AKAS

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Luba Kassova

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From Outrage to Opportunity:

How to Include The Missing Perspectives of Women of All Colors in News Leadership and Coverage

The third in the series of Missing Perspectives reports

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Foreword

By Laura Zelenko, Senior Executive Editor and Founder of New Voices, Bloomberg

When I first came across Luba Kassova's initial report, *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News*, I carried it around for days. I read sections as I went to sleep and again as I woke up, circling quotes and highlighting data. For the first time, in the most comprehensive and global way possible, I found affirmation in the work I was doing.

Trying to drive newsroom transformation – particularly in the space of gender and racial equity – can be lonely, frustrating, and often thankless work. Luba's continued commitment to staying on top of these challenges led to this important sequel, *From Outrage to Opportunity: How to Include the Missing Perspectives of Women of All Colors in News Leadership and Coverage* – a true blueprint for media organizations to make progress. Luba's research continues to back up the reality that I see in my own work and provides data-led context for why it is so important to keep on pushing for better representation of women across races and ethnicities both in newsroom leadership and in our content.

This follow-up report takes us a step further by sizing up the business opportunity, and specifically quantifying the audience gender gap. And while the report argues that the journalistic case is one of the most convincing arguments to bring reporters and editors on board, there's no denying that at some point the money argument should take the newsroom over the line for why we need to take more urgent and intentional action. More than that, the report addresses the important intersectional lens that this work requires to ensure women of color are represented at every level of the newsroom, included in strategic decisions, and elevated in content. Because my role spans the globe and includes our bureaus in the US, UK, and South Africa, I appreciate the significance of these insights as they correspond with my own observations and experience. Raising them lays the groundwork for more thoughtful solutions. Even with the progress I've seen in my own organization, I am often overwhelmed with the challenges that remain. As Luba points out, the systemic, individual, and organizational roadblocks are daunting.

This report gives me hope that awareness is spreading about the critical importance of gender and racial equity in media. It reassures me that we are surrounded by passionate leaders fighting every day for change. It provides us with tools to act with intention and speed to transform the status quo. And it delivers the business case to anyone who is not already convinced. The power to make this happen is firmly in our hands.

Notes on terminology:

For the purposes of this report, the term '**gender**' is used to refer to the distinction between women and men. AKAS understands, however, that gender is non-binary, but is a spectrum. While this document focuses on the relative experiences of women and men only, elements of the findings can be applied to the representation, portrayal, and experiences in the news industry of trans people and the LGBTQIA+ community more broadly. However, the representation, portrayal, and experiences of trans people and the LGBTQIA+ community has been outside the scope of this report. This important area needs more attention and funding.

Writing about **race** presents a challenge even in terms of choosing the right terminology. In considering how to write about race without placing whiteness as the default, thus reinforcing racial injustice, AKAS settled on a binary categorization: women or men of color vs. women or men who are white. We recognize that globally, most people are indeed 'of color' and a vast diversity of cultures exists within this category. However, in the countries with multi-racial populations featured in this report, primarily South Africa, the UK, and the US, these binary definitions are meaningful. In the interests of protecting the identities of the interviewees who contributed to the report and achieving analytically reliable comparisons, we decided not to break down the women or men of color into further groups: e.g. Black, Asian, Hispanic. This has been especially the case when reporting on qualitative findings from the interviews.

In this report the proportion of editors of color – women or men – has been compared to their proportions in the working populations in South Africa, the UK, and the US, rather than in the journalism industry. This decision was taken to enable the analysis to flesh out the structural problems that exist within journalism which result in fewer people of color entering the profession in the first place.

Report Navigation

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Case studies

	New York Times	Khabar Lahariya		Amedia	
	Mint	Nation Media Group			
	Bloomberg	The Fuller Project			
	African Women in Media	Guardian			

Bibliography & Appendices

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Appendix 1 and 2

Links to news value chain

Social norms Socio-economic, political, technology, legal/regulatory changes	●		●		
News sector change	●	●	●		●
News organization strategy change	●	●	●		●
News leadership and individual leader change	●	●	●		●
Newsroom and journalist level change	●		●		
Representation, portrayal and storytelling news coverage change	●		●	●	●
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Project background, objectives, and approach

In 2020, Luba Kassova and the AKAS team were commissioned by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to write two independent reports, collaborating with MEAG (Media Ecosystems Analysis Group) and Behaviourwise to elevate the issue of gender equality in the news media and in support of the Generation Equality Forum.[1] The resulting reports, *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* and *The Missing Perspectives of Women in COVID-19 News*, attracted significant attention and recognition, with media coverage in over 400 news outlets and organizations across more than 75 countries, and winning two prestigious awards.

Eighteen months from the launch of the *Missing Perspectives* reports, AKAS, led by Luba Kassova, were recommissioned to examine the previously unreported representation of women in senior editorial roles in politics, economy/business, health, and foreign affairs beats. They were also asked to dive deeper into two of the longstanding challenges identified in the previous two reports, with a view to producing an independent, solutions-based, forward-looking report that would support the news industry in making much-needed progress.

The **long-standing challenges** in focus are:

1. **How to close the gender diversity and inclusion gap of women (and women of color in South Africa, the US, and the UK) in news leadership in the global south and north.**
2. **How to improve women's persistently low visibility as news protagonists and contributors in news coverage.**

The report also provides a groundbreaking investigation of the business case for gender equality. Based on the newspaper industry, it explores the revenue opportunity that achieving gender parity in news consumption presents through taking actions in twelve solutions areas (see Part 4, Chapter 2).

The report focuses on the countries which formed the basis of the analysis in the previous reports — India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the UK, and the US — chosen to represent the global north and south, while being English-speaking, thus enabling cross-cutting content analysis. The study also explores perspectives and best practice cases from Canada, Norway, and Sweden. In South Africa, the UK, and the US, the research overlaid race onto gender to understand how these two characteristics intersect with each other in the context of news leadership.

As with *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News/COVID-19 News*, this study relies on a wide range of methodologies, combining analysis of primary and secondary research sources, interrogation of big data, quantitative surveys, and qualitative in-depth interviews with 41 senior leaders in news organizations/ industry bodies across the globe to build on their collective wisdom.

Drawing on their experience gained across multiple sectors including news, media, communications, international development, strategy, and market research, the AKAS team have adopted a multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional research approach to address the business objectives. Whilst the research and insights have been centered around the six countries of focus, they have been spread more widely across the globe when researching nine trailblazing news organizations and 168 news initiatives that contain a gender equality improvement element within them.

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1. A global gathering for gender equality, convened by UN Women and co-chaired by France and Mexico, with the leadership and partnership of civil society

The report at a glance

Executive summary

The perception that women have almost caught up with men in news leadership and coverage strengthens further with every high-profile editorial appointment of a woman in journalism. Nonetheless, this perception is wrong. **Women are significantly underrepresented in editorial leadership roles and news coverage and their voices remain muted in a global news industry still dominated by men. However, substantive opportunities to reshape the status quo are emerging**.

This independent, solutions-based report, the third in the *Missing Perspectives* series, focuses on **how to break down two fundamental barriers**, previously identified, **that women face:** their **underrepresentation and cultural exclusion in news leadership** at the top of news organizations/in the highest-profile beats (the subject of **Part 1**); and their **invisibility in news coverage/storytelling** (the subject of **Part 2**).

The report findings are based on research in the same six countries featured in previous reports: India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the UK, and the US. The AKAS team has accessed millions of data points from multiple quantitative methodologies to derive insights and formulate solutions. This time, however, we also conducted in-depth interviews with 41 senior news editors/editors-in-chief and trailblazers from around the world to understand the root causes of and, importantly, the palpable solutions to removing these two key barriers to progress.

When tackling this longstanding issue of women's missing perspectives in news, organizations and leaders often expect to identify a silver bullet, a quick fix that can solve the problem. **The truth is: there is no silver bulle**t. While hiring more women leaders is an imperative starting point, it is simply not enough to resolve the issue. To accelerate change, women's **missing or muted voices must be amplified at each stage of the news value chain**: i.e. in news leadership and newsrooms, in newsgathering, in news coverage, and in news consumption. Moreover, **to improve gender and racial equity in news, organizations should drive change at the individual level**, as typically happens now, but also **at two other levels: the systemic and organizational** (**see Part 3**).

Provided this strategic approach is adopted, **our investigation into the business case for gender equality shows** a potential cumulative revenue opportunity of $43 billion between 2023 and 2027 and $83 billion between 2023 and 2032 for the global newspaper industry if the 11-12 percentage point addressable gender consumption gap was completely closed. Realistically, the gap could only be closed incrementally. If each year the gap was reduced by one percentage point, **over the next five years new women audiences would generate $11 billion and over ten years $ 38 billion** (**see Part 4, Chapter 2**).

Three new insights require the news industry's urgent attention:

Firstly, women are still very much on the margins of editorial decision-making in the highest-profile news beats. For every woman who is an editor-in-chief, there are between two (in South Africa, the US and the UK) and 12 (in Indian regional news outlets) male editors-in-chief. Across the key beats of business, politics, and foreign affairs, women hold as few as 1 in 6 editorial roles in the countries researched. Occasional instances of parity (e.g. in South African political editors or in US business editors) are counterbalanced by exclusively male leadership (e.g. among Kenyan and Indian regional political editors) (**see Part 1, Chapters 1 to 6**).

Secondly, women news leaders of color suffer extraordinary marginalization in countries with multi-racial populations i.e. South Africa, the UK, and the US. This is a news industry blind spot. AKAS' research showed that women of color are often completely locked out of editorial decision-making in the highest-profile beats. In all three countries examined, their representation is significantly below their proportion in the working population. In the UK, no people of color occupy the most senior editorial decision-making positions in politics and health news beats and no women of color occupy the most senior editorial positions in foreign affairs beats. Only 3% of political and 4% of foreign affairs editors in the US are women of color. Even in South Africa, just 29% of political editors are women of color, while their proportion in the working population is 46% (**see Part 1, Chapters 2-6**). These troubling findings were backed up by our interviews, which revealed that the harrowing experiences of women of color are mostly a test of endurance, and the enormous challenges they face demand immediate action (**see Part 1, Chapter 7**). Currently news leadership teams are either unaware, reactive, pushing back, or turning a blind eye to the problem. Moreover, women of color's representation or cultural inclusion in news organizations is simply not tracked. Only 2% of the diversity reports produced by news organizations across South Africa, the UK, and the US release statistics on women of color (**see Part 5**).

Thirdly, there is a huge gap in the coverage of issues that affect women disproportionately. A meagre 0.02% of news coverage globally focuses on seven substantive gaps between men and women in pay, power, safety, authority, confidence, health, and ageism. The scarce coverage of the health gap is particularly worrying given women's parity in editorial decision-making in that beat. The existing male-favoring news-making norms, which transcend the gender of the editors, obscure women-sensitive story angles (see Part 2). To widen the storytelling lens, women's inclusion in editorial decision-making and as news contributors must improve dramatically. *"Just [having women in] many leadership positions is not the only solution. You need women's voices to be heard, and, when women are in leadership positions, for them to be in meaningful positions."* How to achieve that has been a significant focus of this study (**see Part 1, Chapters 7-9**).

Optimistically, the **report outlines 12 solutions themes that are available not only to change the status quo and improve women's representation and inclusion in news leadership, but also to create more balanced, and inclusive news coverage that engages more female and racially-diverse audiences** (**see Summary of solutions themes**). A latent revenue opportunity is waiting to be unlocked through more gender-inclusive journalism that engages more female audiences (**see Part 1, Chapter 9 and Part 2, Chapter 3**). Trailblazing organizations, nine of which are profiled in this report, including some of the world's largest news organizations such as Bloomberg, the Guardian and The New York Times, are making progress already. Drop by drop the river rises. Every one percentage point change along any element of the news value chain, starting with a gender audit, will bring news organizations a small step closer to a more equitable and profitable journalism. To learn more, read the report...

Summary of solutions themes for news organizations

A checklist of key interventions to improve women's representation and inclusion in news leadership, coverage, consumption, and impact

Solutions themes in the news value chain

Change area for gender parity along the news value chain

Social norms Socio-economic change Political change Technological change Legal/regulatory change	News sector change	News organization strategy change	News leadership and individual leader change	Newsroom and journalist level change	Representation, portrayal and storytelling news coverage	News consumption change	News coverage impact

1. Consolidate efforts at an industry level to enhance progress

2. Conduct an audit of the existing gender balance along all the elements of the news value chain. Intersect gender with race/ethnicity

3. Make the goal of pursuing gender balance in your news organization and coverage explicit in the organization's strategy

4. Improve the representation of all women in news leadership

5. Improve specifically the representation of women of color in news leadership

6. Improve the inclusion of women in news leadership decision-making

7. Improve specifically the inclusion of women of color in news leadership decision-making

8. Improve the representation and inclusion of women in newsrooms. Implement recommendations on gender diversity in the workplace for newsrooms from the "Gender Parity in News checklist" in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* report

9. Improve the representation of all women as contributors, especially experts and protagonists

10. Ensure that storytelling is relevant to women by utilizing a vertical or/ and horizontal editorial approach. Tackle the seven gender gaps when telling stories

11. Measure and improve portrayal of all women in news coverage (currently mainly reinforcing stereotypes)

12. Reframe the case for change to include the significant business opportunity that gender parity in news consumption will bring

In writing this report, 12 solutions themes emerged. Many stemmed from generous conversations with the 41 senior news leaders interviewed. Others grew from insights generated through content, quantitative, and qualitative analyses or from studying the case studies of trailblazing organizations. **This checklist is a selection of the most pivotal actions**. For a full list, please visit **Part 5** of this report.

News sector level:

1. Consolidate efforts at an industry level to enhance progress

- Set up a body that unifies all working in this area under the umbrella of the gender equity cause. Non-profits and associations working to improve women's position in news should collaborate more and compete less
- Develop industry-wide initiatives that aim to understand women audiences

News organizational level:

2. Conduct a comprehensive gender diversity audit across all elements of the news operation

- Conduct an audit of the existing gender balance and news initiatives for women/women of color along all the elements of the value chain

3. Make the gender diversity strategy explicit

- Make the goal of pursuing gender balance in your news organization and coverage explicit in the organization's strategy

News leadership level:

4. Improve the representation of all women in news leadership

- Raise awareness that male-favoring norms prevail in society and in journalism
- Be intentional about change at all levels within your news organization by setting targets and measuring representation

continuously along the whole news value chain
- Challenge the persistent soft vs. hard news gender stereotyping that keeps women out of editorial roles in high-profile beats such as politics, economics, and foreign affairs
- Develop talent retention programs, especially for mid-level managers

5. Improve specifically the representation of women of color in news leadership

- Think about representation intersectionally. Measure women's representation intersectionally to understand the role of race and ethnicity when overlaid onto gender
- Review recruitment and retention processes to accommodate diverse talent
- Establish and measure targets for representation and inclusion of women of color

6. Improve the inclusion of all women in decision-making in news leadership

- Ensure everyone understands that a more diverse team does not automatically translate into inclusive decision-making
- Consciously tone down the competitive "win-lose" journalistic values inside the newsroom to create a more empathetic culture
- Allyship is key. Encourage/launch support groups for women, with men on board
- Use employee engagement surveys to measure employees' and leaders' perceived inclusion
- Launch interventions that specifically support individual women's safety and wellbeing

7. Improve specifically the inclusion of women of color in decision-making in news leadership

- Beware of knee-jerk reactions to external trigger events which lead to superficial solutions
- Educate yourself about the taxing experiences of women of color in your news organization

- When considering a DEI initiative, bring in experts to run it, rather than allocating it to staff with lived experiences but no formalized expertise
- Do not expect women or ethnic minority groups to lead and resolve their own under-representation or exclusion. Offer to support. Take initiative
- If you are a woman of color, do not take on DEI initiatives if this is too emotionally taxing
- Measure and track the success of DEI initiatives. Establish baselines before the initiatives start

Newsroom and journalism level:

8. Improve the representation and inclusion of women in newsrooms

- Implement recommendations for gender diversity in the workplace from the "Gender Parity in News Checklist" in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* report (p. 166)

Newsgathering/news coverage:

9. Improve the representation of all women in news coverage

- Focus on circumventing the five key biases in journalism (status quo, male bias leading to gender blindness, short-term outlook, reductive journalism, organizations' unwillingness to report on themselves)
- Measure the impact of your women-centric journalism
- Make your newsroom more inclusive and accessible through outreach training
- Ensure the sustainability of interventions to diversify contributors and protagonists: keep them simple, get backing from both the top and the grassroots, and, ideally, make them voluntary

10. Improve storytelling about women of all colors

- Look for story angles that appeal to both women and men
- Use more micro angles in storytelling, including human stories to make macro stories relevant
- Increase news coverage of seven gender gaps (in power, pay, safety, authority, confidence, health, and ageism), which are wider for people of color
- Introduce inclusive storytelling and 360 degree editing to encompass the perspectives of different communities and audience groups on how a particular story affects them

11. Improve the portrayal of all women in news coverage

- Recognize that the portrayal of women of all colors in the news is an industry blind spot
- Start measuring the use of common gender or racial stereotypes in your news coverage
- Focus on expertise rather than identity when interviewing women contributors
- Conduct portrayal analyses to understand how news contributors/protagonists are portrayed

News consumption and impact:

12. Reframe the case for change to include the business opportunity of targeting women audiences

- Develop a business plan for increasing revenue from women audiences whilst still retaining men's readership
- Research and develop women-friendly news products and formats
- Track women's engagement and consumption
- Track the impacts of any new strategy (on finance, brand, individuals, influencers, and decision-makers)

Summary of key findings

Part 1: Narrowing the diversity and inclusion gap in news leadership in the highest-profile editorial beats. The problems and the solutions

Chapter 1: Gender and racial diversity of top news leaders in organizations

- 1 in 4 editors-in-chief (26%) across the six countries of focus (India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the UK, and the US) are women. This is marginally lower than the global average more than a decade ago. There has been divergence across countries.

