



Women and media

Fall 2023

Journalism

- Same as politics = typically masculine field
- Emergence of mass media = only few women journalists
- Women journalists writing about women and for women
- Typically: suffrage, education, women's issues, household, domestic life, beauty, fashion etc.
- Slowly women demanded to cover typically „male“ topics (from 1960s on)
- Men never demanded covering typically „female“ topics (matter of status)

Resistance of media outlets

- Hostility and discrimination within newsrooms
- Little space for women's advances
- An internal 1973 BBC report stated: *„to large numbers of listeners and viewers a female voice is considered to lack authority in news reading and reporting. According to the Head of TV presentation ‘a woman’s voice attracts too much attention. Announcing’, he thinks, ‘represents the supreme authority and a man’s voice is suited to all occasions by tradition, whereas a woman’s voice is more characteristic, but acceptable in the Open University context.’“*

Table 10. Key Findings: 1995 – 2020

- % of women journalists reporting news increasing slowly
- Numbers by: Global Media Monitoring Project
- <https://whomakesthenews.org/>
- More women reporting on politics and economy, but still minority!

	1995		2000		2005		2010		2015		2020		%Change (Δ)	
	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M
A. People in the news														
by Medium														
Newspaper, Television, Radio (NRT)														
	17	83	18	82	21	79	24	76	24	76	25	75	Δ25 yrs (%F)	
Newspapers	16	84	17	83	21	79	24	76	26	74	26	74	+10	
Television	21	79	22	78	22	78	24	76	24	76	26	74	+5	
Radio	15	85	13	87	17	83	22	78	21	79	23	77	+8	
News websites and news media tweets														
News websites							23	77	25	75	28	72	Δ5 yrs (%F)	
							(pilot)	(pilot)					+3	
News tweets									28	72	26	74	(-2)	
by Scope of Story. NRT														
Local	22	78	23	77	27	73	26	74	27	73	29	71	Δ25 yrs (%F)	
National	14	86	17	83	19	81	23	77	23	77	25	75	+7	
National/other	17	83	15	85	18	82	20	80					+11	
Sub-regional/regional (1)									24	76	24	76		
International / Foreign	17	83	14	86	20	80	26	74	24	76	21	79	+4	
By Major topic. NRT														
Science & Health	27	73	21	79	22	78	32	68	35	65	30	70	+3	
Social & Legal	19	81	21	79	28	72	30	70	28	72	32	68	+13	
Crime & Violence	21	79	18	82	22	78	24	76	28	72	24	76	+3	
Celebrity, Arts & Sport	24	76	23	77	28	72	26	74	23	77	25	75	+1	
Economy	10	90	18	82	20	80	20	80	21	79	24	76	+14	
Politics & Government	7	93	12	88	14	86	19	81	16	84	20	80	+13	
by Function in Story. NRT														
Personal Experience					31	69	36	64	38	62	42	58	Δ15 yrs (%F)	
Popular Opinion					34	66	44	56	37	63	38	62	+4	
Eye Witness					30	70	29	71	30	70	30	70	0	
Subject					23	77	23	77	26	74	24	76	+1	
Spokesperson					14	86	19	81	20	80	22	78	+8	
Expert					17	83	20	80	19	81	24	76	+7	

Journalism as a gendered practice

- First analysis of the gendered nature of journalism in 1980s
- Catherine Covert (1981):
- Journalism valued independence, individual autonomy
- Writing emphasizing conflict, competition, controversy
- Omitting communal values and language (e.g. harmony, community, affiliation)
- Inclusion of more women would bring more feminine values
- More women in newsroom = transforming journalism

Gendered nature of journalism

- Van Zoonen (1998)
 - **Selection of topics** (men report more on news, women on soft news = horizontal segregation)
 - **Story angles** (men focus more on facts and sensations; women focus on background, context, effects)
 - **Use of sources** (men use more men; women use more women)
 - **Ethics** (masculine journalism is more detached from audience and the subject women more concerned iwtu audience needs)

Gendered nature of journalism

- Very often the differences between men and women not confirmed in survey studies
- Men and women very similar their values and goals)
- Some differences hold though
- For example Hanitzsch and Hanusch 2012
 - Study gender differences across 18 countries
 - Women and men do not differ in how they understand their roles

- Entries are mean values of scales:
- Institutional roles = from not important to extremely important
- Epistemologies = from strongly disagree to strongly agree
- Stars indicate that the differences between men and women are statistically significant
- Women and men do not differ in most items
- Men more as detached observers, as watchdog of democracy, more concerned about attracting big audience, want to motivate civic engagement

Table 3. Gender differences in journalism cultures.

