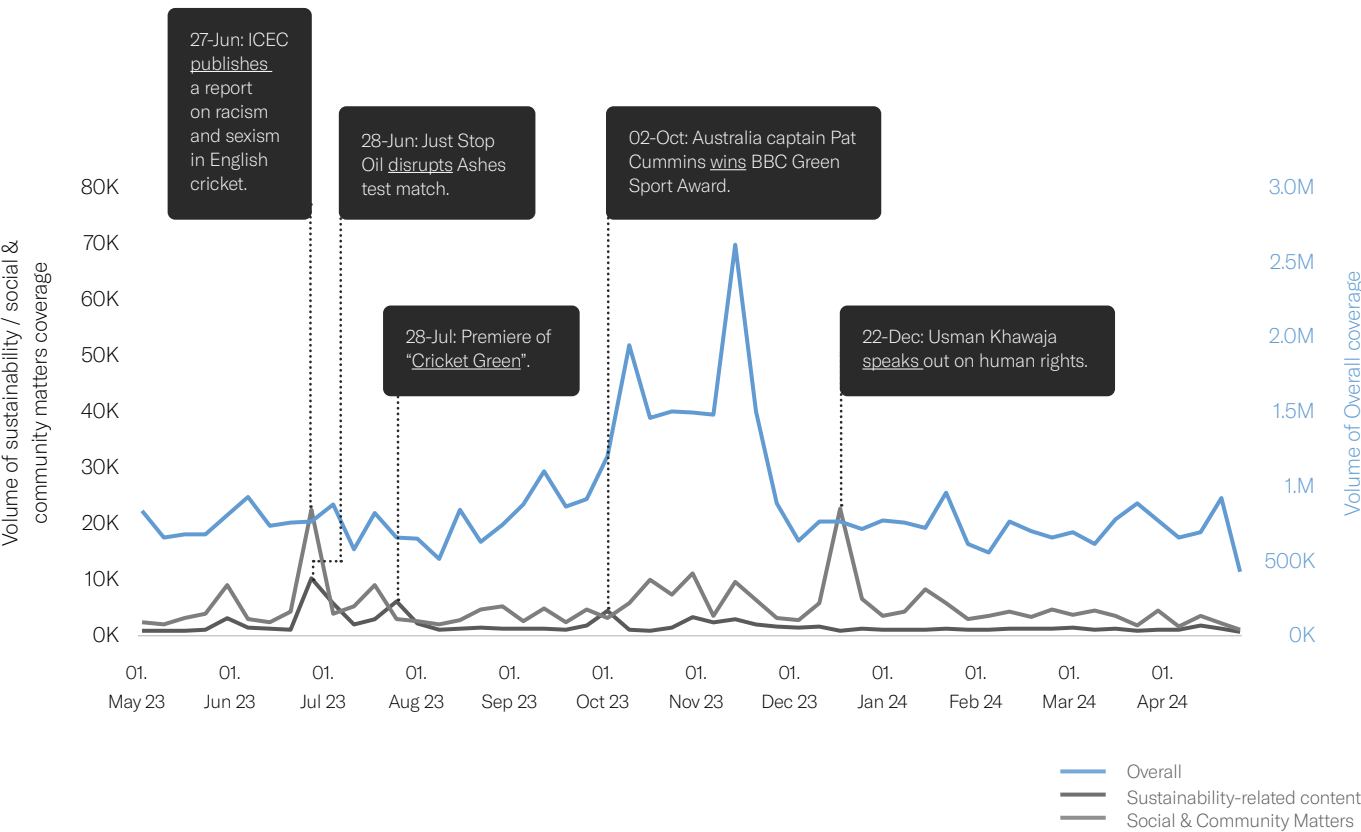
## Carrot and stick: disruption at Ashes and award for cricketer were among the largest spikes in sustainability coverage.

Cricket sustainability coverage was driven by [discussion](#) of climate protests during the 2023 Ashes series, during which England player Jonny Bairstow carried a Just Stop Oil protester off the pitch. Further high-profile stories included Australia captain Pat Cummins winning a BBC Green Sport Award for leadership in climate change and environmental sustainability, along with the [premiere](#) of "Cricket Green", a performative

show exploring cricket's relationship with the climate emergency. Lastly, Indian Cricket's [commitments](#) to eco-friendly behaviour also drove sustainability discussion. The International Cricket Council (ICC) was the most prevalent organisation in cricket's social/community and sustainability-focused content. This was primarily

driven by social and community-related [discussion](#) of the ICC's equal pay initiative, to be enacted across all its events. In terms of sustainability, in early October 2023, the ICC was [praised](#) for unveiling national team flags made from recycled plastic bottles at the Cricket World Cup opening ceremony in India. However, the ICC also faced [criticism](#) for purportedly exposing visiting players to severe air pollution in the same tournament.

Volume of online news and social media coverage over time















# 04

Virat Kohli achieved average engagement ten times higher than anyone else's (despite no active involvement in the campaigns being reported).

Who is most prevalent (by volume) in cricket's sustainability and social/community-related content?

		Average reach*	Average engagement*
International Cricket Council (ICC)	 54.761	860.3K	35.2
Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)	 17.483	961.5K	4.4
Cricket Australia	 16.923	1.3M	1.6
England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB)	 15.693	2.4M	3.8
Usman Khawaja	 14.610	580.5K	5.3
Indian Premier League (IPL)	 13.889	1.9M	30.8
Pakistan Cricket Board	 11.309	1.0M	5.5
Ben Stokes	 5.604	3.4M	5.8
Virat Kohli	 5.534	2.1M	389.6
Lord's Cricket Ground	 4.533	1.9M	4.3

India's talismanic captain, Virat Kohli, achieved an average engagement more than ten times higher than anyone else's thanks in part to [content mentioning](#) him alongside the ICC's inclusion and gender equality partnership with UNICEF, which also mentioned its ambassador David Beckham. Despite not taking an active role in that partnership, it is clear that Virat Kohli commands considerable influence amongst his [dedicated fanbase](#) and combining him (or the India cricket team) alongside other global sporting icons represents significant opportunity.

\*Average reach is the total reach for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

Average engagement is the total number of engagements for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

# 04

USA, India and UK dominant in producing cricket-related content on sustainability and social & community matters.

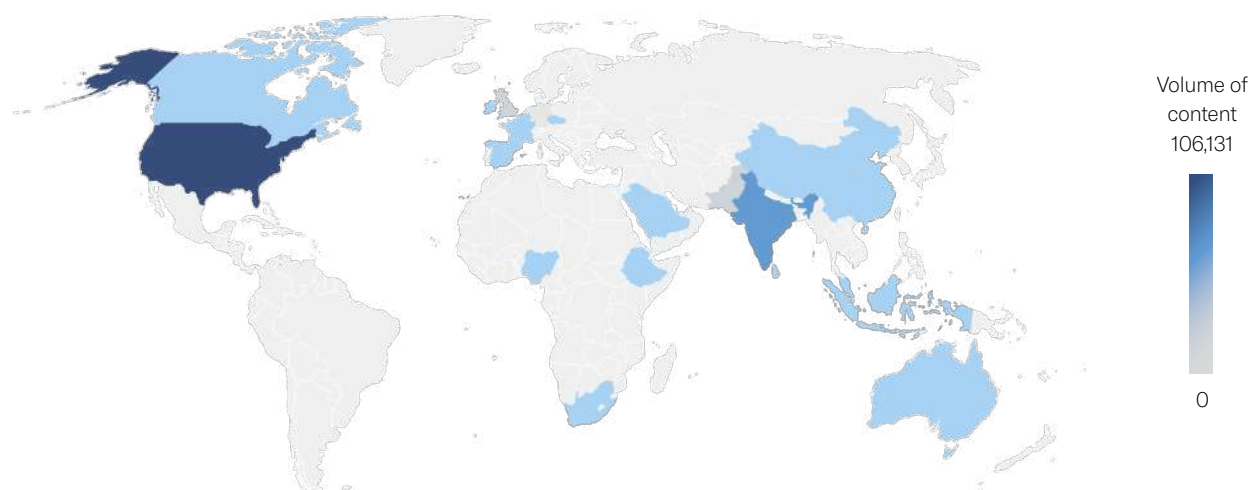
For both sustainability and social/community-related discussion, the top influencers surfaced on X (formerly Twitter), with the majority of content originating from the USA, India and UK.

The top influencers publishing social community-related content focused on increased inclusivity within cricket. Jay Shah, President of the Asian Cricket Council, [focused](#) on gender parity, as it was announced that the prize money for all ICC events would be consistent for both men and women.

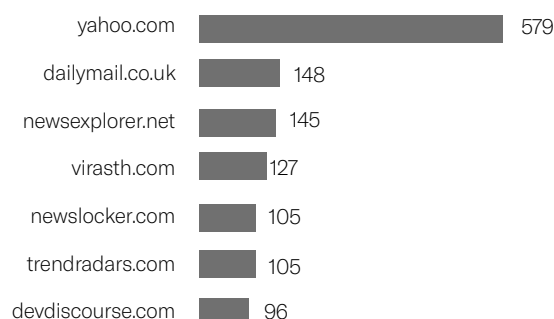
The top influencers discussing sustainability in cricket focused on the climate action protests during the 2023 Ashes series. The YouTube channels of Black Conservative Perspective, GB News, Piers Morgan Uncensored and the Daily Mail [discussed](#) the event, with debates on how effective protests like these are at conveying the intended message to the public.

# 04

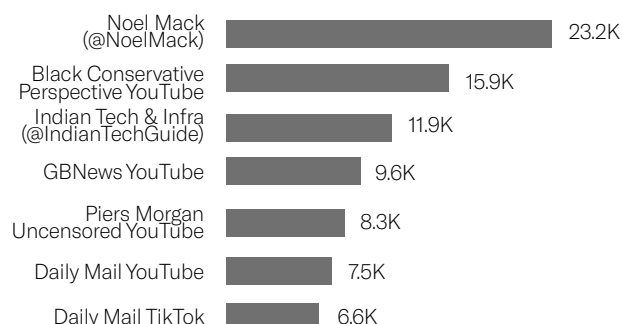
Heat map: where is cricket-related sustainability coverage and/or social/community matters coverage (combined) most discussed?



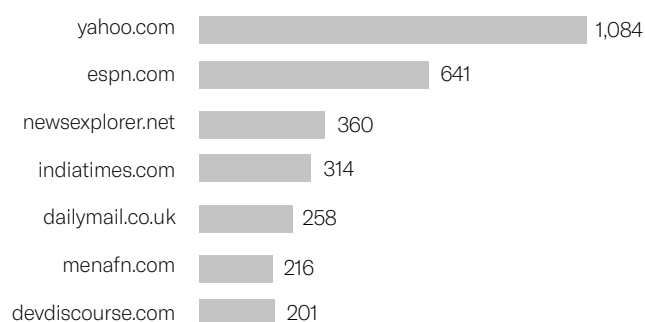
Top online news outlets publishing sustainability content (volume)



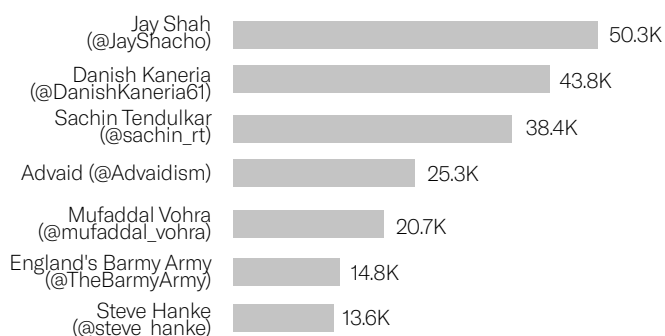
Top social media influencers publishing sustainability content (engagement)



Top online news outlets publishing social/community matters content (volume)



Top social media influencers publishing social/community-related content (engagement)



\*Average reach is the total reach for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

Average engagement is the total number of engagements for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

## SPORT IN FOCUS: MOTORSPORT

	VOLUME	AVERAGE REACH	AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT
Overall	24,347,205	227,102	36.8
Sustainability-related content	55,969	1,195,078	18.7
Social & Community Matters content	102,349	920,166	9.3

### Key topics of conversation

- Driver sympathy for Just Stop Oil juxtaposed by scrutiny of a high carbon emitting sport and perceived hypocrisy in drivers leading a “private jet” lifestyle.
- JSO criticised for disrupting a Formula E event.
- Strong focus on innovation/technology, travel/transport/scheduling and emissions.



# 04

37M people viewed a video criticising activists seeking to disrupt a Formula E event – an organisation trying to make motorsport more eco-friendly.

F1 was the most prominent and most visible organisation mentioned in relation to sustainability and positive impact in motorsport, with some of its biggest stars acting as key drivers of both positive and negative sentiment towards the sport.

Lewis Hamilton was proactive in sharing positive [messages](#) about diversity and inclusion, whilst Sebastian Vettel was the lead in a campaign to increase awareness of the need for [biodiversity](#), promoting 'bee hotels' at the Japanese Grand Prix. Other F1 voices were less prominent, with one highly engaged with [tweet](#) stating that Hamilton and Vettel were the only two who "gave a [expletive]" about "humanity, equality, inclusivity and using their global platforms to

speak on issues worldwide, spread awareness and be the voice for the voiceless." Whilst current world champion Max Verstappen featured – just – in the top ten most frequently mentioned organisations and athletes mentioned in motorsport's sustainability and social/community-related content, those mentions mostly referenced different topics alongside unrelated posts about sustainability issues in F1.

# 04

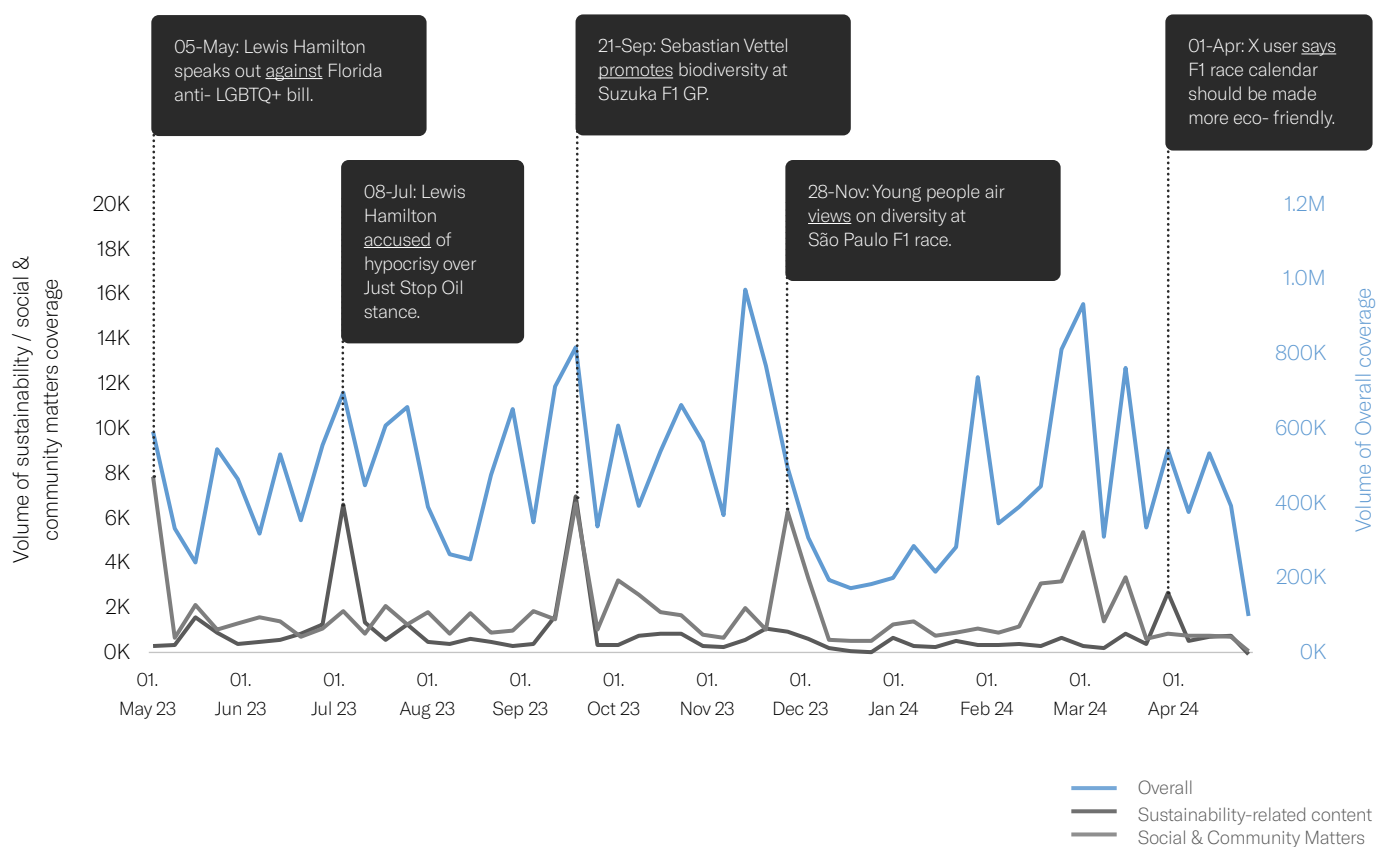
Hamilton did, however, attract both praise and criticism in response to his vocal stance on sustainability and social and community matters, particularly in relation to [diversity topics](#), and was accused of being a hypocrite for supporting a 'peaceful' Just Stop Oil while participating in a [carbon-powered](#) sport and using [private jets](#).