- For every woman who is an editor-in-chief, there are between two (in South Africa, the US and the UK) and 12 (in Indian regional news outlets) male editors-in-chief. The proportion of women editors-in-chief is highest in South Africa and the UK (37%) and lowest in India (11% in national and 8% in regional). In the US, Nigeria, and Kenya, the proportions are 35%, 18%, and 19% respectively.

- Only 2% (1) of the 45 researched diversity reports of news organizations across South Africa, the UK, and the US report on women of color. Yet the introduction of an intersectional lens between gender and race in these countries has revealed the extraordinary extent of women of color's invisibility at a societal, news industry, and news organizational level. Their absence or severe underrepresentation in key editorial roles, and the cultural exclusion, gaslighting, burnout, and long-term suffering they experience demand urgent reform.

Chapter 2: Gender and racial diversity of top editors across high-profile beats (politics, business, foreign affairs, and health)

- Women have achieved gender parity among the most senior editors in health beats across five of the six countries, but in business and politics beats only 1 in 3 and 1 in 4 are women. 1 in 3 foreign affairs editors in the UK and the US are women. This discrepancy reconfirms the longstanding gender segregation of editorial jobs, assigning "soft" beats to women and "hard" beats, from which editor-in-chief roles are recruited, to men.

- In the UK, no women of color occupy the most senior editorial decision-making positions in the key high-profile news beats of politics, foreign affairs, and health. Women of color are severely marginalized in the US compared to their proportion in the working population: 3%, 4%, 6%, and 9% of the political, foreign, health, and economics/business editors in the US are women of color, which is 7, 5, 4, and 2 times fewer than their proportion in the working population. In South Africa, if the representation of women of color in editorial roles matched their proportion in the working population, the number of women of color would be 2 times higher in economics/business editor roles, 2.2 times higher in political editor roles and 1.2 times higher in health editors roles.

Chapter 3: Gender and racial diversity of top editors in politics

- In South African news outlets, almost half of political editors are women. However, in

Kenyan outlets and in Indian regional news, the political editors are exclusively men. Women constitute 1 in 6 political editors in Nigeria (16%), 1 in 5 in the UK (20%), 1 in 3 in the US (31%), and 1 in 3 in Indian national dailies (34%).

- None of the top editorial roles in politics in the UK is held by a person of color. In the US, people of color hold 17% of these roles, which represents approximately a third of their proportion in the working population, as well as being lower than their proportion in the news workforce (22%). In South Africa, 60% of the political editors are people of color vs. 93% of the working population.

Chapter 4: Gender and racial diversity of top editors in health

- In five of our six countries, the majority of editors in health beats in national news media, typically seen as a lower-profile beat, are women. This is in line with the gender stereotyping of news desk assignments which has historically placed health among lower profile, "softer" news topics. In Nigeria, women are marginally underrepresented as health editors (45%), while in Indian regional news they are severely marginalized (8%). This is in stark contrast with Indian nationals where 78% of the health editors are women, followed by 71% in the US (national), 67% in Kenya, 59% in the UK (national & nations), and 51% in South Africa.

Chapter 5: Gender and racial diversity of top editors in economics/business beats

- A majority of economics/business editors in the US (60%) and half in South Africa are women, which makes them positive outliers compared to the other researched countries.

- The lowest proportion of women economics/business editors was found in Indian regional (4%) and national (23%) news outlets. Women constitute less than a third of economics/business editors in Kenya (31%) and the UK (30%), and approximately a quarter in Nigeria.

- Once again, people of color are significantly underrepresented in the top economics/business editor jobs. If the representation of people of color in these positions matched their proportion in the working population in the US, South Africa, and the UK, the number of people of color in these roles would be 3 times, 2.2 times and 1.2 times higher.

Chapter 6: Gender and racial diversity of top editors in foreign affairs desks

- Around 1 in 3 foreign editors in the US national media (31%) and in the UK national & nations (34%) are women (Note: research was not conducted in the remaining four countries for this beat). Women are underrepresented in the most senior foreign affairs editorial roles both in the UK and the US. People of color are severely marginalized in foreign affairs roles in the UK and US. If their representation matched their proportion in the working population, the number of people of color in these roles would be respectively 4 and 3.5 times higher.

Chapter 7: Beyond representation: the barriers that prevent women — including women of color — from being fully included in decision-making in news

- Over 80% of the interviewed news editors (21 of the 25 who were asked the question) believe that newsrooms and news cultures are still dominated by men.

- Lower representation and persistent gender stereotyping in news desk assignments are perceived as the two biggest barriers to women's inclusion in news leadership. Other barriers include bearing the brunt of the work-life imbalance in journalism, being on the outside of an all-boys club that aids career progression in journalism, harassment while on the job, and women being seen as ineffective in making their own case for change.

The challenges that women of color face in news leadership and newsrooms

- Systematic sidelining and race-based exclusion are the most frequently mentioned taxing experiences that women of color news leaders share. Coupled with high levels of burnout due to being everyone's support pillar, this leads to higher-than-average attrition among women of color. *"I don't have the energy anymore to just keep going, it feels like bashing my head against the brick wall."* They often experience their career stalling due to lack of support and growth opportunities.

- *"Inclusion is a real blind spot."* The interviewed women of color news leaders feel disproportionately burnt out, isolated, and/or dismissed. They operate in a triply stressful environment: dealing with a situation that is personally taxing, where they are expected to resolve their own underrepresentation, at the risk of damaging their already slow-progressing careers.

- Top leadership's buy-in to the problem of the lack of racial diversity/cultural inclusion is often reactive rather than truly driven by an appetite for change. Fear of falling short often prevents white leaders from fully engaging with the issue of racial injustice in newsrooms and news leadership. They recoil amid the inevitable pain. Two years on from George Floyd's death, there has been some backlash among leaders against news organizations' soul-searching and interventions aimed at improving representation or inclusion of people of color in news.

- Impossible expectations are placed on ethnic minorities who have less power to resolve the problem of their own underrepresentation and/or cultural exclusion from news leadership. Interventions aimed at improving the representation or inclusion of racially diverse staff are rarely measured, which limits their success.

Chapter 8: Why diversity does not guarantee inclusion: the role of culture

- Five key gender and racial biases stand in the way of women/women of color's inclusion and representation in news leadership: prove-it-again, tightrope, tug-of-war, racial stereotyping, and maternal wall biases.

- Bias can be interrupted by small, systematic, incremental, measurable changes to work processes and with individual training. It is critical to tackle systemic and organizational bias, not just individual bias (for more ideas see Summary of solutions themes).

Chapter 9: Solutions for how to close the diversity and inclusion gap in news leadership in high-profile beats

- Changing the newsroom culture to be more inclusive; implementing gender equality policies; and measuring progress are perceived to be among the more successful tools in driving higher representation and inclusion in news organizations (see Summary of solutions themes).

- The key drivers for all women's inclusion in news leadership are: retaining talent, being intentional about

change and introducing targets, improving women's representation in top-tier management, allyship, and buy-in from both senior leadership and grassroots.

- The important role of social norms, the need to tackle systemic bias, and the potential positive impact of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging experts are blind spots for news leaders.

- The important practical solutions outlined in this chapter have been presented in the Summary of solutions themes section.

Trailblazers in the global south and north are advancing women's representation and inclusion in news leadership

- Among the innovative organizations that stand out for their efforts on representation and inclusion are The New York Times, Mint in India, Bloomberg, and African Women in Media. The New York Times has shared the pillars of the inclusive culture that the organization is building (p. 102); Mint shared how they have managed to nurture an above-average number of women in their leadership team (p. 107); Bloomberg has offered a window on their holistic work and successes in improving gender representation in content (p. 111); while African Women in Media have reflected on their work in supporting women journalists in Africa and on consolidating efforts among associations for improved success (p. 116).

Part 2: How to include the missing perspectives of women in news coverage: representation, storytelling, and portrayal. The problems and the solutions

Chapter 1: The existing but underexplored gender gaps in news coverage

- The news fails to cover sufficiently/misses out altogether the gaps in power (p. 127), pay (p. 130), safety (p. 135), authority (p. 140), confidence (p. 145), health (p. 150), and ageism (p. 156), whereby male-favoring biases in all societies and most organizations provide men with an unfair head start over women that frequently deepened during the pandemic. Under 0.02% of the global news coverage between 2017 and April 2022 featured any of these gender gap terms, with 94% of this coverage focusing on the pay gap. This report provides multiple angles for covering these gaps in the news which will only narrow if tackled at systemic, organizational, and individual levels.

- Various research findings converge around the worrying finding that news organizations are turning a blind eye when it comes to the safety of women journalists, a problem that demands urgent attention.

Chapter 2: The existing systemic, organizational, and individual biases in news coverage

- Albeit from a low base, the proportion of women news experts has grown from 19% to 24% in the last five years globally. Interestingly, 4 in 10 gender initiatives in news have been dedicated to improving women's visibility as experts (see Part 3). Databases and lists may be making a difference.

- The glass ceiling for women's voices in news coverage has been hovering between 15% and 30% in recent decades. On top of the societal structural barriers that women face, the interviews conducted with news editors and experts revealed that there are five key news coverage biases at play which have held up progress: the status quo bias and male biases which collude to produce gender blindness in news coverage; the short-term outlook of journalists; reductive journalism; and organizations' unwillingness to report on themselves.

- Evidence suggests that the gender-stereotypical assignment of editorial roles in beats may be suppressing women's consumption of high-profile news genres which tend to be edited by men.

The problem with news storytelling: what stories are being missed?

- Lack of awareness of gender angles and the low perceived importance of gender stories are at the heart of the missing gender equity/equality storytelling in news.

- The micro (human) stories within big political, economic, or health stories are often missed out.

- The perspectives of people of color are missing from political news; higher weighting is given to news relevant to white people, evidenced in the "missing white woman syndrome".

Women's portrayal in the news is a blind spot for the news industry globally

- In the last two decades, the news industry has failed to shift the stereotypes which hold women captive in society, largely due to news organizations not tracking women's portrayal in coverage in the same way as some track their representation. Consequently, news organizations are more likely to reinforce gender (and racial) stereotypes than to challenge them, even when women have reached representational parity in the news (see the curious case of Bulgarian news p. 173).

Chapter 3: Solutions on how to improve women's representation and portrayal in news coverage and their centrality in storytelling. Drivers of positive change and recommended interventions

- The key perceived drivers for improving women's representation and portrayal in news coverage at organizational level involve tackling the problem in a systematic way by setting and tracking targets. At an individual level, news editors see raising awareness of the issue as a key driver to the solutions and at an industry level it is sharing best practice. The important practical solutions identified in this report have been shared in the Summary of solutions themes section.

Trailblazers are reshaping news coverage of gender issues in the global south and north

- Four status quo-disruptive organizations are featured in this report: Khabar Lahariya – the first all-women newsroom in India (p. 190), featured in the Oscar-nominated documentary Writing with Fire; the Nation Media Group which launched the first Gender Desk in Kenya and in Africa (p. 194); The Fuller Project, a non-profit global newsroom dedicated to producing impact-driven journalism reporting on issues that affect women (p. 198); and the Guardian, which recently launched *Her Stage* newsletter targeted at new audiences, particularly women (p. 202). The success of these organizations in producing more gender-balanced and inclusive journalism is underpinned by collaboration, innovation, alignment from the top and at grass-roots level, and passion for elevating the voices of marginalized groups.

Part 3: Progress – Existing initiatives aiming to reduce gender inequality in news

- For this project AKAS analyzed 168 gender-focused initiatives in news from 118 news, non-profit, international, and governmental organizations operating in North America, Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, or globally. The analysis uncovered that only 10% (16) target systemic change while 68% (115 initiatives) target change at an individual journalist/ leader level. Only an eighth of all initiatives (13%) focus on the much-needed inclusion of women/ethnic minorities in news and only 7% articulate a culture change element within them.

- To make progress there is a need for more news initiatives to target change at both the societal and news organizational levels, focusing on inclusive cultures that ensure equitable decision-making and increase a sense of belonging. More initiatives are needed that aim to understand women audiences as news consumers and revenue generators. In an industry notorious for its

competitiveness, there is a sector-wide need for collaborative initiatives and initiatives that focus on de-stereotyping women's portrayal in news.

Part 4: Solutions for reframing the need for change and sizing the business opportunity that women represent for the news industry

- According to the interviewed editorial leaders, the narrative most likely to persuade news leaders to strive for gender and racial equity in newsrooms, news leadership, and coverage, contains three key elements: the need for journalism organizations to fulfil their duty to give equitable voice to women/minority groups, and the need to be relevant to all audiences, which in turn will lead to news organizations increasing their revenues and improving their volatile business models. The journalistic duty argument speaks louder to news leaders from the global south, while the audience relevance argument speaks louder to news leaders from the global north. The business case for change speaks to most.

Business case forecast: what would happen if women were as likely as men to consume news?

- If women consumed newspapers online and in print on a par with men (closing the addressable gender consumption gap of 11-12%) as a result of news organizations taking actions along the news value chain, the full parity scenario in the business case points to cumulative business revenues of $43 billion over the next five years and $83 billion over the next 10 years. However, achieving gender parity in news consumption is likely to be a more gradual endeavor. So if news organizations were to close the gender consumption gap by one percentage point each year over the next decade, the additional cumulative revenues would be $11bn by 2027 and $38 billion by 2032.

- Amedia – the largest publisher of local news in Norway – has offered their unique analysis (the only one among the 168 initiatives) of the relationship between news production, women's share of voice and female audiences (p. 241). Their analysis reveals a positive relationship between the share of female authors and the share of female protagonists; the share of female protagonists and the share of female readership; and the share of female readership and the share of female subscribers.

Acknowledgements

Introduction: author's reflections

If you are part of the news media, rest assured that this report does not aim to get you on the back foot. Rather it is intended to help you put one foot in front of the other by providing stepping-stones towards progress. It contains tested innovative ideas, case studies of trailblazers in news, and evidence of the positive effects of increasing women's representation and inclusion in news leadership – additional revenue, more engaged audiences, a happier workforce, and greater impact in a tumultuous world in sore need of high-quality journalism. It distils the wisdom of news leaders and sources into 12 implementable solutions themes.

As I was interviewing dozens of news leaders from around the world, absorbing their views on why women/women of color frequently do not feel included in decision-making even when they form part of news leadership teams, or why women's representation in news coverage has flatlined in the last two decades and, importantly, what to do about these challenges, my heart gradually swelled with compassion. **I realized much more viscerally something I had previously known intellectually - how incredibly taxing it is to be a journalist today**. Over the last couple of decades, journalists have faced a plethora of challenges: transitioning from analogue/print to digital formats while competition proliferated; being "*bashed on the head*" (to borrow a phrase from an interviewed news leader) about their "*upended business model*"; fighting misinformation daily while striving to report the truth; enduring threats, harassment, and abuse on- and offline at scale, even to the point of death; and, more recently, being warned of their irrelevance to audiences due to leadership/newsroom homogeneity and the gender and racial discrimination latent in newsrooms. The strategic challenges for news leaders have been enormous, and lived out under grinding time and psychological pressures born out of relentless news cycles dominated in recent years by seismic stories — a global pandemic, a war threatening nuclear spill-over, an energy price shock, global economic uncertainty, and a looming climate crisis. I am sure we can all agree that this is a lot for any individual, organization, or industry to take on. Add to this the fear of being accused of gender or racial bias and we are looking at change at a snail's pace.

A sequel report to *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* and *in COVID-19 News*, this report maintains the tradition of evidence-led and, wherever possible, triangulated insights and shared solutions. But in assessing the problem/solutions to women's underrepresentation and cultural exclusion in news leadership, and underrepresentation and skewed portrayal in news coverage, we at **AKAS now felt it imperative to broaden our lens of enquiry by overlaying race onto gender where countries had multi-racial populations (South Africa, the UK, and the US)**. The quantitative and qualitative methods we used to draw conclusions included a content analysis of over 900 million online news stories; a market

analysis of 1,166 editorial roles across the six countries; analysis of 168 news initiatives worldwide aiming to improve gender equality in news; a literature review of over 200 sources exploring the business value of greater equity in organizations; a revenue forecast of the business opportunity that women audiences hold for news; and hundreds of surveys, indices, books, and articles. This time round, the methodology also included in-depth interviews with 41 editors-in-chief, senior editors or news experts. Without them, this report would contain a fraction of the multitude of perspectives and solutions it offers. In the context of the huge challenges that journalists face today, I feel deep gratitude for the time that each senior leader and news expert chose to spare for this project. The report is infused with numerous quotes from them – often raw and shared in full – offering a platform for the authentic voices of news makers around the globe. To protect the identities of interviewees who opened up about their struggles and at times even anguish, we have not identified the countries where the quoted voices came from. The methodology section details the positions held by interviewees, grouped into clusters.