	N	Women (mean)	Men (mean)	t
<i>Institutional roles</i>				
Set the political agenda	1761	2.93	2.95	.207
Influence public opinion	1761	3.21	3.24	.470
Advocate for social change	1744	3.39	3.36	-.594
Be an absolutely detached observer	1765	4.14	4.29	3.190**
Act as watchdog of the government	1774	3.98	4.10	2.320*
Act as watchdog of business elites	1761	3.38	3.54	2.593**
Support official policies to bring about prosperity and development	1753	2.74	2.68	-.994
Convey a positive image of political and business leadership	1764	1.84	1.94	1.856
Provide the audience with the information that is most interesting	1776	3.78	3.82	.764
Concentrate mainly on news that will attract the widest possible audience	1774	3.28	3.43	2.810**
Provide citizens with the information they need to make political decisions	1774	4.37	4.39	.496
Motivate people to participate in civic activity and political discussion	1766	3.68	3.83	2.760**
<i>Epistemologies</i>				
I think that journalists can depict reality as it is	1756	3.62	3.63	.065
I do not allow my own beliefs and convictions to influence my reporting	1767	4.12	4.07	-.861
I remain strictly impartial in my work	1767	4.04	4.10	1.259
I always make clear which side in a dispute has the better position	1728	2.62	2.60	-.378
I make claims only if they are substantiated by hard evidence and reliable sources	1763	4.41	4.42	.219
I always stay away from information that cannot be verified	1772	3.96	3.98	.307
I think that facts speak for themselves	1765	3.91	3.90	-.336
I provide analysis of events and issues in my work	1765	3.94	3.91	-.431

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Gendered nature of journalism

- Ross 2001: surveyed and interviewed female journalists (UK)
- Identified journalism as male-dominated culture:
 - Impossible work-life balance (worst for mothers)
 - Macho culture
 - Women often adapt and adopt the boy's rule of the game
 - Or find other strategies (freelancing, work with other excluded professionals)
- Significant disagreements among women journalists (see the following slide)
- Conclusion: increasing the number of women is not sufficient to transform journalism

- Inconsistent attitudes among women journalists
- Journalists need to be aware of the dominant newsroom culture
- Dissenting voices are important
- Challenging the culture requires both individual and collective effort

- Note that the analysis is from late 1990s

Table 1. Journalism as practice and policy

Statement	Percentage who agree with the statement (agree strongly = 1; disagree strongly = 10)		
	Agree (1–3)	Equivocal (4–7)	Disagree (8–10)
Profession is still dominated by men	60	27	13
Women managers are more macho than male colleagues	23	41	36
Women and men have equal chance of professional success	41	9	50
It's hard to be a feminist in the newsroom	47	26	26
More senior women will impact positively on prospects for other women	59	32	9
Most men treat women colleagues as their equal	50	36	14
Women and men bring different perspectives to their work, so gender diversity is important	50	40	10
Motherhood is more important factor in career success than gender only	31	15	53
I try to do journalism from a feminist perspective	13	13	74
Covering women's issues is not highly regarded by senior staff	41	18	41
After-hours pub culture makes it hard for women to gain acceptance	36	23	41
Women must adopt macho behaviours to get ahead	13	18	69
More women would make media output more women friendly	41	36	22

Individual and collective effort to challenge the culture

- Various initiatives of women in media
- E.g. Ženy v médiích (Czech Republic)

https://www.instagram.com/zeny_v_mediich/

Stereotypes about topics covered by journalists

- Commonly assumed that politics, economy, technology and other „hard news“ topics are more extensively covered by men
- Women more in soft news, features, even historically (fashion, beauty, lifestyles...)
- Example: North 2016
 - Survey and qualitative interviews with women journalists in Australia
 - More women cover hard news
 - But majority covers soft news
 - Women pigeon-holed in these topics