Given that Vettel has [retired](#) and Hamilton is in the latter stages of his career, F1 and its constructors could consider nurturing new voices to advocate these issues.

[Protests](#) by climate activists at [races](#) were a key driver of [media](#) coverage and [discussion](#). The singular highest source of social media engagement came from

a [video](#) (37M views – since taken offline) which labelled protesters on the track at a Formula E race "stupid" for protesting at a sport designed to be more eco-friendly.

## Volume of online news and social media coverage over time



# 04











Power of the athlete: the average reach and average engagement of F1 drivers was similar or higher than that of organisations. Formula E excels in engagement.

There was positive engagement with innovative ideas to increase the sustainability of motorsport, such as [hydrogen-powered](#) vehicles or the use of [recycled](#) carbon fibre in F1 car parts. Other positively received initiatives included efforts to [reduce food waste](#) at Moto GP events and Sebastian Vettel's [biodiversity](#) initiative.

A more [hotly debated](#) concept was altering race calendars based on geographical closeness of locations to reduce the environmental impact of travel, which had its supporters and detractors. There was also a mixed reaction to MotoGP transitioning to [40% ecofuels](#), with some [unconvinced](#) as to whether the fuel has less impact on the environment, while others were pleased that combustion engines were still favoured over electric.

# 04

Who is most prevalent (by volume) in motorsport's sustainability and social/community-related content?

		Average reach*	Average engagement*
Formula 1	 101,665	1.1M	12.1
Lewis Hamilton	 32,267	1.3M	10.8
Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA)	 20,615	1.5M	6.9
McLaren F1	 15,456	1.5M	5.8
Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1	 11,129	3.1M	13.6
Sebastian Vettel	 9,059	1.1M	12.1
Formula E	 8,889	1.4M	52.5
Red Bull Racing	 8,702	3.7M	13.4
Ferrari F1	 8,030	2.7M	12.8
Max Verstappen	 5,254	5.0M	16.1

\*Average reach is the total reach for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

Average engagement is the total number of engagements for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

# 04

## Sebastian Vettel, now outside Formula 1, remains its most significant sustainability advocate.

*Motorsport.com* was one of the top outlets publishing sustainability-related motorsport content, including reporting on Sebastian Vettel's [testing](#) of [carbon neutral fuels](#) in historic F1 cars and coverage noting that 'starting from scratch' with the [revival of the A1 GP](#) would allow green issues to be addressed. The publication generally appeared supportive of green initiatives, but also published articles [in support of](#) retaining [combustion](#) engines in F1.

SoCal Supers' high engagement on sustainability content stemmed from a singular post - namely the aforementioned YouTube [video](#) (since taken offline) mocking a protester at a Formula E race which generated very high views and engagement. Similarly the second most prominent influencer by engagement, [@81FLWR](#) on X (formerly Twitter) also published only

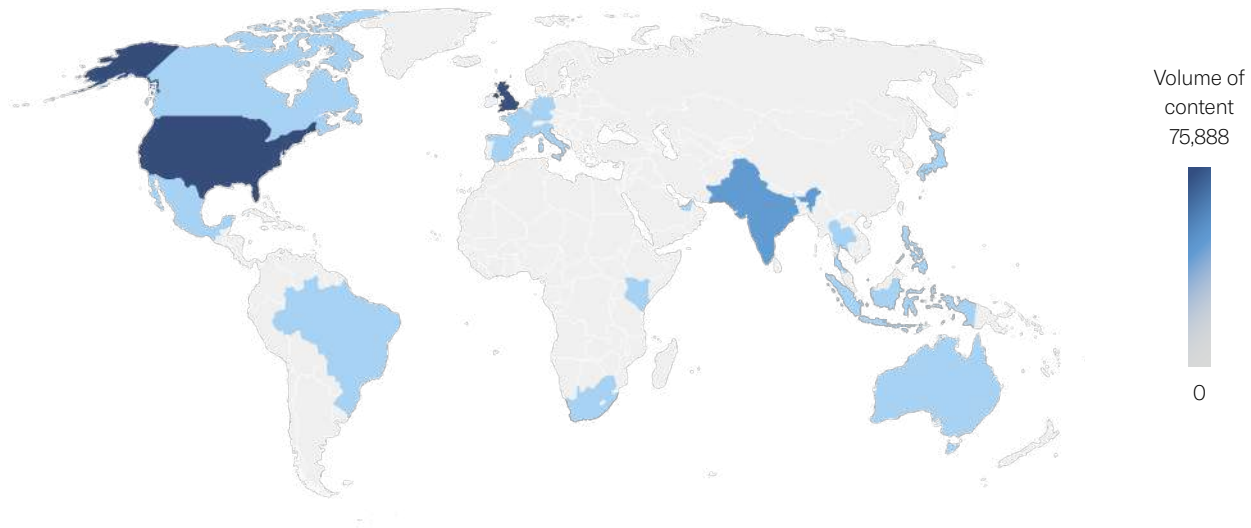
one relevant post which argued for F1 races to be scheduled in geographical order to reduce the environmental impact.

F1, markedly more visible in terms of volume and engagements than other motorsport competitions like Formula E or MotoGP, benefited from popular tweets on sustainability including Vettel's biodiversity initiative, a reduction in [logistics emissions](#) through its partnership with DHL, and [news](#) that F1 was the first motorsport championship to have all member teams achieve FIA Three-Star Environmental Accreditation.

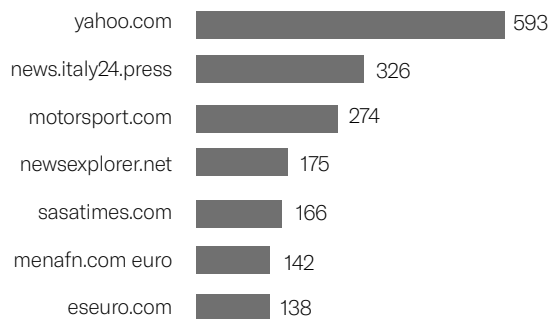


# 04

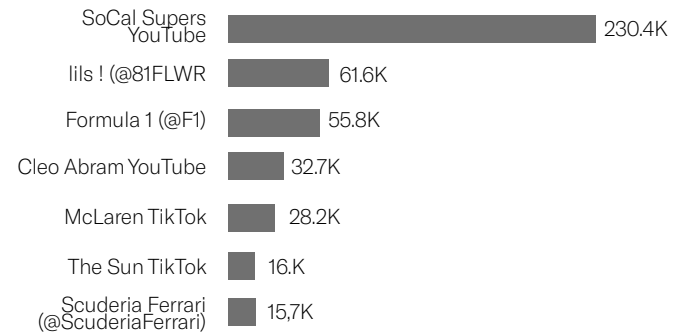
Heat map: where is motorsport-related sustainability coverage and/or social/community matters coverage (combined) most discussed?



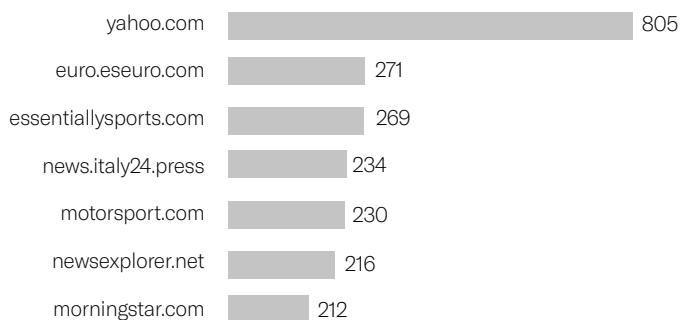
Top online news outlets publishing sustainability content (volume)



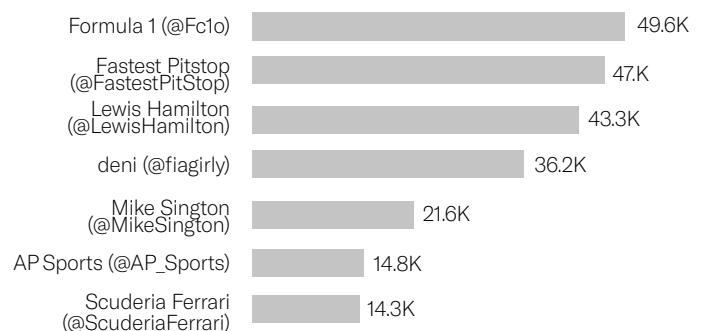
Top social media influencers publishing sustainability content (engagement)



Top online news outlets publishing social/community matters content (volume)



Top social media influencers publishing social/community-related content (engagement)



# 04

## SPORT IN FOCUS: GOLF

	VOLUME	AVERAGE REACH	AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT
Overall	23,162,231	459,580	14.68
Sustainability-related content	103,001	1,008,519	9.1
Social & Community Matters content	144,460	1,378,193	6.4

### Key topics of conversation

- Infrastructure, facilities and logistics, driven by discussion of water requirements and the environmental impact of course maintenance – leading to calls to “ban” golf” or “get rid of” golf.
- Recognition of individual excellence in environmental golf course management.
- Disruption by Extinction Rebellion.
- Dislike of woke culture and cancellation culture surfaced within politically charged conversations.
- LIV / PGA merger.

# 04

## Golf's environmental impact and PGA-LIV merger helped drive coverage volume.

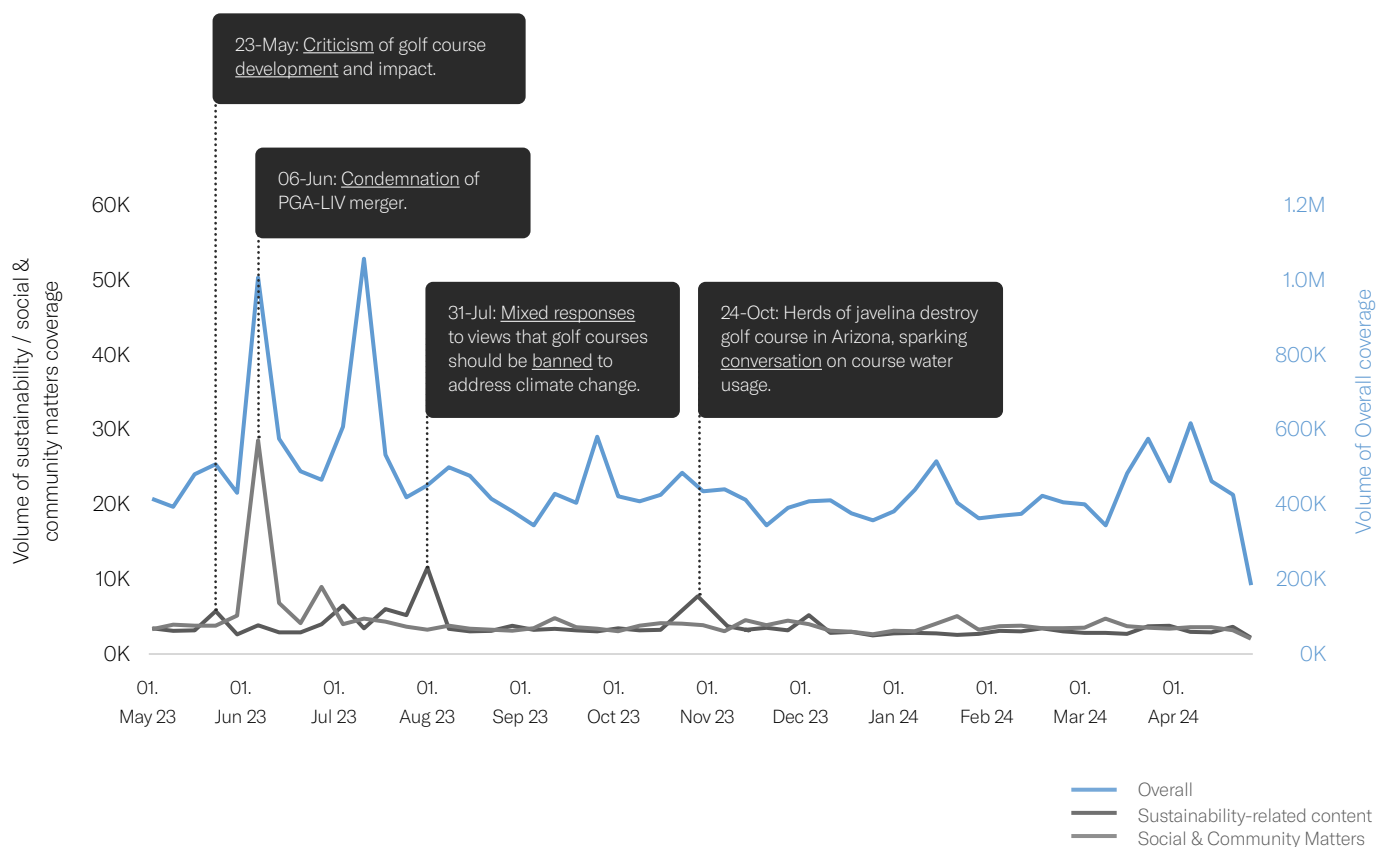
The PGA / LIV, merger was central to sustainability and social/community-related conversation, in light of the latter's links to Saudi Arabia, with many social media users, including a [politician](#), asserting golf has complicitly facilitated the country's "sportswashing" efforts. Further discussion around the merger of the two organisations [raised](#) "environmental concerns" and called for greater opposition to Saudi investment; the PGA was [strongly criticised](#) for choosing to align with LIV and tour sponsor DP World.

Much of the sustainability conversation centred around the actual structures and facilities required for golf, with significant criticism of water required to maintain golf courses and the overall environmental impact of constructing and maintaining courses. This led to calls to "[get rid](#)" of golf as a sport and to "[ban](#) golf courses".

USGA highlighted Bob Farren being [awarded](#) the 2024 USA Green Section Award for his work in golf course management to advance the environmental sustainability of Pinehurst Resort. While engagement was limited, the [responses](#) were [largely supportive](#).

# 04











Volume of online news and social media coverage over time





# 04

Who is most prevalent (by volume) in golf's sustainability and social/community-related content?

		Average reach*	Average engagement*
PGA LIV	 53,652	1.9M	6.9
LIV	 27,955	2.8M	11.1
Tiger Woods	 7,714	3.3M	9.4
Rory McIlroy	 6,449	4.8M	9.7
Phil Mickelson	 5,677	4.8M	8.0
Brooks Koepka	 4,647	4.8M	7.4
LPGA	 4,537	2.4M	7.4
Dustin Johnson	 2,822	5.1M	9.3
USGA	 1,884	3.4M	9.6
England Golf	 1,582	579.1K	5.9

Individual professional golfers, Phil Mickelson, in particular, were also not immune to [criticism](#) for their decision to join to LIV golf. Social media users aired contrasting views on Rory McIlroy, with some noting [his opposition](#) to LIV and others questioning if his [reasoning](#) is due to human rights abuses.

