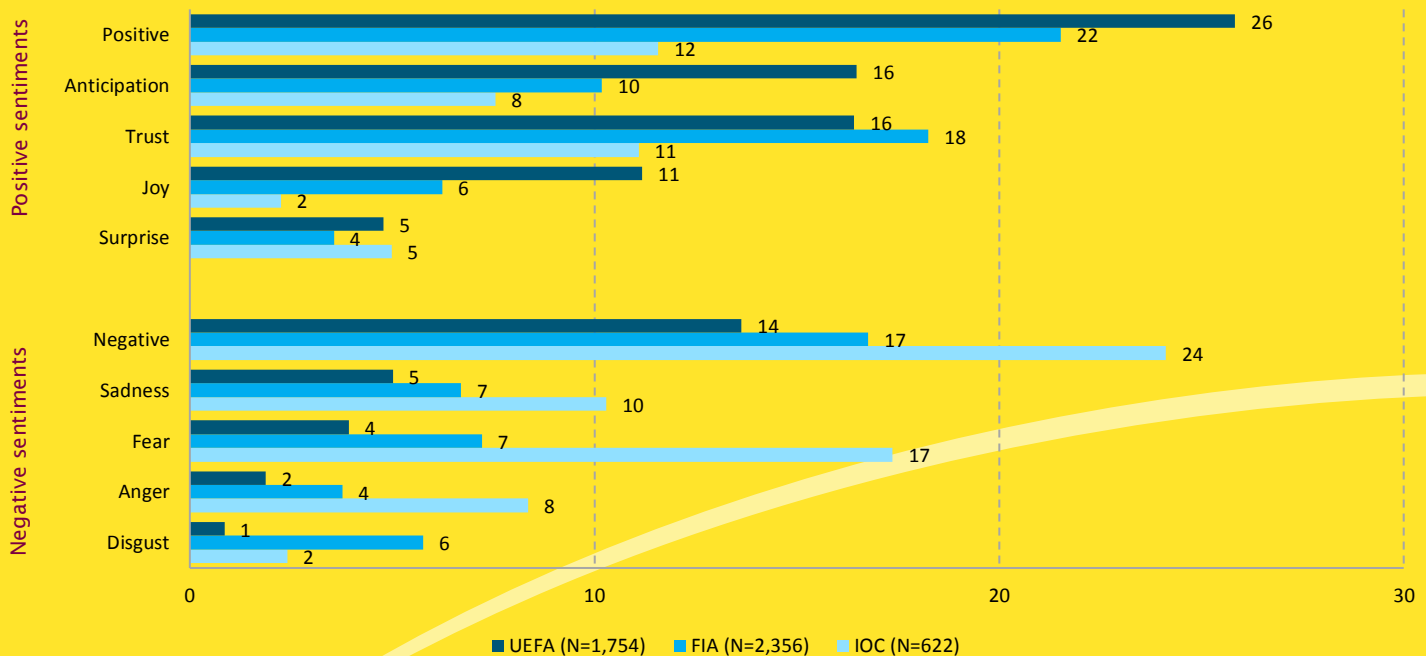


Twitterers' sentiments towards the COVID-19 responses of the FIA, UEFA and IOC

Factsheet 2020/6

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Figure 1. Types of sentiment (in percentages) in Twitter messages about the COVID-19 responses of UEFA, FIA and the IOC between 12 and 20 March, 2020.



Source: Twitter Analytics, 2020. Adapted by Mulier Institute.

Different associations, different crisis responses

The Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) decided that the Dutch, Spanish, and Monaco grand prix will be postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak. FIA is not the only international association that is faced with making tough decisions to ensure the health and safety of sport participants, staff and fans. The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) announced the postponement of EURO 2020 and put all UEFA competitions on hold until further notice.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC), in contrast, remains committed to the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. In a communiqué, the IOC declared that with more than four months to go before the start of the Olympic Games there is no need for any drastic decisions at this stage. Consequently, the IOC encourages all athletes to continue to prepare for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 as best they can, despite the fluid nature of the COVID-19 virus globally.

In this unprecedented pandemic situation, the three associations show different crisis responses. On Twitter, people from all around the world have responded to the decisions of the associations. So, what is the general sentiment among Twitterers about the crisis responses of UEFA, FIA and the IOC?

Support for UEFA and FIA; fears about IOC's response

Twitterers have mounting criticism of the IOC's decision not to call off the Olympic Games (Figure 1). The comparative sentiment analysis shows that Twitterers tweet negatively about the IOC's decision. In fact, the tweets about the IOC show more feelings of fear, anger, and disgust than the tweets about the postponement decisions of UEFA and FIA. In total, 64% of the Twitter messages about UEFA's decision to postpone EURO 2020, and 61% of the Twitter messages about FIA's decision to defer several grand prix, speak positively about the associations' crisis responses. For the IOC this number is 38%. Furthermore, the sentiment of trust in UEFA and FIA as an organization is relatively higher than the sentiment of trust in the IOC. This suggests that there is greater Twitter support for the responses of UEFA and FIA to the COVID-19 crisis than for the response of the IOC.

A data mining exercise and sentiment analysis in R

With the help of the Twitter *Web-scraping* package *twitterR*, and the *Bing* and *NRC* applications in the software *R*, a data mining sentiment analysis was performed on 2940 tweets about the COVID-19 responses of UEFA, FIA and the IOC. Since a tweet message can consist of multiple sentiments, N=4,732 sentiments were used in the analysis.