TABLE 1

Percentage of respondents who predominantly work in these rounds

Rounds	% (N)
General news	55.4 (277)
Features	36.6 (183)
Politics	33.2 (166)
Arts	22.6 (113)
Local government	21.6 (108)
Education	19.6 (98)
Health	18.8 (94)
Business/finance	18.2 (91)
Environment	18.0 (90)
Police	17.0 (85)
Courts	15.0 (75)
Entertainment/celebrity	14.4 (72)
Sports	13.4 (67)
Media	9.2 (46)
Science/technology	8.8 (44)
Indigenous	8.8 (44)
Foreign affairs	7.6 (38)
Fashion	6.2 (31)
Other	(71)
Total N	571 ^a

^aSix respondents did not answer this question.

As a reporter, I was assigned to politics, but within that, the roles were more traditional female roles like health, education, social services etc. Now I'm in feature production, roles to do with food, fashion, lifestyle etc. always go to women. The sports editor is always a man. The chief of staff has always been a man. The business editor is invariably a man. Editor, deputy editor, opinion writer roles have pretty much always been for men. (Metropolitan newspaper, online editor, aged 45–49)

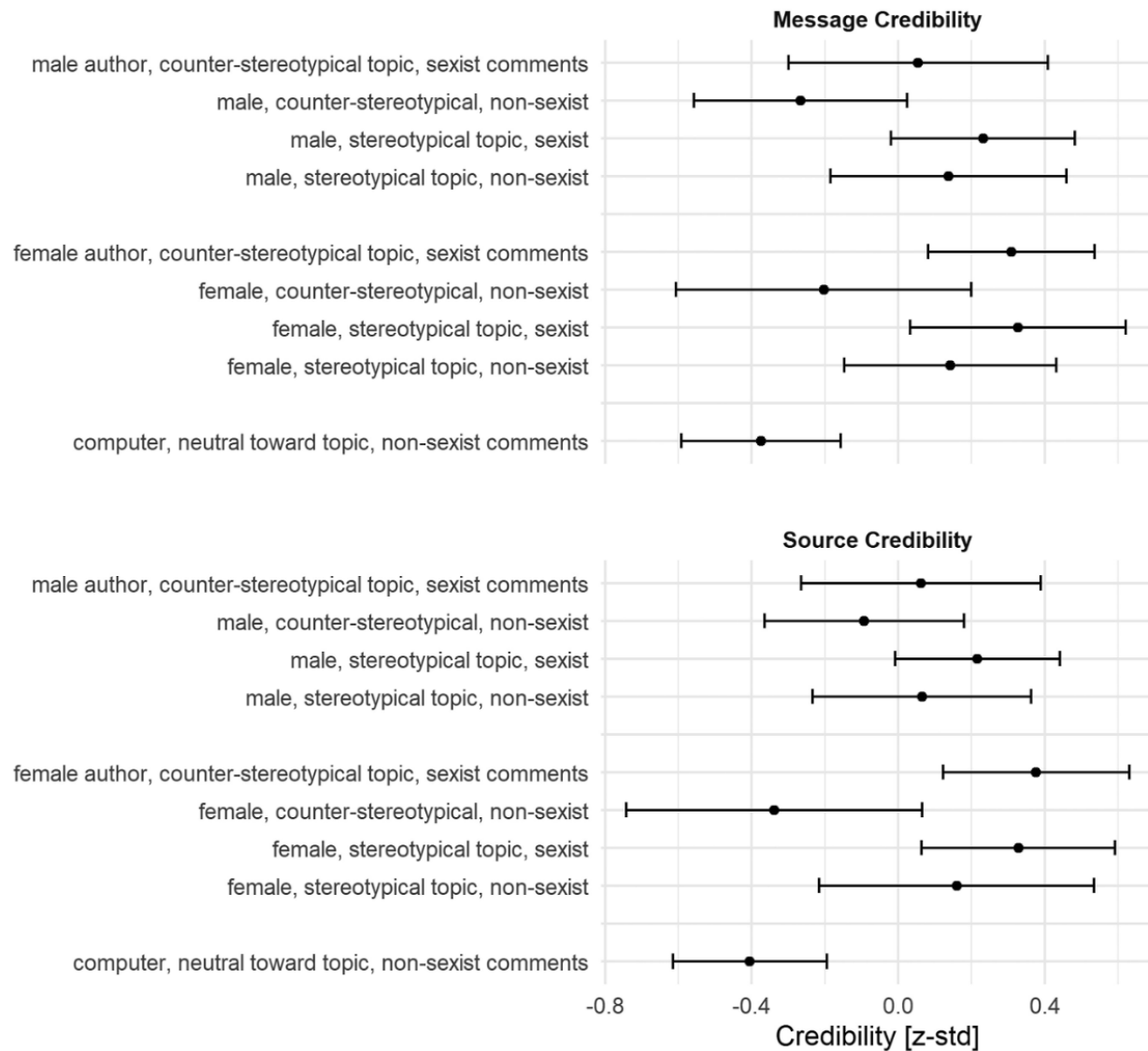
North 2016

Are men perceived as more credible?

- Historically distrust in women's capacity to perform