The limitations of a white writer exploring the issues of women of color

The data- and perspective-gathering and writing phases of this project were not without their challenges. One personal limitation I experienced originated from my position as a white professional woman, whose expertise is geared more towards gender than race, writing about the harrowing experiences of women of color. I reconciled this moral challenge encapsulated in the *white savior* syndrome by deciding to be merely a conduit for the quantitative and qualitative truths uncovered in the course of the project. In this I was supported by the multi-ethnic and multi-racial AKAS team. I remained cognizant of my inability to fully understand the experiences

of women of color. I also tapped into my own experiences in the UK of being "othered", as a first-generation immigrant from Bulgaria who did not graduate from Oxbridge or an Ivy League university. The deeper I immersed myself in the intersecting problems of the racial and gender injustice that women of color face in news, the more evident the importance of being a white ally became (see Part 1, Chapter 7). Not focusing on other critical characteristics that lead to inequity in newsrooms, such as class/caste, affluence, education, sexuality, religion, location, and disability, emerged as another limitation of the report, resulting from the finite time and resources available.

"The media unfortunately doesn't report on itself": the double standards in journalism

Perhaps the most surprising limitation that I stumbled upon was the discrepancy between the high standards of transparency and accountability that news organizations demand of the organizations and individuals they investigate in their reporting vs. the lower transparency and accountability standards that some apply to themselves. A significant minority of the news leaders I approached for the research underwent a rigorous approval process with their external communications departments before their perspectives appeared on the pages of this report. In one case I communicated exclusively through the communications team, who acted as the message gatekeepers. This noticeable double standard has been referenced by Meredith Clark, who led the News Leaders Association's diversity survey in the US in recent years before resigning in 2022, disillusioned by the pitifully low participation rates of news organizations in the industry diversity survey.[2] It transpired that "*historic protests*" and an industry-wide debate about race and representation did not boost response rates. "*It feels like supreme hypocrisy on the part of the journalism industry.*

2.   Scire, 2022

Transparency and doing the digging and the reporting — all of that is so germane to what we understand journalism to be. And we are absolutely unwilling to do it among ourselves", Clarke concluded.

In some countries this challenge manifested in difficulty in convincing news leaders – particularly men – to spare time to speak with me. This apprehensiveness about engaging perhaps points to a strong underlying fear within the news industry of being exposed, as well as to the low priority that these issues carry for some. One male news leader from the global south who did generously agree to be interviewed, hypothesized on why it was so difficult to recruit male interviewees from his country, surmising:

"Maybe the worry here is that they don't want to come out like they're not doing enough about gender, or that they're a stumbling block - or basically they just don't want to be quoted. Maybe they feel that one day it may come back to haunt them."

The same editor highlighted news media's reluctance to report on itself and the accountability issue that this creates.

"Who is holding us accountable? Is it ourselves, is it our external audience, is it news organizations outside, is it news organizations from within? ... The problem with journalists is that they don't report themselves. The media industry will also not report itself."

Since 2020, global progress on gender equality in society has been under downward pressure. The share of women's quoted voice in news and the gender gap in society in the six countries have moved in the same direction, pointing to the close relationship between society and news

The Missing Perspectives of Women in News was published in 2020. One of the key findings which was amplified by numerous news media outlets at the time and is still quoted today[3] was the realization that news globally was largely a man's affair: it was produced by more men, featured more men, and was consumed by more men. Moreover, the news industry in the countries of interest in our study had not achieved substantive progress in the previous decade, primarily due to the prevalent but unchallenged or unnoticed male-favoring social norms. We also found that news media overlaid additional male bias onto the existing social bias, especially in high-profile beats such as politics and economics. Another big study comparing gender equality in news in 123 countries across the globe, published the same year, concluded that gender equality in news media was lagging behind gender equality achieved globally.[4] Moreover, AKAS analysis of GDELT revealed that global news coverage on gender equality issues declined from 0.56% before the pandemic outbreak to 0.44% since.

The AKAS team and I asked ourselves what had changed globally and in our six countries at a societal level since 2020. We found that **over the last two years, gender equality in coverage has experienced downward pressure globally and in three of our countries of interest**. Additionally, in 2022 men are almost twice as likely as women to occupy leadership roles in media and communications (63% vs. 37%).[5] According to the latest World Economic Forum

3. Jamiu, 2022
4. Comparing Gender and Media Equality Across the Globe in Djerf-Pierre & Edstrom, 2020
5. Linkedin Economic Graph in World Economic Forum Gender Index 2022 report in Djerf-Pierre & Edstrom, 2020
6. The Gender Gap Index is comprised of 4 sub-indices: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment

Gender Gap Index[6], the gender inequality gap between men and women globally widened marginally between 2021 and 2022 across the 145 measured countries. Nevertheless, three of our countries of focus have narrowed their Gender Gap Index in the last two years i.e. they have improved in terms of gender equality. Since 2020, Kenya has jumped significantly from 109th to 57th in the rankings, the US has climbed from 53rd to 27th, while Nigeria has crept up from 128th to 123rd. India, South Africa, and the UK have, however, dropped down these rankings. The fall has been steepest in India, which now ranks 135th (vs. 112th in 2020), followed by South Africa (slipping from 17th to 20th), and the UK (falling marginally from 21st to 22nd place). In terms of women's share of voice in online news, the AKAS proxy analysis presented later (see Figure 1, page 35) suggests that since 2019, the ratio between men's and women's share of voice may have improved slightly in the US, Kenya, and South Africa, remained stable in Nigeria, but worsened slightly in the UK and India, mirroring the changes in the Gender Gap Index.

A number of **events of representational and symbolic significance for women** have taken place in the last two years, among them the election of the US' first female Black and Asian Vice President, the death of the trailblazing US Supreme Court associate justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and the appointments of the first Black woman to the position of Director-General of the World Trade Organization, the first indigenous person to a cabinet position in the US, the third female Prime Minister in the UK (albeit for a brief moment), the first Black woman to the US Supreme Court, and women leaders in Northern Ireland and Scotland winning elections in their nations. Additionally, more women vied for political roles in the latest election in Kenya, and marginally more got elected than in 2017. The Tokyo Olympics became the most gender-equal games in history. An all-women Air India

pilot crew flew across the world for the first time. A documentary about the only and successful all-women's newswire in India - Khabar Lahariya - was nominated for an Oscar (see Part 2). The UN Assembly adopted a resolution condemning all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. A number of legislative changes took place across the board, including South Africa's President Ramaphosa introducing three bills to parliament designed to bring justice to the victims of gender-based violence, Scotland eliminating the tampon tax, the US administration establishing a Gender Policy Council, and India bringing a landmark agreement to protect garment workers from violence, following the 2021 murder of Dalit woman Gyasri Kathiravel.

Other **events shone a light on the deep-seated racial and gender injustice within different global contexts:** the murder of George Floyd in the US, which reignited a global anti-racist Black Lives Matter movement; a woman being tied to a tree and thrashed by her husband for seven hours in India; eight women being gang-raped in West Village, Krugersdorp in South Africa; British cricket player Azeem Rafiq revealing that systematic racist experiences had brought him to the brink of suicide; a racist campaign against footballers of color being

exposed in the UK; the Nigerian Parliament rejecting five gender equality bills in March this year; the US Supreme Court overturning women's constitutional right to abortion in the US and, most recently, in her brief tenure as UK Prime Minister, Liz Truss dropping the previously existing ministerial role dedicated to women, and her male successor Rishi Sunak marginalizing women in the cabinet more than any other recent Prime Minister, establishing a downward trend for women cabinet ministers from a peak of 36% in 2006-07 to the current 23%.

Politics, business, and foreign affairs beats are missing women editors. Women of color are often completely locked out of the editorial decision-making

To understand the extent of the representational, inclusion, and portrayal issues in news leadership and news coverage, we explored the gender and racial balance in news through the lenses of organizational resources (i.e. representation and inclusion), newsgathering (representation of contributors and protagonists) and news outputs (what stories are told and how women are portrayed). We focused on quantifying women's and women of color's representation in top editorial jobs and in editorial roles in the highest-profile beats: i.e. politics, business/economics, foreign affairs, and (since the pandemic) health. The interviews were instrumental in understanding how included women felt in decision-making. We defined *inclusion* as leaders' perception of how included women/women of color felt in decision-making compared to their peers. We did not extend this definition to *belonging* i.e. how safe or how much they felt they belonged within the organization[7], although often interviewees naturally veered towards this dimension too.

The report yielded dispiriting findings around women's persistent marginalization at the top of the organizations and in high-profile

beats. Among the most dispiriting were those exposing the extent to which women of color are locked out of decision-making. **Women constitute 1 in 4 editors-in-chief across the six countries, marginally lower than the global average more than a decade ago** (see Part 1, Chapter 1). Progress has diverged across the six countries, the proportion of women editors-in-chief being highest in South Africa and the UK and lowest in India. 1 in 6 political editors in Nigeria is a woman, 1 in 5 in the UK, 1 in 3 in the US and in Indian national dailies, although there were no women political editors found in the 23 Indian regional publications analyzed or in Kenya (see Part 1, Chapter 3). We also found that news produced by a male-dominated group of editors is of limited relevance to other groups. Worryingly, women are turning off politics and political news. Women editors across the board are best represented in health beats and in business/economics beats in the US and South Africa, where there is gender parity or women exceed men. The lowest proportion of women economics/business editors was found in Nigeria and in Indian national and regional news media (see Part 1, Chapter 5).

Women of color are completely locked out of editorial roles in the highest-profile news in the UK, shockingly holding no editorships in politics, health, and foreign affairs beats (see Part 1, Chapters 3, 4, and 6). This demographic is also severely marginalized in the US and marginalized in South Africa.

Women who do sit at the decision-making table frequently find their voices faint, dismissed, or drowned out. The gendered approach to assigning beats in newsrooms remains in place and is among the biggest obstacles to women's inclusion in decision-making at the most senior level. The power and authority gaps that exist between men and women, in favor of men, feed into the inclusion barrier, particularly acutely for women of color. This asymmetry in society that deems certain traits (e.g. being assertive or self-promoting) positive in men but negative in women,

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7. Jacob et al., 2020

makes women's inclusion in news leadership that much more challenging, a point made persuasively by prominent UK journalist Mary Ann Sieghart, whom I interviewed for this project, in her comprehensive study, *The Authority Gap*.

The taxing experiences of women of color in news is not on anyone's strategic or operational radar. It is critical to explore inclusion intersectionally

Approaching this work with compassion, I found the interviews with women news leaders affected by racial injustice the hardest to process. Many had endured high levels of pain, sometimes for more than a decade. Certain quotes lodged in my memory.

> *"It has been a very lonely process, in a way that the gender work wasn't, because there were lots of women around, and you could sort of feel that you were doing it as a group, you didn't feel so exposed"; "There's so much inherent, implicit and explicit bias against people of color in this business, it never ends."; "People don't have that resilience to keep fighting discrimination within news and media and even I've run out of steam."*

These words from women I interviewed reverberate in my mind. **The challenges these women of color face are more excruciating because the racial discrimination comes on top of a battery of gender-related challenges**. These women are being disproportionately sidelined, their career growth frequently hitting a barrier. They often face the impossibly onerous expectation that they should resolve the problem of their own underrepresentation and exclusion from newsrooms and leadership. Meanwhile fearful leadership teams are often unwilling to truly engage with the problem. Their responses are commonly knee-jerk reactions in the form of untracked and under-resourced interventions, as happened following the murder of George Floyd. Two years on, these so-called *bake sale syndrome*[8] activities have typically lost momentum or, worse, been quietly phased out due to leadership backlash (see Part 1, Chapter 7).

In the last two years, my own thinking has evolved in different areas, including in the importance of applying a racial/ethnic lens to gender diversity and inclusion. I did not appreciate quite how important it is to measure intersectionality in news, until I discovered how absent from strategic discourse the dire situation of women journalists of color is in South Africa, the UK, and the US (see Parts 1, 2 and 5). I have already written two reports about the missing perspectives of women in news and yet, at no point did I realize the vastness of the discrepancy between the best and the worst represented sub-groups of women in news. Nor is the news industry any better. **Out of 45 news organizations AKAS analyzed across the UK, the US, and South Africa, only one (in the US) had reported on gender and ethnicity representation intersectionally in their diversity report**.

In her book *So You Want to Talk about Race*[9], Ijeoma Oluo alerts us masterfully to the seemingly obvious but frequently neglected truth that women are not a homogenous group. When seeking to improve the representation of women in society or in news, we often default to advancing the condition of the dominant sub-groups, such as (white) educated middle-class women, rather than those from the most underprivileged backgrounds (for example Black-African mothers in the UK/US or Dalit women in rural India).

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8.   A sudden and inconsequential flurry of activity born out of a senior leader's spur of the moment reaction, identified in Belonging, Jacob et al., 2020
9.   Oluo, 2019

Underexplored gender gaps and important stories are missed in news coverage

Besides the societal and organizational barriers that impede the improvement of women's representation and portrayal in news coverage (see Part 2, Chapter 2), **five other key barriers affect the news industry**. The combination of the status quo bias[10] and gender blindness[11] in journalism results in missed stories or women being under-featured in news coverage. Another three barriers are also in play: the short-term outlook forced by the relentless news cycle, reductive journalism which tends to look to simplify angles as a way of delivering news stories amid a grueling filing schedule, and news organizations' unwillingness to report on themselves.

Micro stories within the big political, economic, and health stories – focusing on human angles – are often missed out of news coverage. Evidence reveals that news relevant to white people in the global north is given undue weight in coverage while the perspectives of people of color are often missed out in political news (see Part 2, Chapter 2). News leaders diverge on the best way to increase news coverage containing gender angles, some favoring a dedicated beat for women's issues, others preferring to incorporate news angles focusing on women across beats. Given the current woefully small coverage of women's and gender angles, we have concluded that there is plenty of room for both horizontal and vertical approaches. All **seven** of the **underexplored gender gaps in news coverage** which AKAS uncovered during research – gaps in power, pay, safety, authority, confidence, health, and ageism, as explored in Part 2, Chapter 1 – would benefit from both vertical and horizontal treatment. The case studies featured in Part 2 also highlight the success of both editorial approaches.

Women's portrayal: the blind spot in news coverage

Women's portrayal in news has been stereotypical and riddled with prejudice for years. Since it is not being measured by news providers systematically, if at all, the path to change is obscure. While some progress has been made globally in terms of women's representation as experts in the news (potentially linked to the development of initiatives and databases of women contributors), the portrayal of women protagonists has been stuck or even regressed in the last two decades, with women mainly portrayed in the stereotypical roles of caregivers, men's sidekicks, victims, and sexual objects (see Part 2, Chapter 3).

Learning to appreciate small positive change is important. Aim to change behaviors, not eradicate biases

Perhaps surprisingly, if I were to write a specific recommendation aimed at setting representation targets for women in news leadership today, as we did in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News*, **I would not recommend a blanket gender parity target across all countries in the global north and south**. Through the dozens of interviews I conducted, I came to appreciate the importance of the cultural and structural baseline in each country and the danger of overlaying Western cultural expectations onto non-Western societies. For example, the AKAS team discovered that many news providers in the global south did not operate within editorial news beats, which prompted the question of whether the very premise of a beat was a Western construct.

Whilst apt from a human rights perspective, a target to achieve gender parity might be perceived in some cultures as so steep as to be off-putting altogether, triggering what

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10. Unconscious attachment to the way things are at the expense of making them better
11. Failure to recognize that the roles and responsibilities of women/girls and men/boys are ascribed according to their gender rather than through merit

behavioral scientists term an *ostrich effect*.[12] Somewhat linked to this learning is another shift in my thinking: learning to appreciate incremental progress (see Part 1, Chapter 8). The shift in social and cultural behavioral or attitudinal norms that resides at the heart of progress towards gender/racial equity in news is difficult to achieve because often our behaviors are impacted by biases which remain unconscious. Joan C. Williams, a leading expert in addressing structural inequalities in organizations, argues that small steps can lead to big changes, as long as they are measured and applied systematically. The nine case studies presented in this report, featuring news organizations who are changing the face of equitable journalism, are a testament to that insight. My thinking around gender and racial sensitivity training also became more nuanced in the last year. While raising awareness and self-awareness of existing biases within news leadership and newsrooms remains vitally important, research into successful interventions suggests that the most effective approach entails a focus on changing behaviors rather than eradicating biases. I was surprised by how sensitive some news editors became at the very mention of the word bias. One quote stuck in my mind.

> ❝ *"I don't think it's a good idea for organizations to try and unpack the biases of individuals, I think that can be incredibly divisive… Because it's assuming that a person is biased, and [then] the corner is up."* ❞

Many behavioral science experts argue that while changing behaviors is possible and works, eradicating biases is not. Thus, their advice is that training should conclude with commitments from everyone of what they will do differently going forward.

