

Beijing +30

Women and the Media

Resource Document

Media shapes and colors our perceptions of women, and too often distorts our understanding of women's issues. The continuing lack of equality in media coverage of women, women as news sources, as well as online violence in social media and physical violence against women journalists all perpetuate this distortion.

This document is a background supplement to the main statement: Beijing +30 Women and the Media. It contains citations and research consulted for further reading.

Primary Sources of Research

- [Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism](#)
- [International Women's Media Foundation: Global Report on the Status of Women in the New Media](#)
- [Women's Media Center](#)
- [Routledge Companion to Media and Gender](#)
- [ECE report](#)
- [Committee to Protect Journalists](#)
- [Freedom of the Press Foundation](#)
- [Reporters without Borders](#)
- [International Center for Journalists](#)
- [CSW 67 Agreed Conclusions](#)
- [OSCE - Safety of Female Journalists Online](#)
- [Women, Peace, and Security - Georgetown](#)
<https://womensmediacenter.com/reports/the-status-of-women-in-the-u-s-media-2021-1>
- [Who Makes the News?](#)
- [Global Media Monitoring Project \(GMMP\) 2020](#)
- [The Chilling: global trends in online violence against women journalists - Julie Posetti, Nabeelah Shabbir, Diana Maynard, Kalina Bontcheva, Nermine Aboulez \(UNESCO, 2021\)](#)
- [The Coalition for Women in Journalism](#)
- [European Centre for Press & Media Freedom](#)
- [Online Violence: The New Front Line for Women Journalists](#)
- [Online Attacks on Women Journalists Leading to 'Real World' Violence](#)
- [International Federation of Journalists](#)

Women as News Sources

- [50:50 The Equality Project \(bbc.co.uk\)](#)
- [50:50 The Equality Project | Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(un.org\)](#)

Coverage and Portrayal of Gender-Based Violence

[Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities](#)

Violence against women is a societal problem and considered a global pandemic by UN Women. According to Birgit Wolf in research for the Universities of the Danube, Barcelona and Vienna, the media play a crucial role in shaping public awareness and opinion with regard to victims and perpetrators. In a study of the Mediterranean audiovisual space from March to May 2018 on 22 public and private television channels in 9 different regions, the Gender and Media Working Group of the Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities (MNRA), found the following: “most channels devote 1-3% of news programme time to reporting gender violence, which make the headlines in 20-40% of cases. With regard to news sources, the main source on 10 channels from 8 different broadcasting regions are experts, while on 6 channels from 3 areas, they are people with some connection to those involved. Furthermore, most of the people interviewed for the news items are women. Using images, audio or language to sensationalize the information is a recurring phenomenon on all of the channels analyzed, albeit in different percentages. Broadly, publicly-owned channels tend to focus more on social awareness and be less sensational than privately-owned channels.”

Representations of gender-based violence against women in news reports are criticized by the feminist academia and by women’s NGOs engaged in helping. The women cited by news reports as having been maltreated by their (former) partners are represented as weak, helpless and vulnerable. Moreover, they often seem to be blamed for their own victimization. The crime of intimate partner violence is determined as being limited to a ‘family tragedy’, somewhat individualized and cut off from its societal contexts. Intimate partner violence as a form of violation of human rights is misused for sensationalistic media representations.

In research undertaken by Alessia Tranchese and Sole Alba Zollo of the University of Naples, on the way in which rape is treated by UK media, it was noted that the media is potential factor of social control through which the dominant class as the power of defining common sense. The the media has the power to reinforce existing ideologies by choosing one story over another. This is often as a result of professional imperatives or commercial interests. The power comes from the cumulative effect they have on the audience, not from one story but the repetition of a particular way of handling things. Thus the manner in which violence against women and girls is portrayed influences the discourse on equality generally. The research highlights a number of ways in which the coverage of rape reinforces stereotypes.

The research highlights: how the stories change depending on the angle of the violent act is from the perspective of the story of police handling or from the victim/survivors family. Often the victim/survivor is represented in contradictory ways - as a vulnerable person at the same time as an actor out of control with alcohol or drugs. Information about the person is included that has nothing to do with the rape but seeks to persuade the audience about the character of the victim. The subject of the story is objectified by use of grammar so whilst they remain at the centre of the story, they are made passive and referred to only in relation to others, such as family members.

Media Coverage of Gender Based Violence Handbook for Trainers (UN WOMEN)

[Handbook for trainers](#)

As the role of the media is paramount in how it is presented to the public, UN Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) supported production of a handbook that addresses media coverage of violence against women. The handbook is intended for journalists, editors, students of journalism, bloggers and public relations officials in institutions working to end violence against women in BiH.

The handbook was produced under the three-year programme “Standards and Engagement for Ending Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” which is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida). It summarizes legislative information and highlights certain aspects of violence against women that are rarely, if at all, covered by the media. The handbook also provides a training methodology for responsible coverage of violence against women, in order to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills to all who would like to take a more active role in addressing the issue.

Human Rights by Design: The Responsibilities of Social Media Platforms to Address Gender-Based Violence Online

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/poi3.185>

Gender-based violence online is rampant, ranging from harassment of women who are public figures on social media to stalking intimate partners using purpose-built apps. This is not an issue that can be addressed by individual states alone, nor can it be addressed satisfactorily through legal means. The normalization of misogyny and abuse online both reflects and reinforces systemic inequalities. Addressing gender-based violence online will require the intervention of the technology companies that govern the commercial Internet to prevent and combat abuse across networks and services. We argue that international human rights instruments provide an opportunity to identify with more precision the responsibilities of telecommunications companies and digital media platforms to mitigate harm perpetrated

through their networks, and ensure that the systems they create do not reproduce gendered inequality. Finally, we present initial recommendations for platforms to promote human rights and fulfill their responsibilities under the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.”

Violence Against Women Journalists

<https://zaman.ro/turcia-femeile-din-mass-media-se-confrunta-cu-hartuirea-sexuala-si-inegalitate-de-sex/>

Women journalists in Turkey face problems at work, including sexual harassment and gender inequality in the workplace, the Stockholm Center for Freedom reports.

Working Group Participants

Jessica Buchleitner

Sallie Chaballier

Valentina Bodrug-Lungu

Sandra Acevedo Hanns

Zarin Hainsworth

Jennie Walker

Isabel Raventos

Claudia Walder

Hala Ghoson

Vivian Fankhauser-Feitknecht