

Social media activities shows massive growth among sports federations

BCW Sports, the sports practice of global communications agency BCW, recently released its 2021 International Sports Federation Social Media Ranking, which aims to capture the social media footprint of international sports federations (IFs).



Source: www.pexels.com

This year's ranking includes all IFs from both the Winter and Summer Olympic programmes, as well as all recognized non-Olympic IFs.

Notable key findings this year include:

- **IFs see exponential growth in followers:** The dramatic growth rates of many IFs in the last year shows that many IFs have capitalised on the opportunities that social media provides and have made a noticeable growth in followers and engagement rates across their platforms.

With Covid-19 continuing to hinder sports events, IFs have turned up their social media presence, pushing virtual engagement on all levels such as athlete take-overs, interactive fan outreach and virtual events. These efforts have significantly boosted the digital transformation efforts of IFs, with an average growth increase of 36% on Instagram

and 33% on Facebook.

Some IFs showed triple-digit growth numbers, including World Athletics which increased its followers by 4 million (total 8,135,451) – a 101% increase in the last year.

- **Traditional IFs doing much better than newer IFs:** With new sports entering the Olympic Summer programme, it is worth noting that traditional Olympic IFs have a much larger following than the newly established summer IFs. While these younger IFs have been given a big position in the Olympic Movement, the numbers show that these younger sports federations have yet to establish their social media presence compared to the traditional and more established IFs.
- **Summer IFs have a stronger online presence than Winter IFs:** While summer sports represent a larger number of IFs in this year's ranking, it is still interesting to note that even the strongest winter IFs have not been able to garner the social media presence as some seemingly smaller summer IFs. While winter IFs account for approximately 10% of IFs in the ranking, one would imagine that at least one winter IF would break the top 10 list of every ranking.
- **Olympic Games not only opportunity for IFs to grow:** The Olympic Games have been a helpful tool in the growth for many IFs. However, it is still interesting to note that despite the background of Tokyo 2020 and Beijing 2022, this year's 10 most followed sports federations continue to include three non-Olympic sports.

With the International Cricket Council (ICC) keeping its crown as the most followed IF, growing an additional 35% this year and increasing its total followers to 79,696,575, FIFA (41,082,790) and FIBA (13,909,368) held steady in second and third place.

Interestingly, the two other non-Olympic sports in the overall top 10 include Teqball (International Teqball Federation, in seventh position, 6,288,971) and Cheerleading (International Cheer Union, 10th, 3,358,462), have made use of other virtual opportunities to engage with their members.

Tanya Heimlich-Ng Yuen, BCW Sports senior director, says: "While sport and events continue to be negatively impacted by Covid-19, it is clear that a strong social media presence provides IFs with new opportunities for growth. When done right, IFs are able to not only expand their brand awareness but also cultivate new partnerships and rapidly increase their fan bases. With some IFs growing their base by more than 100% and gaining millions of new followers in a year, it shows that most IFs have not even begun to tap into their online potential.

Download the [2021 International Sports Federations Social Media Ranking](#).

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