- As in the case of the BBC report
- First woman anchor in major US new broadcast network: Katie Couric in 2006. Major concerns that as a woman she would not be a credible news anchor.
- Are women credible enough? Especially when covering hard/stereotypically masculine news?

Are men perceived as more credible?

- Several experimental studies of poor methodology
- Usually small samples, underpowered, not worth mentioning
- One (quite okay) example:
- Hai and Maurus
 - Experiment on a mixed sample (Swiss, German, and Austrian)
 - N = 417
 - Manipulated author of the news (Men vs. Woman vs. Computer)
 - Manipulated the topic of the news (Masculine = football vs. Feminine = women's movies)
 - Manipulated content of readers comments (Sexist vs. Non-sexist)



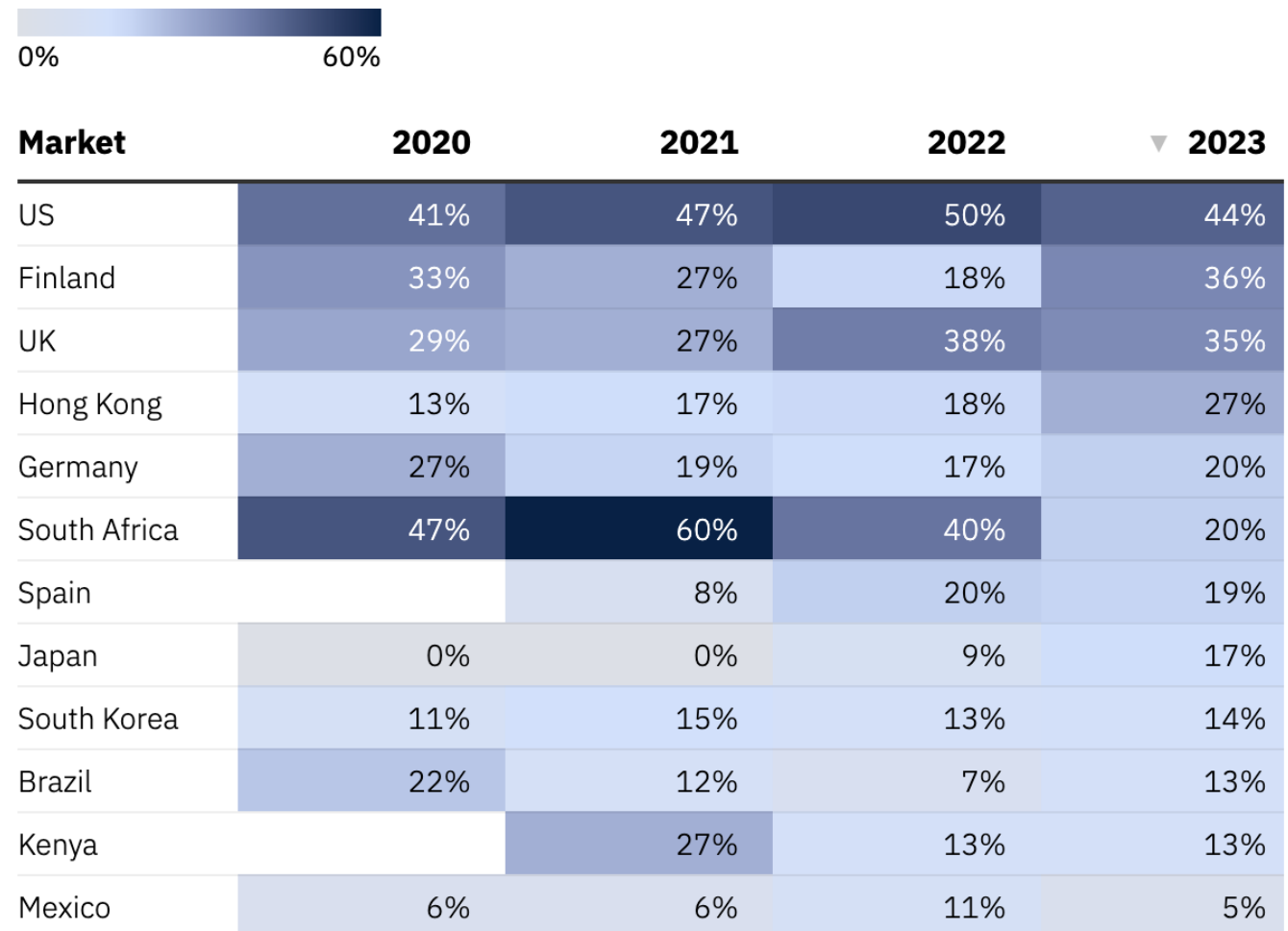
- No gender effects
- Computer as the author of the news decreased credibility
- Sexist comments (under both men and women authored article) increased credibility of the message
- Seeing sexist comments might have made the respondents process the text more carefully (is the assumed explanation)
- Results consistent with another study in the US and Denmark (the Danish study was focused on gender of experts in media)