\*Average reach is the total reach for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

Average engagement is the total number of engagements for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

# 04

## Disruption is high in public consciousness.

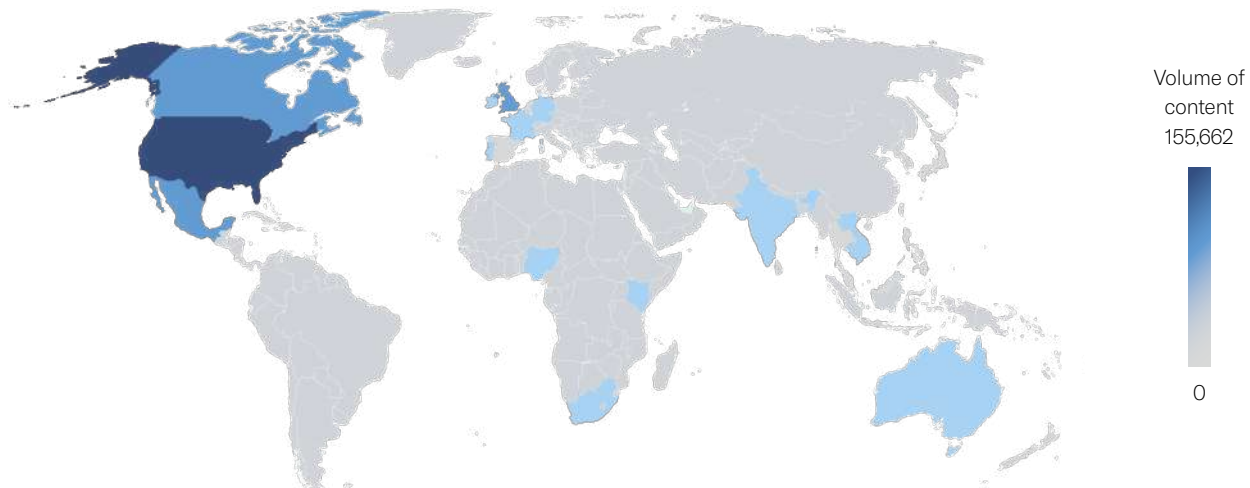
The top influencers for sustainability and social and community matters in golf surfaced on X (formerly Twitter) and YouTube. The top social media influencer focusing on sustainability [called](#) for golf courses to be banned in support of climate change efforts.

The top influencer in relation to social and community matters [expressed](#) disappointment that a golf charity event to raise money for mental health and substance abuse facilities hosted by an NFL American football player had been cancelled after a sponsor backed out for “political reasons”.

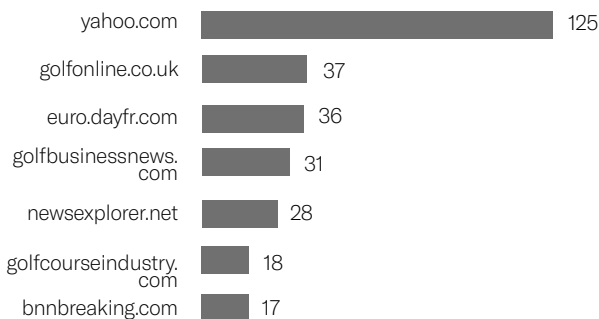
News of Extinction Rebellion disruptions at golf courses in [Spain](#) in early July and Just Stop Oil protests at the Open Golf Championships at the Royal Liverpool Golf Club in the [UK](#) at the end of July were prominent in conversation amongst online users and news outlets based in the USA and UK.

# 04

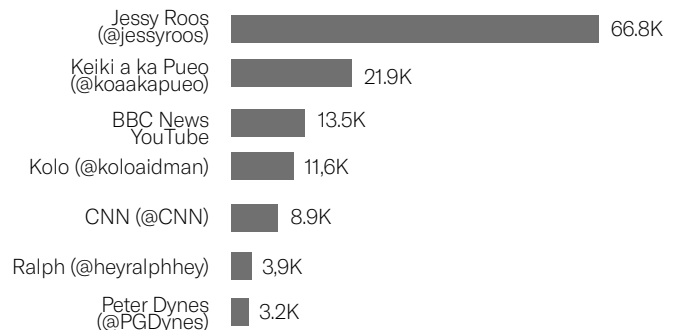
Heat map: where is golf-related sustainability coverage and/or social/community matters coverage (combined) most discussed?



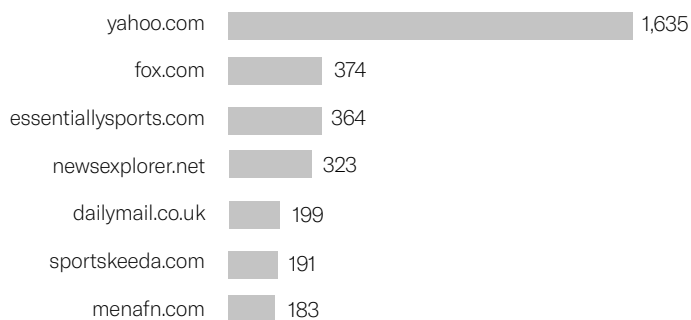
Top online news outlets publishing sustainability content (volume)



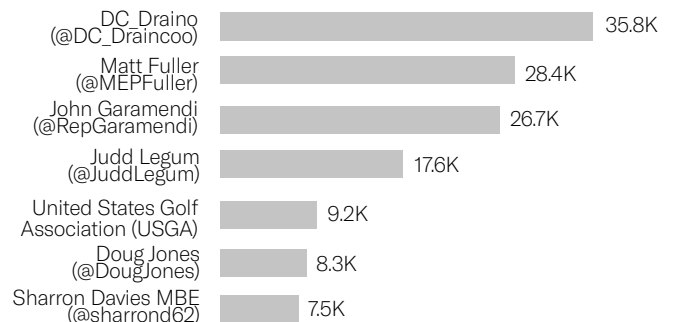
Top social media influencers publishing sustainability content (engagement)



Top online news outlets publishing social/community matters content (volume)



Top social media influencers publishing social/community-related content (engagement)



# 04

Just Stop Oil posted on [YouTube](#) of its disruption to the Open Championship at Royal Liverpool Golf Club in the UK on 21 July. There were also posts [comparing](#) the Just Stop Oil disruptions for the UK's biggest gaming convention to sporting disruptions like golf events. Some posts [added](#) that golfer Billy Horschel had to help contain the protesters.

In response to the Spain protests, social media users again [emphasised](#) the significant water usage required to maintain golf courses.

# 04

## SPORT IN FOCUS: ATHLETICS

	VOLUME	AVERAGE REACH	AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT
Overall	7,860,203	549,413	12.6
Sustainability-related content	7,027	1,237,684	2.3
Social & Community Matters content	97,174	1,417,784	7.6

### Key topics of conversation

- Strong focus on trans athlete participation, climate change impact and disruption by protests.
- Positive awareness and leadership from individual athletes (notably David Rudisha, Innes Fitzgerald).
- World Athletics' sustainability survey showed leadership and accountability on sustainability.
- Low-scale criticism of sustainability within athletics.



# 04

## World Athletics found that three-quarters of athletes have been directly impacted by climate change.

Discussion about trans athletes and women with naturally high testosterone competing in single-sex race categories were the main drivers of social/community-related coverage. This included posts about 16 female athletes [filing a lawsuit](#) against the NCAA for discriminating against women over transgender policy.

Key topics driving sustainability-related coverage included environmental [protests](#) disrupting the [Diamond League](#) athletics event in Stockholm and Olympic Champion David Rudisha presenting at COP28 on the effects of [climate change](#) on athletics.

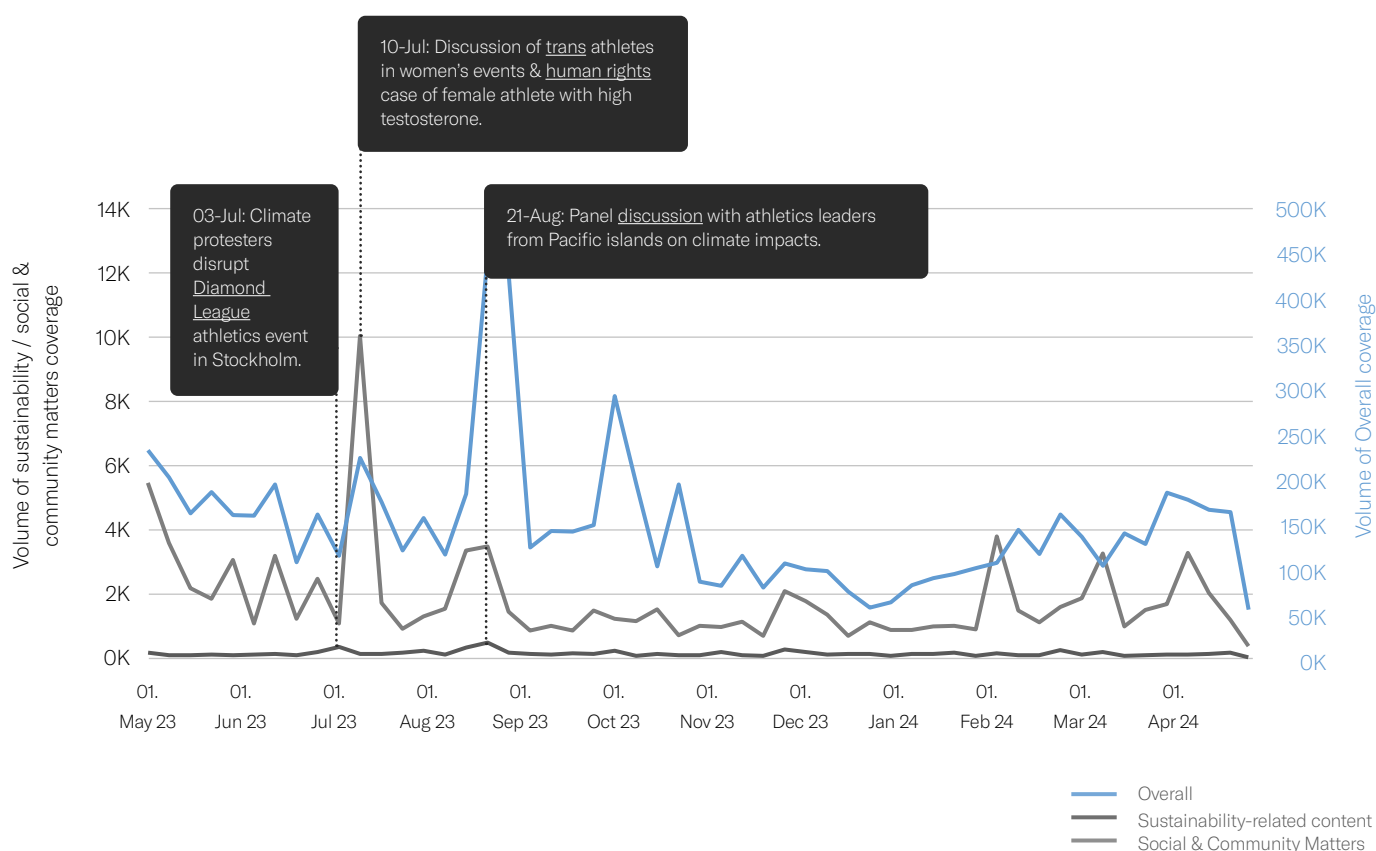
Additionally, it was reported in September 2023 that British cross-country runner [Innes FitzGerald](#) was nominated for, and subsequently won, the Young Athlete of the Year award in the BBC Green Sport Awards for

refusing to fly to Australia for the World Cross Country Championships due to climate impact. In November, the BBC also reported results of a [survey](#) from World Athletics which found that three-quarters of athletes have been directly impacted by climate change.

# 04

Athletics holding open discussions sporting leaders from the Pacific Islands helped put the sport in a positive light.

Volume of online news and social media coverage over time

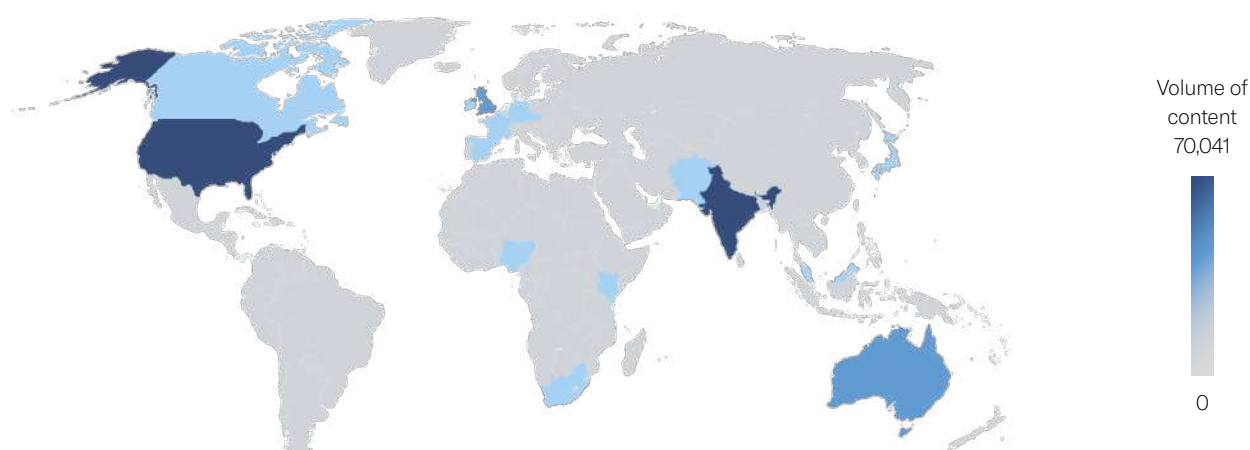


# 04

Who is most prevalent (by volume) in athletics' sustainability and social/community-related content?

		Average reach*	Average engagement*
World Athletics	19.293	1.8M	4.7
National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA)	11.372	1.9M	11.6
International Olympic Committee (IOC)	1.930	3.1M	16.2
World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)	1.539	5.3M	10.6
The Olympic Games	1.396	3.3M	5.4
World Aquatics	1.307	2.1M	7.6
Paralympic Games	949	5.8M	3.9
Paris 2024 Olympic Games	771	6.3M	13.3
Nike	658	4.3M	14.9
USA Track and Field	619	5.1M	7.9

Heat map: where is athletics-related sustainability coverage and/or social/community matters coverage (combined) most discussed?



\*Average reach is the total reach for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

Average engagement is the total number of engagements for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

# 04

David Rudisha's COP28 speech was welcomed; minimal criticism of sustainability in athletics was detected.

World Athletics was a prominent influencer on the topic of sustainability primarily due to its survey on how climate change impacts athletes and panel discussion with athletics leaders from the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu to discuss how climate change affects their communities. The organisation may see further increases in reach and engagement by working more with star athletes from climate-impacted countries to share their personal stories on their social media channels, as well as via World Athletics' own accounts. A good example of an athlete raising his [voice](#) in relation to sustainability issues was Kenyan Olympic champion [David Rudisha](#) speaking at COP28, albeit with modest levels of engagement.

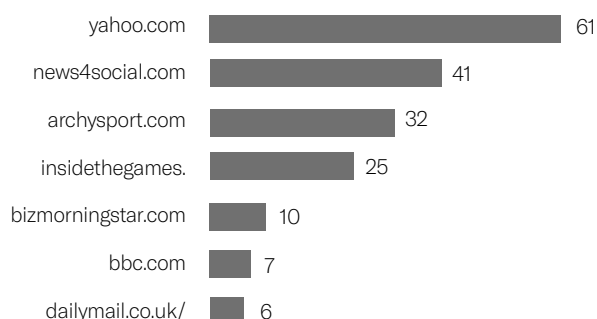
There was little direct criticism of athletics regarding sustainability issues, though [The Independent](#) reported on a single-use running shoe from Adizero which helped a runner to break the Berlin marathon record but had poor environmental credentials. There was a small amount of [criticism](#) of the 'climate change agenda' being pushed by TV presenters during the World Athletics championships.

