



DECODING ONLINE ABUSE OF PLAYERS

Collective Responses by Players and Unions





ABOUT THIS STUDY

This project focuses on targeted online abuse: flagged posts that are directed at or include the account handle of a player so that player might see the message and suffer the impact of the abusive content.

The report exposes a significant threat to the mental health and well-being of today's top athletes. It raises important questions about their workplace and what can be done to ensure they enjoy adequate protection as workers. And it stimulates the discussion around the responsibilities of the sports industry, including the players' associations, players' employers, the sports' governing bodies and competition organisers, to this end, as well as governments and the online platforms where this abuse is taking place. While there are some safeguards and procedures in place already, this report makes it evident that more investment and action are needed by all parties to combat this threat to the players.

Specifically, this report shines a light on the tactics employed by bad actors and outlines the differences and similarities of abuse that confront players in different sports and markets. In this AI-driven scale study, the report covers multiple territories and levels of competition across a representative set of men and women from the sports of football and basketball.

The report will support the efforts of all those who are working to protect the health and well-being of players. It provides evidence-based arguments and recommendations that deepen the existing qualitative research; players themselves offer a first-hand account of the human impact and suffering caused by online abuse.

About Signify Group & Threat Matrix

Signify Group are an ethical data science company dedicated to using machine learning and open-source data sets to improve products, services, and communication for the benefit of all. Over the last three years Signify have conducted online abuse detection, analysis and investigations across a range of clubs, leagues and international events.

Signify have developed a proprietary machine learning solution (Threat Matrix) to help mechanise and automate processes involved in the identification, categorisation and assessment of targeted, threatening and abusive online personal communications. Threat Matrix technology provides an ability to monitor and analyse incoming social media posts aimed at an individual target and flag content and accounts that are worthy of further attention.



DISCLAIMER AND LIMITATIONS

All parties involved in the study recognise that online abuse and threat exists across multiple social and digital platforms and channels. To provide legitimate comparison points, the report focused on Twitter only. Some platforms are using new tools that aim to mitigate the impact of online abuse. Instagram, for example, allows users to create lists of keywords that cannot be posted in comments on their profile. Many have chosen not to exercise this function; some observers argue that it mistakenly places the burden on users rather than platforms.

This study recognises that this creates a hierarchy of probability that an account may receive targeted online abuse. However, at the time of analysis, this was not the case for Twitter,

where every player with a public profile faces an equal risk of abuse. The nature of Twitter also excludes any variation caused by regional or sport-based platform usage. This allows for legitimate comparison by criteria such as player profile and events, and ignores any technical ability to access players.

This research study recognises the existing limitations to monitor online abuse. The focus on Twitter only leads naturally to much lower figures on online abuse compared to what players and other experience on daily level across their accounts on numerous platforms. Considering the shocking numbers in this report, these shortcomings further highlight the need to better protect players.

The burden is on users rather than platforms



Considering the shocking numbers in this report, these shortcomings further highlight the need to better protect players





PLAYER UNION COLLABORATION

FIFPRO – Football Players Worldwide, the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) and the Women’s National Basketball Players Association (WNBPA) have come together to produce the world’s first multi-market, multi-sport AI-driven data insight study. It provides a unique analysis of the types, levels and gravity of discriminatory and targeted abuse faced by players around the world; it offers a comparative focus to help drive solutions.

This report decodes harmful practices that are applicable to millions of individuals across the world.



FIFPRO – Football Players Worldwide

FIFPRO is the global representative organisation for professional football players. With more than 65,000 players, both men and women, spread across the globe. FIFPRO and its 65 affiliated national player associations are committed to improving the lives of players around the world. FIFPRO’s own knowledge centre, Player IQ Hub, provides an important source of player centric expertise for this study.



National Basketball Players Association (NBPA)

The NBPA is the union for current men’s professional basketball players in the National Basketball Association (NBA). Established in 1954, the NBPA’s mission is to ensure that the rights of NBA players are protected and that every conceivable measure is taken to assist players in maximizing their opportunities and achieving their goals, both on and off the court.



Women’s National Basketball Players Association (WNBPA)

The WNBPA is the union for current women’s professional basketball players in the WNBA. The WNBPA is the first labor union for professional women athletes. It was created in 1998 to protect the rights of players and assist them in achieving their full potential on and off the court.



EXECUTIVE FOREWORD: PROTECTING OUR PEOPLE

6

EXECUTIVE FINDINGS

8

JOINT ACTION PLAN: PROTECTING PLAYERS AGAINST ONLINE ABUSE

10

RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

13

Insights by Playing Groups
and Workplace 15

Impact on workplace and lifestyle:
the effect of online abuse on players 16

Mental health and well-being at risk 17

Psychological Costs Associated
with Social Media Abuse 18

Suggested Interventions 19

Football Industry: Summary Findings 20

Basketball Industry: Summary Findings 24

Comparative Observations and Issues 28

PROTECTING PLAYERS I: MONITORING, MODERATING, & REMOVING HARMFUL CONTENT

38

Responsibility of Online Platforms 38

Moderation of abusive Posts
and Accounts 38

Types of moderated abuse 39

Moderation across sports 39

Remaining Content 41

PROTECTING PLAYERS II: THE ROLE OF THE INDUSTRY TO CREATE A SAFE WORKPLACE

44

The responsibility of leagues
and competition organisers 44

The responsibility of clubs and teams 45

The responsibility of sponsors
and commercial partners 45

PROTECTING PLAYERS III: PUBLIC REGULATION & LAW ENFORCEMENT

47

Global response 47

UK: Online Safety Bill 47

EU: Digital Services Act 48

US Regulation 48

APPENDIX A: DETAILED METHODOLOGY

50

Defining Abuse on Social Media 50

Categorisation of Gender-based/
Transphobic, Sexist abuse 51

Sport, League, Region and
Player selections 51

Coverage and Scope 52

APPENDIX B: SELECTED PLAYER LISTS

53

Basketball Player List 53

Footballer Player List 55

APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

57



EXECUTIVE FOREWORD: PROTECTING OUR PEOPLE

Top athletes around the world are more visible and public than ever before. Many play a critical role not only in their sport but in society, using their platforms to raise awareness for the causes they believe in and playing their part to progress issues that connect and protect communities. Nevertheless, whilst this visibility is “part of the job”, the heightened scrutiny and increased connectivity through social media is threatening their mental health and well-being.

The fast integration of virtual spaces into our lives - technologies that were designed to bring people together and create connection – now makes athletes vulnerable to those who want to spread hate, anger and prejudice. As unions representing those athletes, we see what is happening and we must respond.

In times like these, we turn to our values, and remind ourselves what we stand for. Our unions’ historic commitment to dignity and safety in the workplace is more urgent and necessary than ever before, and social media and the online space becoming ever more embedded in the personal and professional lives of athletes. Therefore, the message we take from this report is clear: we cannot allow any form of abuse, on social media or elsewhere to undermine the dignity, health and well-being of our athletes, our sports and what they bring to millions of people around the world: the highest levels of athletic performance and the most exciting sporting competitions.

As players and unions accept their responsibility towards our sports and communities, we expect others to play their part too. Online platforms have a duty to provide a safe environment for

all their users. They must move beyond looking at athletes as drivers of engagement on their platforms and instead see them as people with human vulnerabilities and needs, and offer the protection they deserve.

Our mission, at its heart, is to protect our members and their families. But the problems exposed in this report reveal a social crisis that touches many individuals every day, all over the world, starting from our youth who inarguably experience social media as a critical space for the determination of their identity. It’s a social crisis with deep roots, which demands a collective response – the abuse of our players is an attack on their personalities with deep and pervading impact. Employers, competition organisers, online platforms and governments each have their own responsibility to act, but they must coordinate their work. It was in this spirit that we commissioned this report – to provide compelling evidence, offer solutions, and instill a sense of shared urgency.

For players and player unions the identification of the same workforce challenges means that collective action of players to speak with one voice is more important than ever in a globalized sports entertainment space.

What you are about to read will help us all to understand the scale of the problem we face. It should strengthen our resolve to act now – quickly, decisively and together – so that athletes around the world can enjoy the fundamental rights that belong to every human being, and which start with our dignity and our safety, in the home, in our communities and in the places where we work.

FIFPRO General Secretary
Jonas Baer-Hoffmann

FIFPRO President
David Aganzo

WNBPA Executive Director
Terri Jackson

NBPA Executive Director
Tamika L. Tremaglio



EXECUTIVE FINDINGS





The executive findings identify systemic problems for players across the workplaces in the industry and encourage collective action to protect the people that create the game.

- 1 THE PLAYERS' WELL-BEING AT RISK:**
Players across sports share similar risk profiles and suffer horrific online abuse in the workplace impacting mental well-being, lifestyle and performance.
- 2 THE SAME ABUSIVE PATTERNS:**
Online abuse follows similar tactics and categorisation of social media abuse across sports industries and jurisdictions.
- 3 A SAFETY ISSUE AT WORK:**
Players are often targeted by followers of their own team accounts, sponsors, competition organisers and media outlets.
- 4 AN ATTACK ON PERSONALITIES AND THEIR IDENTITY:**
Online abuse creates an environment that attacks the characters and personalities of players and forces them to hide and withdraw from who they are and want to be.
- 5 SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT FOR PROGRESSIVE CAUSES TRIGGERS ABUSE:**
Players who express solidarity for social issues almost always receive a torrent of abuse (e.g. homophobia).
- 6 SAFETY MEASURES FOR PLAYERS ARE OFTEN MISSING:**
Whilst players can be protected against online abuse, specific safety measures are often not sufficiently implemented.
- 7 A LACK OF MODERATION & REGULATION:**
A clear majority of the content detected remains online and visible to the public (87%) and exposes a lack of regulation and oversight.



JOINT ACTION PLAN: PROTECTING PLAYERS AGAINST ONLINE ABUSE





1 IDENTIFY

It's personal: online abuse is widespread but harms individuals and their vulnerabilities at a very deep level

Our players embody all the complexity and diversity of human life: powerful and vulnerable; technically excellent and naturally flawed; uniquely outstanding but part of a wider community. They are people first and athletes second. Their vulnerability only reflects the wider fractures of our society, whilst their higher visibility makes them an easy target.

The research in this report shows the horrific, targeted and sometimes criminal abuse that affects players across sports and gender, in both their workplace and family environment. As player unions we have a duty to defend the rights and safety of our members, and that starts by exposing the evidence of targeted player abuse and its distressing impact on players and society

ACTION: FIFPRO x NBPA x WNBPA exposes the objective reality of online abuse that targets players, illuminating its volume and ubiquity, and how it harms the individuals' health and well-being.

2 PROTECT

Union action

It is our duty as player unions to protect players, ensure their safety and, support their desire for action. We work to identify the situations and activities where we, as unions, can make a difference both in our sports and beyond.

The collaboration between FIFPRO x NBPA and WNBPA represents our commitment to work as a team, finding common ground and synergies between the two biggest global team sports, their unions, and players.

Our action to assist players ranges from individual player assistance to programs that prioritise well-being and mental health from support with investigations and law enforcement to collective action. Each union will identify how best to respond to the needs of their playing groups. Together, we will act as a thought leader, creating new ideas and tools that can support and protect our players.

ACTION: FIFPRO x NBPA x WNBPA commit to deliver specific capacity-building initiatives that educate players on online abuse, calling on existing mental-health and well-being programs, and identify additional expert initiatives to protect the personal vulnerabilities of players.



3 SUPPORT

Industrial action

As players and unions accept their responsibility towards our sports and communities, we expect others to play their part too. Online platforms have a duty to provide a safe environment for all their users. They must move beyond looking at athletes as drivers of engagement on their platforms and instead see them as people with human vulnerabilities and needs, and offer the protection they deserve.

At the same time, the teams, clubs and competition organisers – as employers – have a duty of care towards our members: to ensure all elements related to the working environment that is free of discrimination and abuse. Public policymakers, regulators and law enforcement all have their own critical role to play, helping to rid the online environment of abuse and hate.

ACTION: FIFPRO x NBPA x WNBPA believe that industrial action is required to protect players against online abuse. We will enter into the necessary dialogue with our industrial counterparts.

4 CHAMPION

Community action: A proactive commitment to prioritise well-being and positive community culture through kindness and empathy

Our societies are living in a time of polarisation and fragmentation, within countries and across regions. Technological change and the growth of social media have provided new platforms for abuse and hate. Online abuse in all its forms can cause enormous suffering to anyone in our society, damaging their mental health and well-being.

