

The most repeated sports terms on Twitter at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic

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Luis Millán González, researcher and professor of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences at the University of Valencia, has led a study on the relationship between COVID-19 and sport on social network Twitter

during the first months of the pandemic. The work confirms the importance of European football, the Olympics (which were canceled at that time) and that a majority of tweets focus on men's professional sports and large mass events.

A quantitative and qualitative analysis of tweets collected from January to May 2020 has been carried out in this work, demonstrating the importance of sport in the lives of citizens and the role played by sports figures and the media in this field. It has recently been published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

Most of the tweets analyzed focus on men's professional sports and large mass events, especially on the [economic impact](#) derived from this massive cancelation. Grassroot and women's sports have gone unnoticed despite being the most disadvantaged by COVID-19. In addition, no [tweet](#) has addressed issues related to the most [vulnerable groups](#) such as the homeless, refugees and groups directly affected by the effects of the pandemic such as the elderly.

"There were also no anti-COVID measures for sports practices, since most of them were aimed at the spectators of these sporting events. However, some [professional athletes](#) have been part of campaigns and have published content to contain the virus," highlights Luis Millán. Despite this, the study declares that the full potential of this social network has not been used to disseminate this information. On the other hand, the importance of doing [physical exercise](#) to combat both physical and psychological problems derived from confinement was reflected in the tweets.

The sport that has been talked about the most has been European football, with the words "league," "football" and "premier league" being some of the most repeated throughout the analysis. The word "Olympics" also stood out, since it is the most significant sporting,

economic, political and social event, and its cancelation took place during this study period.

For this research, carried out between the months of January and May 2020, more than four million gross tweets about sport and COVID-19 were systematically collected worldwide. The highest number of tweets collected was registered in March, coinciding with the restrictive measures taken by Spain and Italy to contain the pandemic. Through quantitative algorithms, it has been possible to expand the macrostructure of quantitative data, while qualitative analysis offers a detailed interpretation of the previous ones, thus providing a global vision of this impact. It is the first time that a mixed analysis of this type has been carried out to study a pandemic in the field of sports.

It is important to know the impact of sport on people's lives, an aspect that has been reflected on Twitter. Unfortunately, this social network has seldom been used to spread healthy attitudes about COVID-19 in the study period analyzed.

More information: Luis-Millán González et al, The Impact of COVID-19 on Sport in Twitter: A Quantitative and Qualitative Content Analysis, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (2021). [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph18094554](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18094554)

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