# 04

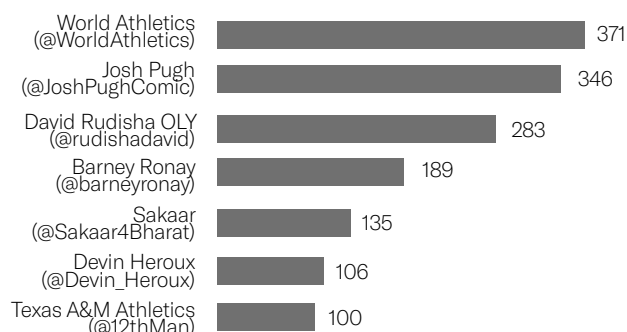
Social & community matters was a much more significant driver of conversation within athletics than sustainability.

Olympic swimmer Sharron Davies was vocal on the topic of trans athletes competing in single-sex categories across many sports, including athletics. She suggested "have two categories biological female & open. This way everyone gets to compete & both males & females get equal opportunities of success in sport".

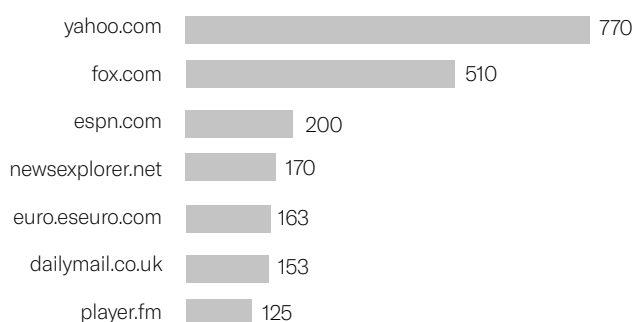
## Top online news outlets publishing sustainability content (volume)



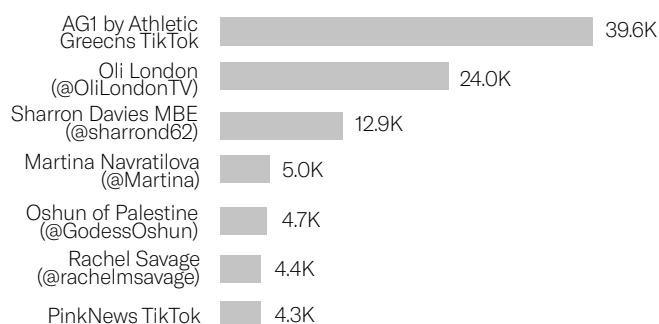
## Top social media influencers publishing sustainability content (engagement)



## Top online news outlets publishing social/community matters content (volume)



## Top social media influencers publishing social/community-related content (engagement)





# 04

## SPORT IN FOCUS: SAILING

	VOLUME	AVERAGE REACH	AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT
Overall	90,478	827,279	4.3
Sustainability-related content	2,550	1,428,512	4.3
Social & Community Matters content	2,439	753,140	3.9

### Key topics of conversation

- Successful “borrowing” from and collaboration with other sports, notably Sebastian Vettel working on a biodiversity project and the Clean Water Sports Alliance.
- Strong focus in partnerships (e.g. SailGP and Low Carbon renewable energy company).
- Dolphin protection.

# 04

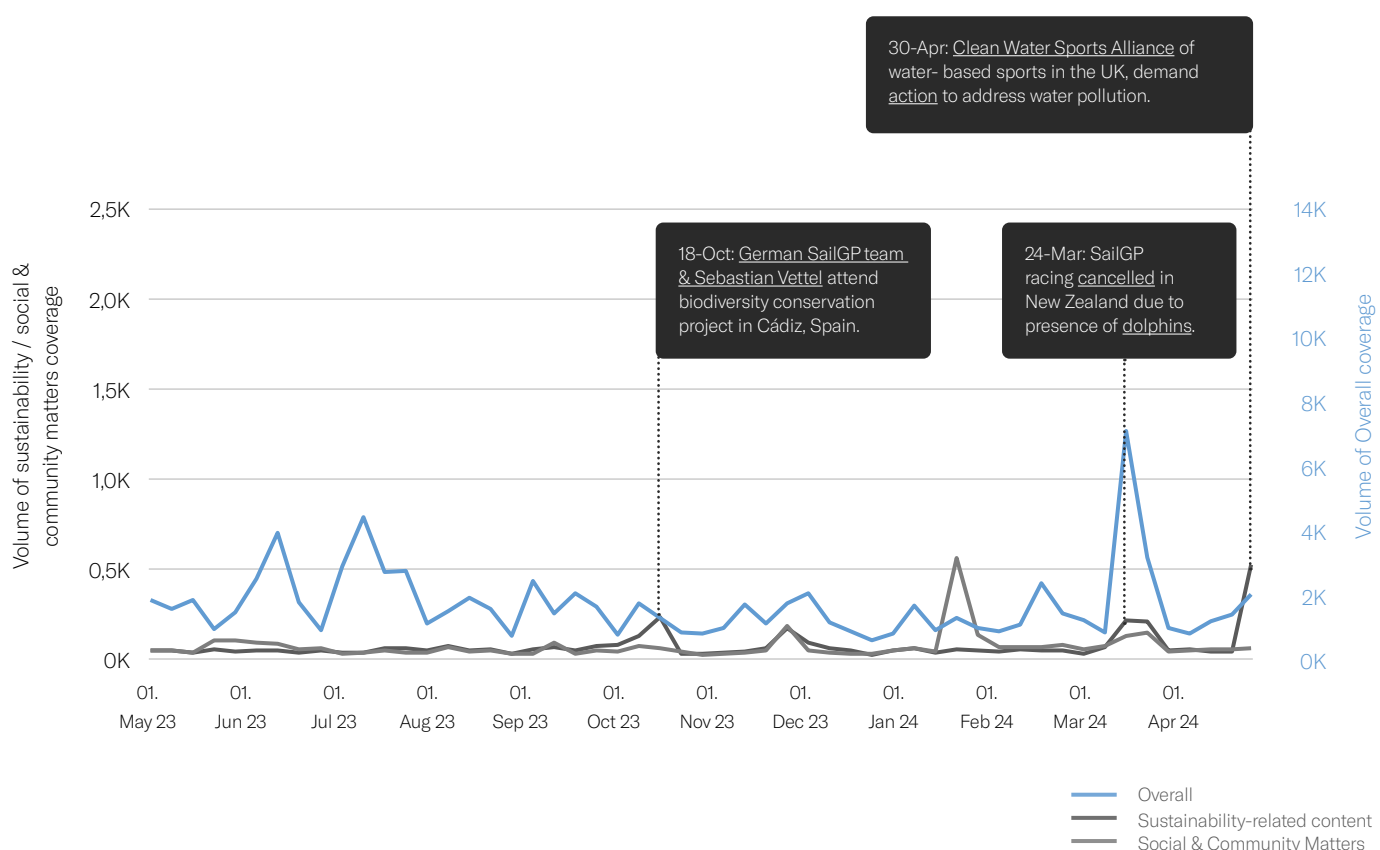
## The Clean Water Sports Alliance shows opportunity to drive greater media attention and audience engagement through collaboration.

Positive action was a driver of two of the largest peaks in coverage about sailing. In mid October 2023, SailGP attended a biodiversity conservation project in Spain with [investor](#) and former F1 driver, Sebastian Vettel, with Vettel's large F1 [fanbase](#) helping to generate significant attention for this initiative.

exposed to campaign messaging on [owned channels](#). This step is a clear indicator of the opportunities that exist to sporting organisations if they unite to drive partnerships and collaboration with other sports where there are common interests and goals and to drive greater media attention and audience engagement.











A further peak in discussion in late April 2024 was generated by the formation of the Clean Water Sports Alliance of seven UK organisations (including the RYA) demanding government action on water pollution. The initiative was very [well received](#), demonstrating the power of sports uniting for a stronger voice. The alliance generated significant coverage from [top tier](#), [high reach](#) media outlets and the [audience of each sport](#) was

Volume of online news and social media coverage over time



# 04

Who is most prevalent (by volume) in golf's sustainability and social/community-related content?

		Average reach*	Average engagement*
World Sailing	 1,622	356.2K	1.7
SailGP	 1,344	2.0M	6.7
Royal Yachting Association	 682	1.1M	5.1
Clean Water Sports Alliance	 440	518.3K	2.9
Emirates	 292	2.2M	1.2
British Sailing	 191	1.5M	0.1
Ben Ainslie	 155	5.4M	4.2
Hannah Mills	 111	5.0M	5.3
US Sailing	 60	7.6M	0.5
Australian Sailing	 50	9.1M	0.04

\*Average reach is the total reach for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

Average engagement is the total number of engagements for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

# 04

USA and UK were the top countries to generate sustainability and social/community-related coverage.

World Sailing was the most mentioned entity in relation to sustainability and social and community matters. While a range of themes existed in its coverage, a key highlight was the organisation [winning](#) an IOC Climate Action Sustainable Travel Award for its [initiatives](#) to reduce travel and transport emissions.

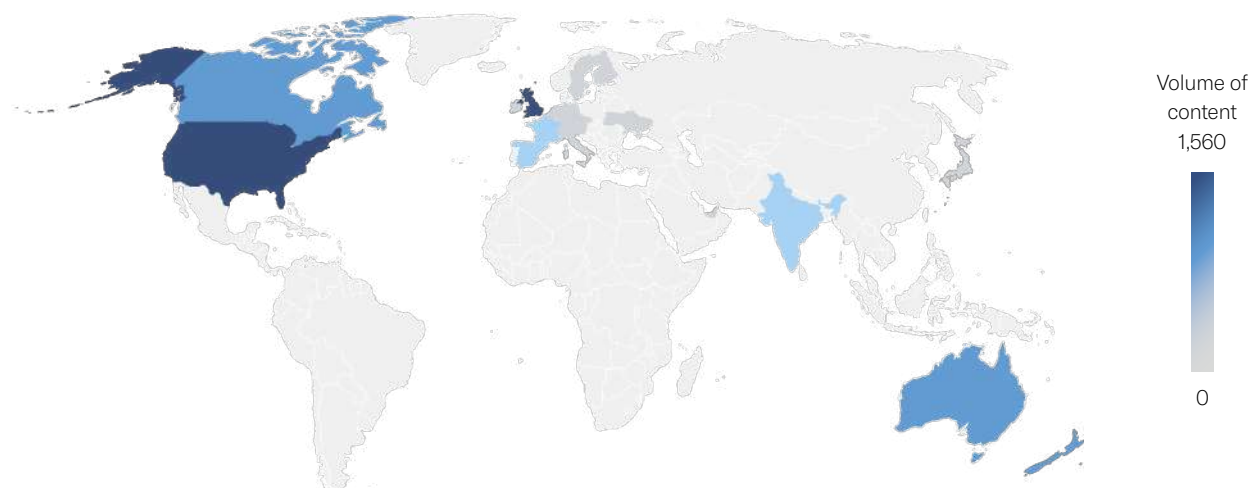
The decision to cancel the SailGP race in Lyttleton, New Zealand due to the presence of Hector's dolphins accounted for the highest peak in engagement due to [controversy](#) over the decision. Media reported that SailGP chief executive Sir Russell Coutts criticised the "extreme" marine mammal management plan that resulted in the race being cancelled. Some people responded [critically](#) to Coutts' comments, saying that

protecting the [dolphins](#) should be the [priority](#): "it's good they put conservation ahead of the almighty dollar". Other organisations may opt to take note that where sport takes place in areas of wildlife conservation, decisions and reactions will likely be scrutinised and amplified by media.



# 04

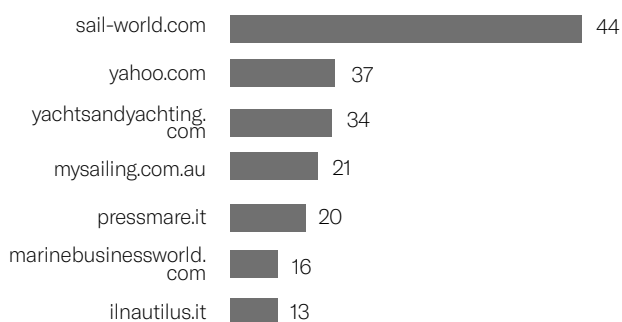
Heat map: where is sailing-related sustainability coverage and/or social/community matters coverage (combined) most discussed?



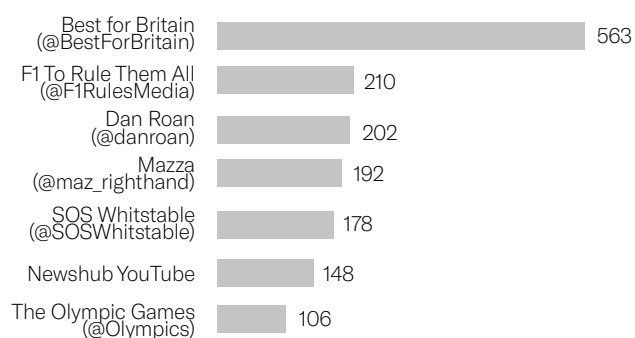
The USA and UK were the top countries to generate sustainability and social and community-related content. Content in the USA highlighted SailGP's sustainability [partnerships](#) and COP28

[statements](#). USA news outlets also [drew](#) attention to Hector's dolphins delaying the SailGP event at Lyttelton Harbour, New Zealand.

## Top online news outlets publishing sustainability content matters (volume)



## Top social media influencers publishing sustainability content (engagement)



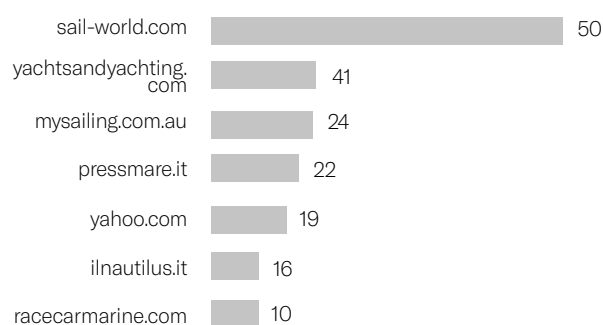
# 04

## Sailing content was largely driven by trade press, differing from other sports in this study.

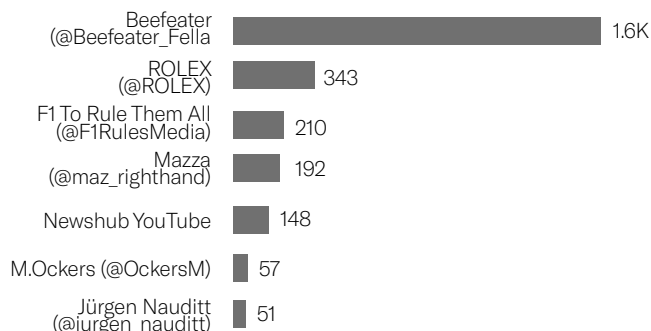
Top content in online news was largely driven by sailing-related trade press - which was not the case for many of the other sports tracked in this study. Sailing professionals may be well aware already that this appears to have the most potential for sustainability or Social & Community Matters content and engagement. The sport may also have an ambition to get itself into more mainstream publications.

This was not the case on social media, where a broader range of influencer (politics, media, sporting authorities) engaged on issues relating to sailing. Transferring those conversations into traditional media outlets may well help boost the sport's popularity.

### Top online news outlets publishing social/community matters content (volume)



### Top social media influencers publishing social/community-related content (engagement)



The top sustainability influencer and social/community-related influencer were both accounts located in the UK.

In terms of the highest sustainability-related engagement, an NGO called 'Best for Britain' [sympathised](#) with and amplified [calls](#) from the Clean Water Sports Alliance to reduce water pollution in the UK, criticising the UK government for perceived inaction and current state of affairs. Politicising the issue can sometimes be a way to generate engagement.

