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# EXPLORING SPORTS GENDER EQUALITY IN THE MEDIA

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# BACKGROUND



The ITF have commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake a first-of-its kind global research project looking at the portrayal, perception and representation of sportswomen across the media and social media. The research will explore how the representation of male and female athletes varies, identifying any key differences by market and media type. It will also explore any differences in consumer searches between male and female players.

Only by understanding the landscape around women's sport will we be able identify issues and make change where it is needed.

# PROCESS



This research was conducted and delivered by Ipsos MORI, utilising their in-house social media monitoring tool, Synthesio, by collecting online mentions relating to the 100 top-ranked male and female athletes across each of tennis, golf and football. The research analysed Global English as well as content from France, Spain and China.

Ipsos applied advanced Neuro-Linguistic Programming techniques to analyse differences in:

- The absolute volume of online content relating to female and male athletes in each sport;
- The relative composition of online content relating to female and male athletes in each sport, exploring specific phrases, themes, emojis etc where relevant.

Ipsos also analysed available online social media content by different channel types (news, industry channels, forums, mainstream social media sites) and also by different sources within each e.g. how language varies between Twitter vs Facebook etc.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The absolute volume of online conversations is consistently and much higher for male tennis players than for female tennis players.

On a like-for-like basis, female athletes are less likely to have their on-court performance discussed than men and more likely to have their off-court lives discussed.

The conversation and coverage of men's tennis is **more focused on the sport**, with a **strong combative narrative** and a **sense of history, elite competition and achievement**.

This may contribute to a situation where on-court performance plays a bigger role in defining male tennis players than it does female tennis players.

Conversely, the conversation around **women's tennis is less intense and relatively more focused on life off court**, from health and age to family, **framing tennis as a one facet**.

Where do these differences come from? Looking at relative differences in content by channel reveals how the Mainstream media is driving these differences

There is **not enough reporting of women's tennis** and a need to **improve SEO**. We have a collective responsibility to promote the sport and report on it in a **consistent and unbiased way**. The opportunity is therefore to **drive more engagement** in the women's game by **rooting a narrative more firmly in on-court action**.

# MEN'S TENNIS IN NUMBERS



The absolute volume of Men's coverage over-shadows that of women's and is also focused on action on court, positioning men as athletes first

- Men's tennis content is around **2 times more likely to refer to 'battle' terminology** as women's content
- Men's content is **70% more likely to mention a player's physical prowess**, than women's content
- **G.O.A.T** was mentioned **50% more** in men's tennis content than women's (2020)
- There are **40% more references to 'making history'** (2019)
- Men's tennis focuses more on the sport itself than in women's tennis, **using more social media hashtags** to drive online engagement

# WOMEN'S TENNIS IN NUMBERS

Women's tennis coverage is less intense and more focused on life off court

- Women's content is **twice as likely to mention specific age/teen/'youngness'** of players than men's content is (for 2019-20, Global English data)
- Content around women's tennis is over **2x more likely to mention health and medical treatment** than men's tennis
- Women's content is **30% more likely to refer to players' family** than men's tennis
- **'Career'** is mentioned nearly **50% more in women's coverage** than men's coverage.

Despite relatively low volume of mentions overall, the research also found:

- There are **11x more mentions of skin colour in women's tennis** as there are in men's
- Women's content is **nearly twice as likely** to mention clothing vs men's content
- There were **3x as many mentions of BLM** in women's tennis

# ONLINE SEARCHES

- Search data shows very **few differences in top search terms and search questions** around male and female tennis players.
- There is a similar level of interest in sport-related searches, searches around **relationships and family**, interest in their **country of origin, age, height and current location**.
- The only key difference between top search terms/questions is the discussion of **net worth**, which is more prevalent in men's tennis than women's.
- Overall, there are **unbalanced search results** in Google
- **Only 6/50 search results are women** if you Google “top 50 tennis players” (Data true as of 31.03.21)
- ‘Tennis players’ deliver male results; or **usually call out ‘women’s tennis’** for female results
- **Different visual focus** for women’s media coverage than men’s – **more likely to highlight family and off-court activity**



# FOOTBALL



- Women's football content works hard to emphasise the team aspect of the game. Aside from a few key international players –the media language promotes team successes.
- Teammates are referenced more than twice as often in women's football content compared to men's
- The relative infancy of the industry means **records** are mentioned 2.5x more than in men's,
- Participation at conferences and summits are 2.2x higher in women's football.
- But engagement and search volumes are significantly lower than men's football
- Engagement in social media posts increase significantly when male players are also included in the post.

# GOLF



- Like tennis, women's golf depicts a story of young, emerging talent.
- We also see a high volume of tournament commentary, with a focus on player progression through the course.
- Unlike tennis, both male and female social media and search behaviour shows an interest and focus on male and female players' personal lives.
- The mainstream media, instead, focuses more on tournament commentary providing a detailed description of player progression and interviews with players as they finish.
- Men's golf is similarly focused on tournament play, but with a growing social media presence of the players themselves.

# TECHNICAL NOTE

All data retrieved from publicly available content sourced via the Social Listening platform Synthesio for Global English, Spain and France. Data also sourced by local vendors for China. Data retrieved w/c 1st March 2021 and covers the full calendar years of 2020 and 2019, except China where we retrieved 2019 data only. Data was collected in local language and English for each country and translated to English before analysis.

Content was retrieved on the basis of it containing mention of a top-100 ranked athlete's name and reference to their sport. Comparative analysis between male and female athletes was undertaken on a sample of 25,000 online posts per gender, per sport, per year, per language/country. The sample represented the full dataset in terms of media channel split. All relative differences between male and female players are statistically significant at the 99% confidence interval.

Search analysis was conducted using Google, incognito.

Men's and Women's:		Global English	France	Spain	Chinese
Tennis	Jan - Dec 2019	2,993,288	286,550	137,448	120,308
	Jan - Dec 2020	987,922	94,931	65,155	- Not Included -
Football	Jan - Dec 2019	1,043,773	- Not Included -		
	Jan - Dec 2020	969,734	- Not Included -		
Golf	Jan - Dec 2019	1,037,698	- Not Included -		
	Jan - Dec 2020	618,197	- Not Included -		

Absolute volumes collected, as of w/c 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021