



Golf & Social Media: Sustainability

Insights, Analysis & Solutions



Social listening data provided by Ipsos

Introduction

'Golf + Social Media: The Great Divide' explored 16.1 million social media posts*, articles, comments, blogs, shares and retweets to analyze what people were saying about golf.

2% of posts related to golf and the environment. While the volume of posts was comparatively small, the sentiment was predominantly negative and it was evident that detractors' voices were growing during the three-year study.

This summary report highlights what is being said online about golf and sustainability focusing on three key topics:

- **Water**
- **Land**
- **Nature**

**United States & UK, July 2019 – August 2022*

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All golf courses should've been obliterated eons ago. Obscene waste of public space and complete shit for the environment.
#AbolishGolf.



“

I think golf courses probably serve fewer residents per acre versus other recreational uses of public land, and less of them therefore likely makes sense.



Expert Analysis

“The negative image of golf is a common theme throughout the study. In terms of sustainability, there are now growing questions from detractors and non-players about golf and environmental considerations.

“During droughts, people are especially vocal in their opposition to golf courses using water for irrigation. It is seen as bad for the environment and communities.

“Detractors also accuse golf courses of privatizing large green areas. There are calls for the repurposing of golf courses from developing the land for housing to meet the needs of growing urban populations to making golf courses nature reserves.”

Claire Martin

Ipsos Social Intelligence Researcher



WILD
FENCES
space
WATER
priority
nature
SAVING
BIODIVERSITY
crops
ANIMALS
public
PRIVATE

Water

Golf courses' use of water for irrigation is an active debate on social media. The perception is that courses comprise large areas of grass that demand heavy consumption. During droughts, social media activity and negative comments increase.

Some users ask questions about how much water is used. Others call for golf courses to be restricted, or banned, from using water for irrigation and call out perceived exceptionalism.

*While detractors' voices are the loudest, some golf courses and advocates – including superintendents – respond with insights, solutions and demonstrations of sustainable management.



If we wanna talk about action to take to reduce our water usage (which we do need to do, of course), we need to get rid of golf courses and turf grass lawns. That's not the only thing we need to do, but it's essential.



How much water do golf courses use in Denver (per units of land) compared to parks?



Water exemptions for GOLF COURSES during apocalyptic droughts tells us everything we need to know about the nature of our government and who they are there to serve.



The planet is burning. Why do golf courses still exist? #BanGolf



The reality is that less than 1% of potable water in California is consumed by the golf industry. Indeed, golf courses consumed 1.44% of all water used for irrigation in the US in 2013. Almost all regions increased their use of recycled water.*

Land

Predominantly, detractors accuse golf courses of 'privatizing' green spaces for the benefit of the happy few.

Suggested alternative land uses vary. Some detractors say golf course land should be used to develop housing to meet the needs of growing urban populations. Others recognize the value of green space and suggest converting golf courses to parks and public leisure spaces.

A campaign by dog walkers to secure access to golf course space used the slogan 'Barks4Parks'.



Golf is so weird. Huge swathes of landscape culled and privatized because men are too scared to just ask their friend if they want to go for a walk.



Build housing on municipal public golf courses. They are in city centers and only exist because of tax breaks and political capture by wealthy residents. They have absolutely no place in a city and the land should be of true public use.



I think golf courses probably serve fewer residents per acre versus other recreational uses of public land, and less of them therefore likely makes sense.



I hate golf courses, such a waste of green space for exclusive use.



#Barks4Parks

Nature

Detractors say golf is bad for the environment and land used by golf courses should be turned over to nature conservation.

During the pandemic, videos of animals wandering across empty golf courses generated comments. Golf courses and superintendents were accused of being anti-nature and that the land should be 'rewilded'.

But positive voices – including superintendents – share their personal experiences and the nature they see on golf courses, especially in the early morning. However, it is the predominantly negative posts that attract more support and comments.



Worried that golf courses are a refuge for animals? Imagine how much better they'd be as re-wilded public lands.



On our course there are sheep, badgers, rabbits, foxes, deer, many birds of prey and bats. We have several large ponds with wildflowers and fruit trees. There are public walks surrounding it. It definitely doesn't have to be a sterile environment.



#BirdsNotBirdies

Solutions



“

There are huge online debates about political and social topics, but what is said at the local level is really important. Golf courses have an opportunity to engage with local communities, to demonstrate the good things they do in terms of sustainability and the positive experiences they offer, benefiting the local community. But you need to do it, and say it, for people outside to know and understand.

Claire Martin

Ipsos, Social Intelligence Researcher

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This study highlights a major challenge for the industry: there is strong negative sentiment across social media in relation to golf and sustainability. However, there are a wealth of case studies that demonstrate golf courses' sustainability credentials. These compelling examples serve as proof of the industry's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable practices. It is important that golf courses, and the industry, now communicate these stories to change perceptions.

Mark Birchmore

Syngenta, Global Head of Marketing, Turf & Landscape

Case Studies

Discover how golf courses around the world are tackling sustainability challenges with innovative solutions:

Water

Green Evolution

On the Spanish island of Majorca, Arabella Golf proactively communicates its use of recycled water across its three golf courses to the local community and tourists.



Water Conservation

The Resort at Pelican Hill, Newport Beach, is a sustainability pioneer recognized as a model not only for golf courses, but for communities along California's Pacific coast.



Drought-resistant grass

A variety of bent grass called AU Victory, developed by Auburn University in Alabama, responds well to heat stress and surged in popularity as superintendents look for solutions to water scarcity.



Land

Saved from Development

Public golf course Goat Hill Park in California was saved for the community from development by golf fashion designer John Ashworth.



Reimagining golf space

The historic Park in West Palm Beach, Florida, once one of America's top-ranked municipal courses, has been transformed from a state of disrepair into an inclusive, accessible community venue.



Golf courses' true value

How do you value a golf course as a green space? GEO Foundation is helping courses increase and promote their environmental and social value to its stakeholders and wider community.



Nature

Golf & Nature

Just 30 miles east of Manhattan is Bethpage State Park, a 1,500-acre public green space that is home to five golf courses, including the 2025 Ryder Cup venue. Learn about its industry leading biodiversity.



Carbon Par

Golf courses' grasslands can be important carbon stores. In Iceland, a series of scientific projects led by Edwin Roald is aiming to develop a land carbon score for all of the country's 65 golf courses.



Birds and bees

This South Florida club is enjoying unexpected benefits after converting unused areas of its golf course in a bird sanctuary and honey bee colony.



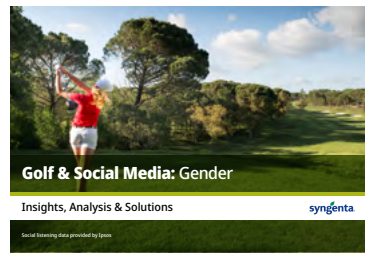
Market Insights

Golf & Social Media: The Great Divide is free to download from www.syngentagolf.com

Look out for our series of snapshot reports:



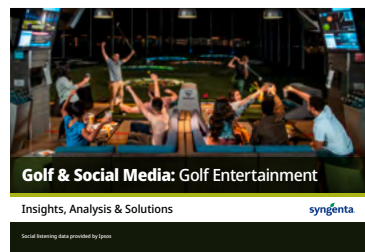
> Sustainability



> Gender



> Diversity



> Golf Entertainment

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