Figure 1. Message and source credibility across experimental groups. Note: Points depict means with appended 95% confidence intervals. Message and source credibility are based on principal component analyses.

Vertical segregation of women in media

- They key factor is the male-dominated nature of **top management** (therefore vertical)
- Lack of women editors, managers, publishers
- Reuters Institute analysis of 240 news outlets in 12 markets (2023)
- In all markets: majority of top editors are men, women only 22%
- Uncorrelated to % of women journalist in the country
- Very weak correlation with gender inequality index (= even women with overall high levels of equality have low numbers of female editors)
- Diversity may be increasing only at lower levels of the hierarchy (the newsroom)but not in the top leadership positions

Percentage of women top editors in every market



Data not collected for Kenya or Spain in 2020.

Source: Data collected by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism on the gender of top editors at 200 news outlets in 2020 and 240 news outlets in 2021-2023

Challenge the dominant concept of journalism?

- The final strategy of women to transform media (Melin-Higgins 2008)
 - The first is „tamend feminism“ – building female only spaces within newsrooms, magazines etc.
 - The second one is women act within mainstream journalism not questioning hierarchies
- Some media employ „gender equality manager/editor“ responsible for ensuring that the content complies with gender equality
- Example: Spain has at least 8 media who employ Gender/equality editor
- Study among these people (Iranzo-Cabrera, Figueras-Maz, Muri-Ríos 2023) indicates that:
 - There is no consensus on the definition of such a position
 - Time consuming
 - Resistance from colleagues, negative reactions
 - Lack of support by the management and editors
 - Mostly they do not have control over content

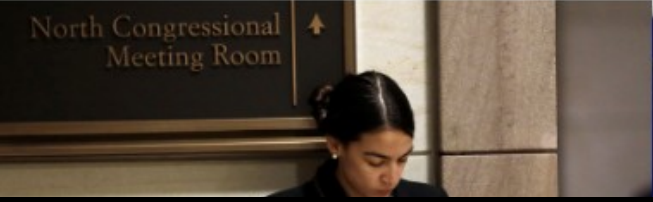


How media cover politics and politicians?

How Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Plain Black Jacket Became a Controversy

The backlash against the incoming congresswoman's "very nice" outfit is both tedious and predictable.