In terms of social and community matters, the top influencer called for [protest](#) against the World Sailing Federation's decision to admit Russia and Belarus to the 2024 Olympics.

Sail-world.com was the top source for both sustainability and social/community-related online news content, highlighting climate and sustainability [awards](#) in sailing. Sail-World.com also spotlighted the [partnership](#) between SailGP and renewable energy company Low Carbon to increase Sail GP's use of clean energy.

## SPORT IN FOCUS: BASKETBALL

	VOLUME	AVERAGE REACH	AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT
Overall	82,005,087	288,030	22.8
Sustainability-related content	43,386	1,019,112	4.73
Social & Community Matters content	388,1039	705,145	7.8

### Key topics of conversation

- High interest in trans athlete participation, mental health and homophobia.
- Carbon footprint, travel, emissions.
- Technology and re-usage of materials.
- Climate hoax and climate denial fairly prevalent, (often presented in joke format).
- Earth Day.
- Partnerships.

# 04

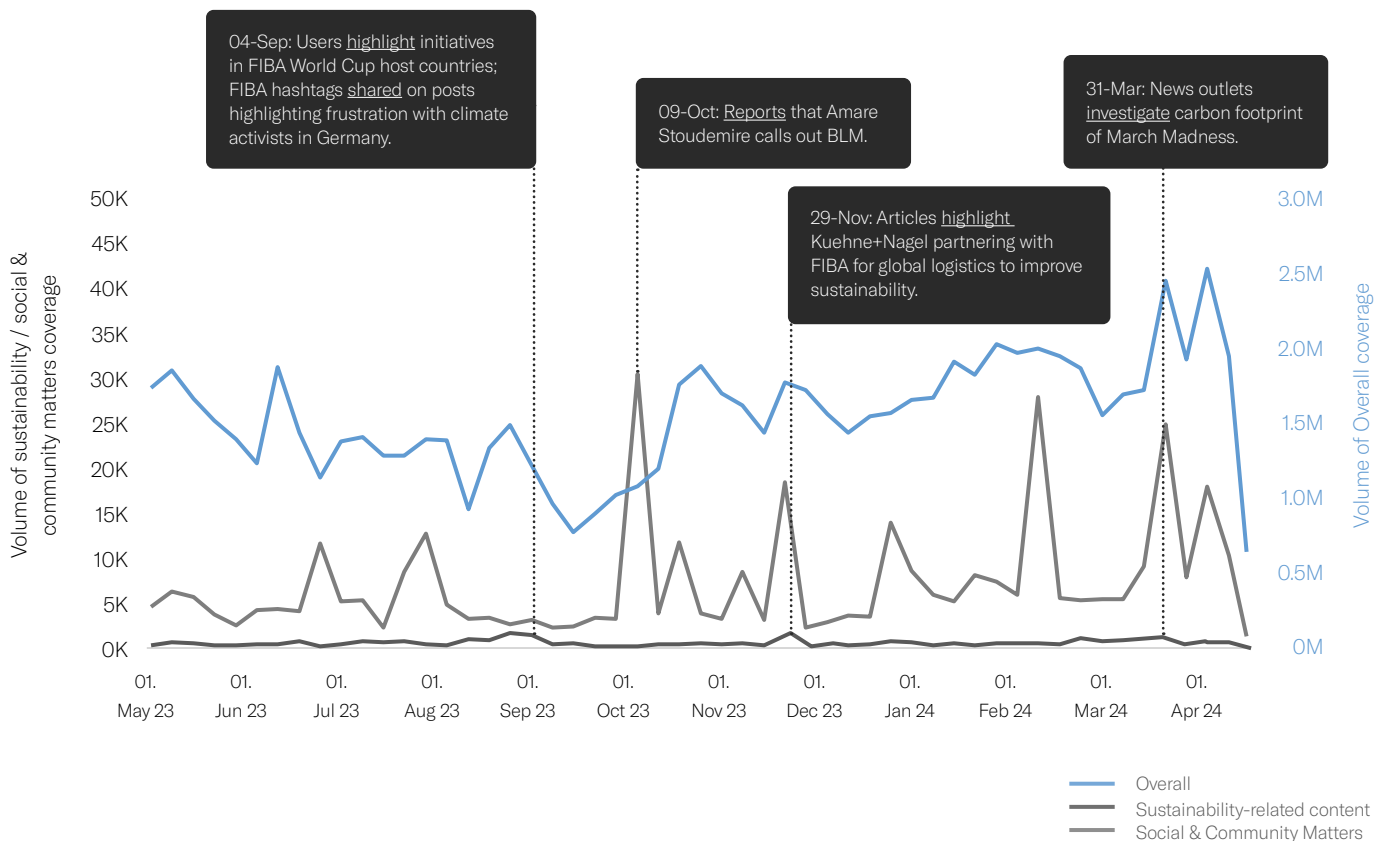
Three NBA players, three NBA teams and three US-based organisations teams emerged in the ten most frequently mentioned content discussing sustainability and social & community matters.

The NBA was the most frequently mentioned organisation in conjunction with sustainability and social/community matters. Sustainability was mentioned in posts [emphasising](#) the work of veteran and former [players](#) to reduce their carbon footprint and combat climate change. Former NBA player Rick Fox, for instance, [featured](#) in [discussion](#) of his tech startup aiming to combat the climate crisis with carbon neutral concrete.

March Madness (the NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament) prompted some to [encourage](#) sustainable practices and [unveil](#) climate action plans, triggered by [reporting](#) on the competition's carbon footprint. March Madness could provide a platform for NCAA and other affiliated organisations to detail efforts to reduce the carbon footprint.

# 04

Volume of online news and social media coverage over time













Basketball content relating to social & community matters was somewhat orientated around polarised or perceived differing views. In particular, this included opposition to transgender athletes competing in girls' basketball teams in schools and connected [discussion](#) around the mental health impacts of inclusion or exclusion. Other topics included [polarised responses](#) to a "homophobic" Instagram story [posted](#) by Anthony Edwards in 2022, and [claims](#) that former NBA player turned coach Amar'e Stoudemire is against Black Lives Matter.



# 04

Who is most prevalent (by volume) in basketball's sustainability and social/community-related content?

		Average reach*	Average engagement*
NBA	 224,209	678.7K	7.0
WNBA	 35,497	1.4M	10.0
Amar'e Stoudemire	 24,642	75.8K	6.8
NCAA	 20,134	1.2M	8.1
Los Angeles Lakers	 15,622	1.3M	9.2
LeBron James	 14,949	951.2K	15.0
Cleveland Cavaliers	 13,115	157.0K	10.1
Anthony Devante Edwards	 9,905	2.0M	9.8
Golden State Warriors	 9,011	1.5M	6.0
FIBA	 7,435	2.1M	6.2

\*Average reach is the total reach for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

Average engagement is the total number of engagements for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

## Public scrutiny on the WNBA's charter travel focused more on economics than on climate change issues.

The WNBA was the second most prevalent organisation (in volume terms) to be mentioned in the context of sustainability and social or community matters, generating around one sixth as many mentions as the men's NBA. At the heart of discussion relating to the WNBA was its policy on charter flights, which at the time blocked teams from taking charter flights (but has during the course of this research since been [altered](#) to allow this.)

A handful of posts [advocated player welfare](#) and [commented sympathetically](#) on the [impact](#) of long travel on players; some also [sought](#) to [champion equality](#) or [women's rights](#). However, more frequent were perceptions that privilege to take chartered flights [is tied to economic capacity](#), and [views surfaced](#) that charter flights are [not climate-friendly](#), and athletes should be willing to take commercial flights to [reduce](#) pollution.

All this said, given the marked discrepancy in volume and engagement in content about the NBA (much higher on both accounts) relative to the [more nascent](#) WNBA, the women's game may feasibly have an opportunity to establish and promote its own messaging around climate change and sustainability separately from whatever path the NBA may choose.

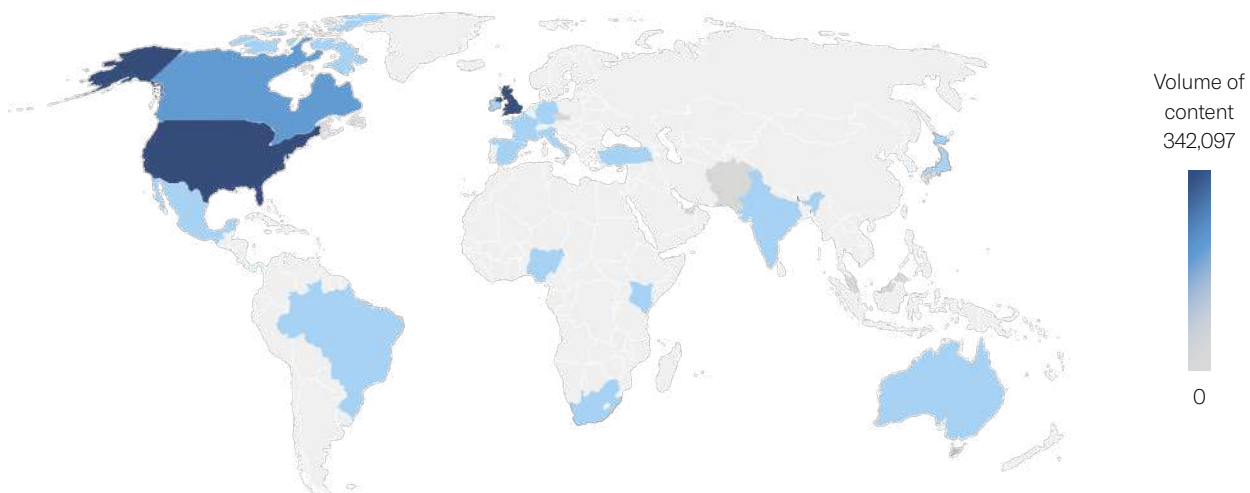
After LeBron James' son suffered cardiac arrest at basketball practice, users on X (formerly Twitter) jokingly [blamed](#) climate change. Further [commentary](#) around the WNBA's charter flights also indicated that climate change may not be taken seriously by some and climate hoax beliefs or trolling are somewhat prevalent.

Within conversation mentioning FIBA, topics included the organisation's efforts to promote [sustainability](#) and the [unveiling](#) of a new MVP trophy made from recycled materials for the 3x3 World Tour.

# 04

The US generated around 30 times as much content as any other country - more than five times as much as all other countries combined.

Heat map: where is basketball-related sustainability coverage and/or social/community matters coverage (combined) most discussed?



The vast majority of content was generated by the USA owing to the prominence of the NBA and NCAA.

The UK was the country with the second highest volume of sustainability and social/community-related content, with conversation mainly [focusing](#) on transgender athletes competing in sports in school and the [nomination](#) of New York University basketball player Belle Pellecchia for a BBC Green Sports Award.

Nominated after becoming an 'EcoAthletes' champion, she has used that platform alongside her online blog and a YouTube channel to help educate others and encourage sustainable changes.

# 04

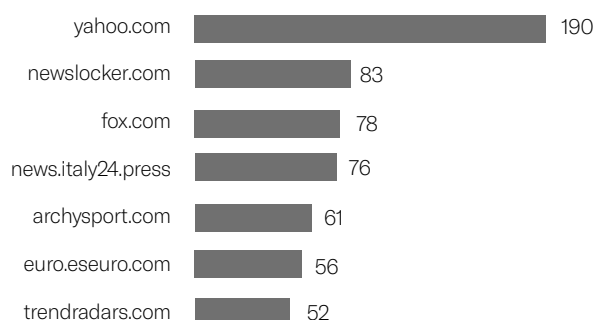
Earth Day (and Earth Month) were pivotal in driving sustainability-related conversation for basketball.

While no teams featured amongst the top influencers for sustainability or social and community matters, YouTube content from [NBA on TNT](#) celebrating Earth day helped make it one of the most popular influencers for sustainability.

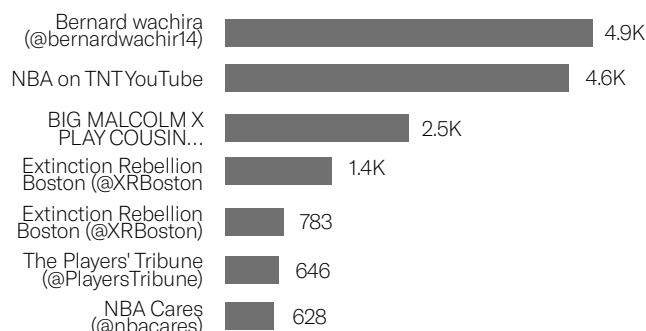
The X (formerly Twitter) account of NBA Cares also featured in basketball's list of highest engagement social media influencers for sustainability, having posted on [Earth Day](#) and [Earth Month](#) and using the hashtag #NBAGreen on each. While these posts provided limited detail on the specifics, the posts stress that the NBA strives to reduce carbon footprint and create a more sustainable future.

Another top influencer in sustainability, the Players Tribune, [highlighted](#) a partnership between Denver Nuggets centre DeAndre Jordan and United Airlines that will see him spend time at Urban Farm (in Denver) to learn about sustainable farming. This partnership is an excellent use case of celebrity endorsement (for the farm) and community involvement (for the sports entities) from which both benefit from strong engagement with the public.

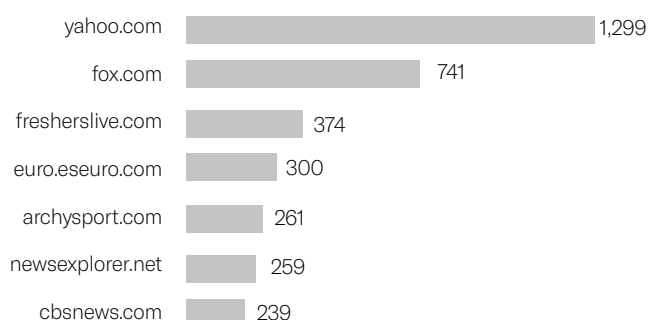
## Top online news outlets publishing sustainability content (volume)



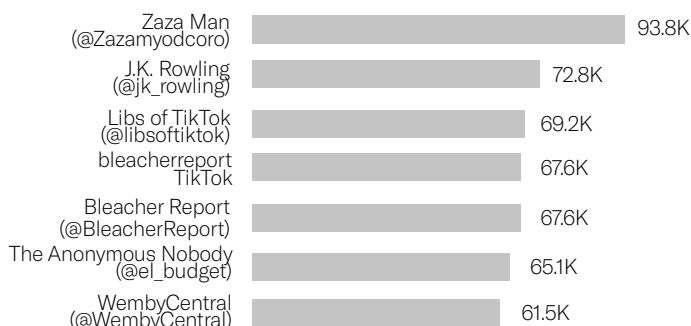
## Top social media influencers publishing sustainability content (engagement)



## Top online news outlets publishing social/community matters content (volume)



## Top social media influencers publishing social/community-related content (engagement)



## SPORT IN FOCUS: AMERICAN FOOTBALL

	VOLUME	AVERAGE REACH	AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT
Overall	75,407,211	276,679	13.3
Sustainability-related content	54,688	589,744	7.9
Social & Community Matters content	252,235	681,834	11.6

### Key topics of conversation

- Emissions and carbon neutral offsetting.
- Focus around key calendar events: Superbowl, NFL Green Week and the NFL draft (roster pick).
- Strong cross-sport connections, especially with Tottenham Hotspur FC.
- Climate jokes and trivialisation.



# 04

The NFL generated almost three times as much sustainability and social/community-related conversation as the next nine most mentioned organisations and athletes combined.