As player unions we recognise our institutional responsibility to work with others for an inclusive, open and kinder society. Many of our members play an active role in their communities, driving new initiatives that foster a positive and respectful culture amongst all of us.

ACTION: FIFPRO x NBPA x WNBPA work together to identify individual and collective initiatives to drive and support an open and positive community culture and industry.



RESEARCH AT A GLANCE





The study detected **1,558 abusive posts** sent from **1,455 unique accounts** across all sports and competitions during the study period. These were identified using an algorithm that detects abusive, threatening and discriminatory key words, phrases and emojis.

In the physical world, where abuse in a stadium makes national headlines, those 1,558 posts **would equate to over 17 incidents** in every game round of a regular NBA season or **over 38 incidents** in every English Premier League fixture week.¹

There is a general tendency within the public sphere to downplay behaviour that would not be tolerated in stadiums or other physical venues, even as player testimony confirms how intimate access to their online persona can harm their mental health and well-being.

- 648 abusive tweets came from the men's basketball data-set, 427 from men's football, 398 from women's football and 85 from women's basketball.

- 20 of these tweets constituted threatening or violent language.

- 136 of these posts contained racist emoji usage. Racist posts containing emojis were present across men's football, men's and women's basketball, and have previously been detected in women's football.

- 2 in every 3 male footballers in this study were targeted with some form of discriminatory targeted messages.

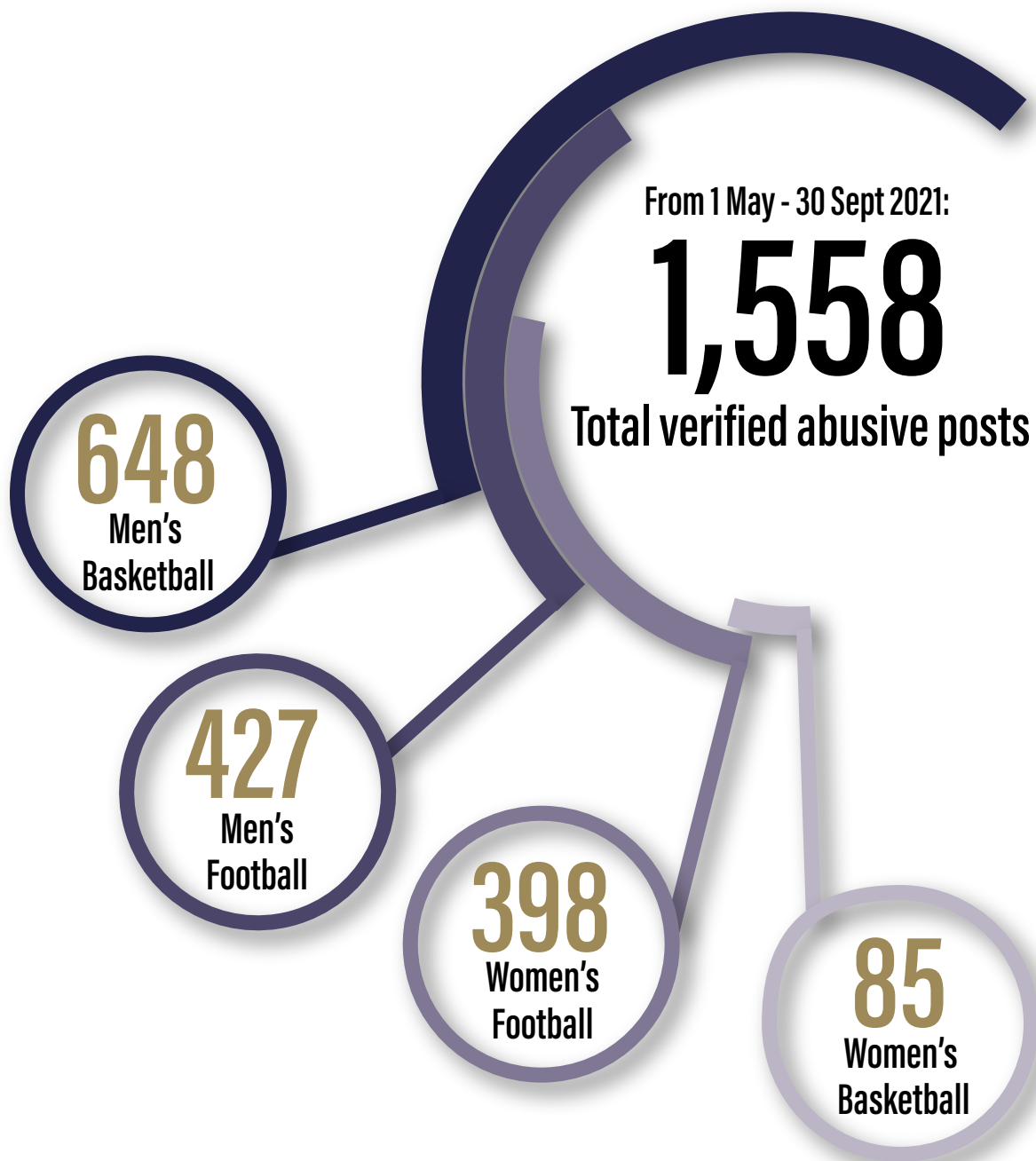


In the physical world, online abuse would equate to
over 38 incidents
in every English Premier League
fixture week

One of the key objectives for this report was to examine similarities in targeted online abuse across the different sports and jurisdictions. Using similar methodologies and focusing on comparable platforms, the study confirms significant levels of abuse across men's and women's sports.

This indicates that a shared approach to the monitoring of abusive messages would offer valuable insights, which in turn would strengthen the strategies and tactics of prevention.

¹Figures were calculated by dividing the number of incidents by the number of fixture rounds in a regular season (82 for the NBA and 38 for the EPL).





Insights by Playing Groups and Workplace

Football Industry

• Racism and homophobia accounted for the overwhelming majority of verified targeted abuse detected in Men's football (85%).

..... 85%

Racist and homophobic abuse in Men's Football

• 2 in every 3 male footballers in this study were targeted with some form of discriminatory message.

• Sexism and homophobia accounted for the majority (90%) of targeted abuse detected in Women's football.

..... 90%

Sexist and homophobic abuse in Women's Football

• Political stances and social / sexual identities also make players particularly vulnerable to targeted abuse. 29% of Women's players received online abuse due to political stances or sexual identity as opposed to in-game events or incidents. One player received 90% of verified targeted abuse and an openly transgender, non-binary player receiving the second highest level of targeted abuse in Women's football.

Basketball Industry

• Racism and homophobia accounted for 74% of abuse targeting NBA players.

..... 74%

Racist and homophobic abuse in Men's Basketball

• Racist and homophobic abuse was targeted at 29 NBA players with two players accounting for more than half the abuse (due in part to their profile, but also in response to perceived politically motivated statements).

• Sexist and homophobic abuse were the biggest categories of targeted abuse directed at WNBPA players.

• 4 in 5 instances of targeted abuse in the WNBPA included sexually explicit or harassing messages.

..... 4/5

Instances of abuse at WNBPA members included sexually explicit or harassing content

Anonymity and player protection – a duty of care for players

FIFPRO x NBPA x WNBPA have taken care to ensure that this report does not lead to an increase in targeted abuse, specifically protecting players studied and highlighted within this report. We have omitted a number of data points, insights, and examples that directly call-out specific players or the volume / type of abuse they are receiving.



Impact on workplace and lifestyle: the effect of online abuse on players

The repetitive and large-scale abuse of players across all common social media and online platforms has a direct and immediate effect on the players and their families. The impact on the player is intrinsically linked with the workplace environment, the sporting eco-system and the cultural settings in which the abuse is taking place.

Risk profiles for players

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Activist & Advocates
- Public Profile
- Employment & Contract Negotiations

The mental health risks

- Anxiety Attacks
- Self-worth
- Family Affairs
- Depression

The negative impact cycle of online abuse on players

- Athletic Performance
- Lifestyle & Family
- Business Opportunities
- Competition Integrity

For a more personal perspective of what players are facing, see FIFPRO's "What Equal Playing Field" Report. This publication supports the findings of this study including case studies from the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup.

<https://fifpro.org/en/rights/inclusion/itspersonal/what-equal-playing-field-players-perspectives-on-discrimination-in-football>





Mental health and well-being at risk

The following section has been developed by Dr William D. Parham, Ph.D., ABPP – Director of the NBPA's Mental Health and Wellness program. Contributed from a bespoke article entitled: 'Social Media Abuse: Looking Through the Lens of Mental Health and Wellness' this section and its recommendations are based on the findings and insights from this study.



The importance of context – understanding the lived experiences of athletes

An athlete's circumstances and situation cannot be fully understood and appreciated until and unless the multiple contextual variables that frame and illuminate their lived experiences are factored into the bigger picture.

Individual variables and human context

Contextual variables can be broken down into three categories that include:

- a) personal identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, culture, social class, LGBTQ, persons with disabilities, faith-based practices);
- b) social (e.g., families, communities, educational systems, faith-based institutions, media [visual, auditory, written]); and
- c) structural (e.g., systemically sanctioned legislations, mandates, decrees, policies, procedures, protocols, and laws).

The above-referenced premises apply to both domestic and international players across gender, age, sports, notoriety, and levels of excellence and expertise.

Acknowledging the human element of social media abuse

Conversations about social media abuse absent the integration of resulting immediate, short-range, and longer-term adverse psychological consequences and impacts on individuals / athletes fail to capture a full valuation of the human element in at least two ways.

- First, excluding mention of adverse psychological impacts of social media abuse evidences a lack of consideration of the emotional vulnerability of the athletes who are the targets of the abuse.
- Second, exclusion of said adverse consequences dismisses, even outright ignores the truer essence of the athlete's abraded and raw lived experiences that they now manage, and that often are not easy to dismiss, shake off, or reconcile.

Absence of safeguards

Social media lacks viable and worthwhile safeguards that protect athletes and despite the recent formulation of new regulatory proposals across the UK, EU and US, there is nothing to suggest that required safeguards will be put in place. Arguably, and using first amendment rights as a backdrop in the US, resistance to putting substantially protective safeguards in place, that go far enough in their protection, are in full force.



Psychological costs associated with social media abuse

Accumulation of trauma

Emotional vulnerability of athletes represents mixed or failed results, accumulated across time, to resolve complexly painful pasts. At the extreme, pasts indelibly etched with invisible tattoos trauma, broadly defined (e.g., person-made [physical, sexual, emotional abuse; substance abuse; domestic violence, interpersonal violence, physical injuries, etc.] and environmentally influenced [e.g., floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, wildfires, etc.]) warrant focused attention.

Adverse consequences

A non-exhaustive list of resultant adverse consequences influenced by human vulnerabilities and doubtlessly triggered by social media abuse includes: addiction to social media, anxiety, depression, sadness, fear of missing out (FOMO), pitfalls associated with social comparisons, jealousy, feelings of inadequacy, social withdrawal and isolation, suicide, sleep disturbances, changes in patterns of eating, decreased productivity in work and school, disengagement from leisure, faith-based, and self-care routines.

The camouflage and cover-up effect

As significant, if not more than the above-referenced short list of visible changes to social media abuse are psychological and emotional responses that are 'invisible', intra-personal, and, nonetheless, hiding in plain sight. When viewed within contexts such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, notoriety, or 'celebrity' status, athletes may feel disinclined to admit feeling adversely impacted by social media abuse. They may elect, alternatively, to act as if all is well with them. These self-protective strategies involving 'camouflage' and cover-up may place athletes at greater risk of falling through the cracks of care and sensitivities and not receiving the support and wise counsel that could help them better manage their responses to social media abuse.



Suggested Interventions

Providing athletes with tools and awareness of their possible responses

Athletes have little to no control over what happens to them. However, they have 100% control over how they respond to the challenges that the world presents. Thus, teaching athletes how to respond differently to current and likely future social media abuse is essential. Athletes could then help challenge stigmatization of

mental health and wellness, using their status to empower social change. Developing curriculum that both educates and engages athletes and increases their awareness of media abuse and resulting implications as well as spawn proactive responses to self-protect are recommended.