Women and men should be inside the tent together. Equitable journalism can only be achieved if they join together into a functional whole

Finally, a pivotal area where my thinking has evolved in the last two years is the importance of approaching the topic of gender and racial inequality in news with compassion rather than judgement (the position adopted by many advocacy organizations and parts of the news industry itself today). "*The world full of empowered women isn't one where men are marginalized. It's a world where everyone thrives*" says Indian author and gender expert, Purnima Mane. While it is naturally and rightly easier to feel compassion for women and women of color who are severely underrepresented along the whole news value chain, it is harder to feel compassion for men or white men who are in the driving seat in news organizations.

However, it is important to do so if sustainable and meaningful change is to happen. **Compassion does not mean condoning the industry's underrepresentation, exclusion, or reinforcement of prejudice when portraying women in news, but understanding the systemic root causes behind inequity; and how that inequity affects men adversely too**. This in turn will enhance the potential for engaging men decision-makers who can accelerate positive change. After all, Kathrine Switzer, the US's first female marathon runner, was only able to break the rules and complete the marathon because a group of supportive men surrounded her until the finish line, preventing her disqualification.

A male editor-in-chief from the global south explained how excluding men in power can make attempts to improve gender equity end up being perceived as futile.

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12. The ostrich effect is a cognitive bias manifested in the tendency to avoid dangerous or negative information by simply closing oneself off from this information.

> " *"In [this country] the interesting thing is that most of these workshops are organized by female pressure groups, and the audience, most times, are largely female. And I think that's counterproductive, because then you are not really addressing the decision-makers... you're not bringing the men in, into a space where your critical voices can tell them the truth and push them towards changing the status quo."*

This perception about gender-exclusive echo chambers from the global south has been echoed in recent research from the US which points to notably higher interest and engagement in diversity and inclusion initiatives among ethnic minority groups, who have less power to change the status quo: Black (59%), Asian (52%) and Hispanic (57%) journalists proved more likely than their white colleagues (44%) to discuss issues of diversity.[13]

Highly competitive news culture crowds out the compassion that underpins collaboration. Collaboration lies at the heart of trailblazing news initiatives

Competition (which forces focus on oneself) is antipathetic to compassion (which requires focus on others). Unfortunately, the interviews I conducted and ample other sources attest to high levels of competition still being woven into the core of newsroom cultures across the global north and south. Many news editors alluded to the highly competitive culture still prevalent in journalism. One called it "*a leftover from the 80s and 90s cut-throat-get-on-with-it*

culture" which is more challenging for women journalists because they "*can definitely be more questioning of themselves, maybe, less bullish about their opinions*". Another senior leader called it a "*one dimensional win-or-lose culture*" that hurts the wellbeing and mental health of all journalists irrespective of gender. In a recent tweet, the British news broadcaster Jon Sopel even likened the news culture of his early career to *The Hunger Games*.[14] **By contrast, the nine case studies presented in this report (see Parts 1, 2 and 4), and the interviews with senior editors reveal an implicit realization that increased collaboration between journalists and leaders from diverse backgrounds, cultures, countries, and organizations leads to more inclusive storytelling and higher audience engagement among more diverse audiences**. The case studies feature Bloomberg's success in achieving holistic impact on different levels, the Guardian's work in coalescing new and established voices, Khabar Lahariya's egalitarian, collaborative and compassionate journalism, The New York Times' strategic program to redefine culture, Mint's journey to a much higher than average representation of women in news leadership in business news, African Women in Media's quest to consolidate efforts among associations to enhance progress, Nation Media Group's pioneering gender desk work in partnership with The Fuller Project (TFP) and TFP's impact-driven journalism.

Unfortunately, trailblazers aside, what we also uncovered through the interviews and analysis of 168 existing initiatives to improve gender equality in news is that there is a deficit of collaboration in journalism at an industry, organizational or individual level (see Part 3). This lack of collaboration results from the highly competitive ethos in journalism which impedes the industry's and organizations' capacity to tackle equity and inclusion issues at a structural level.

13. Pew Research Center, 2022
14. Tweet from 11th September 2022

The dormant revenue waiting to be captured: closing the addressable gender consumption gap by one percentage point every year over the next decade would generate additional cumulative revenues of $11 billion by 2027 and $38 billion by 2032

> " *One of the things that I have found really important is not to make this [diversity and equity] just an emotional argument about having a responsibility to change society. When you start talking about business and survival - what this means for our coverage, what this means for our business - that's what appeals to senior news leaders,"*

reflected a female news leader from the global north. The most frequently used argument for gender parity in news in the last few decades has been that it is women's human right to feature in news proportionately to their representation in the population. And yes, this argument is unequivocally fair. But it has not sufficiently shifted the views of the decision-makers who hold the key to gender balance in news. **Most news leaders cited this problem and the opportunity to shift the narrative towards the business benefits of being more gender (and ethnically) balanced**. In response, Richard Addy and the AKAS team conducted a ground-breaking business case investigation into the value that gender parity in news consumption (currently tilted towards men) would generate (see Part 4, Chapter 2).

He found that over the next decade, under a conservative scenario whereby the addressable gender consumption gap of between 11-12 percentage points was closed by one percentage point a year, **the global newspaper industry could generate additional cumulative revenues of $11 billion by 2027 and $38 billion by 2032**. To achieve this however, it is important that more women are plugged in along the whole news value chain (from editing and reporting to featuring in news outputs). The business case investigation includes strategic, editorial, platform- and measurement-based actions that organizations must take to achieve revenue growth. In addition, the analysis of fresh data, generously offered to AKAS by Amedia[15] in Norway and presented in Part 4, revealed a positive relationship between the share of female authors and the share of female protagonists; the share of female protagonists and the share of female readership; and the share of female readership and the share of female subscribers.

We live in defining, turbulent times. They demand idealism and preclude cynicism. We owe it to the next generations that they know what truth is, told by a thriving journalism industry that cares to reflect their different perspectives. "Drop by drop the river rises": an African proverb reminds us that it is often the small steps that lead to a sustained change. Reflecting on this profoundly optimistic aphorism made me wonder what the world of news would look like if each organization and journalist decided to make a one percent change in their behavior to make news more equitable. How inclusive would journalism look then?

I hope that the evidence, narrative, and recommendations presented in this report help you to find that one percent change that you would like to make or instigate…

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15. The largest publisher of local newspapers in Norway

What has happened to women's share of voice since *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News?*

Although the purpose of this publication is not to track the representation of women as news experts, sources, or protagonists since 2019, which would be very costly, the AKAS team produced a proxy analysis for the share of voice of men vs. women in global news by comparing the ratio of feminine vs. masculine pronouns used in online news articles between January 2017 and April 2022.[16] Where the ratio is close to one, this is seen as an indicator of women's share of voice approaching parity with men's. It should be emphasized that this methodology is different to the one used by Media Ecosystems Analysis Group in the previous *Missing Perspectives* reports and the two should therefore not be compared or contrasted.

For every feminine pronoun used in news globally, more than three masculine ones outnumber it. Not much has changed since 2019

Figure 1 shows that in the last five and a half years, the ratio between the feminine and masculine share of pronouns used in news has not changed significantly in the UK, US, or South Africa (although it has improved slightly in the US and South Africa since 2019 and worsened slightly in the UK). In these three countries, however, where masculine pronouns have been mentioned approximately twice as frequently as feminine, the ratio between men's and women's share of pronouns has been significantly better than globally, where it has sat at between 3.8:1 and 3.2:1 during the period 2017 to 2022. Since 2018 Kenya's share

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16. The analysis was carried out using the GDELT Project's global online news archive, which covers over 900 million stories. GDELT can convert search terms into 65 languages and was searched to determine the number of articles in each of the six countries and globally that contained terms using masculine pronouns (he said, he says, he sets out, he set out, he argued, he argues, he stated, he states, he explained, he explains) and feminine pronouns (she said, she says, she sets out, she set out, she argued, she argues, she stated, she states, she explained, she explains).

Figure 1: Masculine vs. feminine pronoun analysis: Ratio between men's and women's share of voice in news (2017-2022)

Region	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 (to 09 May 22)	Assessment (2019 vs. 2022)
US	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.7	Slightly better
UK	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.0	Slightly worse
South Africa	1.9	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.0	Slightly better
Kenya	3.8	3.3	3.2	3.0	2.7	2.8	Slightly better
Nigeria	5.0	5.5	5.0	5.0	4.8	5.0	Stable
India	5.7	6.2	5.7	5.7	5.9	6.3	Slightly Worse
Global	3.8	3.5	3.3	3.4	3.2	3.3	Slightly Better

Source: AKAS analysis of GDELT database (2022)

of feminine pronouns used in news articles has been higher than the global ratio. This year in Kenya for every feminine pronoun used in news there have been 2.8 masculine ones vs. 3.3 globally.

India and Nigeria are lagging significantly behind the global average and the other four countries. In India for every feminine pronoun mentioned in articles there are 6.3 masculine ones, while in Nigeria there are five. Furthermore, the ratio between masculine and feminine pronouns used in news articles

in India has increased i.e., become worse since 2019 and has remained static in Nigeria.

The overall picture of slow progress or stagnation in the last five years gives little grounds for optimism and serves as a strong motivator to introduce new initiatives which disrupt the male bias in the share of voice in online news at systemic, organizational, and individual levels. If there was a requirement to validate the need for this sequel publication, then this analysis is it.

Part 1

Narrowing the diversity and inclusion gap in news leadership in the highest-profile editorial beats. The problems and the solutions

Report Navigation

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• Background and objectives • Executive summary • Summary of solutions themes • Summary of key findings • Acknowledgements • Introduction • What has happened since 2019	Gender diversity and inclusion gap in news leadership	Women's representation, portrayal and stories in news coverage	News initiatives addressing gender equality	Gender equity business opportunity for newspapers	Proposed strategic and operational solutions

Case studies

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Bloomberg	The Fuller Project	
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Bibliography & Appendices

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Appendix 1 and 2

Links to news value chain

	At a glance & Introduction	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5
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News sector change	●	●		●		●
News organization strategy change	●	●		●		●
News leadership and individual leader change	●	●		●		●
Newsroom and journalist level change	●			●		
Representation, portrayal and storytelling news coverage change	●		●	●		●
News consumption change	●			●	●	●
News coverage impact change	●			●	●	●

Part 1 at a glance

This part of the report focuses on the first element of the news value chain: resources. It investigates the gender and racial representation among editors-in-chief and editors in the highest-profile beats i.e. politics, economics/business, foreign affairs, and health. Part 1 also explores the barriers that women of all colors face in being fully included in decision-making when they are in leadership positions. Importantly, it concludes with a chapter focusing on the solutions for how to close the representation and inclusion gap at the top of news organizations and in the highest-profile beats. It features best practice case studies of success among four organizations: The New York Times, Mint, Bloomberg, and African Women in Media.

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This part reveals that women are marginalized as editors-in-chief and as editors in politics, economics/business, and/or foreign affairs beats in all the researched countries. Women of color are largely invisible in the news industry or severely underrepresented in key leadership roles. Women have achieved parity in editorial roles in five of the six countries in health beats, traditionally seen as less prestigious. In South Africa and the US, women have achieved/exceeded parity in business/economics beats. There is consensus that the news leadership culture is still favoring men across countries, which precludes women of all colors from being fully included in decision-making even when they are in power. However, there are many solutions for bridging the existing representation and inclusion gaps. Among them are solutions aimed at raising awareness of the problem, removing barriers (e.g. programs aimed at retaining talent, allyship, and tackling bias at an organizational as well as individual level) and creating new habits (e.g. introducing targets and measuring progress).

Note:
The research into editorial roles reported in Chapters 1-6 was conducted between January and September 2022. All data reflect the accurate position at that time.

Introduction to the problem of women's underrepresentation as decision-makers at the top of news organizations

The Missing Perspectives of Women in News, published in 2020, unexpectedly unearthed that in the last decade the proportion of women in news leadership in this project's countries of focus – a minority – had remained largely static. Women's representation in news is like a funnel: whilst the majority of university journalism graduates are women, the numbers swiftly reduce so that typically less than half of journalists in newsrooms are women, and certainly in all the countries AKAS researched, only a minority of news leaders are women.[17] Furthermore, our research found that even when women formed a significant proportion of news leaders, they often did not feel included in the decision-making in newsrooms, where professional standards were seen as very male-biased. In this part of the report, we examine what proportion of top news editors and most senior editors in the highest-profile beats are women (or women of color in South Africa, the UK, and the US) in our six countries of focus. To our knowledge, this type of diversity research into the highest-

profile beats has not been conducted in the news industry before. In addition, through in-depth interviews with senior news leaders, we examine qualitatively the nature of the cultural barriers in the news industry that prevent women leaders, including those of color, from being included in decision-making. Equally importantly, we explore how these barriers can be weakened and how the drivers of women's inclusion in decision-making at the most senior levels of news organizations can instead be improved.

Researching the proportion of women in news leadership for *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* uncovered an underlying challenge that had contributed to a lack of awareness of the stalled progress: the significant gap in longitudinal, regular, and comparable global data measuring gender diversity in news governance and leadership. The most recent globally comparable dataset across 59 countries is more than a decade old, having been published in the *Global Report*

17. Kassova, 2020a

Figure 2: Proportion of top editors in the 10 most-consumed offline and online news providers who are women (2020-2022)

Percentage of women top editors in every market			
Country	2020	2021	2022
All 12 countries		22%	21%
South Africa	47%	60%	40%
US	41%	47%	50%
UK	29%	29%	38%
Kenya		27%	13%
Finland	33%	27%	18%
Germany	27%	19%	17%
Hong Kong	13%	17%	18%
South Korea	11%	15%	13%
Brazil	22%	12%	7%
Spain		8%	20%
Mexico	6%	6%	11%
Japan	0%	0%	9%
Base: top 10 offline and online news outlets in each country	200	240	240

Sources: Andi et al (2020), Robertson et al. (2021a), Eddy et al. (2022a)

on the Status of Women in the News Media[18], based on research conducted between 2008 and 2011. To identify the proportion of women in news leadership for *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* report, AKAS had to conduct extensive country-specific research using secondary sources. Since the report's publication, the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ) has reported[19] that the proportion of women among top editors in a sample of 240 major online and offline news outlets in 12 countries[20] (see Figure 2) declined marginally from 22% in 2021 to 21% in 2022,

despite 40% of journalists in these countries being women. The picture was, however, mixed across different countries. The US reached gender parity for the top editors in the 10 most-consumed online and offline news outlets vs. 47% the year before. In the UK the proportion of top editors who are women in the 10 most-consumed offline and online outlets increased from 29% to 38%, but in South Africa it dropped from 60% to 40% and in Kenya, the proportion of women at the top of news organizations halved (from 27% to 13%).

18. Byerly, 2011
19. Eddy et al., 2022a
20. Four of the six countries of focus in this report are included: Kenya, South Africa, the UK, and the US.

Figure 3: Proportion of top editors in the 10 most-consumed offline and online news providers who are people of color (2020-2022)

Percentage of top editors in every market who are people of color			
Country	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
All 5 countries	18%	15%	21%
South Africa	68%	60%	73%
US	11%	18%	33%
UK	0%	0%	0%
Germany	0%	0%	0%
Brazil	5%	0%	0%
Base: top 10 offline and online news outlets in each country	100	100	100

Sources: Nielsen and Andi (2020), Robertson et al. (2021b), Eddy et al. (2022b)

A different RISJ report published in 2022[21], that focused on the racial identity of top news editors in five countries (see Figure 3), unearthed that 21% of the top editors among the 10 most-consumed offline and online news providers across all countries are people of color. In the US people of color held a third of the top editor roles in the 10 biggest online and offline news outlets. This proportion was an increase from 2020 when the research was initially conducted, and much higher than the proportion of journalists of color in the US (9%), although lower than the proportion of people of color in the working population (42%). By contrast, between 2020 and February 2022[22], not a single top editor of the 10 most popular news outlets in the UK was a person of color, from a small pool of 6% of journalists of color. In South Africa the majority of top editors in the 10 most-consumed outlets were people of color, although the proportion was still lower than in the working population (73% vs. 93%).

The diversity analysis and conclusions in Part 1 of this report are based on AKAS' extensive research into 1,166 of the most senior roles in 354 news brands in India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the UK, and the US, as well as the most senior editorial leads in the highest-profile beats i.e., politics, economics/business, health, and foreign affairs.[23] The analysis uniquely intersects observed binary gender (women vs. men) with observed binary racial identity (white vs. people of color). Typically, reports focus on gender or on race/ethnicity, but rarely combine the two. The opportunity created by intersecting gender with race lies in understanding how severely underrepresented women of color are in news. Without this unique intersection, the issue remains masked.

So, how diverse is the news leadership landscape in the six countries? Are women of color in South Africa, the UK, and the US more marginalized in news leadership than women in general? How inclusive are the news leadership cultures in journalism in different countries? How can we unlock progress? These are some of the key questions that the chapters in Part 1 of this report address.

21. Three of the six countries of focus in this report are included: South Africa, the UK, and the US.
22. The fieldwork was carried out between these dates.
23. The news brands researched did not include local brands in the UK and the US.

The importance of intersectionality

Unlike *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* and *The Missing Perspectives of Women in COVID-19 News*, which focused exclusively on gender diversity in newsrooms, news leadership, and news stories, this report is expanding the diversity lens to also include how gender intersects with race in the countries in our study with multi-racial populations i.e. South Africa, the UK, and the US. In addition to examining the gender and racial composition of news leaders at the very top of news and in four high-profile beats, we have explored how included these diverse groups think they are in decision-making in news organizations.