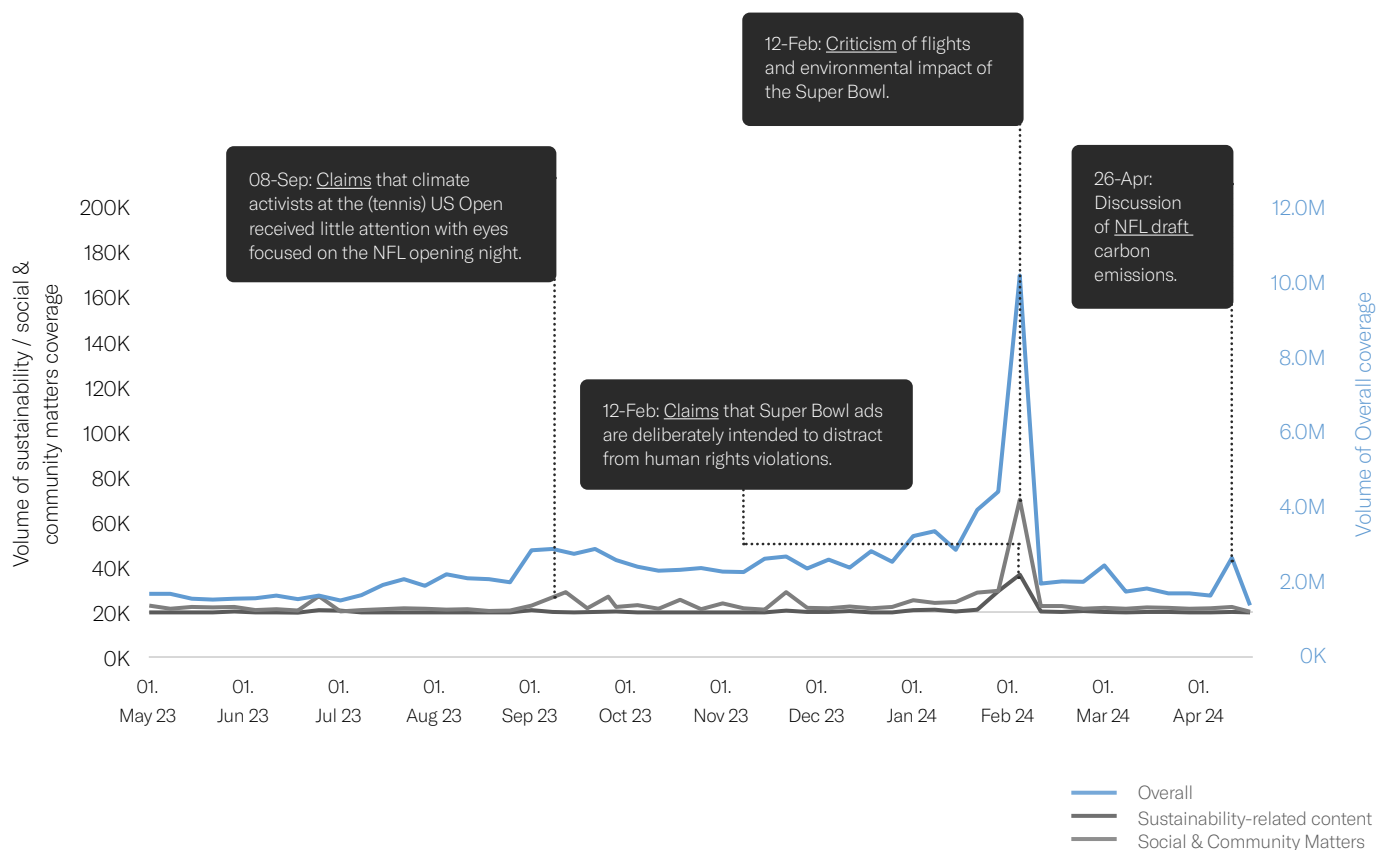
The Super Bowl was a key driver of coverage, with users [amplifying](#) statistics on the number of private [jets](#) flying to the Super Bowl and satirically [contrasting](#) emissions of that air travel to [personal](#) efforts to [reduce](#) waste. Further, social media users [called out](#) high-profile [individuals](#), including [celebrities](#) and [politicians](#).

The Super Bowl also provided a platform for people to [emphasise](#) efforts in environmental sustainability, with [news](#) outlets [highlighting](#) that this would be the first Super Bowl to be powered by [renewable energy](#). This was [applauded](#) by key government officials in the US. This content often [mentioned](#) the Kansas City Chiefs and San Francisco 49ers, as the two teams played in this year's Super Bowl.

There was also [discussion](#) surrounding a Super Bowl [advertisement](#) from a Christian outreach campaign featuring Christians washing the feet of different individuals, including an environmental activist. Reaction to the advert was broad-ranging: some [questioned](#) why the organisation appeared to support climate change but [called](#) instead for the \$7m Super Bowl advertising spend to instead be diverted directly to provision of clean water, and others called the ad “woke”.











# 04

Volume of online news and social media coverage over time



# 04

Who is most prevalent (by volume) in American football's sustainability and social/community-related content?

		Average reach*	Average engagement*
NFL	 198.767	805.3K	9.7
Kansas City Chiefs	 12.659	2.5M	12.2
Washington Commanders	 9.571	1.4M	13.9
Philadelphia Eagles	 8.370	1.9M	8.1
Travis Kelce	 7.775	1.8M	11.0
Dallas Cowboys	 7.252	2.4M	8.4
49ers	 7.180	3.0M	13.3
Jordan Poyer	 5.662	99.0K	5.7
Roger Goodell	 5.443	3.7M	12.8
Pittsburgh Steelers	 4.909	2.1M	13.5

\*Average reach is the total reach for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

Average engagement is the total number of engagements for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

## A jocular tone was common amongst top social media influencers' conversations about sustainability.

Sustainability was a topical issue in relation to the 2024 NFL draft, which was hosted in Detroit, Michigan.

On the one hand, local media [highlighted](#) positive stories about the [materials](#) used for the assembly of the presenting stage being recycled to build a spay and neuter clinic in Detroit. Conversely, reporting with conflicting sentiment [suggested](#) that because the draft created 3 million pounds of carbon dioxide emissions within Detroit itself but the carbon offsetting efforts were attempted elsewhere in North Michigan, the event was not carbon neutral in local terms and contributed to pollution in the city. In similar vein, some [were disappointed](#) by the league's [efforts](#) (such as planting 44 trees in Detroit) to offset carbon emissions. Such contrasting sentiment perhaps highlights either an opportunity to educate on how impactful the carbon

offsetting truly was, or demonstrates the need for organisations to steer well clear of any claims that could be construed as greenwashing.

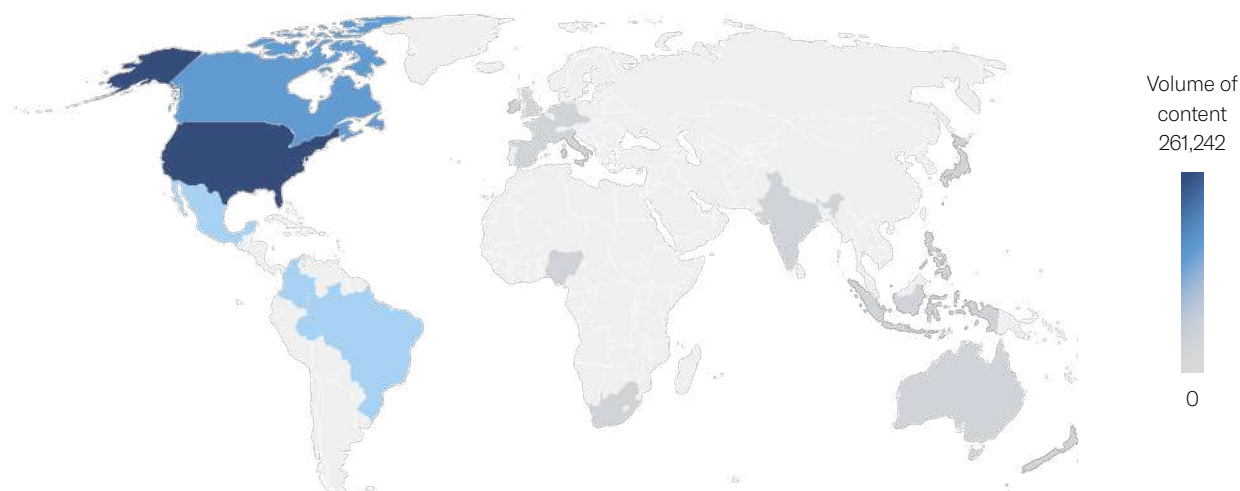
Clark Hunt, CEO of the Kansas City Chiefs, was mentioned in some content in the leadup to the Super Bowl, with news outlets [focusing](#) on his family's oil dynasties and noting that the NFL has close ties with the fossil fuels industry.

Also, in the [leadup](#) to the Super Bowl, NFL Green Week generated coverage, particularly in online news articles and in social media posts from [organisations](#) based in Las Vegas. As in Detroit, key posts amongst these [highlighted](#) efforts including planting climate-adapted trees.

# 04

## Tottenham Hotspur was a key driver of sustainability content relating to NFL.

Heat map: where is American Football-related sustainability coverage and/or social/community matters coverage (combined) most discussed?



Conversation was overwhelmingly centred in the USA thanks to the presence of the NFL. The country with second highest content volume was the UK, with Premier League team [Tottenham Hotspur](#) and its players highlighting partnerships with the NFL focusing on helping the local community to develop a healthy lifestyle and promoting [mental health](#).

A jocular tone was common amongst top social media influencers' conversations about sustainability. In response to a climate protester gluing his feet to the ground at the US Open for tennis, the third ranked social media influencer on sustainability [joked](#) that the protester would have received more attention if the event did not fall on the same day as the first NFL game of the season.

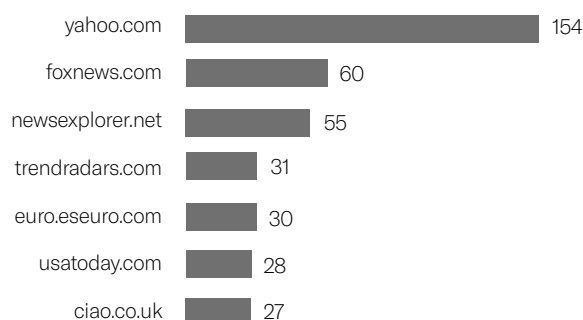


## Private jet usage came under scrutiny.

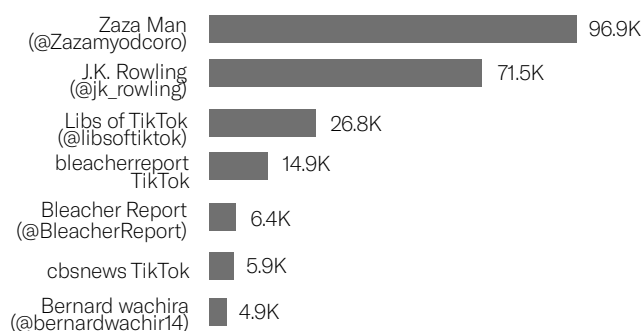
The top social media influencer on sustainability jokingly [claimed](#) that a performance by Justin Bieber and Usher at the Super Bowl could solve a multitude of world problems including global warming.

The influencer that generated the second highest engagement on sustainability [criticised](#) private jets flying to the Super Bowl by emphasising their individual efforts to reduce waste.

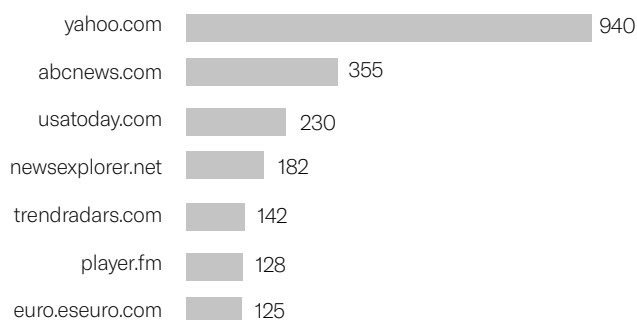
### Top online news outlets publishing sustainability content (volume)



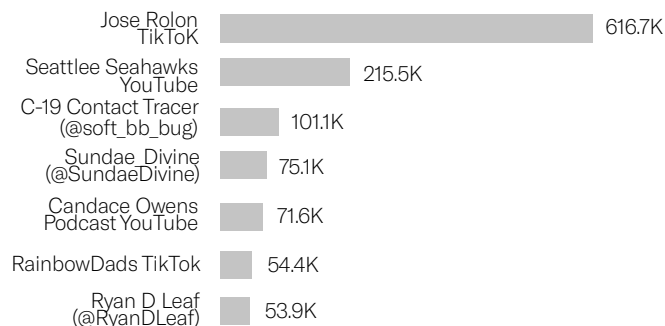
### Top social media influencers publishing sustainability content (engagement)



### Top online news outlets publishing social/community matters content (volume)



### Top social media influencers publishing social/community-related content (engagement)



## SPORT IN FOCUS: TENNIS

	VOLUME	AVERAGE REACH	AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT
Overall	82,005,087	288,030	22.8
Sustainability-related content	43,386	1,019,112	4.73
Social & Community Matters content	388,1039	705,145	7.8

### Key topics of conversation

- Wimbledon and US Open front of mind in sustainability-related conversation.
- Focus on activism: JSO disrupting events, Coco Gauff sympathising with Extinction Rebellion, lobbying on fossil fuel sponsorships, efficacy of climate crisis activism at major tennis tournaments and discussion around “climate alarmism”.
- Serena Williams’ leadership on diversity.

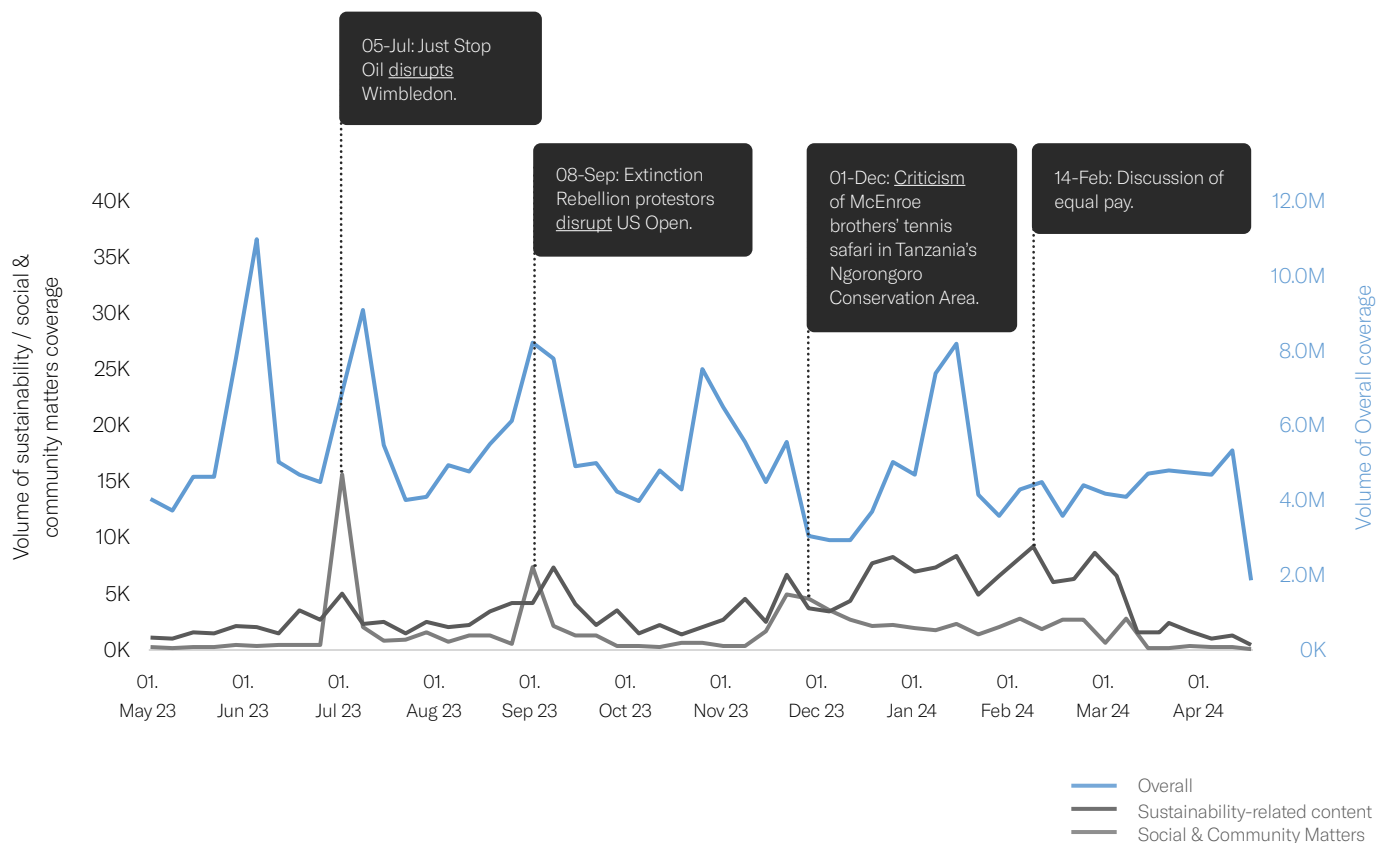
# 04

Coco Gauff was the most prolific (in volume terms) contemporary athlete mentioned in the context of sustainability or social and community matters.