Specifically engage youth players

Related, teaching younger generations (e.g., high school, collegiate) how to respond differently to current and likely future social media abuse is equally essential. Tailoring curriculum that is both age-appropriate and user-friendly merits consideration.

Dedicated mental-health and wellness support services

To compliment curriculum development and dissemination, creating and strategically marketing resourced mental health and wellness support services (e.g., apps, helplines, individual counselling, group support) is offered for consideration.

Leadership and sports industry responsibility

The importance of professional sports entities developing, implementing, and evaluating sustainable mechanisms used to advocate and lobby for broad ranges of athlete protections from social media abuse cannot be overstated. Having a 'seat at the table' of conversation and decision-making positions executive leadership, across professional sports, to have their

pulse on current and evolving sophistication and complexity of social media. Related, active, and strategic participation at tables of discourse has the potential for executive leadership (or their designees) to add input, influence thinking, sway opinions, and ultimately produce systems of protection are compelling, convincing, and conclusive.

Provide dedicated spaces for thought leadership exchanges

Finally, assembling interested domestic and global stakeholders and partners, across sports, to convene a Global Summit on the Protection of Athletes from Social Media Abuse is strongly encouraged. When the clarion voices of many come together in a chorus proclaiming the importance of athlete mental health and wellbeing, with a focus on social media

abuse, other entities pay attention. Of course, mental health and wellness of athletes is much broader than social media abuse. As such, the proposed 'Summit' could and should address bigger picture contexts of athlete mental health and wellness that has long been dismissed as a critical and necessary component of athletes' overall health, wellbeing, and performance.

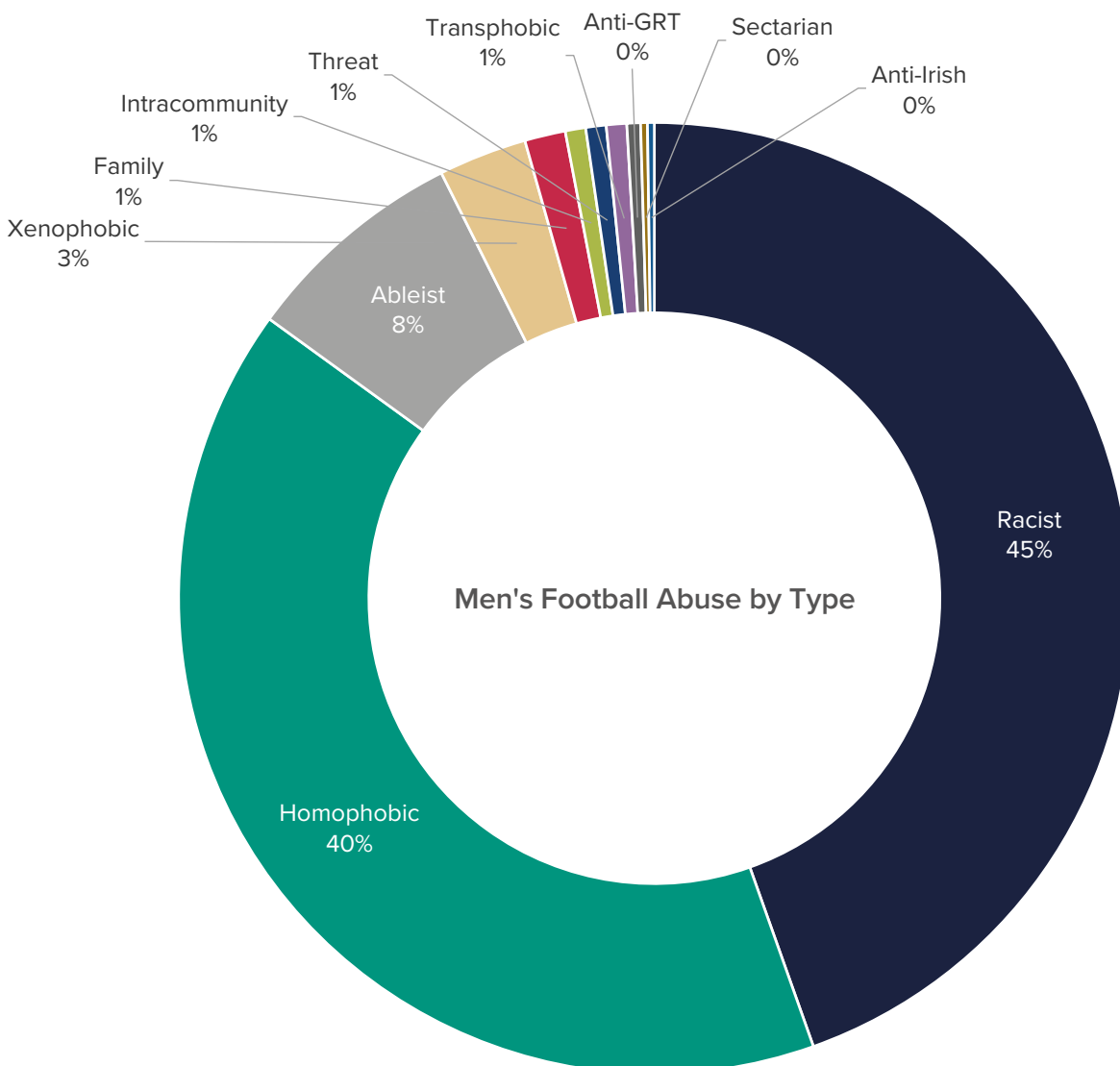


Football Industry: Summary Findings

Men's Football - Overview data

The study found 427 posts reaching the threshold for abuse.

- Racism and homophobia accounted for the overwhelming majority of verified targeted abuse (85%).
- This was often related to in-game events, transfer moves and public statements.
- Other categories were smaller compared to those seen in previous (European and UK based) studies; the choice of players and regions might explain this.





Men's Football - Victims of Targeted Abuse

The study found targeted abuse aimed at 30 players – exactly two in three of our sample.

Some of the most abused players were targeted as they changed clubs whilst others saw abuse in relation to on-field issues with the most visible example being the hostility directed at England players following the Euro 2020 Final.

Analysts also recognised players being targeted due to club rivalries or perceptions of their character.

Men's Football - Different Types of Abuse

Types of abuse differ significantly across player study sets.

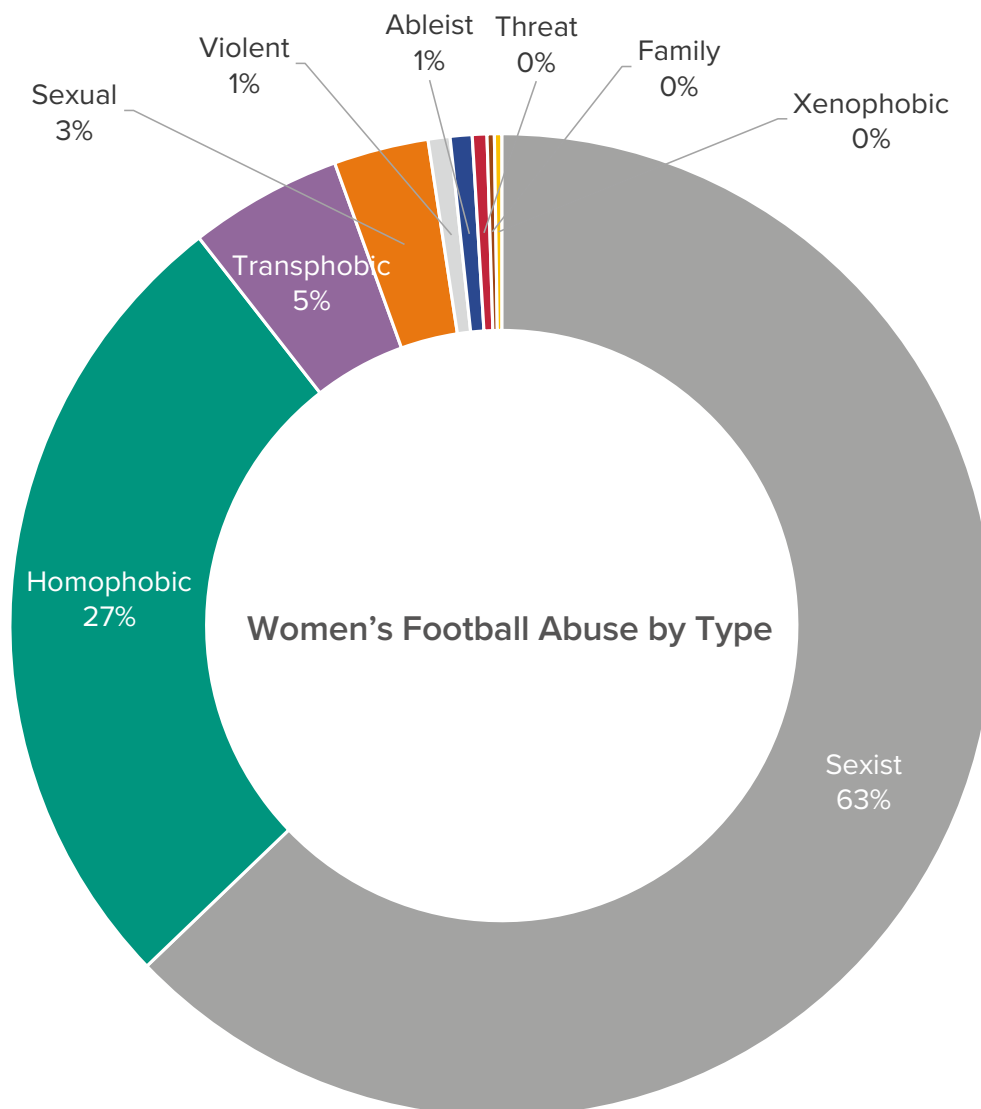
- The most abused player in our study received exclusively LGBT-phobic abuse, linked to his support for those issues.
- Several others received primarily racist abuse. It is unclear whether this is a pattern, but these tend often to have been players who have angered one set of fans or another.
- One player received a focused amount of ableist abuse targeted predominantly for the way he speaks.





Women's Football - Overview Data

- 398 posts reached our threshold for abuse.
- Sexism and homophobia accounted for the overwhelming majority (90%) of what the study detected.
- This often related to political stances and social and political engagement and sexual identities, rather than to in-game events.
- When sporting events were mentioned, they tended to be secondary: for example, an abusive account welcomed a particular player's defeat because of their political views.





Women's Football - Victims of Targeted Abuse

- 87% of detected abusive posts in women's football were targeted at one player. Much of this was related to their political stances.
- Abuse affected 10 players in our study: 29% of the sample.
- The only openly transgender, non-binary player in our women's football study received the next most abuse.

Women's Football - Different Types of Abuse

Types of abuse differ significantly across player sets.

- The player who received the largest volume of targeted abusive messages received both sexist and homophobic abuse.
- All the abuse received by the openly transgender player was related to their being non-binary.
- Players also tend to receive explicit sexual harassment and comments rather than discriminatory abuse.