The research that AKAS conducted for this report revealed that at an organizational level, very little effort is made to measure how gender

intersects with race in South Africa, the UK, and the US. In addition, there are hardly any established news industry standard benchmarks for intersectional representation. The problem of not including intersectionality in any examination of the challenges that women face, is that women of color often remain out of focus. Most frequently, the diversity narratives are anchored around either women or people of color, but rarely focus on women of color. By not measuring and recording their representation (through data tracking) or inclusion (through engagement surveys), the extent of the challenge that women of color face in news remains largely hidden. And, as we shall discover later in this chapter, these often longstanding challenges have also remained unresolved. In the opinion of a senior news leader from the global north, achieving diversity and inclusion in terms of race rather than gender is a much bigger stretch. The picture is slightly different in South Africa, where the bigger challenge for women of color may be that they are women, rather than that they are not white (see Part 1, Chapter 7).

A key question remains: why is it that this part of the report is not written by a woman of color? Would that be a safe move for any woman of color working in news? And would she be listened to? The answers to these questions are contained in the pages that follow.

Chapter 1

Gender and racial diversity of top news leaders in organizations today

AKAS conducted a unique market intelligence research exercise in the six countries of interest, examining the gender and racial profile of the top editors/editors-in-chief and the most senior editorial leads/editors in the highest-profile news areas across 354 key national (and in India, local) media brands – 60 in India, 30 in Kenya, 61 in Nigeria, 70 in South Africa, 76 in the UK, and 57 in the US.[24] The research focused on finding out who the most senior editorial people were in the politics, economics/business, health, and foreign affairs desks/beats as well as across the whole news brand. The beats were selected based on how high a profile they carry in the news industry. Traditionally, the politics and economics/business beats have been considered the most prestigious areas of news, generating the highest volume of news outputs, so these became the central focus of the research. Health and foreign affairs were chosen in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and, more recently, the war in Ukraine. This market intelligence exercise aimed to understand the extent to which women (and women of color) are represented in the highest-profile beats. Does the significant male skew persist when it comes to editorial decision-making at the highest level in news organizations? To what extent do women have a seat at the editorial table when it comes to covering the most important stories of our times such as the pandemic, political and economic crises, the biggest war in Europe since World War II, and others? We are about to find out the answers to these questions, but before we do that, let's go back to race.

Racial benchmarks for the working population and in the news industry

When reporting on women's representation in news or news leadership, it is relatively easy to put any proportions in context because we know that there is gender parity between women and men in the population. It is much harder to put in context the representation

24. For a detailed understanding of the methodology used in selecting the media brands, please see Appendix 2 on Methodology

of people of color, especially women of color, because the proportion of people of color in South Africa, the UK, and the US is very different. Therefore, before diving into analysis of the proportion of women and women of color in the top editorial roles in news organizations and in high-profile beats, we will establish the benchmarks for each country. The data for women of color in news is patchy and is not easily available for South Africa and the UK.

In South Africa in 2022, people of color[25] constitute 93% of the working population.[26] Women of color constitute 46% of South Africa's working population. In the UK in 2022, people of color[27] are estimated to constitute 16% of the working population, with women of color constituting 8%.[28] In the US in 2021, the proportion of people of color in the population is similar to that in the working population. People of color[29] constitute 42% of the working population, while women of color constitute 21% of the working population.[30]

Journalists who are people of color are underrepresented in all three countries. The proportion of journalists who are women of color is not readily available for all of the countries studied and is therefore difficult to contextualize. In South Africa, one survey[31] recorded the proportion of women journalists as 49% in 2019. The proportion of women of color, however, was not reported. In South African media houses in 2018, the proportion of senior managers and top managers who were women was 46% and 36% respectively. The proportion of Black women in top management was 30%: much lower than that

of white men or white women, or indeed Black men (50%), and lower than the proportion of Black women in the working population (46%).

In the UK, according to a recent analysis reported by Press Gazette[32] in 2021, the proportion of "non-white" journalists in the UK in 2020 was 8%. The proportion of women journalists of color was not reported. In the US, 47.5% of journalists are women and 22% are people of color (Black, Asian and Hispanic).[33] According to a different source[34] from 2019, people of color (referred to as minority groups) made up 23% of all journalists in the US, with women of color representing 12%. Women constituted 42% of all journalists. While the proportion of newsroom leaders who are women was reported as 41%, the proportion of women of color who were newsroom leaders was 9% (vs. 12% of all journalists). The proportion of news leaders who were of color was 19% (vs. 23% in newsrooms).

According to seminal research by Byerly[35], the only global study to quantify women's representation in news governance and leadership between 2009 and 2011, the proportion of women in top level management in news in India was 14%, in Kenya it was 35%, in South Africa 25%, in the UK 30%, and in the US 23% (no figure was reported for Nigeria). Globally 27% of the top level managers in news were women. AKAS' research into the proportion of women working as editors-in-chief in national media brands in the six countries (and in regional media in India) revealed a very similar picture to the one recorded by Byerly more than a decade ago.

25. This includes Black/African, Colored, Indian/Asian
26. Statistics South Africa, 2022
27. This includes Asian, Black, Mixed, and Other aged 20-59
28. AKAS estimates for 2022
29. This includes Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Two or more Race
30. United States Census Bureau, 2021
31. Daniels et al., 2018
32. Tobitt, 2021a
33. Pew Research Center, June 2022
34. ASNE, 2019
35. Byerly, 2011 and 2016

Figure 4: AKAS research of editors-in-chief in 2022 vs. Byerly's research of women in top level management between 2009 – 2011

	% Women in top level management (Byerly 2009-2011)	Chief editor % women
UK (National & nations)	30%	37%
South Africa	25%	37%
US (National)	23%	35%
Kenya	35%	19%
Nigeria		18%
India (National)	14%	11%
India (Regional)	14%	8%
Six countries (National plus India regional)/Byerly global	27%	26%
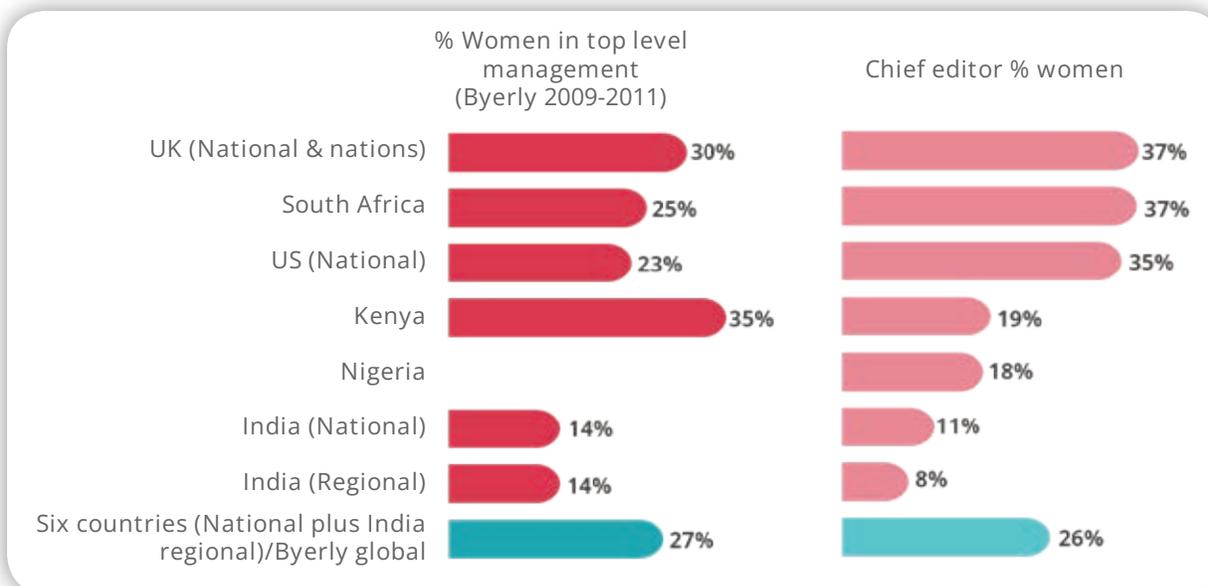
Sources: AKAS news editors research (2022) and Byerly (2011)

1 in 4 editors-in-chief across the six countries of focus in this research are women. This is marginally lower than the global average more than a decade ago. Progress has diverged across the six countries

In the first half of 2022, 26% of the editors-in-chief in 298 national news media brands in India[36], Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the UK, and the US were women (see Figure 4). However, there is real variation between countries, with notably higher proportions in South Africa, the US, and the UK, and lower proportions of women in top jobs in India, Nigeria, and Kenya. Compared to a decade ago, it is a story of progress in South Africa, the US, and the UK, but one of regression in Kenya and India (with no comparison possible for Nigeria).

The proportion of women editors-in-chief is highest in South Africa and the UK, and lowest in India

As shown in Figure 4, 37% of all editors-in-chief across 109 news media brands in South Africa and the UK are women. A similar proportion of women (35%) hold the top jobs in US national news brands. At the opposite end of the spectrum is India, where approximately 1 in 10 chief editors is a woman (11% in national and 8% in regional media). This is down compared to a decade ago. In Kenya and Nigeria approximately 1 in 5 editors-in-chief are women (19% and 18% respectively). When comparing the results with Byerly's analysis of top-level managers, it seems that Kenya has seen the steepest fall in numbers compared to a decade ago when more than a third of top level management in news was comprised of women. The proportion of women who are editors-in-chief in the US has enjoyed the biggest uplift compared to the last decade.

36. Also includes regional media

Figure 5: Proportion of women of color in top editorial roles compared to their proportion in the working population (2022)

	% Women of color in working population	% Editors-in-chief who are women of color
South Africa	46%	20%
US (National)	21%	13%
UK (National & nations)	8%	3%
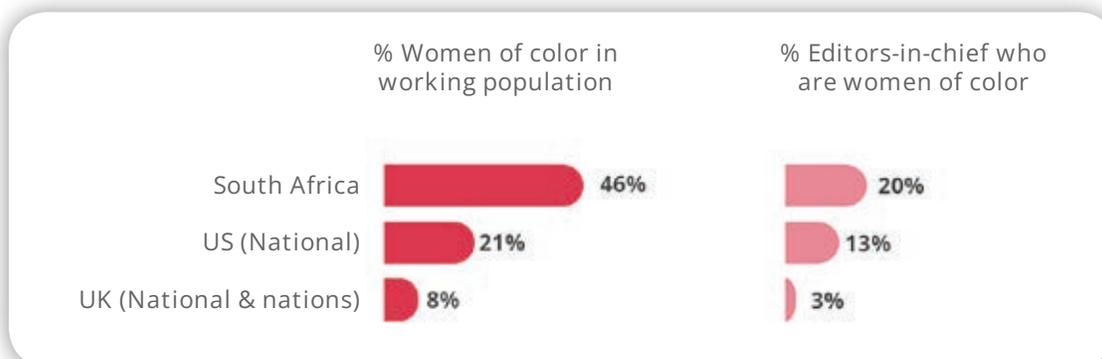
Source: AKAS news editors research (2022)

Women of color are grossly underrepresented as editors-in-chief in all three countries compared to their proportion in the working population

1 is 5 editors-in-chief in South Africa, 1 in 8 in the US, and only 3% in the UK are women of color (see Figure 5).

The gap between women of color's representation in top roles and their proportion in the working population is biggest in the UK, followed by South Africa and the US. There

are proportionally 2.7 times as many women of color in the working population in the UK, 2.4 times as many in South Africa, and 1.6 times as many in the US working population as there are in top news editorial jobs. As reported above, women of color make up almost half of newsroom staff in South Africa, yet only a fifth make it to the top jobs. In the US the low proportion of women of color who become journalists is reflected in the number holding the top jobs (13%), which points to an additional barrier at the point of entry into the profession. Unfortunately, we do not have a reliable source to determine the proportion of women of color in newsrooms in the UK.

Chapter 2

Gender and racial diversity of top editors across high-profile beats

Is the concept of structuring news in beats a Western construct?

While researching the most senior people responsible for editorial decisions across different beats, our colleagues from the global south (particularly in India) stumbled across some very interesting challenges. Often it was impossible to discern who the editor of different beats was, especially in regional or smaller news outlets, because either the beat or the title did not exist. Many outlets were simply not organized in terms of beats but had more fluid structures that cut across topics. The pandemic story in particular had at times loosened the delineation between different beats. Frequently in coverage of the pandemic, the high profile of the story had meant that editors-in-chief had been leading the editorial decisions alongside political editors, and then

health editors. In other instances, the health desks, for example, were too financially lean to have their own editor, and were led by senior journalists. In one of the interviews conducted for this project, a senior news leader from South Africa alluded to this challenge:

> "Specialist beats in newsrooms are a luxury [which exacerbates the issue of women's underrepresentation]. You have fewer journalists, and more junior as well, because based on the budgets that newsrooms have, to have very senior people is not easy."

Figure 6: Number of women editors in key beats across the six countries (2022)[37]
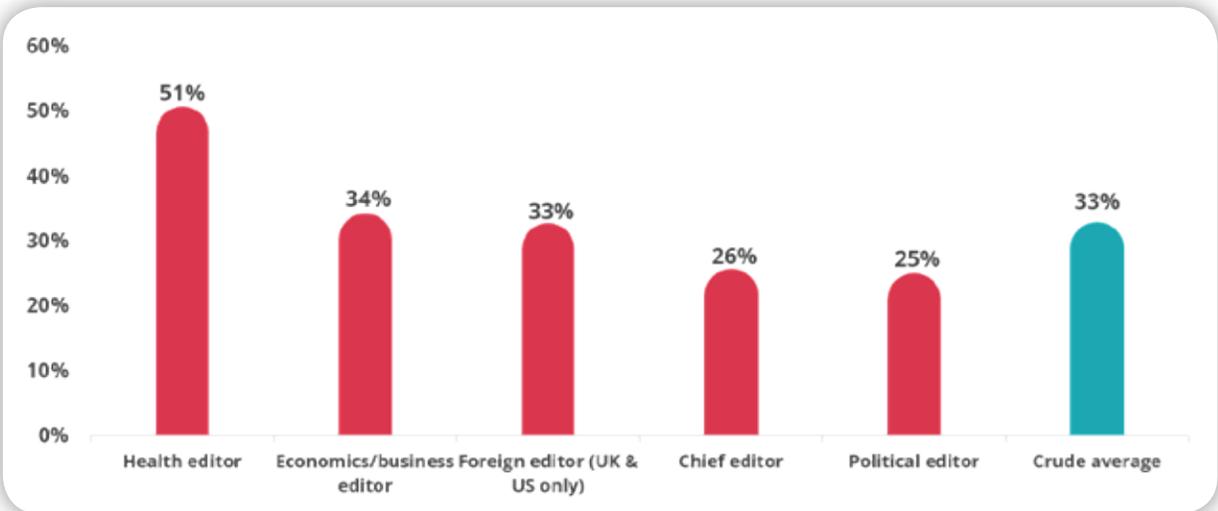
Source: AKAS news editors research (2022)

To complete the research therefore, our partners in all six countries researched who was the most senior person who took editorial decisions about what stories to cover in a particular area, be it politics, economics, health, or foreign affairs.

Does the "soft" vs. "hard" news categorization still play out in the representation of women editors in high-profile beats?

Before diving into the findings about the representation of women and women of color among the most senior editors in each of the beats AKAS investigated, we were curious to understand whether there was a significant difference in the gender representation across different beats. It turned out that there was. Moreover, the difference reconfirmed the news industry's longstanding existing biases in appointing women as editorial leads in what journalists call "softer" beats, such as health and education, which have traditionally had a lower profile and occupy less shelf-space. Conversely, the highest-profile beats, such as politics, known as "hard" beats, which are

also the most voluminous, have remained editorially much more male-led. The tradition of channeling women into certain beats has remained firmly in place, and was mentioned by many of the senior leaders interviewed for this project. The idea was captured well by a very senior female news leader from the global south:

"Are we boxing women into certain beats? I think that this is what has largely happened: we box women into health, lifestyle, entertainment, and general news and communities."