Peaks in overall tennis coverage coincided with the start of major tournaments like Wimbledon and the US Open. Similarly, peaks in sustainability coverage focused on [climate action protests](#) during these events, with celebrities also urging [Wimbledon](#) to end its sponsorship deal with Barclays due to the bank's support for fossil fuel projects.

# 04

Volume of online news and social media coverage over time













The ATP Tour was a highly prevalent organisation in tennis' sustainability and social/community-related content. In particular, it was mentioned for its BBC Green Sport Award [nomination](#) because of its work in launching a carbon tracker app that allows players to track and mitigate travel emissions. Wimbledon topped sustainability and social/community-related content by volume and featured highly for average engagement amount tennis organisations.

Coco Gauff was the second-most prevalent person in tennis' sustainability and social/community-focused content, with items mentioning the US tennis star also generating the second-highest average engagement. In sustainability-focused content, Gauff was [discussed](#) as having no anger towards the Extinction Rebellion protestors that disrupted her US Open game on 7 September. Gauff was also quoted stating: "we are in a history-defining moment, people need to do what they need to do to get their voices heard".

# 04

Who is most prevalent (by volume) in tennis' sustainability and social/community-related content?

		Average reach*	Average engagement*
Wimbledon	 29,422	3.1M	12.6
Women's Tennis Association (WTA)	 22,397	3.5M	6.1
ATPTour	 16,544	2.6M	2.4
Billie Jean King	 14,434	2.6M	22.1
US Open	 14,361	4.1M	19.0
Coco Gauff	 7,751	3.8M	34.1
Serena Williams	 7,391	4.4M	53.8
Novak Djokovic	 6,973	4.4M	6.0
International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA)	 6,594	2.8M	5.8
International Tennis Federation (ITF)	 5,274	2.1M	3.1

\*Average reach is the total reach for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

Average engagement is the total number of engagements for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

# 04

TikTok was the top social platform for influencers on sustainability and social and community matters in tennis.

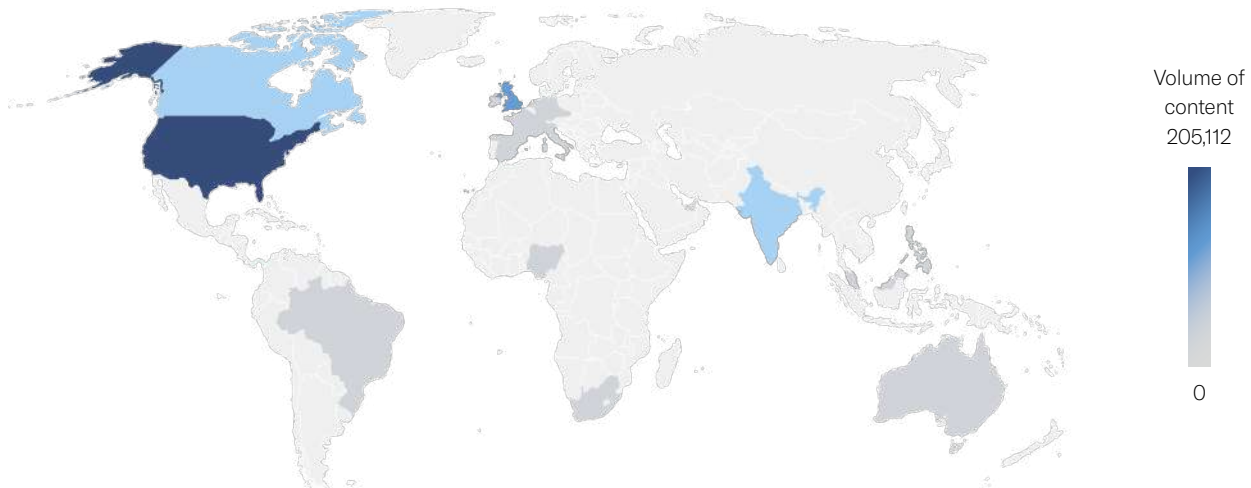
The top influencers for sustainability and social and community matters in tennis surfaced on TikTok, with both based in the USA. The accounts of CBS News (detailing [Just Stop Oil](#) protests at Wimbledon) and Serena Williams (championing [diversity](#) in tennis) generated the standout highest levels of engagement.

Sky News Australia (an Australian conservative news channel owned by News Corp Australia)'s YouTube channel also generated significant engagement, with content focused on climate change. This included [debate](#) about the efficacy of climate crisis activism at major tennis tournaments, and it also [dismissed](#) warnings that extreme temperatures could cancel the Australian Open by 2050 as “hysterical [...] climate alarmism”.

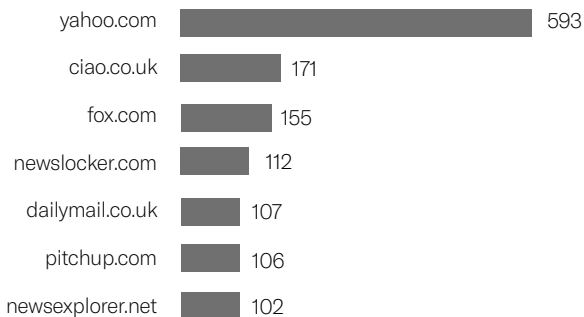


# 04

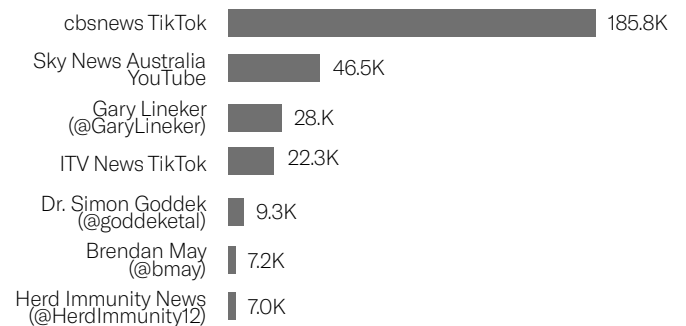
Heat map: where is tennis-related sustainability coverage and/or social/community matters coverage (combined) most discussed?



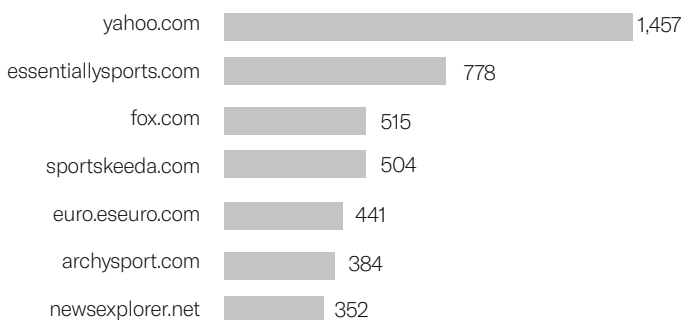
Top online news outlets publishing sustainability content (volume)



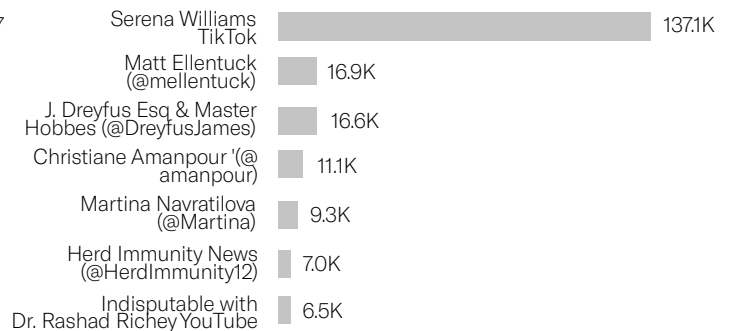
Top social media influencers publishing sustainability content (engagement)



Top online news outlets publishing social/community matters content (volume)



Top social media influencers publishing social/community-related content (engagement)



## THE BIGGER PICTURE: WHAT NEXT & WHAT ELSE?

In this section, we compare volume, reach and engagement metrics from media coverage of our ten tracked sports versus those of broader socio-political issues. This comparison gives an interesting perspective on how important each is, and, crucially, how much the public cares.

The findings are clear: sport generates high interest, and people care about individual sports just as much as (if not more than) things like the Gaza crisis, the US presidential election or UK general election.

# 05

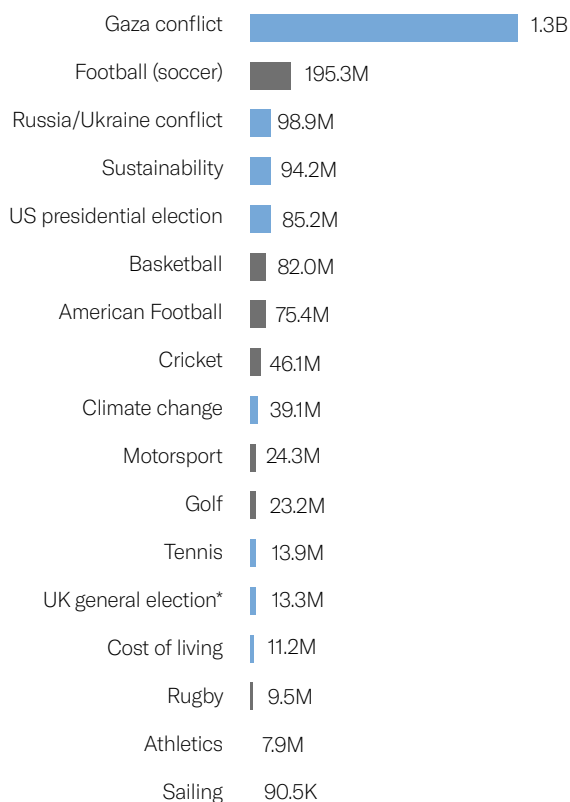
Content about football and sustainability (as separate topics) achieved higher reach than content about Gaza in online news and social media.

In our analysis of online news and social media coverage for the 12-month period from 1 May 2023 to 30 April 2024, some immediate findings stood out.

On volume, Gaza is entirely dominant (exceptionally so since Oct 2023), however this was not the case for reach. While the Gaza

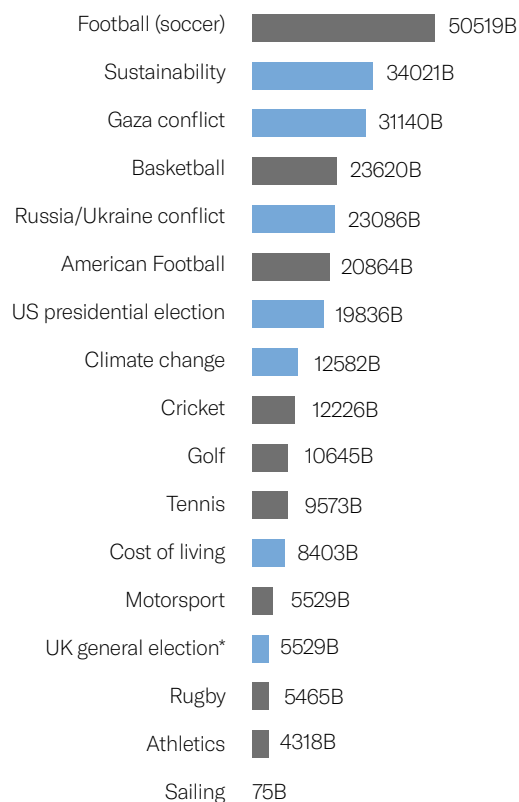
conflict generated more coverage than any sport or any other issue, football (overall) and sustainability generated greater reach – indicating that more people saw content about football (overall) and sustainability than about Gaza, and that such content was published in more meaningful media and forums, and travelled further.

## Volume of online news and social media content



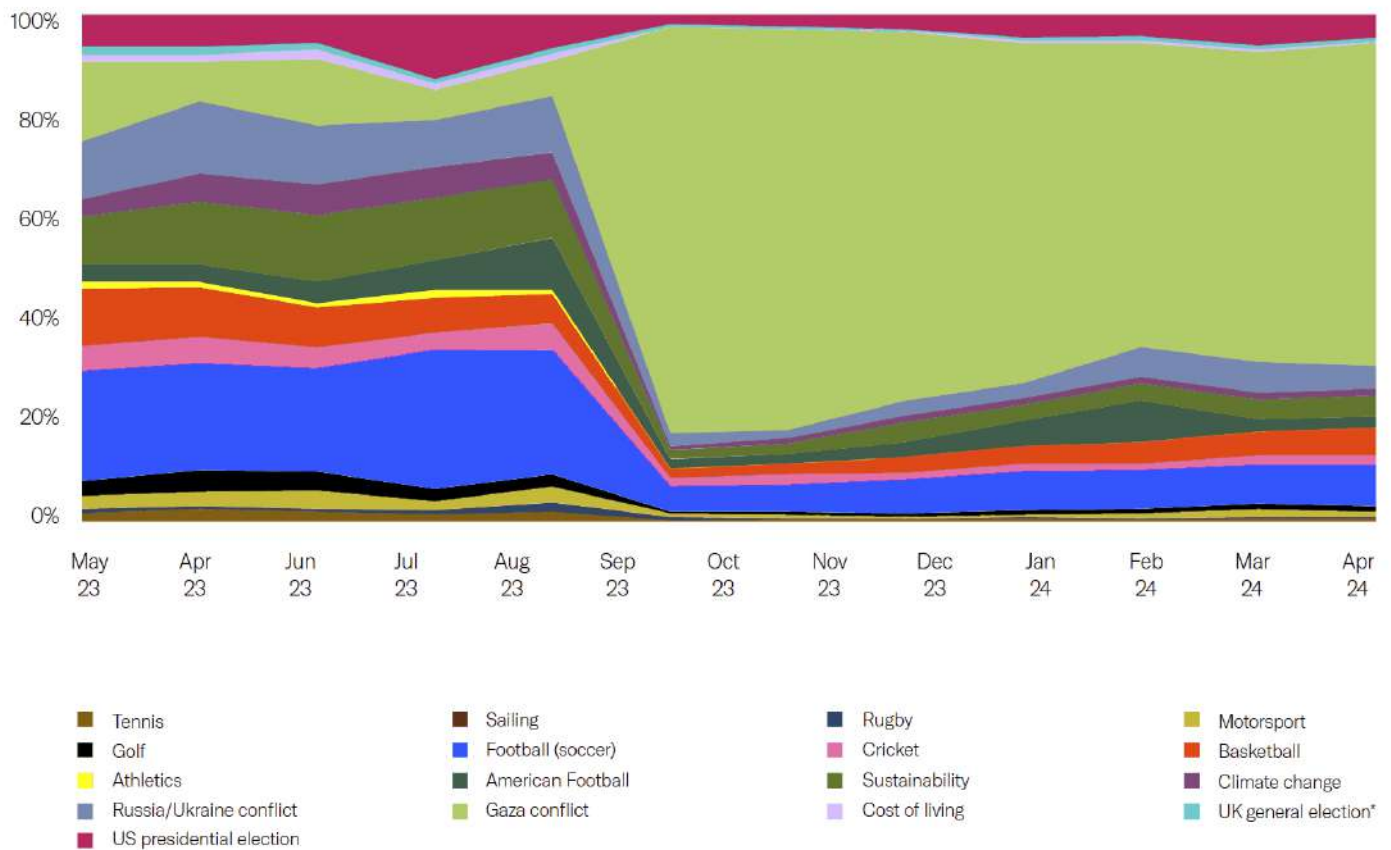
■ Socio-political macro issues ■ Sports

## Sum total reach of online news and social media content



\*Data collected up to 30 Apr 2024 - prior to Rishi Sunak's announcement on 22 May 2024 confirming the date of the UK general election as 4 Jul 2024.