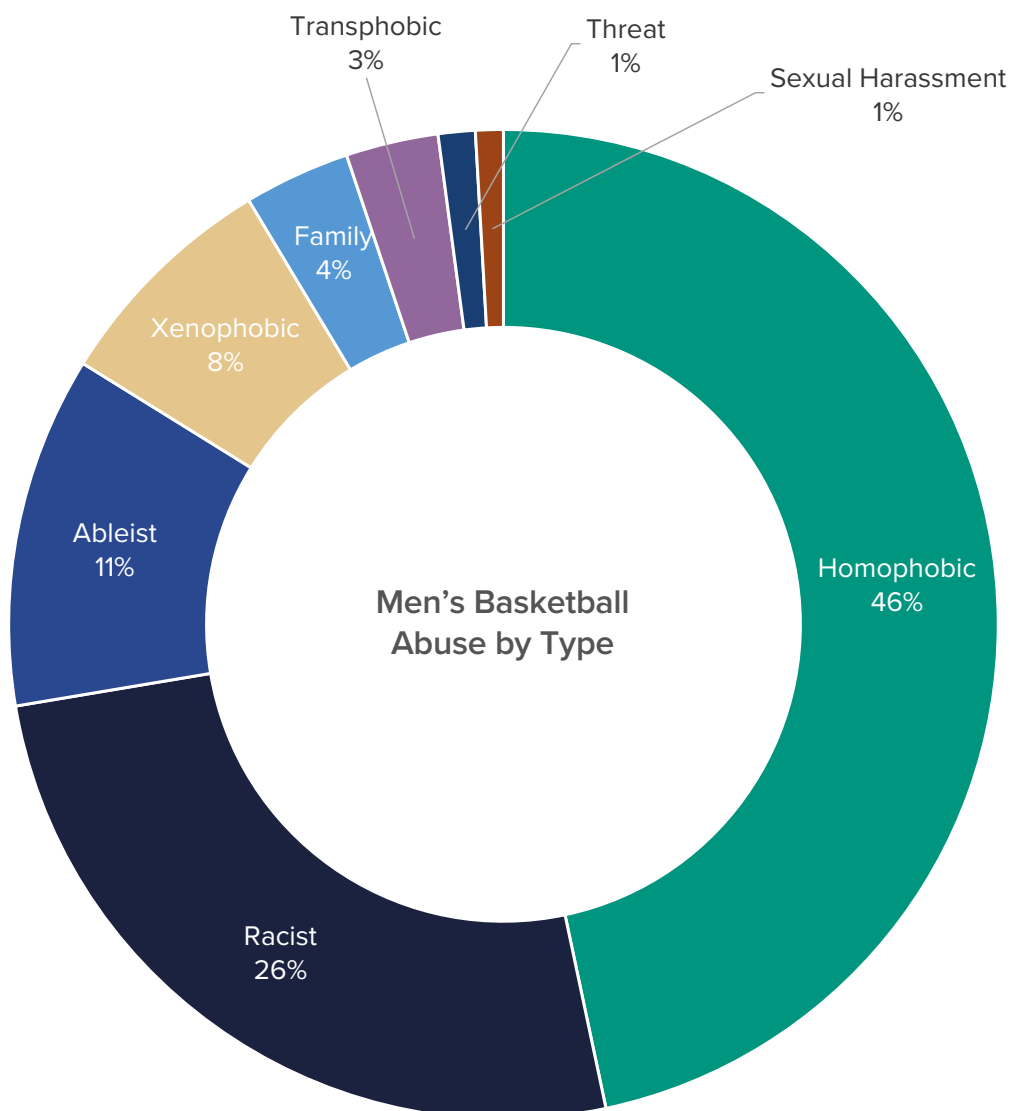


Basketball Industry: Summary Findings

Men's Basketball - Overview Data

The study found 654 posts reaching our threshold for abuse.

- Racism and homophobia accounted for most of what the study detected (72%).
- Ableist and xenophobic abuse both appeared more significantly than in the equivalent for men's football, as did very personal comments about family.





Men's Basketball – Victims of Targeted Abuse

- The study detected abuse aimed at 29 players: 64% of the sample.
- Much of the abuse was aimed at a small number of players: more than half (52%) affected the top two players.
- High public profile and particular incidents or perceptions seem to drive such abuse.

Men's Basketball – Different Types of Abuse

Types of abuse differ significantly between players.

- The recipient of the highest volume of abuse suffered a variety of abuse, as well as being the most abused player overall.
- One player received mostly LGBT-phobic abuse, particularly after posting a photo of himself in an outfit that many users deemed effeminate.
- A player with foreign nationality received significant xenophobic abuse, targeted specifically at his heritage and background.

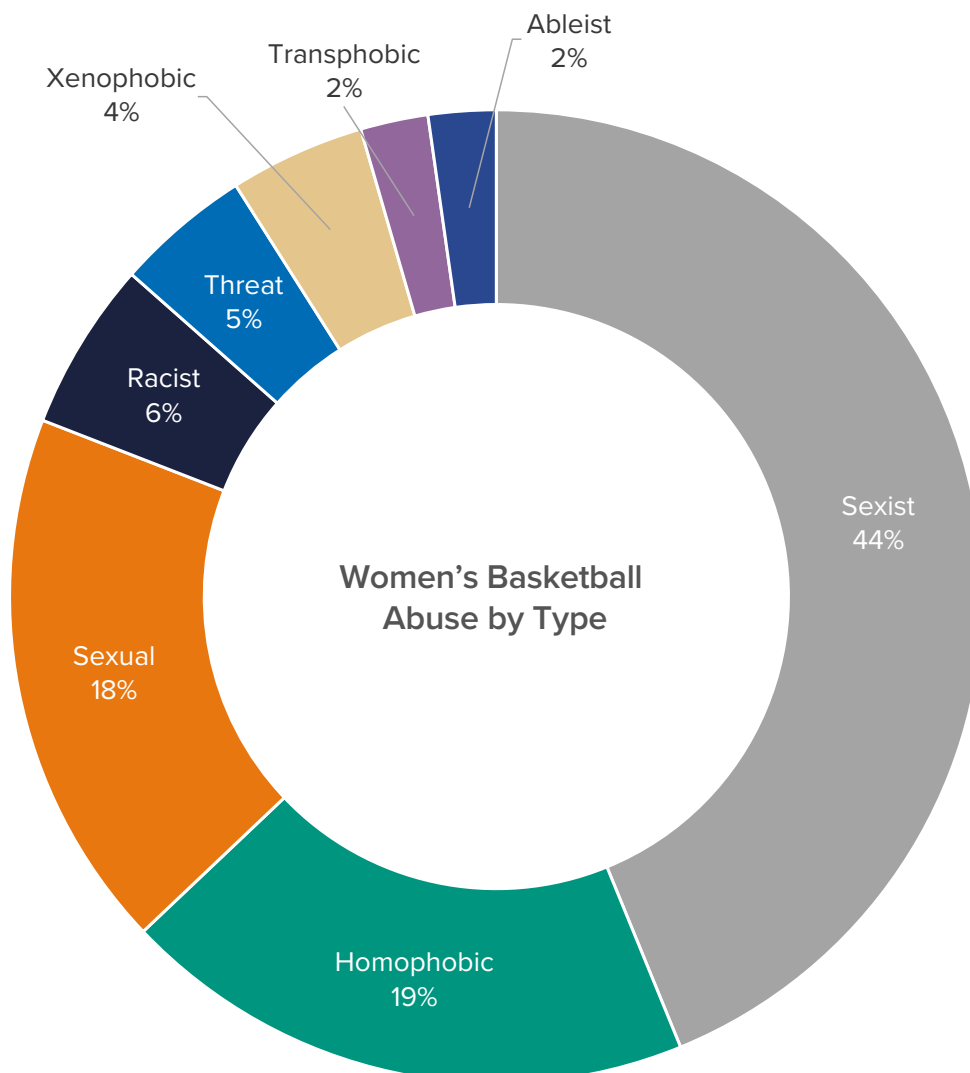




Women's Basketball - Overview Data

The study detected 85 posts reaching the threshold for abuse.

- The biggest categories are sexist and homophobic abuse, and sexually explicit or harassing messages, which together account for more than 4 in 5 instances or 81% of abuse.
- Racist abuse appears to represent a much lower proportion than that detected in the NBA players' sample (6% vs 26%).
- This field of the study presented the least abuse, however, removing one player from the sample in women's football would then reveal a higher volume of targeted abuse in women's basketball than in women's football (85 posts vs 50 posts).





Women's Basketball - Victims of Abuse

- The study detected targeted abuse aimed at 13 players in this study: 37% of the sample.
- Two players stood out with more than 10 pieces of abuse directed at them.

Women's Basketball - Different Types of Abuse

Types of abuse differ significantly across player sets.

- As with the NBA players, the higher-profile players receive a range of different abuse.
- One player received a large proportion of sexist abuse.





Comparative Observations and Issues

Men's Football - Overview data

The study has outlined several issues that cut across the different sports. Where possible, the study identified similarities and patterns, and showed examples of them; it also compared the experiences of players (men, women, and non-binary) across football and basketball.

Player Transfers and Free Agency

Sports have found different ways to manage the movement of players between clubs. Accordingly, the study observed different trends in abuse.

The correlation between transfers and targeted abuse appears to be more prevalent in football, which may reflect the greater freedom in this sport for players to choose where they play.

The study lays out examples of these observed differences across football and basketball.

Men's Basketball

In men's basketball, of the 29 players who suffered targeted abuse, 10 had moved teams during the period of study.





Women's Basketball

In the women's basketball, only one recipient of abuse moved teams during the study period.

None of the abuse appeared to be in any way linked to a move. Unlike the other sports analysed in this study, the WNBA did not experience a period of free agency within the period of study. Analysts could usefully consider a further study to cover the free agency period.

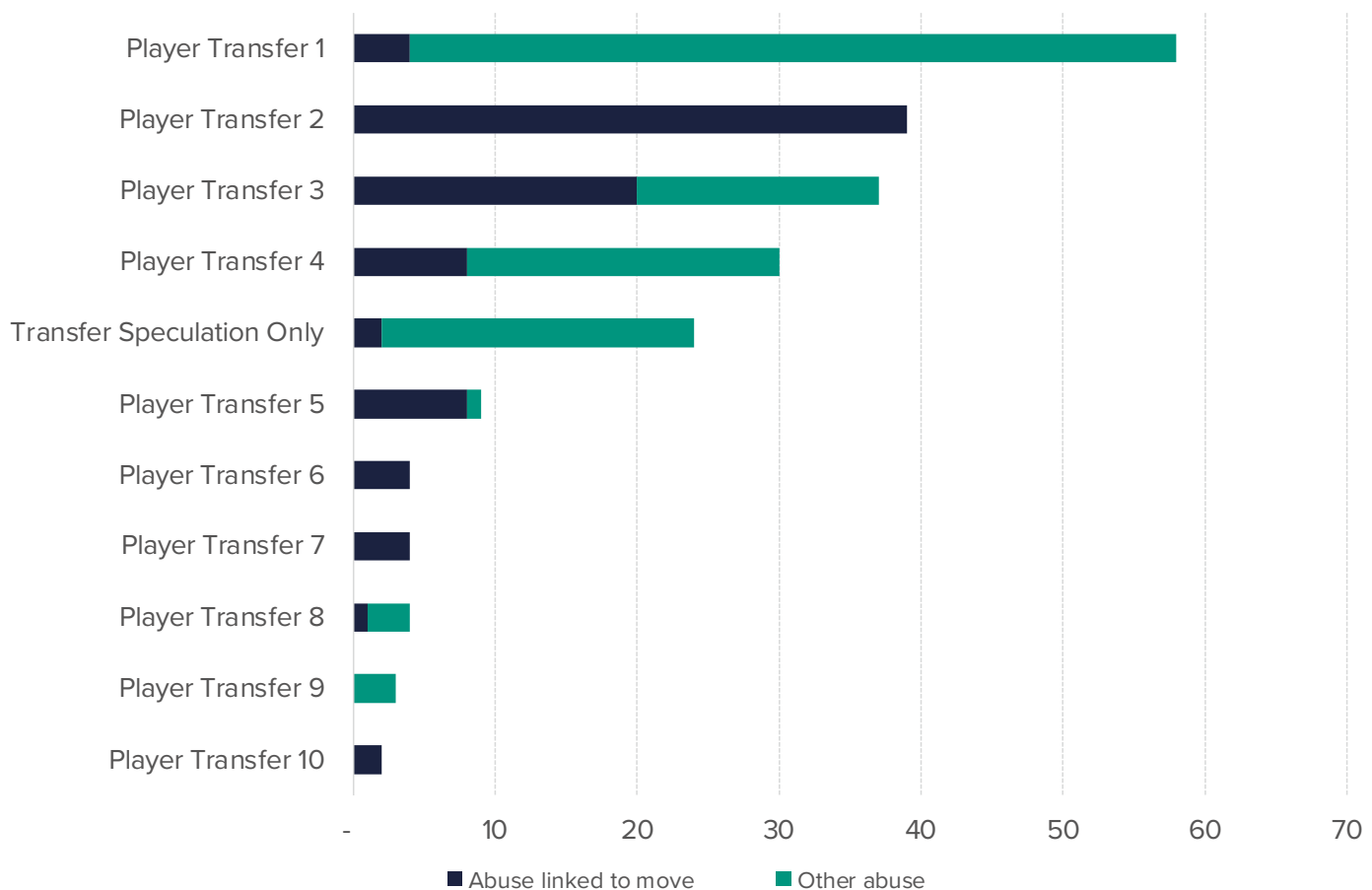
Men's Football

In men's football, 10 of the players who suffered abuse did move teams during the period of study. One player was reported to be attempting to force a move by not attending training.

