

## **Beijing+30 Statement United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Women and the Media**

Media, a designated critical area of concern, touches on all aspects of society, driving the narratives that shape our economics, choices, and governments. Below are the most critical inequalities 30 years after introducing the Beijing Platform for Action in media.

### **Definitions**

“Women in the media” refers to the representation, participation, and portrayal of women in television, film, radio, print, and digital platforms<sup>1</sup>. “The media” refers to channels transmitting information, news, and entertainment: newspapers, television, radio, magazines, social platforms, blogs, and podcasts. Media propagates power from its cumulative effect on audiences.<sup>2</sup>

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### **Challenges**

#### *Diversity in the Workplace*

The media industry has long been influenced by traditional gender roles affecting women's recruitment, promotion, and professional and training development. Organizations must actively challenge biases by implementing policies that promote diversity and inclusion at all levels, especially in leadership<sup>3</sup>. Key roles also often demand long hours and high availability, clashing with caregiving responsibilities that disproportionately fall on women. Sexual harassment and discrimination remain pervasive industry issues.

According to a 2021 AKAS report<sup>4</sup>, organizations globally have made long-term progress on this indicator; however, 20th-century progress substantially slowed and in some countries, halted in the last decades. Globally, most journalists, owners, and those in news leadership positions are men, despite gender parity among graduates of journalism courses in many countries. Similarly, a 2021 report by Women's Media Center revealed that women accounted for 39.9% of the workforce in local radio news, down from 44.4% in 2018<sup>5</sup>.

A 2018 European Journalism Observatory (EJO) study within the ECE revealed that women journalists are severely under-represented across Europe despite a rough gender balance across the media. The research<sup>6</sup> examined 11 European countries and found just 23 % of stories were written by women compared to 41% by men.<sup>7</sup>

Another report revealed several countries scoring well on the United Nations Gender Inequality Index (UN GII) continue to have few women as top editors. Only 22% of the 180 top editors across the 240 brands covered are women, even though, on average, 40% of journalists in the 12 markets are women. Among the 38 new top editors appointed across the brands covered, 26% were women. In the United States and Finland, half of the new top editors appointed in the past year are women, but in many other markets, few are.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Women as news sources*

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/PFA\\_E\\_Final\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/PFA_E_Final_WEB.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/9/468861\\_0.pdf](https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/9/468861_0.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://phys.org/news/2023-01-women-voices-mediaincluding-generate-billions.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.akas.london/userfiles/2020.11.19-The%20Missing%20Perspectives%20of%20Women%20in%20News%20-%20EXEC%20SUMMARY%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://womensmediacenter.com/reports/the-status-of-women-in-the-u-s-media-2021-1>

<sup>6</sup> <https://en.ejo.ch/research/where-are-all-the-women-journalists-in-europes-media>

<sup>7</sup> <https://en.ejo.ch/research/where-are-all-the-women-journalists-in-europes-media>

<sup>8</sup> <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/women-and-leadership-news-media-2023-evidence-12-markets>

According to the 2020 Global Media Monitoring Project report<sup>9</sup>, the world's largest study (116 countries) of gender portrayal in the news, women comprised 40% of reporters and 25% of news sources across print, TV, radio, internet news, and Twitter. This was a record result for women as both news workers and sources, but still well short of equality. The report estimates it will take another 67 years to close the gender gap in news<sup>10</sup>. The share of women who appear with live statements as experts, representatives of the authorities, guests or commentators in the most important TV news shows is low; for example, in Romania, it is only 25.8% (2023).<sup>11</sup>

### *Coverage and portrayal of gender-based violence (GBV)*

Violence against women is a societal problem and is considered a global pandemic by UN Women. Media play a crucial role in shaping public awareness with regard to victims and perpetrators. For example, every three days, a woman is murdered by her partner or ex-partner.<sup>12</sup> Headlines citing “spurned lovers” and “jealous rages” frame acts of GBV as “crimes of passion” rather than of coercive control. Despite being a public health concern, fatal domestic abuse is portrayed as a private issue.<sup>13</sup>

University of Naples research<sup>14</sup> on media portrayal of rape in the United Kingdom revealed that stories change depending on the angle of violence. Often, the victim/survivor is contradictorily represented as a vulnerable victim or out of control with unrelated information that seeks to defame the victim’s character.