By Megan Garber



Appearance, sexism, and objectification

- Women described more than men in terms of their sex, marital status and children
- More focus on appearance and clothing
- Objectification harmful for women in politics
- Reducing people to their physical selves
- Experiment (Funk and Coker 2016) manipulated politicians gender and presence/absence of objectifying comments in a mock-up Facebook thread. Findings: men tend to rate objectified politicians as less suitable for political office, less reliable and less honest.
- Framing women politicians as attractive = more negative evaluation (compared to men labeled as attractive and both men and women not labeled as attractive) (Lizotte and Meggers-Wright 2019)



News media effects on politician's evaluations

- Meta-analysis of available experiments about how media coverage affects the way voters evaluate men and women candidates
- Rohrbach, Aaldering, Van der Pas 2023
- 50 studies, 670 evaluations, 23,000 participants
- Results:
- Most types of media practices do not have different effects on men and women with exceptions:
 - Media tonality: negative coverage decreases voters' likelihood of voting for women (no effect for men)
 - Coverage of communal (feminine) personality traits worsens evaluation of women's' viability (ability to win)
 - Coverage of appearance diminishes preferences for women candidates
 - But negative evaluation of candidate's appearances. Impacts men and women in the same way
 - Coverage of candidate's family diminishes women's viability
 - Coverage of emotionality impacts men and women similarly for evaluation of issue competence, viability and voting preferences
 - Emotionality coverage makes people evaluate women politicians more strongly on communal (feminine) traits)

Constructing image of women politicians in the press

- Mediated representation of women in politics
- Reproduction of dominant discourses
- Portrayal of women politicians through gender-specific frames
- Sometimes reinforcing stereotypes, ideas that women belong to private sphere not politics
- Analysis of media discourses about women politicians in French, Spanish, Italian, and UK media (Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen 2012) at the time of the first female majority Spanish cabinet appointment:
 - Personalization
 - Appearance and sartorial choices (more in some countries (UK) than others)
 - Attention to the Spanish Minister of Defence pregnancy: 1) framed as great and symbolic achievement, normalization of pregnant women in politics; 2) negatively framed as problematic and unsuitable for the office
 - Framing the government gender composition as media-oriented strategic choice to attract positive attention or controversy
 - Women as „extensions“ of PM Zapatero rather than full-fledged ministers with skills and intentions of their own (women politicians as puppets)
 - Some text were counterarguing this by emphasizing the ministers' education, achievement, skills (emphasizing gender bias, because men ministers' competences were not discussed at all)
 - The cabinet also framed as PM Zapatero's achievement, undervaluing the long term efforts of civic society, interest groups, politicians, parties (collective dimension of the situation).

Coverage of women candidates

- Women typically covered less intensively than male candidates
- There are lots of studies which bring evidence to this
- E.g., study of the 2009 European Parliament election by Lühiste and Banducci (2016):
 - Women candidates received less media coverage
 - Effects dependent on electoral system. Closed-list systems had positive effects on women candidate's coverage
 - Party viability a key factor. Women candidates' covered more when they and also their parties were more viable (greater chances of being elected).

Representation of women in the media matters

- In line with poststructuralist feminist theory (i.e. Butler, Mouffe etc.)
- Role of hegemonic production of gender attributes and media are part of this production (produces and reproduces gendered structures in societies)
- Gender is not a fixed condition which individuals are
- Gender is something that individuals do
- Gender articulated through practices (what we do and how we behave, even what we think) which reveals (and is also deeply rooted) in the structure of power relations (women of lower status and power, this structure is kept by the hegemonic reproduction of the structure – media part of this, they accept, normalize, legitimize certain images of men and women).
- Read some work by feminist theorists if interested ;)

BTW the GMMP 2020 report:

- Even though the numbers of women in media are growing
- Very low % of representation of minorities
- Media content not challenging gender stereotypes
- Read the report here: https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/GMMP-2020.Highlights_FINAL.pdf

More resources (will not be in the exam)

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laBJFSAxVgY&ab_channel=TED-Ed
 - Ted talk on representation of women in the media
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=714d18CS9k4&t=955s&ab_channel=AndreaSanchez
 - Classical documentary Miss Representation. It is already a little dated (you might probably not get some of the cultural references such as Britney Spears in her prime years) the standards might have sifted since then. But still some interesting moments, especially speakers not easily seen in context of gender (like Condoleeza Rice).
- <https://www.writingwithfire.in/>
 - Inspirative Oscar nominated documentary about women journalists in India. Available through Apple TV or Amazon Prime.