Between them all, 91 separate abusive posts referred directly to players' moves: 21% of the total number of abusive posts.

For one player who transferred during the study period, 100% of the abuse he received was linked to the move.

Men's Football Players with Transfer Deals or Attempts





Women's Football

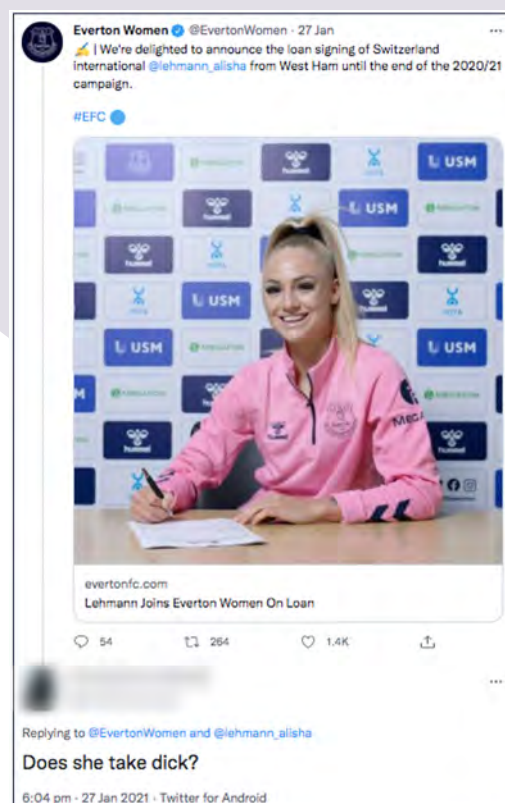
In women's football, the study used a smaller sample size. 10 players suffered targeted abuse, of whom only 3 moved clubs during the study period.

- Two of those three suffered targeted abuse directly linked to their transfers.

- One received abuse in a familiar way: from aggrieved fans of the club she left.

- The other received a sexualising comment when the move was announced.

- This same player had received other such sexualising comments earlier in the year, when a loan move was announced.





Homophobia in Men's Competitions

Homophobia in men's competitions presents a unique aspect in that it targets players who are not known to be gay; they are often targeted either for their support of LGBT issues or for perceptions of their behaviour or character.

Players in the study who have expressed solidarity for LGBT issues received a torrent of homophobic abuse. Additionally, for players pictured wearing effeminate clothing, there have been instances of aggressive and hostile interrogations of their sexuality.





Support of Progressive Issues

Key high-profile players in this study represent a long and noble tradition of athletes' engagement with political and social questions, responding to what many people in society expect from them. These players supported progressive causes during the study period, only to be confronted with historically insensitive social media content that they had posted in the past. This is becoming a common tactic used against players.

Whilst there was some outpouring of understandable anger and disappointment at the past behaviour of these players, typically it

became the basis for supporters of reactionary political causes to discredit the players' stance and justify their abuse.

In one instance, a player from the Women's football data study was subjected to sexist and homophobic harassment which used an historic message she had posted more than ten years previously as a justification.

Similarly, during the period of study, two players from the Men's football data set were seen in a controversial video leading to significant criticism and abuse – including targeted racist abuse.

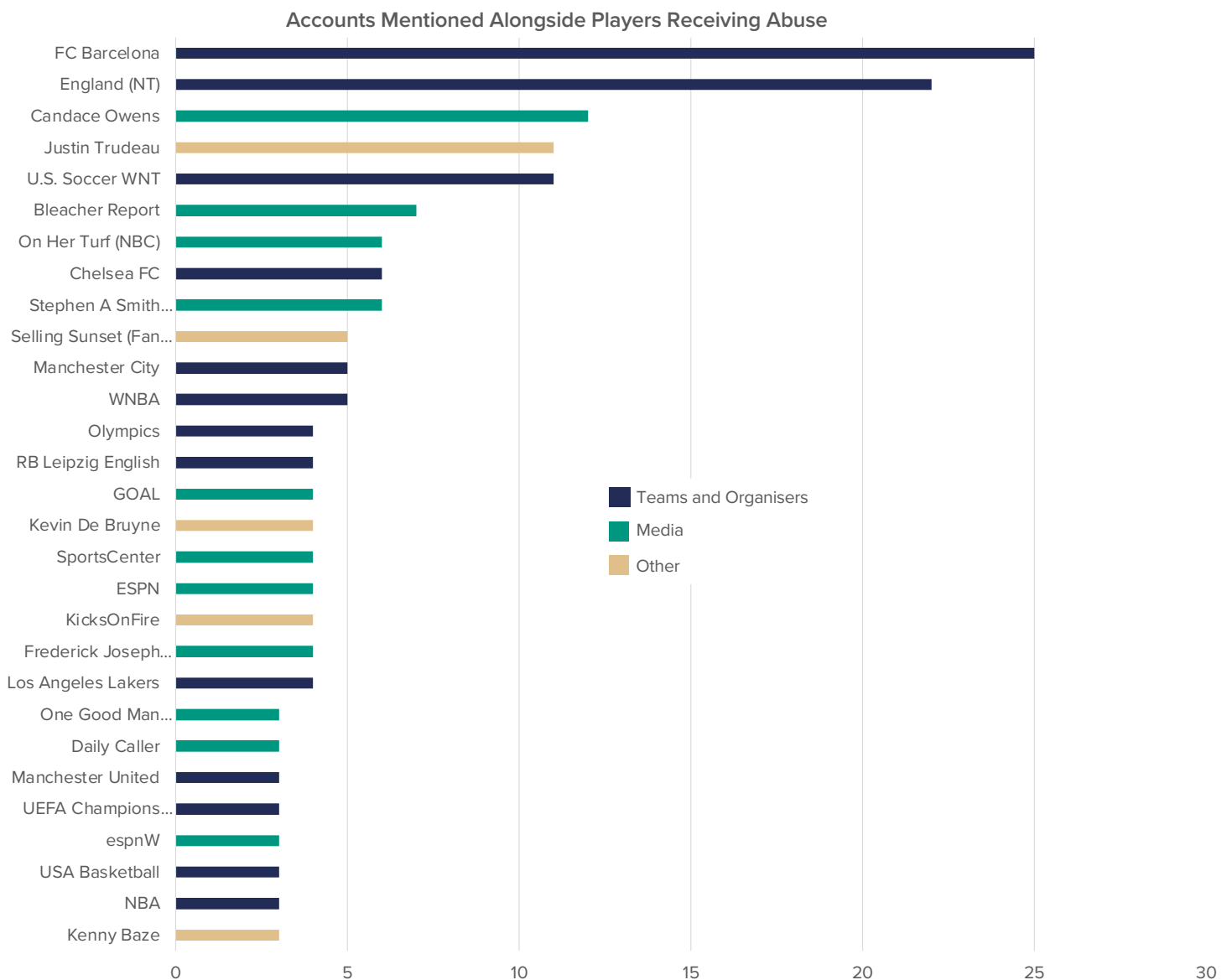




Club and Media Accounts Catalysing Abuse

The study looked at accounts mentioned alongside players in the abuse they received.

This provides a picture of whether players were targeted by followers of their own accounts, by people who sought them out, or by people who saw them mentioned in posts made by others.



Additional commercial / sponsor brands also identified and under analysis for further study



RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

The most prominent accounts that drew attention to players, and then saw them suffer abuse, were those of the players' own teams or competition organisers.





RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

This was also true for a few sponsors – where someone might see a promotional post and then abuse a player.

In some cases, this was also true of media personalities and organisations.

The most prominent example came from Candace Owens, whose post calling a player from the US Women's National Soccer team 'an anti-American piece of trash' provoked yet further abuse.



The study confirms that players can be identified with the posts of commercial brands and may bear the brunt of any backlash against these companies.



RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

This occurred in a few cases for major media outlets, such as Bleacher Report, which was mentioned alongside players in 7 pieces of abuse.

In this case, it does not seem to be the outlet's intention, but analysts can see a number of instances where the exposure to a wider commercial audience left players vulnerable to abuse.





PROTECTING PLAYERS I: MONITORING, MODERATING & REMOVING HARMFUL CONTENT





PROTECTING PLAYERS I: MONITORING, MODERATING & REMOVING HARMFUL CONTENT

Responsibility of Online Platforms

Much has been said and written about the responsibilities of social media platforms to do more on the issue of online abuse with recent initiatives focused specifically on hiding or filtering out hateful content so that players do not have to consume abusive messages. These initiatives are welcomed and represent a start – showing that detection of abusive keywords, phrases and emojis are a reality, and that the technology is available for this kind of activity.

Many of these solutions mask the real problem by hiding a post but taking no action against the abusive account owner. Other solutions merely transfer responsibility to the player / target of abuse who must either activate filtering services to block out specific keywords or block users who send them.

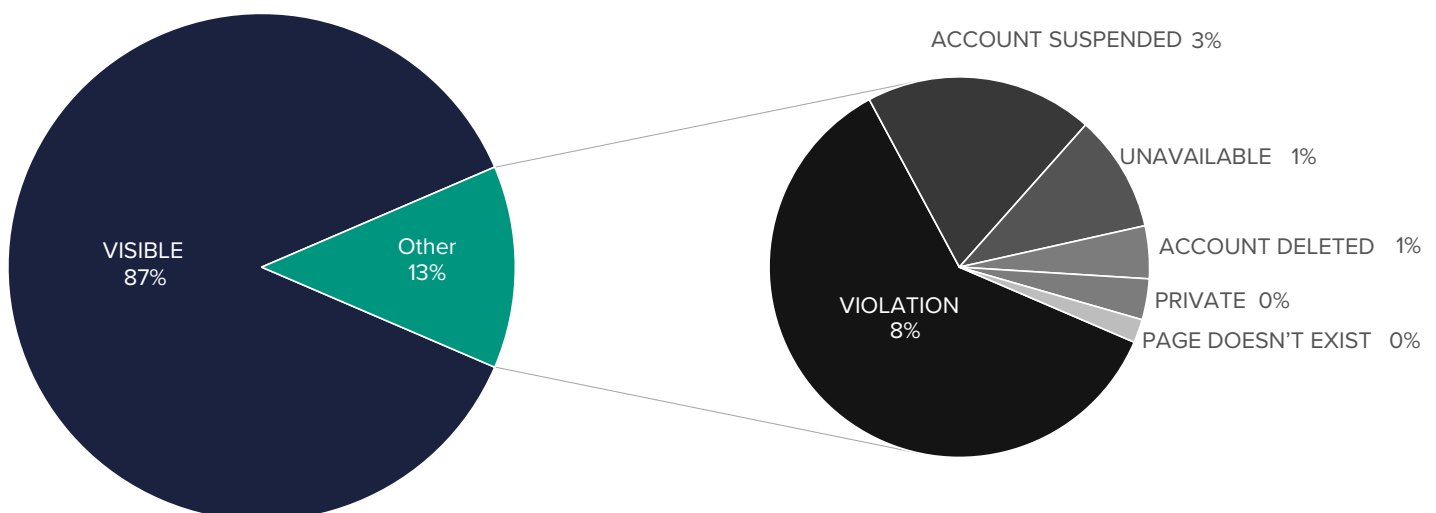
This study has demonstrated how it is possible to use AI and machine learning to identify specific accounts and account owners (those sending abuse), allowing action by the platforms. Where evidence of criminal thresholds has been passed – law enforcement can also be enabled to take action. This section outlines a noted lack of understanding around the nuance of abuse in both football and basketball, with specific issues and categories of discrimination not identified or actioned by the platforms.

Moderation of abusive Posts and Accounts

A very high proportion (87%) of the abuse observed in the study remains online and visible* to the public. This goes to the heart of online platforms' responsibility and suggests that the current approach – the rules in place and how they are enforced – is falling short.