There is broadly gender parity among the most senior editors in health beats across the six countries, but in politics beats only 1 in 4 are women

As evidenced in Figure 6, using crude averages, AKAS estimates that across the four beats we researched in all six countries, women represent a third of the most senior editors. However, we found a discrepancy between different desks/areas. More than half of the editors responsible for health stories

37. The figures quoted refer to national media in all six countries, plus regional media in India

Figure 7: Percentage of editors who are women of color (2022)

	South Africa	US (National)	UK (National & nations)
Health editor	31%	6%	0%
Political editor	29%	3%	0%
CEO/publisher	22%	n/a	n/a
Economics/business editor	21%	9%	4%
Chief editor	20%	13%	3%
Foreign editor	n/a	4%	0%
Crude average	25%	8%	1%
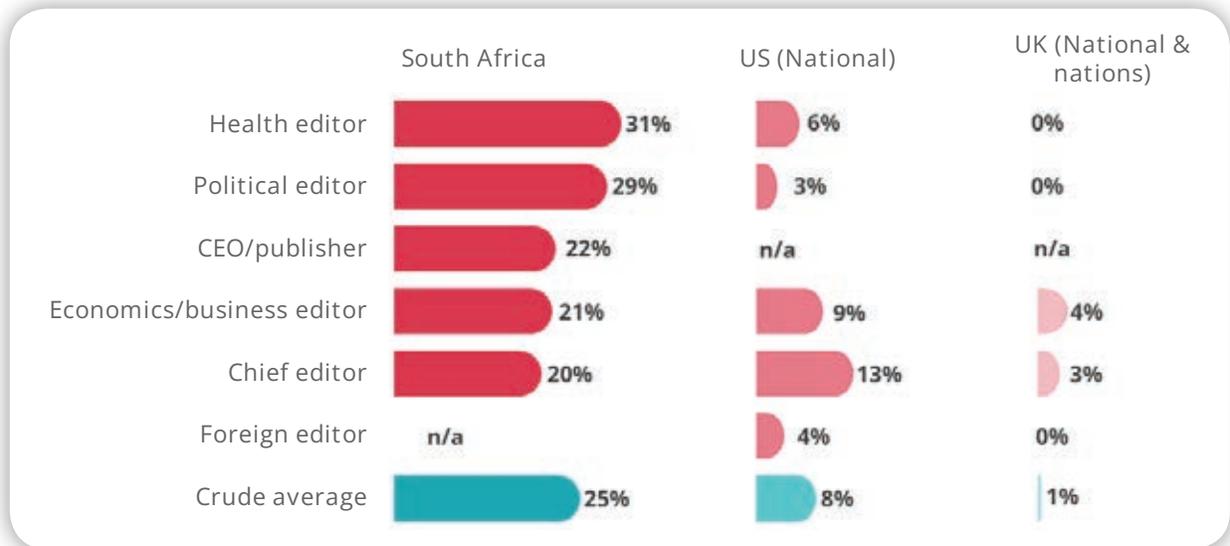
Source: AKAS news editors research (2022)

are women (51%) (and where health beats focus more on lifestyle than healthcare, approximately 90% are women) vs. a quarter of those responsible for political stories (25%). The proportion of foreign affairs editors and economics/business editors who are women is around a third (33% and 34% respectively). It is important to note, however, that the diversity research into foreign desks was only conducted in the UK and the US.

Women of color are locked out of most senior editorial decision-making in the highest-profile news in the UK and are severely marginalized in the US. In South Africa, women of color are underrepresented too

The findings from the intelligence research revealed an extraordinarily dire picture for women of color in the global north (see Figure 7).

It is particularly noteworthy that in the UK, not a single journalist in the highest decision-making editorial ranks in foreign affairs, politics, and health is a woman of color. In the US, where women of color comprise 9% of news management and 11% of all journalists (vs. 21% in the working population), their proportion is underrepresented in all key beats, including foreign affairs, politics, economics/business and health, at between 3% and 9%. In South Africa, the proportion of women of color in the most senior decision-making roles in key areas is approximately 25%. The prevalence of women of color in the working population in South Africa is almost double that (46%).

Chapter 3

Gender and racial diversity of top editors in politics

The politics desk is typically among the highest-profile, most competitive desks in news, and the most prestigious for journalists to join, let alone lead editorially. *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* found that gender stereotypes had greatly influenced the assignment of reporting desks in newsrooms, with women being pushed into lower-profile beats, and men taking on the agenda-setting beats such as politics which were considered more suitable for men, particularly in the global south. The findings from this new research into gender diversity in the editorial leadership of high-profile beats confirm this trend at the decision-making level.

In South African news outlets, almost half of political editors are women. But in Kenyan and Indian regional news, the political editors are exclusively men

As reported earlier in this chapter, across the news outlets researched in all six countries, women are most underrepresented in politics beats. However, the findings diverge substantially between countries (see Figure 8).

In South Africa, editors of politics beats are nearing parity (46%). By contrast, in the Kenyan news outlets assessed, there isn't a single female political editor. In India, the representation of women in editorial roles is starkly different between national news outlets (typically English-speaking and metropolitan) and regional outlets (typically non-English speaking and in non-metropolitan areas): while 29% of political editors in national news outlets are women, there are no women in the regional ones.

Women constitute 1 in 6 political editors in Nigeria, 1 in 5 in the UK, 1 in 3 in the US, and 1 in 3 in Indian national dailies. In most countries they are more marginalized in news leadership than in political leadership

Women political editors are grossly underrepresented in all countries bar South Africa. In the UK and the US, women are more significantly underrepresented in decision-making roles in political news beats than they are in ministerial roles in these countries: in the UK only 20% of political editors are women whereas women hold 24% of ministerial roles, while in the US the proportions are 31% vs.

Figure 8: Proportion of women in the most senior editorial roles in politics vs. proportion of women who are in ministerial roles and in lower or single house (2022)

	Women in ministerial positions in 2021	Proportion of women in lower or single House	% Women Political Editors
South Africa	48%	47%	46%
India (National)	9%	15%	34%
US (National)	46%	29%	31%
UK (National & nations)	24%	35%	20%
Nigeria	10%	4%	16%
Kenya	30%	21%	0%
India (Regional)	n/a	n/a	0%
Six countries (National plus India regional)	n/a	n/a	25%

Source for women in Ministerial positions: 2021: IPU Women in Politics 2021 report[38] Source for women in lower or single house: Inter-Parliamentary Union Open Data, ranking as of 1st July 2022 Source for Women political editors: AKAS news editors research (2022)

46%. This suggests an even more significant male bias at decision-making level in news media than in politics. However, in the US the high proportion of women in ministerial roles following the change between the Trump and Biden administrations builds an overly optimistic picture of their representation in US politics. Their representation remains a quarter (24%) in the Senate (the upper house)[39] and as Figure 8 illustrates, under a third (29%) in the House of Representatives (the lower house). In Nigeria, women's severe underrepresentation extends across both news media and government, although their representation in news media (16%) is more favorable than their proportion in government (10%) and in parliament (4%).

People of color are locked out of editorial decision-making about politics in the UK and are severely underrepresented in the US

AKAS' research findings uncovered stark gaps in women and men of color's representation in decision-making roles in political news beats

in the UK and the US (see Figures 9 and 10). In the UK, there is no representation of racial minorities - almost a sixth of the working population – at senior editorial level in news about politics. In the US, the proportion of people of color occupying senior editorial roles in politics (17%) was approximately a third of their proportion in the working population, as well as much lower than their proportion in the news workforce (22%). This lack of representation was also found in South Africa, where if people of color were represented in top editorial jobs about politics to match their proportion in the working population, the number of people of color in these roles would be 1.5 times higher.

Women of color are locked out of the top editorial jobs about politics in the UK and are almost locked out in the US

In the UK, there are no women of color who are political editors, while in the US only one of the 29 political editors is a woman of color. In fact, men of color are four times more likely to be editors than women of color in the US, while

38. Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021
39. Rutgers, 2021

Figure 9: Proportion of people of color who are the most senior editorial leads in politics (2022)

	People of color in working population	Political editors who are people of color
South Africa	93%	60%
US (National)	42%	17%
UK (National & nations)	16%	0%
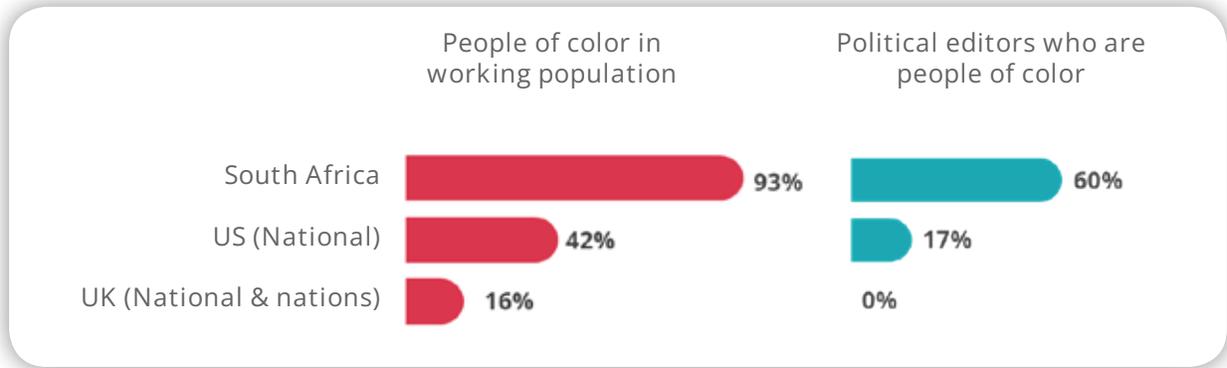
Source: AKAS news editors research (2022)

there are no people of color political editors in the UK. Women of color constitute 21% of the working population in the US, 11% of journalists and just 3% of editors in political beats. In South Africa, 29% of the top editorial jobs in politics are occupied by women of color, which is significantly lower than their proportion in the working population (46%).

In an interview for this project, a very senior male news editor from the global south pondered regretfully the perniciousness of the problem:

"Some of our best political writers have been women, but for some reason, very few of them went up to become political editors or editors of publications - somehow they just ended up being those writers, and then they move on to do other things, which means it has to do with the culture. This belief that, 'No, maybe when it comes to promotion, the men get those jobs'."

Later on in this section we will be exploring these organizational cultural barriers that keep women from decision-making roles in news.

Figure 10: Proportion of women of color who are the most senior editorial leads in politics (2022)

	Value
South Africa	29%
US (National)	3%
UK (National & nations)	0%
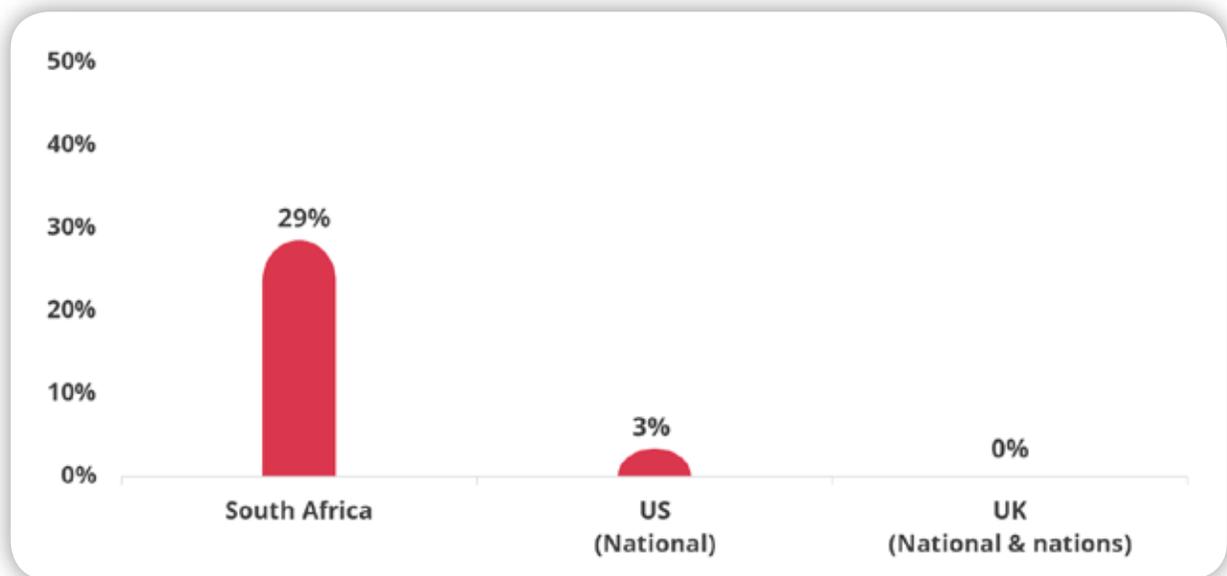
Source: AKAS news editors research (2022)

Chapter 4

Gender and racial diversity of top editors in health

The gender stereotyping of news desk assignments globally has historically placed health among lower-profile, "softer" news topics – deemed more suitable for women journalists and less appealing to men.[40] This persistent belief was articulated very pertinently by a senior news leader from the global south during an interview for this project.

> " *In our country, the tendency has been that health reporters tend to be women journalists because health has been seen, for the longest time, as being "soft". It's usually not a career path that leads to highest level editing.*"

In 2019, health was among the more gender-balanced beats globally, albeit with men still predominating: 43% of journalists working on health beats globally were women.[41] Did the pandemic shatter the cultural stereotypes in news around health being "soft"? Not exactly. What happened instead is that the reporting on COVID-19 was shifted to higher-profile beats, away from or alongside health, and the editors who made the decisions on what to cover remained much more likely to be men.

In five of our six countries, the majority of health editors in national news media are women. Nigeria and India (regional) are the only places where men outnumber women as health editors

The findings from AKAS' intelligence research into editors in the six countries of interest found that 224 of the researched news brands have a health editor or a senior decision-maker dedicated to driving health coverage. Among these just over half are women (51%). In many instances the health desk extends to covering wellness and fitness, which partly explains

40. Kassova, 2020a
41. International Center for Journalists, 2019

Figure 11: Proportion of health editors who are women (2022)

% women health editors

India (National)	78%
US (National)	71%
Kenya	67%
UK (National & nations)	59%
South Africa	51%
Nigeria	45%
India (Regional)	8%
Six countries (National plus India regional)	51%
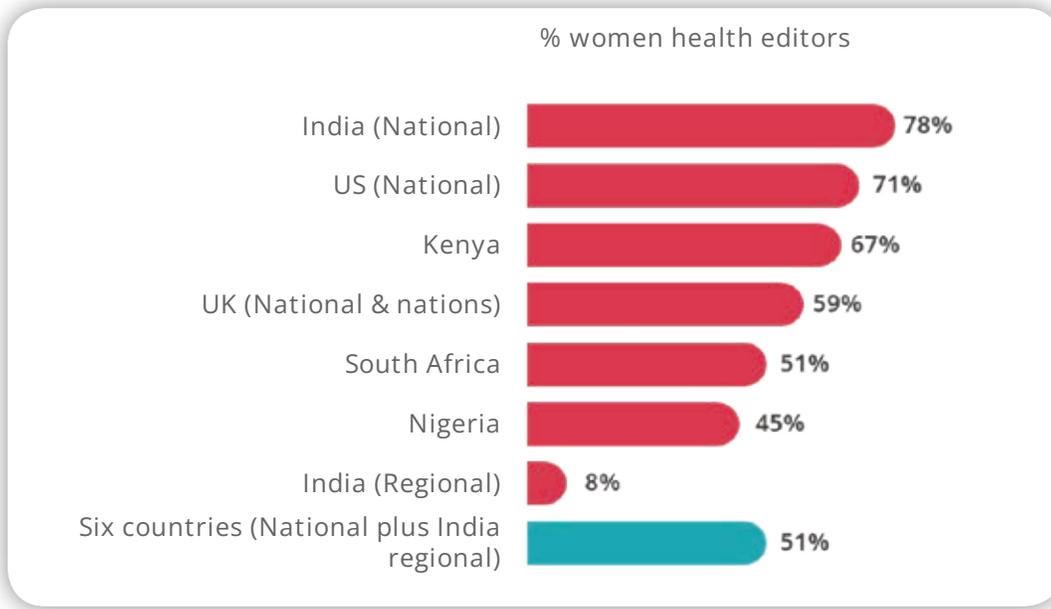
Source: AKAS news editors research (2022)

the dominance of women in some countries. Almost 8 in 10 health editors in Indian national providers and 7 in 10 in US national news media are women. The figures are also high in Kenya and the UK where, respectively, almost 7 in 10 and 6 in 10 of the health editors are women. Bucking this trend, the proportion of women health editors in Nigeria is less than half (45%). Once again, the editorial decision-making in regional news media in India is found to be extremely male-dominated, with only two in 24 of the health editors (8%) being women.

People of color are locked out of the decision-making on health news coverage in the UK, almost locked out of it in the US, and underrepresented in South Africa

Out of the 29 health editor roles that the AKAS team investigated in the UK in May 2022, none was found to be held by a person of color (see Figure 12). In the US, only one of the 17 health editorial roles explored is occupied by a woman of color. The missing editorial perspectives of people of color in health is particularly worrying in the context of the pandemic's disproportionate impact on people of color in the UK and the US, as well as the enormous health gap that exists generally for people of color, especially women (for details, please see

Figure 12: Proportion of health editors who are people of color, split by gender (2022)

	% of health editors who are people of color	% of health editors who are women of color	% of health editors who are men of color
South Africa	53%	31%	22%
US (National)	6%	6%	0%
UK (National & nations)	0%	0%	0%
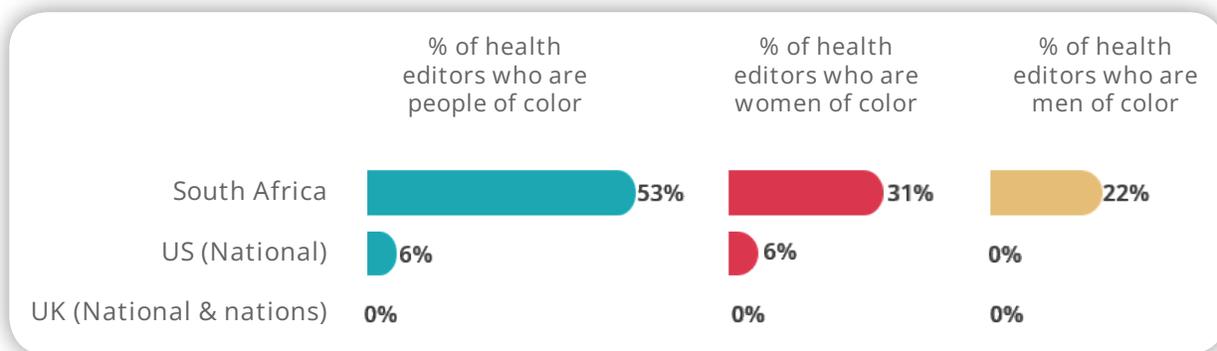
Source: AKAS news editors research (2022)

chapter 1 on the health gap in Part 2 of this report). Thousands of important stories about the health challenges faced by people of color are potentially being missed every day as a result of the absence of people of color in key decision-making roles in journalism.