UN Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) supported a handbook addressing media coverage of violence against women intended for journalists, editors, students, bloggers, and public relations officials summarizing legislative information.

### *Violence against women journalists*

According to UNESCO, “globally, women journalists and media workers face increasing offline and online attacks and are subject to disproportional and specific threats. The GBV they are exposed to implies stigmatization, sexist hate speech, trolling, physical assault, rape, and murder.<sup>15</sup>” These risks can lead to under-reporting and self-censorship, and eventually to women leaving the profession. A UNESCO-sponsored study in 2021 found that “nearly three quarters (73%) of respondents identifying as women said they had experienced online violence.”<sup>16</sup>

The trauma and fear violence propagates become chilling effects on press freedom and freedom of expression, causing self-censorship.<sup>17</sup> The normalization of misogyny and abuse online both reflects and reinforces systemic inequalities and requires intervention by Member States and technology companies.

### **Institutional mechanisms**

UN Women researches the portrayal of women in news media and the entertainment industry. The agency collaborates with the media to facilitate equitable coverage, offering global workshops and trainings with journalists. The Media Compact in Beijing+20 works to increase and sharpen women in the news<sup>18,19</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> [GMMP](#)

<sup>10</sup> <https://waccglobal.org/6th-global-media-monitoring-project-show-quantitative-gains-qualitative-losses/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.mediatrust.ro/femei-vs-barbati-in-mass-media/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/domestic-abuse-femicide-elimination-of-violence-against-women-b1762437.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.wellevelup.org/about-us/>

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sole-Zollo/publication/320980233\\_The\\_Construction\\_of\\_Gender-based\\_Violence\\_in\\_the\\_British\\_Printed\\_and\\_Broadcast\\_Media/links/5a0586680f7e9bc407953c1c/The-Construction-of-Gender-based-Violence-in-the-British-Printed-and-Broadcast-Media.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sole-Zollo/publication/320980233_The_Construction_of_Gender-based_Violence_in_the_British_Printed_and_Broadcast_Media/links/5a0586680f7e9bc407953c1c/The-Construction-of-Gender-based-Violence-in-the-British-Printed-and-Broadcast-Media.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.unesco.org/en/safety-journalists/safety-women-journalists>

<sup>16</sup> “The Chilling: global trends in online violence against women journalists - Julie Posetti, Nabeelah Shabbir, Diana Maynard, Kalina Bontcheva, Nermine Aboulez (UNESCO, 2021) <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377223>

<sup>17</sup> ECPMF Women’s Reporting Point, <https://www.ecpmf.eu/support/womens-reporting-point/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw59/feature-stories>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Beijing%20Plus/Attachments/Events/Media%20compact%20partners%20%20pager.pdf>

## **Forward Critical Recommendations**

To fulfill these recommendations, comprehensive legislation, regulations, and mechanisms (by States and multinational media corporations) are needed.

- *Short term*  
According to ICFJ<sup>20</sup> the psychological warfare of online harassment, threats, and targeted physical violence permeates all aspects of journalistic experience for women targets. Regional and local law enforcement must create task forces for special measures to circumvent them.
- *Medium-term*  
Employers must offer flexible work hours for women journalists with children.<sup>21</sup> Standardize hiring practices to be more inclusive and ensure equal representation of women reporters in newsrooms. Establishing professional mentorship programs and networking groups provides the support, opportunities, and connections needed to advance.<sup>22</sup> Strong policies, clear reporting mechanisms, and a zero-tolerance stance on harassment and discrimination are mandatory.
- *Long term*  
The media controls how women are portrayed. Media organizations must create and adhere to strict guidelines on equitable coverage.

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<sup>20</sup> [https://www.icfj.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/ICFJ%20Unesco\\_TheChilling\\_OnlineViolence.pdf](https://www.icfj.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/ICFJ%20Unesco_TheChilling_OnlineViolence.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/covid-19-has-increased-gender-inequalities-in-the-media-ifj-survey-finds>

<sup>22</sup> <https://phys.org/news/2023-01-women-voices-mediaincluding-generate-billions.html>