87% The amount of abuse in the study that remains online today

Overall Moderation Levels



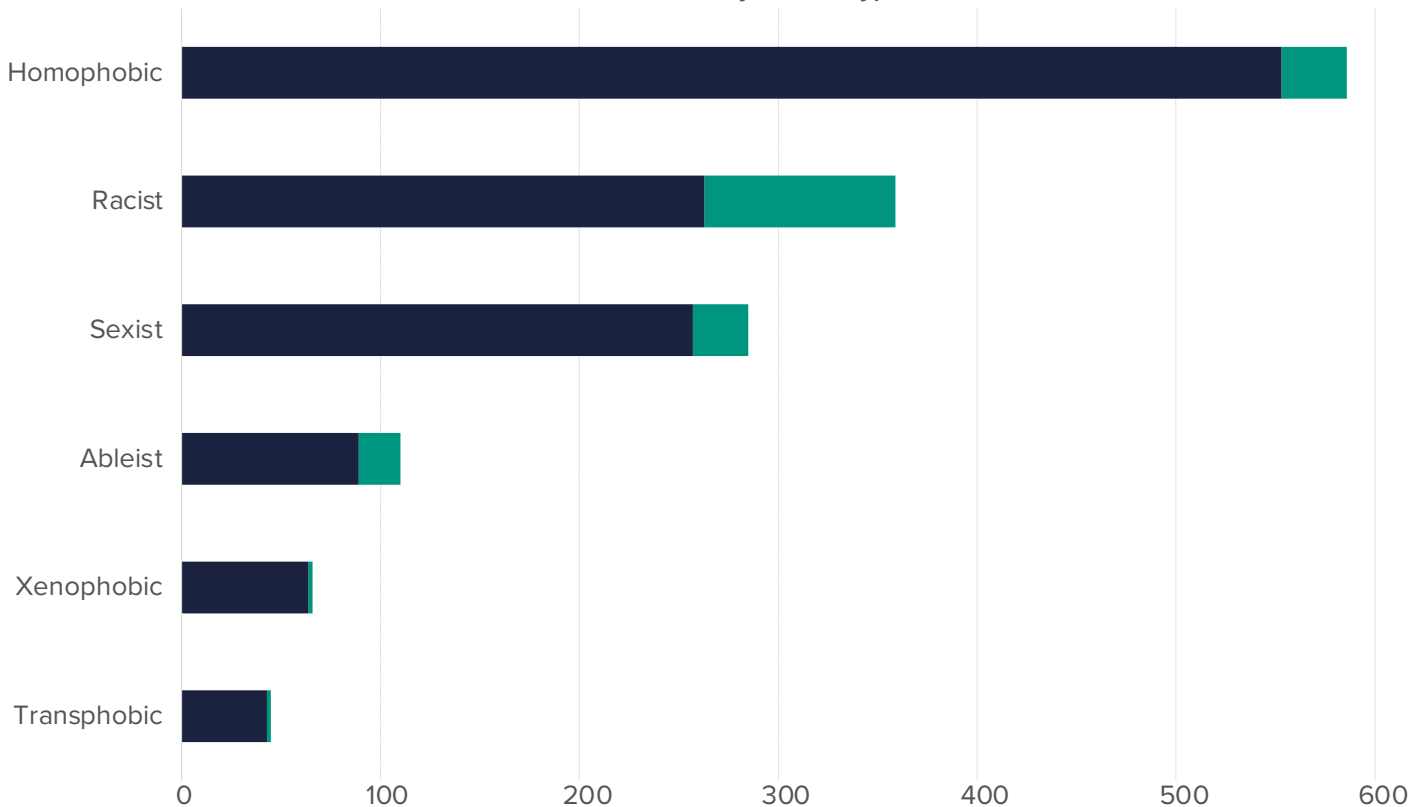


The study further analysed the posts that were no longer visible: in 8% of cases the individual post had violated the rules of the platform, which suggests that the platform took action; and in only 3% of cases did analysts observe that a source account had been suspended.

Types of moderated abuse

Whilst the study recognises some progress in the identification and removal of racist posts, this is much less the case for homophobic material.

Post Status by Abuse Type



Racist posts were taken down with some regularity: more than 1 in 4, or 27%, were no longer visible.

However, this drops to only 6% for homophobic posts. As the chart above shows, the percentages were much lower for other categories.

Moderation across sports

Drawing conclusions from direct comparisons of moderation levels across sports is complex.

A higher number of people will see the abuse aimed at well-known players; in turn, they are more likely to be reported to Twitter.

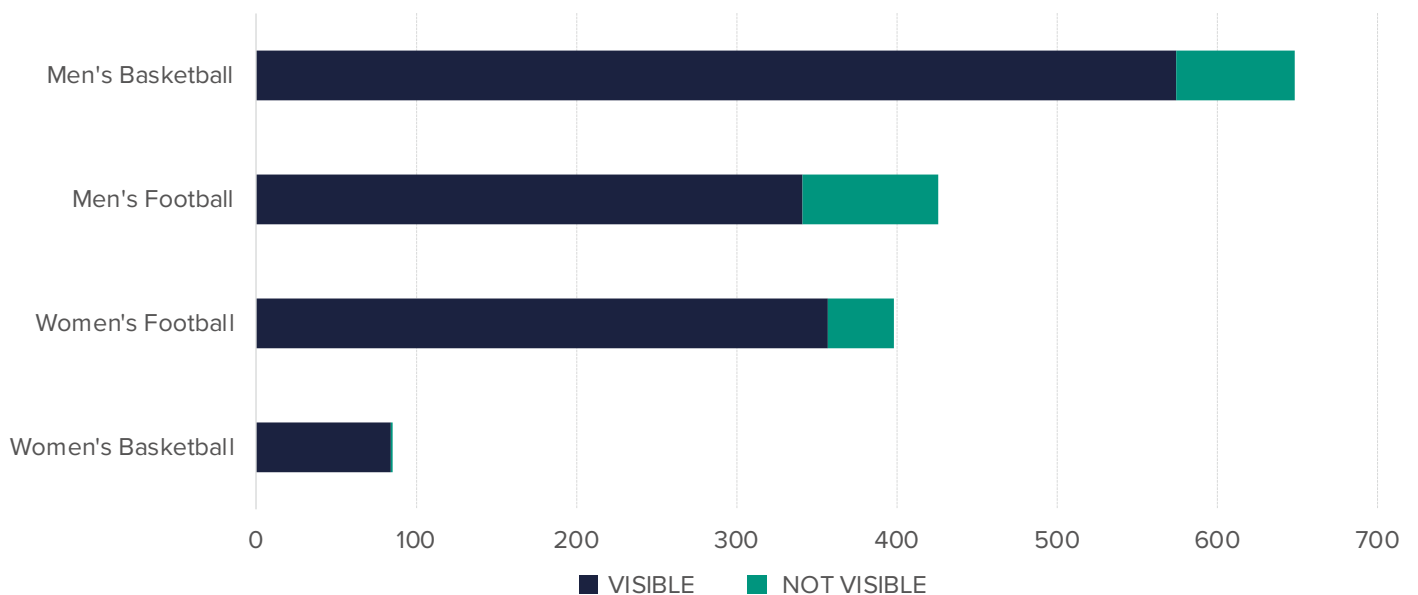
Conversely, those players may receive so many comments overall that much of the abuse that targets them goes unseen by anyone but the original poster.



Any systems in place to detect abusive content, or decisions about what to remove, may be affected by the different types of abuse encountered across sports and geographies.

In this section, the study outlines comparisons that may clarify how the abuse of players is treated in different sports.

Post Status Across Sports



Men's football has the highest number of moderated abusive posts – but even this only reaches 20%.



Remaining Content

Highly offensive content remains online in all fields.

No moderation system appears to be effective when so much abuse remains online.



All content shown here was still visible on December 2nd 2021.

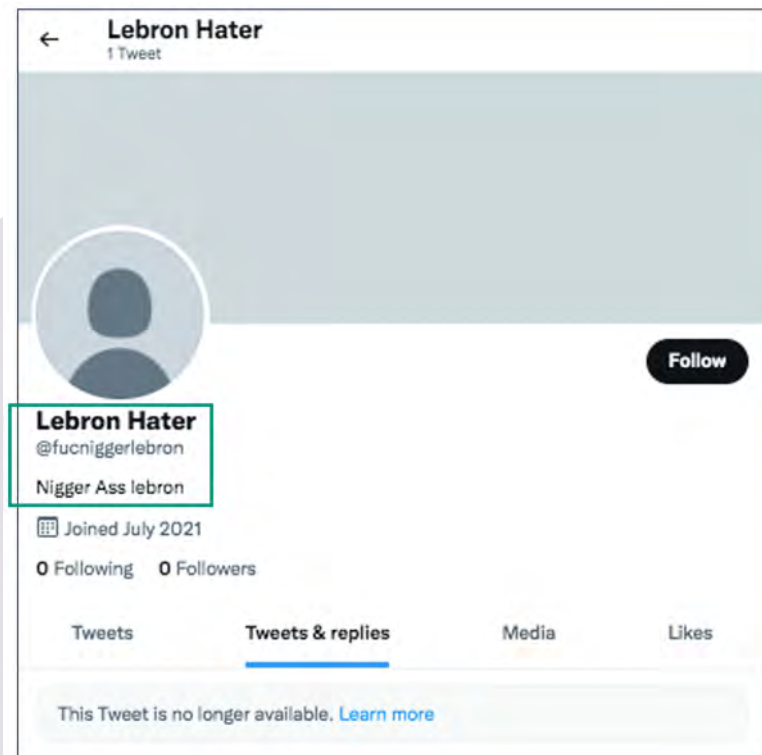


In some cases, it is questionable why individual posts might be removed rather than the account as a whole.

In one instance, a single post was removed for obviously violating a rule: it clearly used racist language.

However, this account appears dedicated to this kind of racist abuse: the same offensive language appears in both the handle and the bio of the account alongside the player's name.

It is unclear why such an account remains online, given that the post itself was flagged for moderation. This suggests a clear gap in the moderation process.





PROTECTING PLAYERS II: THE ROLE OF THE INDUSTRY TO CREATE A SAFE WORKPLACE





PROTECTING PLAYERS II: THE ROLE OF THE INDUSTRY TO CREATE A SAFE WORKPLACE

For players and athletes, social media represents an integral part of their lives – often both personal and professional - enhancing the need for fundamental duty of care.

Players are expected and encouraged by sponsors, teams, leagues, managers, and fans to utilise social media to raise their brand and engage. Whilst this can bring upsides and open up opportunities, it provides 24/7 access that can reach into a player's home, car - anywhere they take their phone or device that keeps them on the clock as 'player X of Y team' - someone that fans can vent at due to their professional lives at any hour of the day.

The embedding of technology and social media into our lives imposes expectations and responsibilities on players without the same protections and support they would expect in a stadium / arena, at a post-game press conference or meeting fans as part of an official team event. Unlike physical meetings online engagements become permanent records which requires an athlete to retain the professionalism and poise expected in a workplace regardless of whether they are at the gym, the local supermarket or at home on their couch.

The 'always on' nature of social media means that there is no down time from the anxiety, trauma and other issues online abuse and threat can cause. Increasingly this creates a feedback loop that translates back into in game performance.

The 'always on' nature of social media means that there is no down time from the anxiety, trauma and other issues online abuse and threat can cause.

The responsibility of leagues and competition organisers

Leagues and competition organisers lean heavily on players for publicity and exposure, with players often forming the core focus for any associated content. This study has demonstrated that the most prominent accounts drawing attention to players, and then seeing them suffer abuse, were those of the players' own teams or competition organisers.

Content planning, programmes and campaigns should have built-in safeguards with set procedures for how to identify and report any online abuse attracted towards players due to their participation in a league or event competition. We recognise the action being taken by some leagues but call on more consistent responses across the sports and jurisdictions to ensure better outcomes globally.



The responsibility of clubs and teams

The results of this report demonstrate how proactive monitoring of online abuse is now available at scale. With the use of machine learning and smart filters, it is quite possible to monitor a wide range of discriminatory terms, emojis and images. Where social media platforms are unable to directly identify specific issues or disagree with specific terms of abuse which may not adhere to their community guidelines, clubs and teams can take the initiative in an effort to better protect their employees.

Within the timeline of this study, we recognised a number of club / team supported progressive campaigns - tackling difficult issues like racism and homophobia in sports. These are to be supported and applauded, but they can also lead to expanded volume of targeted abuse.

It is essential that players who support or associate with these campaigns are briefed and educated at the formation of such campaigns, allowing them to better prepare for any follow-up abuse. Clubs / teams can ensure that all available protections are in place to detect and call out any targeted abuse - supporting their players on and off the pitch / court.