The underrepresentation of people of color in health editorial roles continues in South Africa. Despite 93% of the working population in the country being of color, only 53% of these senior editorial roles are occupied by this demographic. Where people of color do hold these editorial roles, women predominate, holding 31% of the positions (vs. men's 22%) which is on a par with their proportion in news leadership in South Africa.

Having greater gender and racial diversity among editors has resulted in new but critically important stories emerging, according to this senior editor from the global south.

"...we now have an industry-wide discussion around the consequences of the profession on the mental health of journalists; and the correlation between mental health and media freedom. These are discussions that could not have been on the table when you do not have this movement to have more diverse editors at the table."

One cannot help but wonder what the stories are that are being missed as a result of the predominance of more homogenous editorial teams. Part 2 of this report will begin to provide answers to this question.

Chapter 5

Gender and racial diversity of top editors in economics/ business

A reminder of women's structural disadvantage in economics and business

The Missing Perspectives of Women in News argued in 2020 that gender parity in economics and business beats represented a particular challenge for news organizations due to the structural undersupply of women in economics. It was reported that in England only 27% of economics undergraduates were women; in South Africa 21% of economics PhDs were held by women; while in the US, women represented a third of economics undergraduates and 15% of full professors of economics. On the business side, across the six countries of focus, women represent only 5-7% of CEOs.[42] According to ICFJ's 2019 global survey, 36% of business/commerce and 35% of economics news beats staff globally were women.[43] AKAS' intelligence research into the most senior editors shows that on average a

third (34%) of all economics or business editors across the six countries are women. However, there is very significant variation between countries (see Figure 13).

The US and South Africa are significantly ahead of other countries with the majority of economics and business editors in US national news media being (white) women

Much to AKAS' surprise and against expectations, the latest editors research uncovered that it is women who hold the majority (60%) of the 35 business and economics most senior editor roles in the US national news outlets researched. Unfortunately, this undoubted progress is undermined by the reality that there is a 22% gender pay gap between women and men business editors.[44] Less surprisingly and in line with women's representation in other beats

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42. Deloitte, 2022
43. ICFJ, 2019 in Kassova, 2020a
44. Culey, 2022

Figure 13: Proportion of economics/business editors who are women (2022)

% women economics/
business editors

US (National)	60%
South Africa	50%
Kenya	31%
UK (National & nations)	30%
Nigeria	26%
India (National)	23%
India (Regional)	4%
Six countries (National plus India regional)	34%
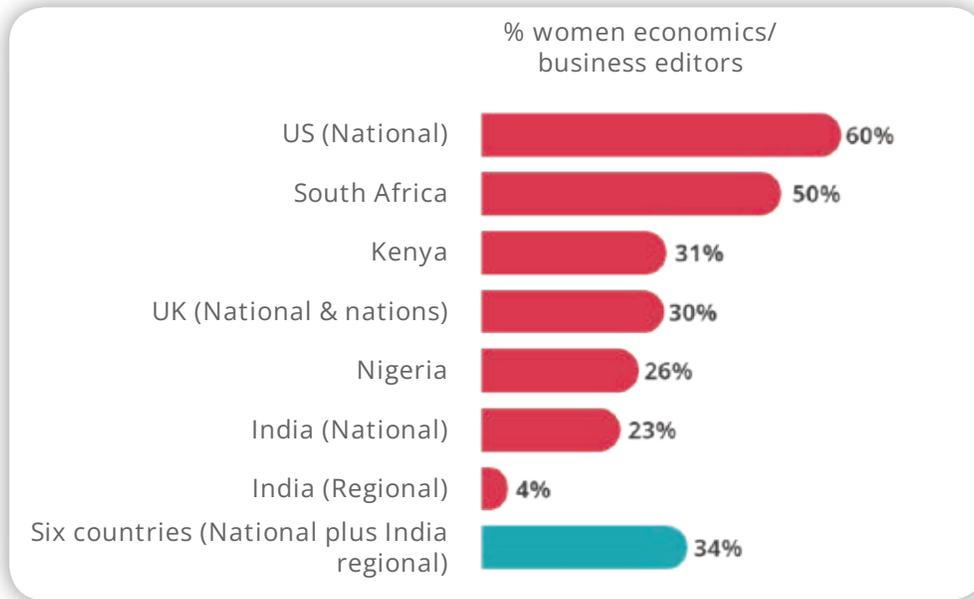
Source: AKAS news editors research (2022)

in South Africa, half of the 52 business and economics roles researched there are occupied by women. These proportions are significantly higher than in the other four countries where women's occupancy of the most senior leadership roles in economics/business news ranges from 4% to 31%.

The lowest proportion of women economics/business editors was found in Indian national and regional news media

Only one out of the 23 economics/business editor roles identified in Indian regional news media is occupied by a woman. In the UK, 14 out of 46 top editor roles in business and economics are held by women (30%). However, the UK performance in this area is significantly affected by high female representation in one news provider. Without that news provider, women's representation in top editor roles in business and economics would have stood at only 18%, which would have made the UK the second least gender-diverse country in terms of decision-making in this beat.

Women constitute less than a third of economics/business editors in Kenya, and approximately a quarter in Nigeria

The proportion of women occupying the most senior roles in economics/business beats in Kenya, Nigeria, and India's national news media is significantly lower than that of men. 31% of the top jobs in this beat in Kenya, 26% in Nigeria, and 23% in Indian national media are held by women.

Some of the historical barriers to improving women's representation in economics and business beats were highlighted by editors from both the global north and south in the interviews conducted for this project. They cited stereotypes, prejudice against women, and the authority gap (examined in Part 2, Chapter 1 of this report) as key barriers to better representation in economics/business editorial roles. A female senior leader from the global south shared her observations and objections to the prejudices that exist:

Figure 14: Proportion of economics/business editors who are people/women/men of color (2022)

	% of people of color economics/ business editors	% of women of color economics/ business editors	% of men of color economics/ business editors	% of working population of color
South Africa	42%	21%	21%	93%
US (National)	14%	9%	5%	42%
UK (National & nations)	13%	4%	9%	16%
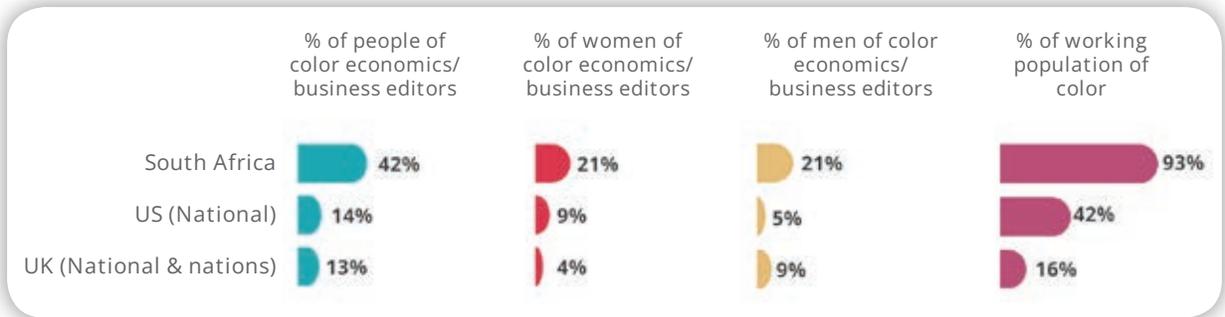
Source: AKAS news editors research (2022)

> "I worked in financial journalism, and it was all white and male. It was just so beyond ridiculous... In financial economic journalism, there's this myth that it's so complicated and only men can get their brains around it, it's just bullshit."

Once again, people of color are significantly underrepresented in the top economics/ business editor jobs, while in the UK women of color are missing altogether

If people of color were represented in top editorial business/economics jobs to match their proportions in the working population, the number of people of color in these roles would be 3 times higher in the US, 2.2 times higher in South Africa, and 1.2 times higher in the UK. In South Africa 93% of the working population is comprised of people of color but only 42% of these top editorial jobs are held by people of color. In the US and the UK, the proportions are 42% vs. 14% and 16% vs. 13% respectively (see Figure 14).

Of the 46 top economics/business editor roles that AKAS analyzed in the UK, two are occupied by a woman of color and only four are held by men of color i.e. men of color are twice as likely as women to occupy business editor roles. The picture in the US is even starker for people of color when juxtaposed with their proportion in the working population. Only five of the 35 roles researched in the US are occupied by people of color (three by women and two by men). These gender and racial proportions suggest that the perspectives of communities who are struggling the most financially are only marginally represented in news media in the UK, the US, and Indian regional news, and are underrepresented in all our other countries of focus.

Chapter 6

Gender and racial diversity of top editors in foreign affairs desks

AKAS analysis of GDELT in the first few weeks of the ongoing war in Ukraine indicated that under a quarter of the total experts, protagonists, or sources quoted in global digital news about the war were women.[45] This discovery prompted us to examine the gender (and racial) profile of the foreign affairs news editors who ultimately make the decisions about whose voices and stories to amplify in war coverage. Within the limited timeframe available, AKAS was able to complete this intelligence exercise for 67 national outlets in the UK and the US only (see Figures 15 and 16 overleaf).

Around 1 in 3 foreign editors in the US and in the UK are women

31% of foreign editors in the US and 34% in the UK are women, which is at or below the crude average of women across all beats for both countries (43% in the US and 34% in the UK).

This male bias has increased the likelihood of women's perspectives and stories being missed in the context of the war.

People of color are severely marginalized in most senior foreign affairs editorial roles both in the UK and the US. There are no women of color foreign editors in the UK

At the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, voices in the media called out examples of racism that had featured in some UK and US news outlets' coverage of the war. Whether it was correspondents lamenting an uncivilized war that was only meant to happen in "*poor*", "*developing*", "*third world nations*" but not in Europe, or missed stories of how people of color were facing extraordinary racism when trying to leave Ukraine, or even the sheer volume of coverage the war generated

45. Kassova and Scharff, 2022

Figure 15: Proportion of foreign editors who are women (2022)
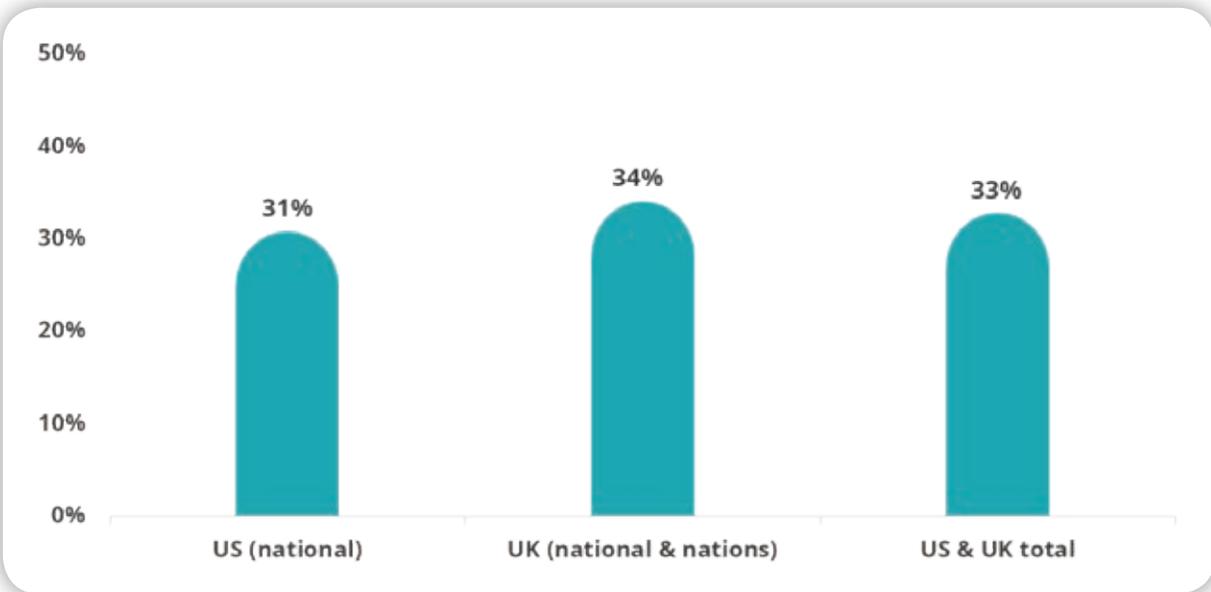
Source: AKAS news editors research (2022)

Figure 16: Proportion of foreign editors who are people of color (2022)
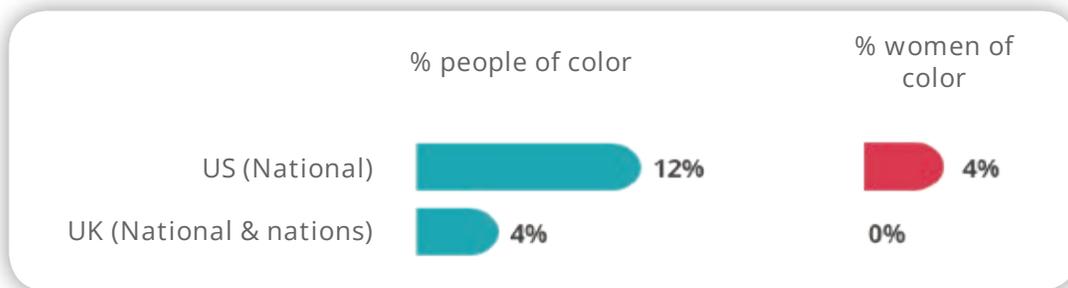
Source: AKAS news editors research (2022)

compared to the much more limited coverage of the wars in Yemen and Afghanistan, all pointed to unconscious racial bias, favoring white people "*with blond hair and blue eyes*".[46] Having a strong affinity towards people who look "*similar to us*" is a well-recognized bias in behavioral science, which Rutger Bregman used in his impressive *Humankind: A Hopeful History* to partly explain how atrocities were committed by people who were not otherwise in any way considered "*evil*".

AKAS' analysis of 73 foreign editor roles in news outlets in the UK and the US shines some light on why news coverage of the war may be racially unjust (see Figure 16).

As this data indicates, there are barely any racially diverse editors in this beat, making it more likely that affinity bias will manifest in coverage being skewed towards white populations in the UK and the US. Those editors who are racially diverse tend to be men.

46. Twaij, 2022; Bayoumi, 2022

Approximately 1 in 10 of the foreign editors in the US and 1 in 20 in the UK are people of color. The proportion of people of color in the working population in the US and the UK (42% and 16%) is therefore 3.5 times higher in the US and 4 times higher in the UK than their representation as foreign editors in the news. This severe marginalization of people of color in such a high-profile beat means that the pool of people considered 'similar to us' – in this instance to the editors – is correspondingly very limited for people of color, and entails very limited sensitivity to the perspectives of people of color. Furthermore, no woman of color is a foreign editor in the UK (and only two of 47 roles are held by men of color) which overlays a worrying gender dimension to the racial bias. To redress the white- and male-centric biases in war coverage that have been highlighted in news outlets, there is an urgent need to bring in more editors of color.

Chapter 7

Beyond representation: the barriers that prevent women — including women of color — from being fully included in decision-making in news

> **"**
>
> *"Whether the newsroom looks like the world we live in can't be how low the bar is, that should be a given. How much can we hear the voices of the women in the room? Are they speaking loud enough? Are they being given a microphone that's working, and, more importantly, are they being spoken over?"*
>
> **"**

These potent semi-rhetorical questions are at the heart of what this chapter is about. They were articulated in an interview for this project by a prominent female political editor, who made a clear distinction between women's representation in news leadership and their inclusion in decision-making.

In the chapters preceding this one, we found that the most senior editors in the highest-profile news beats look nothing like the world we live in. There is no gender parity in the leadership of any of the high-profile beats, with the exceptions of health in five of the six countries of interest in this project, and economics/business in the US and South Africa. People of color are underrepresented in editorial decision-making across beats in South Africa, the UK, and the US. Women of color

are locked out of editorial decision-making across most beats in the UK and are severely marginalized in the US. This chapter focuses on the key barriers that women, including women of color, face which keep them outside the decision-making room altogether or keep them quiet when they make it inside the room. It is predominantly based on the analysis of 41 interviews with top leaders in news organizations and senior editorial leaders in news, with an emphasis on economics/business and political beats.