Share of digital conversation (based on volume of mentions)



\*Data collected up to 30 Apr 2024 - prior to Rishi Sunak's announcement on 22 May 2024 confirming the date of the UK general election as 4 Jul 2024.

## Every sport tracked in our study generated higher average engagement than any of the socio-political macro issues tracked.

Although Gaza was dominant on volume, and also gained higher sum total engagement than any other concept, it was last in terms of average engagement.

Conversely, average engagement for content about football (22.7 engagements per piece of content) was more than four times higher than average engagement for Gaza (4.8 per piece of content). It is difficult to draw substantive conclusions on why this is, but it could be posited that the public is consuming information more passively about Gaza or that in general terms, the public is more engaged on the topic of football (overall).

All of the sports generated higher average engagement figures than all of the socio-political issues:

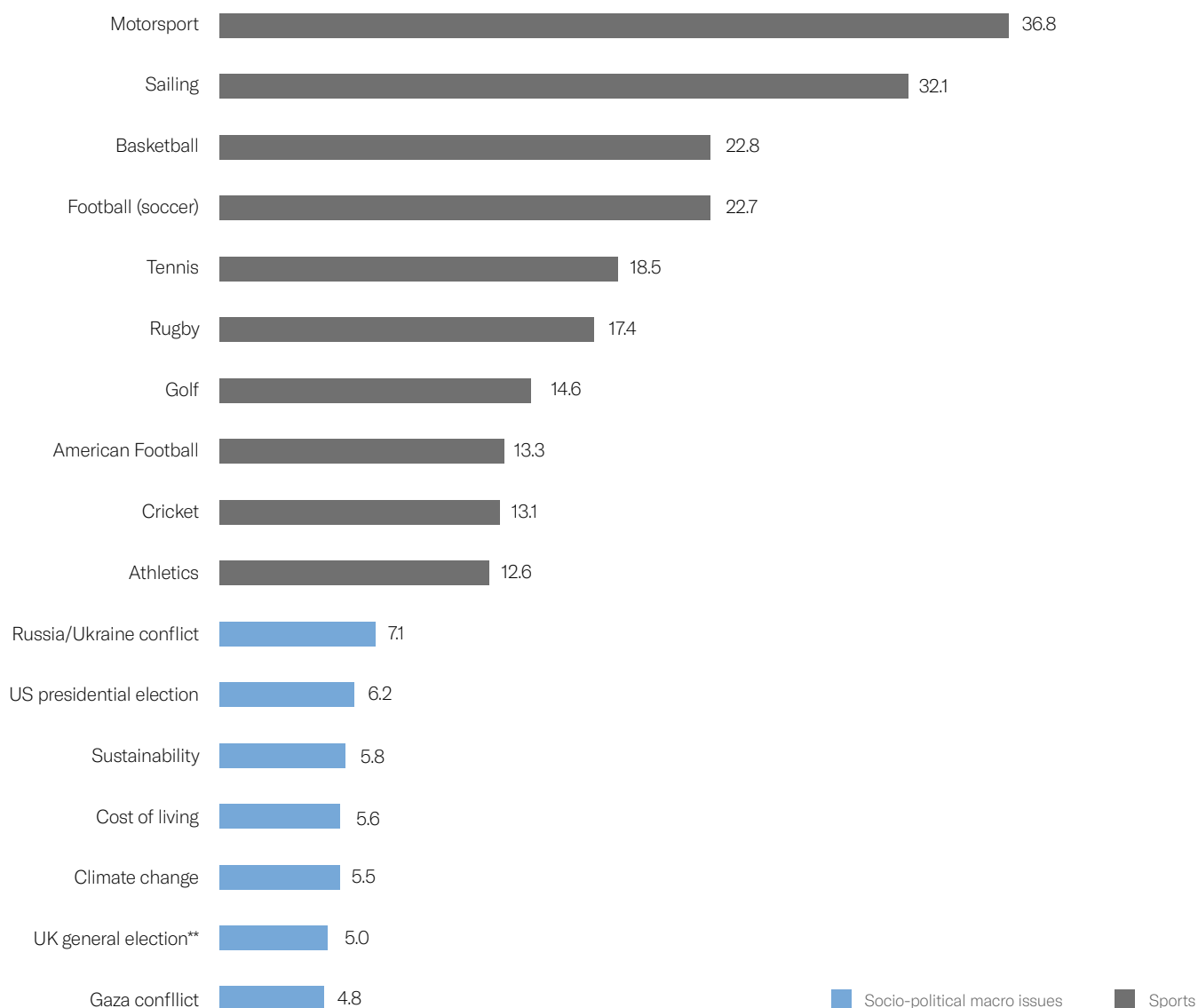
- motorsport generated the highest average engagement (36.8),
- cricket recorded the lowest average engagement of any sport overall (13.1)

- the socio-political issue with the highest average engagement (Russia/Ukraine conflict) averaged 7.1 engagements per item

In essence, this demonstrates that the general population is more engaged on sport than on socio-political issues – and underscores sport’s potency as a medium for impactful discourse and positive societal change. Moreover, when sports do join forces and combine messaging, as we will recap in the following pages, that becomes a very powerful tool of communication.

# 05

## Average engagement\* of online news and social media content



\*Average engagement is the total number of engagements for all articles/posts divided by the volume of articles/posts.

\*\*Data collected up to 30 Apr 2024 - prior to Rishi Sunak's announcement on 22 May 2024 confirming the date of the UK general election as 4 July 2024.



## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

Within the sport-in-focus sections, we established some of the key topics of interest within online news coverage and social media conversation relating to sustainability and social/community matters for each of the ten sports tracked in this study.

We also identified some of the key protagonists in those stories, where those conversations were taking place and who were the top influencers helping to disseminate those stories.

The next section summarises the trends and commonalities seen across our ten sports, with a view to understanding what can be learned from the trends we have observed.

# 06

## WHAT WERE THE KEY FOCUS AREAS WITHIN EACH SPORT?

### Football

- Air travel, transport, scheduling.
- 2022 Qatar World Cup carbon neutrality claims and sustainability at future World Cups.
- Strong theme of leadership and example-setting.
- High engagement around Liverpool FC's sustainability stories and with Vinicius Jr.

### Rugby

- Air travel, transport, sustainable travel.
- Calendar events: World Cup, Premiership Final.
- Disruption by Just Stop Oil.
- Sponsorships: Scottish Gas, TotalEnergies.
- Frequent posts and strong local presence helping to solidify and enhance reputation.

### Cricket

- Largely positive tone thanks to leadership theme (and recognition of success/efforts) in climate change.
- Polarised views on effectiveness of disruption.
- Equality and gender parity.

### Motorsport

- Driver sympathy for Just Stop Oil juxtaposed by high carbon emissions and "private jet" lifestyle.
- JSO criticised for disrupting Formula E event.
- Strong focus on innovation/technology, travel/transport/scheduling and emissions.

### Golf

- Infrastructure, facilities, logistics, water requirements, environmental impact of course maintenance.
- Vocal calls to "ban golf" and "get rid of golf" offset by individual praise for environmental golf course management.
- Disruption by Extinction Rebellion.
- Politically charged conversations referencing dislike of woke culture and cancellation culture.

### Athletics

- Strong focus on trans athlete participation, climate change impact and disruption by protests.
- Positive awareness and leadership from individual athletes (David Rudisha, Innes Fitzgerald) and athletics as a whole (survey finding).
- Little direct criticism of sustainability within athletics.
- Athletics appears to have tackled sustainability issues head on – survey and engagement with relevant issues shows awareness.

### Sailing

- Successful "borrowing" from other sports; Sebastian Vettel working on a biodiversity project.
- Clean Water Sports Alliance. demonstrates power of partnerships, unison, collaboration, achieving top tier coverage and cross-sport exposure.
- Sailing appears strong on partnerships in general, e.g. SailGP and renewable energy company Low Carbon.
- A decision to prioritise wildlife (dolphin) protection was welcomed.

### Basketball

- Carbon footprint, travel, emissions.
- Strong content from Earth Day and partnerships.
- Some negativity surrounding trans athlete participation, mental health and homophobia.
- Technology and re-usage of materials.
- Climate hoax and climate denial prevalence; manifesting as climate jokes.

### American Football

- Emissions and carbon neutral offsetting.
- Key calendar events included Superbowl, NFL Green Week and NFL draft (roster pick).
- Strong cross-sport connections, especially with Tottenham Hotspur FC.
- Climate jokes and jocular tone.

### Tennis

- Disruption and protest focus: JSO protests, Coco Gauff sympathising with XR, lobbying on fossil fuel sponsorship, efficacy of climate crisis activism at major tennis tournaments and notions of hyperbolic "climate alarmism".
- Leadership from Serena Williams championing diversity.

# 06

## WHAT COMMONALITIES EXIST BETWEEN SPORTS, AND WHAT CAN BE LEARNED?

We have established what were the drivers in sustainability and social/community-related conversation for the ten sports tracked in this study, as well as identifying the key protagonists in those stories, where those conversations are taking place and who are the top influencers helping to disseminate those stories.

Next, we evaluated the trends and commonalities seen across sports within the period reviewed.

- **Social and community matters** content typically generated higher volumes & engagement than sustainability (expected due to broad nature of subject matter).
- **Video is a popular format of content consumption.** Many of the highest engagement influencers produce content on TikTok and YouTube (opposed to X/Twitter, Instagram or Facebook), which, naturally, is a popular medium for presentation of sport-related content.
- **Disruption was a prevalent theme.** Just Stop Oil, Extinction Rebellion and climate action protests were all moderately visible across different sports. Just Stop Oil in particular gained prominence in football, cricket, tennis and rugby (at events they have sought to disrupt). Guiding athletes and authorities on how to deal with, respond to and sensitively air views relating to such disruption (as seen by Lewis Hamilton and Coco Gauff) may help achieve stronger sustainability practices in sports and through collaborative means.
- **Sporting events create peaks in conversation** about sustainability and social and community matters. Harnessing key events within any given sport globally (March Madness, Super Bowl, Wimbledon, World Cups, etc.) provides a platform for greater attention that teams, individuals and organisations can utilise to draw attention to sustainability efforts. To sustain conversation away from events it is important to have other initiatives or matters to talk about.
- **Initiatives create engagement.** Aside from sporting events, having sports initiatives creates talking points. As an example, Earth Day emerged as a key catalyst for high engagement with content around sustainability in basketball. Branded efforts can help sustain a thread of engagement too, as seen with Liverpool FC's The Red Way.
- **Criticism (and information voids) present opportunity.** Greater levels of engagement were detected around contentious issues from which criticism arose, than from positive posts that highlighted initiatives or day-to-day affairs. Conversation on negative issues sometimes highlighted perceived information voids - from which opportunities to reframe and educate can arise. To consider a real-life example, there were incidents of calls to "ban golf" on the basis that the sport is "not sustainable" or Formula 1 not being environmentally-friendly. Tackling issues and assumptions (even if they are erroneous) head on is often reasonably well received by the public.
- **Engagement was amplified by influencer involvement...and more by teams/organisations than by individuals.** While key individuals / prominent spokespeople were able to generate high coverage and high engagement, we found organisations/teams were usually more prominent (in volume and engagement terms) than people, particularly in sustainability-focused content. However, certain nuances should be factored in (see below).
- **Climate change leadership from athletes is (broadly speaking) welcomed.** David Rudisha in athletics, Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel in motorsport, and Serena Williams in tennis were all recognised as vocal advocates supporting climate action and generated positive broadly engagement.
- **Ensure succession planning for athlete voices.** In basketball, the sustainability work of former player Rick Fox was well recognised; likewise in motorsport former F1 driver Sebastian Vettel remains an eminent champion of sustainability and in tennis, Serena Williams champions diversity. These are examples of three sports making good use of former athletes to promote sustainability; using former pros to help detail work of current players may provide interesting insight to the

# 06

general public. That said, it would also be important to ensure sustainability advocates are not limited to a narrow pool of individuals (in Formula 1, Vettel has retired and Hamilton is at the tail end of his career) and that current athletes are equally raising awareness on such issues, so ensuring that there are also new sustainability voices coming to the fore may also be a worthwhile strategy.

- [Cross-sport collaborations are extremely powerful](#). Uniting seven sporting organisations in the UK, the Clean Water Sports Alliance generated significant coverage from top tier, high reaching media outlets, and demonstrated how separate audiences of different sports sharing the same sport spaces can be exposed to campaign messaging via owned social media channels. This stands as an excellent example of how partnerships and collaboration can drive greater media attention and stronger audience engagement. In similar fashion, content orientated on American Football was published by Tottenham Hotspur FC and by Harry Kane and highlighted partnerships with the NFL on community improvement and mental health, which resonated well with the public. Likewise, Sebastian Vettel and SailGP's conservation project received significant engagement in sailing and

motorsport conversation, where each was able to tap into a new audience segment, and David Beckham's endorsement of an inclusion and equality initiative in cricket generated huge engagement within cricket.

- [Do not underestimate the power of local press](#). Typically, people care more about issues and stories local to them than stories further away. Publishing numerous stories in local press can help to cement reputation on any given issue, and often forms the basis for reputation and perceptions that may well travel further. Rugby in particular appeared to benefit well from the impact of local media stories.
- [Humour is impactful...but avoid trivialisation](#). While humour can be strongly effective in attracting attention (see the WWF's [highly impactful observation](#) "mourning" wildlife "disappearing" when Twitter removed the bird from its logo), trivialisation can have the same impact in reverse (see comments attributed to SailGP reportedly implying that dolphin protection plans were too "extreme"). Given the regularity with which social media users joke about the severity of climate change and climate hoaxing in sport alone, this will be a fine line for any sporting organisation to need to navigate.

- [Many individual voices can be just as powerful as one committed activist](#). It's worth emphasising that not every athlete needs to become a formal advocate or ambassador for an environmental or societal issue to have an impact. We saw examples in the analysis of sports people who posted on issues they cared about as a one off and achieved strong engagement, such as Dutch Professional Footballer Vivianne Miedema [standing up against racism](#). Athletes should feel empowered to use their voices and influence to post authentically, when it feels right, on issues that matter to them. Sports organisations can help by educating athletes on how they can make a positive contribution with a less formal approach.
- [What else?](#) Further popular subjects of interest that were discussed across multiple sports included: emissions/transport/scheduling/logistics, innovation/technology/facilities, re-usage and upcycling of materials (like trophies, stages, equipment), sponsorships and ownership, and the BBC Green Sport Awards.

Partnerships and collaboration can drive greater media attention; when united many individual voices can be powerful.



# About Sport Positive

Sport Positive supports the global sports industry to increase action on climate, sustainability, biodiversity and environmental justice, to both safeguard the future of professional and grassroots sports, and unlock the power and influence of sport to tackle some of the most pressing issues of our time.

This work manifests through community creation and support, connecting people and ideas, education and engagement, media and communications. Products include our annual Summit and Awards, bi-weekly intelligence bulletin, podcast, leagues, reports and mainstream media and social media output.

Find out more: [www.sportpositive.org](http://www.sportpositive.org)

Contact: [info@sportpositivesummit.com](mailto:info@sportpositivesummit.com)

# About UNICEPTA

UNICEPTA is a globally successful provider of media & marketing intelligence. With AI- driven technology and nearly 370 analysis and monitoring experts, UNICEPTA analyses globally available content from social media, online, print, TV, radio, and numerous other data sources – in real-time and at any other desired time. In short, UNICEPTA enables companies to listen better and take appropriate actions.

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