The responsibility of sponsors and commercial partners

Sponsors lean heavily on the image, reputation and voice of players to help drive their own brand and campaign messaging. The study demonstrates instances of players identified within the posts of commercial brands and how they often bear the brunt of any backlash against these companies. Whilst these are unintentional consequences

as far as sponsors are concerned, it is the responsibility of those sponsors to ensure that campaigns are tracked and moderated for any associated abuse targeting their spokespeople / brand ambassadors.

This should become a priority for commercial sponsors and partners and should be viewed as more important (and often just as simple to activate) as brand metrics and analysis of campaigns.

ACTION: FIFPRO x NBPA x WNBPA welcome dialogue from all levels of leagues, clubs/teams and sponsors and would be pleased to share more details around the tactics and trends we have identified across this study. We are keen to feed into education programmes and preventative monitoring, moderation and direct action initiatives



PROTECTING PLAYERS III: PUBLIC REGULATION & LAW ENFORCEMENT





PROTECTING PLAYERS III: PUBLIC REGULATION & LAW ENFORCEMENT

Global response

Governments and many parts of society have an increased desire to tackle the causes and consequences of online abuse. This study shows that the problem is not defined or limited by gender, sports or geography.

Many have called on the internet platforms to take greater responsibility, however, it is

generally recognised that they cannot tackle the problem alone, either through self-regulation or technological progress. A coherent and effective response will demand new laws and regulatory frameworks.

In spite of the urgency, clarity and unity are in short supply: governments, regulators and law-enforcement agencies around the world are each adopting their own approach.

UK: Online Safety Bill

The UK Government is currently considering draft legislation: the Online Safety Bill³ (previously the Online Harms Bill). It aims to tackle abusive and threatening online behaviour. The bill includes new offences that would directly affect the ability of players and their representatives to tackle the behaviours examined in this report. As well as defining serious criminal offences, the bill currently seeks to focus on 'legal but harmful' content. The bill will give independent regulatory powers to Ofcom (the UK's regulator of communications), allowing it to fine platforms up to 10% of their revenue or to prevent access to their services in the UK. Whilst the bill enjoys broad support, it is still in draft stage and has already met resistance from various quarters including privacy advocates and freedom-of-speech campaigners. There is also some concern the bill would cause friction with EU legislation on data protection (GDPR) by challenging certain aspects of privacy and encryption. For these reasons, the bill is not certain to progress in its current form. However, if all its provisions were to remain intact, the new law would represent some of the toughest independent regulation in the world. The latest draft of the bill includes the following main points:

- It will offer better protection for public figures such as MPs, celebrities or footballers who receive extremely harmful messages threatening their safety.
- This offence will make it easier to prosecute online abusers by abandoning the requirement under the old offences for content to fit within proscribed yet ambiguous categories such as "grossly offensive," "obscene" or "indecent". Instead, it is based on the intended psychological harm, amounting to at least serious distress, to the person who receives the communication, rather than requiring proof that harm was caused.

The bill is also seeking to oblige platforms to allow individuals to interact exclusively with users whose identity has been verified. Although identity-checks alone do not prevent certain types of abuse, this would nonetheless give players an important new tool as they respond to online abuse.

The bill's final draft is expected to be made public in early 2022.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill>



EU: Digital Services Act

The European Commission proposed two new laws to upgrade the rules governing digital services in the EU: the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA). Together they form a single set of new rules that aim to:

1. create a safer digital space in which the fundamental rights of all users of digital services are protected;
2. establish a level playing-field to foster innovation, growth, and competitiveness, both in the European Single Market and globally.

The DSA in particular seeks to tackle online abuse and hate crime. The European Commission adopted its DSA proposal in December 2020; the European Parliament voted its first-reading amendments in January 2022; those institutions and the EU's Member State governments have negotiated the final text and the ratification is expected to be finalised in the coming months.

US Regulation

Tech platforms in the US have relied, since 1934, on Section 230 of the Communications Act to avoid liability for user-generated content. However, a strong bipartisan push to regulate platforms has now arrived. Nonetheless, regulation has so far failed to focus on online harms and instead sought to tackle tech platforms' status as monopolies.

Almost all the platforms involved most often in incidents of targeted online abuse were founded and are currently headquartered in the US - where the regulatory framework remains the weakest of all the jurisdictions covered in this study.

⁴ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act-package>

⁵ [https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2020/0361\(COD\)&l=en](https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2020/0361(COD)&l=en)



APPENDICES





APPENDIX A: DETAILED METHODOLOGY

Threat Matrix is a machine learning methodology that allows us to capture and quantify abusive language on public social media, or within direct messages and email if granted access. For the purposes of this report, the study used only public social data to ensure consistency, encompassing 100% of posts directed at sports stars on Twitter, and any public flashpoints on Instagram or Facebook.

The technology uses natural language classifiers trained by data science company Signify Group over the past two years to understand different types of threat and identify both types, and severity of abuse. This proprietary technology was initially developed to assess death threats and dangerous behaviour. Over the last 18 months the case library has been expanded to include hundreds of discriminatory and abusive terms encompassing racism, homophobia and misogyny. The system also uses a specialist Cyber Threat Assessment Protocol to identify patterns in abuser behaviour such as profusion, changing location or delusions of a personal relationship, which can indicate more serious problems.

Threat Matrix scans for post directed at subjects using an @ handle. Professional players and athletes in high profile leagues can receive

hundreds of thousands of such mentions every month.

The technology parses millions of mentions and categorises posts that are potentially offensive or threatening. Flagged abusive posts are then reviewed by analysts to ensure no false positives – often requiring a review of thousands of comments per report. Confirmed discriminatory or abusive posts are categorised according to whether they are discriminatory or threatening. Any mentions that would constitute a disciplinary offense if issued from one player to another are tagged and highlighted for a more detailed analysis.

Abuse that breaks the terms of use on social platforms (going beyond free speech into the realms of personal abuse, racism or threat) is also archived and supplied to each platform containing any information gathered around the account and the offending evidence.

Patterns of targeted abuse and threat / causes of behaviour can be compared and contrasted across regions or sports. This analysis included the most abused players, and a review of what activities may have occurred on or off the field to incite abuse.

Defining Abuse on Social Media

Targeted online abuse may encompass threat to life or family, discriminatory language based on race, religion, sexuality and other factors as well any specialised terms with defined intent to be abusive in the context of the specific player, team or region.

As part of this exercise, analysts have read and collated codes of conduct for both players and fans represented across the study regions. The simple standard applied in this study, is an assessment of whether content should be included as abusive based on whether a player would be censured if they said the same to a fan.



Categorisation of Gender-based / Transphobic, Sexist abuse

There are some difficulties with rigid definitions of kinds of abuse

- Often female players will be referred to as being trans or having male genitalia as part of abuse. In one sense this could be called transphobic, however, analysts have tended to count it as sexist abuse - in that it is questioning the legitimacy of those players as women.

• In some cases, a more nuanced analysis might also point out that different kinds of abuse can intersect. For example, players might receive comments about their sexual practice or their genitalia that could be linked to their sexuality or gender identity.

- In this study analysts have put posts into the most appropriate category unless they specifically state multiple identities, but there is certainly some porousness between the categories of abuse which can't entirely be avoided.

Sports, League, Region and Player selections

For the study, FIFPRO and the NBPA | WNBA selected a representative set of players from these employers and competition organisers:

European Football Leagues (English Premier League, Serie A and La Liga)

The EPL, Serie A and La Liga each present around 400 players (with active Twitter accounts), who all completed their 2020-21 season in May 2021. These are three of the world's most high-profile football leagues, which face nuanced issues across different clubs and regions. In recent years, the players have had to contend with universal social media abuse connected to varying forms of discrimination.

Barclays FA Women's Super League (WSL)

Consisting of 11 teams with around 20-22 players each (220-250 players in total), the WSL started in August-September 2020 and ran through to May 2021. In 2021, the UEFA Women's Champions League Final was contested on 16th May by the WSL's Chelsea and Spanish Primera Division's Barcelona.

National Women's Soccer League (NWSL)

Consisting of 10 teams with around 20-22 players each (around 200 players in total), the NWSL started with the Challenge Cup on April 9th 2021; the regular season ran from May to October 2021.

South American Football League (Categoría Primera A - Colombia)

Consisting of 21 teams with around 400 players, Categoría Primera A has one of the world's most passionate and dedicated fanbases. The league shows a range of historical issues including recent examples of social-media threats that turned into real-world violence. The league ran from January to December 2021.

National Basketball Association (NBA)

The NBA has over 500 registered players across 30 teams and a fanbase who are extremely active users of social media. The second half of the regular NBA season ran from March to May 2021 with the Playoffs taking place in May-July 2021.

Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA)

The WNBA has over 150 registered players across 12 teams. The regular season ran from May 2021 through the summer and into September-October 2021.

The study wanted to accommodate a range of relevant features:

- sports that were truly global and home to a mix of players from different cultures and ethnicities;
- a diverse range of social and cultural issues that were expressed or exploited by athletes, clubs and fans around the world;
- selected moments of ongoing seasons that allowed for the monitoring of live matches, covering highly emotional, end-of-season play-off tournaments and finals.



Coverage and Scope

The project focuses on targeted online abuse: flagged posts that are directed at or include the account handle of a player so that the player might see the message and suffer the impact of the abusive content.

The study used live data across July, August and September 2021, and incorporated historical data to cover May and June 2021. This effectively covered the end of the domestic football seasons, the summer international competitions, and the NBA playoffs.

FIFPRO and the NBPA | WNBPA designed the scope of the study to cover between 60 and 80 players in each sport. The breakdown of coverage and accounts monitored includes:

- 80 footballers including male, female and non-binary players from football leagues in Europe and South America;
- 80 basketball players including male, female and non-binary players across the NBA and WNBA;

- approximately 100 million Twitter followers from each sport, so 200 million in total;
- monitoring of all public posts on Twitter, and any flashpoints on Instagram;
- thematic analysis of abuse and threat levels;
- a study period of 5 months (May 2021 – Sept 2021) to allow sufficient incident and variance in each sport covered.

The key report findings were presented to the stakeholders, then refined in the light of their feedback, and now presented for publication in this English language report.

Drawing from the findings and recommendations of this study, FIFPRO and the NBPA | WNBPA have requested a Blueprint for a live proactive monitoring service to run across multiple sports and selected league competitions. This is to be submitted and presented separately to the sponsor organisations.



APPENDIX B: SELECTED PLAYER LISTS

Basketball Player List

NAME	TEAM / CLUB	LEAGUE	COUNTRY	GENDER	FOLLOWERS
Kyrie Irving	Brooklyn Nets	NBA	USA	M	4,300,000
Donovan Mitchell	Utah Jazz	NBA	USA	M	1,000,000
Ja Morant	Memphis Grizzlies	NBA	USA	M	1,300,000
Ben Simmons	Philadelphia 76ers	NBA	Australia	M	1,000,000
LeBron James	Los Angeles Lakers	NBA	USA	M	50,000,000
Russell Westbrook	Los Angeles Lakers	NBA	USA	M	6,700,000
Trae Young	Atlanta Hawks	NBA	USA	M	1,100,000
Frank Ntilikina	New York Knicks	NBA	France	M	86,000
Evan Fournier	New York Knicks	NBA	France	M	306,000
Kyle Lowry	Miami Heat	NBA	USA	M	918,000
Patty Mills	Brooklyn Nets	NBA	Australia	M	419,000
Jrue Holiday	Milwaukee Bucks	NBA	USA	M	183,000
Enes Kanter	Boston Celtics	NBA	Turkey	M	467,000
Karl-Anthony Towns	Minnesota Timberwolves	NBA	USA	M	623,000
Juan Toscano-Anderson	Golden State Warriors	NBA	USA/Mexico	M	66,000
Elfrid Payton	New York Knicks	NBA	USA	M	66,000
DeAndre Ayton	Phoenix Suns	NBA	Bahamas	M	116,000
Joel Embiid	Philadelphia 76ers	NBA	Cameroon	M	1,900,000
Jusuf Nurkic	Portland Trailblazers	NBA	Bosnia & Herzegovina	M	131,000
Joe Ingles	Utah Jazz	NBA	Australia	M	209,000
Yuta Watanabe	Toronto Raptors	NBA	Japan	M	181,000
Dante Exum	Cleveland Cavaliers	NBA	Australia	M	66,000
Kevin Love	Cleveland Cavaliers	NBA	USA	M	3,100,000
Jalen Green	Houston Rockets	NBA	USA	M	147,000
Brad Beal	Washington Wizards	NBA	USA	M	655,000
Giannis Antetokounmpo	Milwaukee Bucks	NBA	Greece	M	1,900,000
LaMelo Ball	Charlotte Hornets	NBA	USA	M	940,000
Lonzo Ball	New Orleans Pelicans	NBA	USA	M	1,200,000
Paul George	Los Angeles Clippers	NBA	USA	M	2,300,000
Seth Curry	Philadelphia 76ers	NBA	USA	M	332,000
Austin Rivers	Denver Nuggets	NBA	USA	M	290,000
Gabe Vincent	Miami Heat	NBA	USA/Nigeria	M	7,642
Reggie Bullock	New York Knicks	NBA	USA	M	1,600,000
Rajon Rondo	Atlanta Hawks	NBA	USA	M	99,000
Patrick Beverley	Los Angeles Clippers	NBA	USA	M	266,000
Juancho Hernangomez	Minnesota Timberwolves	NBA	Spain	M	45,000
Tristan Thompson	Boston Celtics	NBA	Canada	M	664,000
Andre Drummond	Los Angeles Lakers	NBA	USA	M	848,000
Jaxson Hayes	New Orleans Pelicans	NBA	USA	M	16,300
Sterling Brown	Houston Rockets	NBA	USA	M	7,331
Chris Paul	Phoenix Suns	NBA	USA	M	8,300,000
Jaylen Brown	Boston Celtics	NBA	USA	M	473,000
Jonathan Isaac	Orlando Magic	NBA	USA	M	94,000
Andrew Wiggins	Golden State Warriors	NBA	USA	M	507,000
Jeremy Lin	No team affiliation	NBA (formerly)	USA	M	2,400,000
Layshia Clarendon	Minnesota Lynx	WNBA	USA	NB	20,000
A'ja Wilson	Las Vegas Aces	WNBA	USA	F	97,000
Candace Parker	Chicago Sky	WNBA	USA	F	364,000
Arike Ogunbowale	Dalla Wings	WNBA	USA	F	39,700
Nneka Ogumike	Los Angeles Sparks	WNBA	USA	F	45,600
Skylar Diggins-Smith	Phoenix Mercury	WNBA	USA	F	572,000
Tina Charles	Washington Mystics	WNBA	USA	F	38,000
Sue Bird	Seattle Storm	WNBA	USA	F	171,300
Diamond DeShields	Chicago Sky	WNBA	USA	F	24,800
Angel McCoughtry	Las Vegas Aces	WNBA	USA	F	44,000



APPENDIX B: SELECTED PLAYER LISTS

Basketball Player List

NAME	TEAM / CLUB	LEAGUE	COUNTRY	GENDER	FOLLOWERS
Napheesa Collier	Minnesota Lynx	WNBA	USA	F	15,800
Allie Quigley	Chicago Sky	WNBA	USA	F	14,200
Courtney Vandersloot	Chicago Sky	WNBA	USA	F	14,700
Dearica Hamby	Las Vegas Aces	WNBA	USA	F	15,600
Courtney Williams	Atlanta Dream	WNBA	USA	F	9,300
Jonquel Jones	Connecticut Sun	WNBA	Bahamas	F	7,870
Sabrina Ionescu	New York Liberty	WNBA	USA	F	130,000
Sylvia Fowles	Minnesota Lynx	WNBA	USA	F	13,600
Tina Charles	Washington Mystics	WNBA	USA	F	38,900
Liz Cambage	Las Vegas Aces	WNBA	Australia	F	89,000
Diana Taurasi	Phoenix Mercury	WNBA	USA	F	85,600
Brianna Stewart	Seattle Storm	WNBA	USA	F	107,000
Elena Delle Donne	Washington Mystics	WNBA	USA	F	269,000
Natasha Cloud	Washington Mystics	WNBA	USA	F	23,100
Britney Griner	Phoenix Mercury	WNBA	USA	F	78,000
Kyla Mc Bride	Minnesota Lynx	WNBA	USA	F	34,000
Te'a Cooper	Los Angeles Sparks	WNBA	USA	F	125,000
Lexie Brown	Chicago Sky	WNBA	USA	F	27,000
Chelsea Gray	Las Vegas Aces	WNBA	USA	F	10,500
Natalie Achonwa	Minnesota Lynx	WNBA	USA	F	25,700
Aerial Powers	Minnesota Lynx	WNBA	USA	F	16,300
Ji-Su Park	Las Vegas Aces	WNBA	South Korea	F	1,505
Chiney Ogumike	Los Angeles Sparks	WNBA	USA	F	94,000
Satou Sabally	Dallas Wings	WNBA	USA	F	23,000
Elizabeth Williams	Atlanta Dream	WNBA	USA	F	6,600

Total Followers = 100,000,648



APPENDIX B: SELECTED PLAYER LISTS

Football Player List

NAME	TEAM / CLUB	LEAGUE	COUNTRY	GENDER	FOLLOWERS
Iñaki Williams	Athletic Bilbao	La Liga	Spain	M	100,000
Luis Suarez	Atletico Madrid	La Liga	Uruguay	M	16,800,000
Kieran Trippier	Atletico Madrid	La Liga	England	M	320,000
Antoine Griezmann	Barcelona	La Liga	France	M	8,200,000
Ansu Fati	Barcelona	La Liga	Spain	M	460,000
Samuel Umtiti	Barcelona	La Liga	France	M	1,500,000
David Alaba	Real Madrid	La Liga	Austria	M	2,000,000
Raphaël Varane	Real Madrid	La Liga	France	M	6,700,000
Karim Benzema	Real Madrid	La Liga	Spain	M	13,200,000
Alexander Isak	Real Sociedad	La Liga	Sweden	M	16,000
Gianluigi Donnarumma	Paris Saint-Germain	Ligue 1	Italy	M	225,000
Bukayo Saka	Arsenal	Premier League	England	M	662,000
Hector Bellerín	Arsenal	Premier League	Spain	M	1,900,000
Romelu Lukaku	Chelsea	Premier League	Belgium	M	2,700,000
Richarlison	Everton	Premier League	Brazil	M	665,000
Raheem Sterling	Manchester City	Premier League	England	M	2,900,000
Jack Grealish	Manchester City	Premier League	England	M	893,000
Marcus Rashford	Manchester United	Premier League	England	M	5,100,000
Paul Pogba	Manchester United	Premier League	France	M	9,200,000
Davinson Sanchez	Tottenham	Premier League	Colombia	M	179,000
Harry Kane	Tottenham	Premier League	England	M	3,400,000
Luis Muriel	Atalanta	Serie A	Colombia	M	3,900
Hakan Çalhanoğlu	Internazionale	Serie A	Turkey	M	345,000
Paulo Dybala	Juventus	Serie A	Argentina	M	2,200,000
Álvaro Morata	Juventus	Serie A	Spain	M	4,200,000
Giorgio Chiellini	Juventus	Serie A	Italy	M	2,500,000
Leonardo Bonucci	Juventus	Serie A	Italy	M	1,700,000
Kalidou Koulibaly	Napoli	Serie A	Senegal	M	396,000
Victor Osimhen	Napoli	Serie A	Nigeria	M	132,000
Ilaix Moriba	RB Leipzig	Bundesliga	Guinea	M	168,000
Tyrone Mings	Aston Villa	Premier League	England	M	242,000
Tammy Abraham	AS Roma	Serie A	England	M	623,000
Nicolás Tagliafico	Ajax	Eredivisie	Argentina	M	128,000
Riyad Mahrez	Manchester City	Premier League	Algeria	M	2,800,000
Mouctar Diakhaby	Valencia	La Liga	Senegal	M	22,700
Tajon Buchanan	New England Revolution	MLS	Canada	M	3,700
Emerson Royal	Tottenham	Premier League	Brazil	M	85,000
Diego Chara	Portland Timbers	MLS	Colombia	M	10,800
Alfredo Morelos	Rangers	Scottish Premiership	Colombia	M	112,000
Fernando Uribe	Millonarios	Categoría Primera A	Colombia	M	102,000
Jefferson Duque	Atlético Nacional	Categoría Primera A	Colombia	M	119,000
Teófilo Gutiérrez	Deportivo Cali	Categoría Primera A	Colombia	M	52,000
Antonio Rüdiger	Chelsea	Premier League	England	M	946,800
Reece James	Chelsea	Premier League	England	M	648,400
Quinn	OL Reign	NWSL	Canada	NB	8,000
Ada Hegerberg	Olympique Lyonnais	Division 1 Féminine	Norway	F	90,000
Ellie Carpenter	Olympique Lyonnais	Division 1 Féminine	Australia	F	16,000
Wendie Renard	Olympique Lyonnais	Division 1 Féminine	France	F	111,000
Kadidiatou Diani	Paris Saint-Germain	Division 1 Féminine	France	F	23,000
Marie-Antoinette Katoto	Paris Saint-Germain	Division 1 Féminine	France	F	8,000
Ashley Lawrence	Paris Saint-Germain	Division 1 Féminine	Canada	F	17,000
Christen Press	Angel City	NWSL	USA	F	545,000
Megan Rapinoe	OL Reign	NWSL	USA	F	936,000
Alex Morgan	Orlando Pride	NWSL	USA	F	3,800,000
Christine Sinclair	Portland Thorns	NWSL	Canada	F	110,000



APPENDIX B: SELECTED PLAYER LISTS

Football Player List

NAME	TEAM / CLUB	LEAGUE	COUNTRY	GENDER	FOLLOWERS
Aitana Bonmatí	Barcelona	Primera División (women)	Spain	F	50,000
Jennifer Hermoso	Barcelona	Primera División (women)	Spain	F	55,000
Kosovare Asllani	Real Madrid	Primera División (women)	Sweden	F	79,000
Alisha Lehmann	Aston Villa	WSL	Switzerland	F	32,000
Sam Kerr	Chelsea	WSL	Australia	F	87,000
Pernille Harder	Chelsea	WSL	Denmark	F	52,000
Fran Kirby	Chelsea	WSL	England	F	127,000
Vivianne Miedema	Arsenal	WSL	Netherlands	F	86,000
Jonna Andersson	Chelsea	WSL	Sweden	F	10,200
Lynn Williams	North Carolina Courage	NWSL	USA	F	20,000
Rinsola Babajide	Brighton & Hove Albion	WSL	England	F	15,000
Alex Greenwood	Manchester City	WSL	England	F	78,000
Ramona Bachmann	PSG	Division 1 Féminine	Switzerland	F	10,000
Mana Iwabuchi	Arsenal	WSL	Japan	F	326,000
Lauren James	Chelsea	WSL	England	F	75,000
Christiane Endler	Olympique Lyonnais	Division 1 Féminine	Chile	F	81,000
Mileana Shim	Houston Dash	NWSL	USA	F	8,614
Jess Fishlock	OL Reign	NWSL	Wales	F	29,900
Erin Mcleod	Orlando Pride	NWSL	Canada	F	25,600
Domi Richardson	Gotham FC	NWSL	USA	F	1,066
Becky Sauerbrunn	Portland Thorns FC	NWSL	USA	F	671,000
Nadia Nadim	Racing Louisville FC	NWSL	Denmark	F	31,000
Georgia Stanway	Manchester City	WSL	England	F	33,000
Anita Asante	Aston Villa	WSL	England	F	13,100
Denya Castellanos	Atlético de Madrid Femenino	Primera División (women)	Venezuela	F	236,800

Total Followers = 102,557,580



- **Abuse / Abusive posts and accounts:** refers to content that includes discriminatory, egregious and aggravated terminology.
- **Discriminatory flags:** Posts flagged for content that may include racist, homophobic, sexist etc. terms.
- **Flagged posts:** Posts flagged for content that may include personally abusive or discriminatory content. Personally abusive content can include calling someone a c**t, etc.
- **NB / Non-Binary:** Non-binary is an umbrella term for gender identities that are neither male nor female - identities that are outside the gender binary.

Our flagging system is based on a series of issue specific keywords, from a range of categories including (but not exclusively):

- Ableist
- Antisemitism
- Basketball slur
- Child abuse
- General abuse
- Homophobia / LGBT Phobic
- Intra-communal abuse
- Islamophobia
- Football slur
- Sectarianism
- Sexism and Misogyny
- Racism / Xenophobia
- Special terms



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THREAT
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