The women and men news leaders who were interviewed were honest and generous. They shared many pertinent stories which shed light on the significant problems that women of all races still face in news leadership today. Universal stories that are experienced by women across countries and global regions. Stories which many believe are a thing of the past. I heard about female leaders being told "*Let me curtail you...*" two sentences into their argument at a board meeting; being told to "*leave their womb at the door*"; being publicly dismissed for suggesting relevant stories which "*are not news*"; being offered coaching to fit in better with the culture; being harassed by members of the public or by hired PR companies on social media for how they look or what they wear instead of the stories they tell; women leaders being asked to deliver the most complex projects, later to be sidelined when it came to promotion; women leaders being labelled "*trouble-makers*" for telling stories about women's rights and being circumvented when substantive decisions were being made.

I also heard different stories about the specific experiences of women of color in news leadership. These stories had an added level of injustice and anguish, often unfathomable to white people of any gender. Stories of gaslighting, extreme exclusion, loneliness, with no resolution in sight. I heard about

a senior leader who was asked to guide the organization through the significance of the "*story of that man who was killed in the States*" [George Floyd] while not being asked once in the months that followed how she felt as one of the very few people of color in the newsroom; a talented and highly-skilled female leader of color who always came a close second in interviews; a senior female leader of color who was gaslighted (twice) in her career by being reassured that she was not being underpaid, only to find out once she was eventually promoted and saw the salaries of those reporting to her that she had indeed been significantly underpaid. I heard the stories of a few senior female leaders of color who were experiencing burnout from being asked to drive diversity initiatives amid cultural pushback and not given enough power to make change happen; a person of color being thrust into a news organization to run a session about the challenges that people of color face, only to be met with a nearly-empty room; a newly promoted editor turning up for her first shift being pointed to the bin, assumed to be the cleaner.
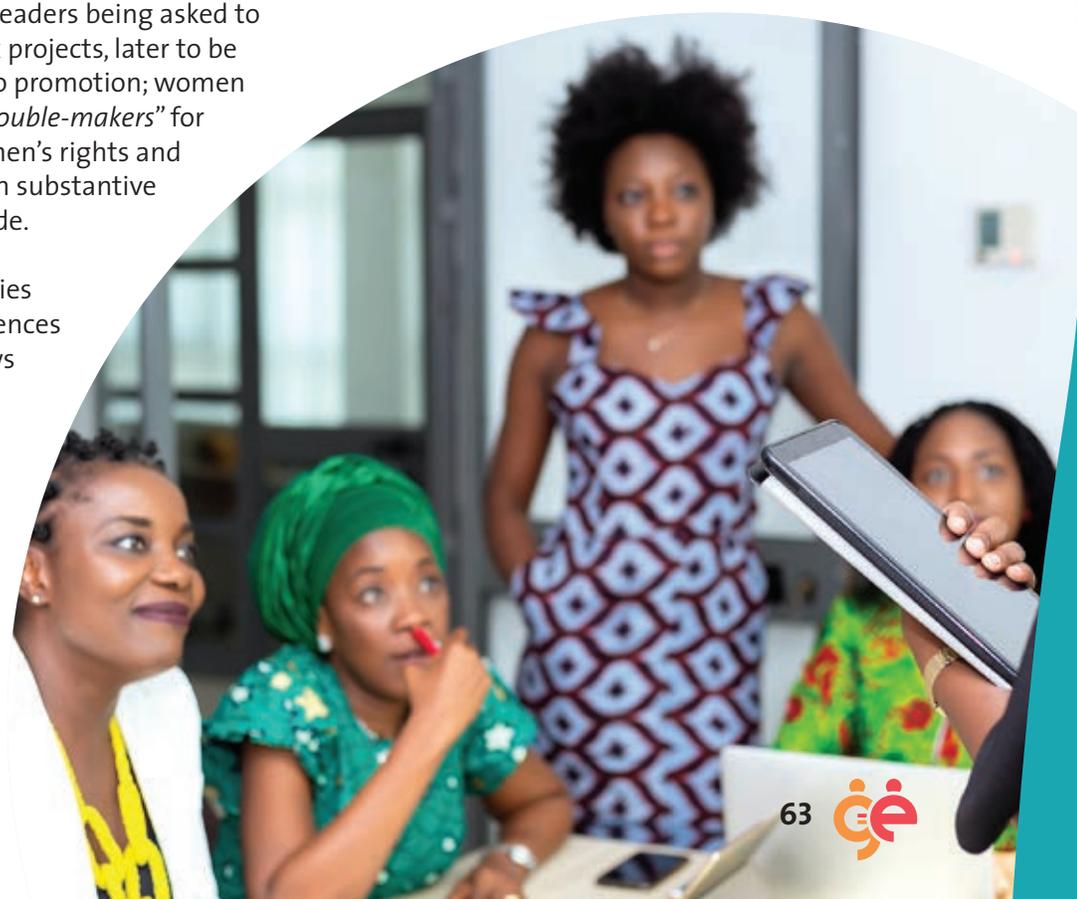
Figure 17: How senior news leaders interviewed for this project perceive newsroom cultures (2022)

	Top 5 news culture descriptors identified by senior news leaders in the six countries	No. of news leaders	%
1	Newsrooms and cultures are still dominated by men	21	84%
2	There are fewer senior women in news and their battle is lonely	16	64%
3	Newsroom cultures are meritocratic	14	56%
4	Success is often dependent on factors such as luck, timing, mentors	12	48%
5	Gender balance in news has improved	8	32%

Source: Author's interviews (2022) Base: 25 news interviewees; Q: To what extent, if any, has the culture in the newsrooms you have worked at aided your ascent?

The interview findings yet again highlighted the importance of examining how gender intersects with race. What became apparent while researching this project is the irrefutable fact that women of color in news experience a double whammy.[47] They are faced with all the disadvantages and stereotypes that women generally experience, as well as the added stereotypes and prejudices that are attached to people of color. It is for this reason that in this chapter, some key barriers associated with the exclusion of women of color have been separated out from the barriers faced by women in news leadership. It is important to remember that women of color in news leadership will be experiencing both sets of challenges. But before we explore any challenges, let us examine how senior news leaders who were interviewed for this project perceive newsroom culture in the context of gender.

Over 80% of the interviewed news editors believe that newsrooms and news cultures are still dominated by men

As part of the research for this project, AKAS asked 25 news leaders out of the 41

interviewed whether they thought that the newsrooms they had worked in had aided or hindered their career ascent. Their responses revealed a number of noteworthy insights, among them some descriptors of newsroom cultures which were shared by many of the interviewees (see Figure 17). Across the global north and south, the vast majority of the news editors interviewed (84%) acknowledged that newsrooms and news culture are still dominated by men, while a significant majority (64%) also recognized that there are fewer women in news leadership and that their battle can be lonely.

Interestingly and perhaps somewhat contradictorily, the majority of the interviewed senior leaders (56%) held the view that newsroom cultures are meritocratic and that they had achieved their status in news on merit alone (see Figure 17). Men and leaders from the global south were more likely to hold this view. When asked how they got to grow in their career, a male editor from the global north attributed his success exclusively to his abilities.

"I think it was my ability, my relationships with people."

---

47. New research in fact points to women of color experiencing a triple whammy: gender, color and class. This report, however, has not explored how class intersects with gender or color in the context of news.

Another male leader from the global north highlighted the opportunities that newsrooms bring to form alliances, which he believed to be universal:

> "I think that the biggest benefit of newsrooms is they give those who aspire to develop leadership skills and build coalitions and alliances throughout organizations plenty of space to do so."

The belief in fully meritocratic newsrooms suggests a high level of unawareness of the privilege that comes with gender or other factors such as class or race, as powerfully illustrated in this story shared by a senior female news leader from India:

> "Because we're in an English-speaking [metropolitan] newsroom... I think we are disconnected from the social barriers that a lot of other women, certainly on the regional [media], have to deal with. I was on a panel and a young journalist from the vernacular press... got up and said: 'You guys make it sound so easy and that it's all merit based. You have no idea what it's like for women like me, and the barriers that we have to deal with at work - ethnicity and language and the patriarchy. And how that comes in the way of us being seen and heard.' That really stayed with me, and now I'm very, very, very mindful of the fact that I'm privileged... and I realize that we're the very small, slim minority."

A third of the interviewees believed that the gender balance in newsrooms has improved in recent years. Almost half (48%) placed factors such as luck, the right timing, and good mentors at the heart of their career success. Women, especially women of color, and those from the global north were more likely to believe this to be the case.

Lower representation and persistent gender stereotyping in news desk assignments are perceived as the two biggest barriers to women's inclusion in news leadership

In order to understand why male bias in decision-making and news coverage – evidenced abundantly in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* – has been so stubborn in the news industry globally, AKAS interviewed global leaders from nine countries, mostly from the six countries of focus in this project. One of the questions we asked the senior editors was why they thought this bias persisted. Most of the 19 leaders who responded to this question highlighted two key barriers, both organizational (see Figure 18): women's underrepresentation in senior leadership roles (58%) and the persistent cultural gender stereotypes associated with assigning news desks (53%). Many referenced the long-standing division of desks into hard news and soft news. The editors who are chosen to lead news organizations tend to be recruited from the higher- profile hard news beats, rather than the soft ones. As we have seen, however, men are much more likely to be editors in those highly prestigious beats, whereas women occupy those with less prestige, which has a knock-on effect on women's representation on news leadership boards. The lower proportion of women editors in high-profile beats also keeps them in the role of sidekicks rather than allowing them to progress to the position of top dogs.

Almost half of the interviewed leaders believe that the power and authority gender gaps inhibit women's growth into leadership roles

Almost half of the interviewed editors (47%) shared that there is an observable power and/or authority gap which can keep women at arm's length when it comes to real decision-making (see Figure 18). Women leaders can still frequently be token hires, especially in news organizations where the gender gap is substantial at all levels of the organization.

Figure 18: What senior news leaders perceive the key barriers to inclusion to be (2022)

	Top barriers to women's inclusion in decision-making in news	No. of news leaders	%
1	Fewer women in senior roles	11	58%
2	Persistent cultural stereotypes around assigning desks (e.g. "soft" vs. "hard" news)	10	53%
3	Career advancement slow due to power and authority gender gap	9	47%
	There is no male bias	9	47%
4	Work life imbalance affecting women more	8	42%
4	Gender balance much improved at junior and senior journalist level today	7	37%
5	The onus is on women and they are not doing enough	7	37%
5	All boys clubs keep women at arms length	7	37%

Source: Author's interviews (2022). Base: 19 news leader interviewees; Q: How far do you agree that there is male bias in news? Why do you think it persists in decision-making and news coverage irrespective of women's representation in news leadership?

Some leaders linked this barrier to the power and authority gap in society. Others perceived the problem to be more acute within the news industry. A senior female editor of color from the global north revealed:

"...I think it is a real issue in our society, the way that women are perceived. It's in everything, we're just dismissed. I think it's partly because women are not seen as powerful, and important, and equal."

A very senior editor from the global south poignantly summarized how the pernicious nature of tokenism adversely impacts a leader's self-confidence:

"As a woman [in a very senior decision-making role], you realize that you feel sidelined in a lot of situations, where you probably should be taking center stage. I was not given the authority that came with the office a lot of times. So you have many people who basically work below you, but report to somebody else, to the person above. It's

clearly nothing to do with my competence. I would think it's about somebody, who is gender-biased, not having confidence in me."

Another editor in a different country from the global south questioned how substantive and meaningful the leadership positions of women editors really are:

"Just many leadership positions is not the only solution. You need women's voices to be heard, and women in leadership positions, in meaningful and critical positions."

A senior female news leader from the global north eloquently highlighted the power and authority gap she had faced in her previous role, which was echoed by other interviewees of both genders:

"We got to the point where most women ran the company but we were never at the top rung. There's always a layer of men above us."

Almost half of the interviewed leaders question the existing male bias in news leadership. A minority highlight the progress already made

47% of the news leaders we asked about the persistent male bias in leadership and coverage questioned its prevalence (see Figure 18). This was particularly the case in the global north and among men. The most frequently stated pushback was the perceived high representation of women editors-in-chief running well-known papers, as well as broadcasters fronting high-profile shows. The prominent UK journalist Mary Ann Sieghart, whose interview about the authority gap features in a later chapter, has explained convincingly the skew that the male bias in societies and in news creates in our brains. She contends that when women form 30-35% of a leadership group, our brains tell us that we have reached equality, because the baseline is hardly seeing any women at all (see Part 2, Chapter 1, The Authority Gap).

> *"Based just on row data, there are more women in senior positions than there were a decade or two ago. Moving the conversation beyond that would be how meaningful this is,"*

reflected a female editor from South Africa on the importance of inclusion - one of the 37% of interviewed leaders who thought that some progress in representation had been made at senior and junior levels in journalism.

Women bearing the brunt of the work-life imbalance in journalism, women being on the outside of an all-boys club that aids career progression in journalism, and women being seen as ineffective in making their own case for change, were other barriers to having an equal voice mentioned by some

42% of those who were interviewed on this issue emphasized the disproportionately negative impact that being a parent has on women who want to take on leadership roles

67

(see Figure 18). The interviewees pointed out that a lack of work-life balance affects women more than men, especially those with kids, who found it much harder to drop everything for a story or a newsroom emergency. According to the interviewees, the need to restructure work life to accommodate family often results in women taking up more writing and fewer leadership roles. A female news editor from the global south shared her frustration at having been refused a pay rise merely because she had become a mother:

> "When I came back from maternity leave, I hadn't [got the same raise] as my male colleagues, so I confronted them. And my [female] boss said, 'But how can you expect the same kind of raise when you've been on maternity leave?', and I thought that was shocking: 'Are you punishing me because I have been away having a child?' It wasn't a holiday, I was working."

37% of the interviewees placed the responsibility for the male bias in decision-making in news fully or partly at women's door and thought that they were not doing enough to help themselves (see Figure 18). The same proportion thought that not being a part of the socializing structures that benefit men in journalism resulted in fewer women being allowed to join the decision-making strata. A male senior news editor from the global north explained the barrier that results from women being on the outside of men's bonding structures:

> "If there are newsrooms that are very male and clubby, I can see very easily how women would not be included, and that culture would need to be changed. Especially if you have a very large proportion of men in leadership roles, and they have connections with one another, they socialize with one another, maybe they play sports or whatever together, I can see how women would be discriminated against in those situations."

A very senior female news leader from the global south explained how the boys' club mentality and being one of very few women curtailed her agency as a decision-maker:

> "I was not really part of the boys' club, so I would get to know about decisions once they had been taken, and then it was up to me to execute them. The decision-making continues to rest more with the men and the structure that they have put in place. Until we see enough, or at least significantly more numbers of women, to operate a sort of parallel 'club', it will be a challenge, because I do feel sometimes it's a lone battle for me."

The following memorable quote showcases the thought process of a senior female news leader from the global south who explained why she believes that the problem lies with women:

> "Let's also be honest with ourselves and women in this part of the world, and I say this with all sense of responsibility as a news manager: there's so many women I work with in newsrooms, how many of them are ready for responsibility? A lot of people want to punch a time clock. You are the foreign affairs correspondent, and let's use the big story of Ukraine. When you say to some of them: 'Okay, let's localize the story', everybody has 1 billion excuses. It's either too late, or 'I have a husband', 'I have children'. You start to hear ridiculous excuses. And then a woman believes that she'll be given the leadership of a newsroom, right?"

Another female editor from a different country in the global south attributed some of the problem to women's inability to convince male leaders that they deserve promotion:

> "There are issues that newsrooms obviously have to attend to, but the women themselves have to put their hand up, and sometimes there is that lack of confidence from some."

Women have to prove themselves endlessly

One of the most psychologically and physically punishing halo effects that women in news leadership face – which have resulted from facing so many prejudices and barriers before reaching or being taken seriously in senior leadership roles – is the need to endlessly prove themselves to bridge the power and authority

gap. This is encapsulated powerfully in the thoughts of a senior female leader from the global north:

> *"There's always a layer of men above us across the company. And then you have this layer of women that are getting all this stuff done. We all started talking to each other and supporting one another. We made some change happen because our results showed it. We were killers - each of us. We almost did everything perfectly and broke all the revenue figures. I met every metric of success that I was being judged by. You have to be perfect in your job and then you can fight for change."*

Harassment while on the job and unintentional bias are other challenges mentioned by minority editors

One in five of the news editors from across the global north and south who were interviewed for this project highlighted the extraordinary burden that women bear as a result of the misogyny and harassment that exist inside and outside the newsroom (see Figure 19). We will be exploring (quantitatively) this fundamental challenge in journalism in more detail later on in this report, in the context of the safety gap that exists between men and women journalists (see Part 2, Chapter 1).

Some of the most striking observations with regard to the existing sexual harassment and misogyny were offered by senior news editors from the global south. One female senior news leader from the global south shared career-ending examples of misogyny in the newsrooms in her country:

> *"I think there's so many stories. Our newsrooms are full of these stories... people who would read explicit, pornographic things in the newsrooms to intimidate the women. There are so many stories where a woman gets a bad end of it. There was a huge scandal about two people being found in an intimate position. Well, that man is now one of the editors, and no one knows where the woman is."*

Another editor from a country in the global south shared the complex dilemma that political editors face when it comes to sending women reporters to work on political stories and the need to put measures in place to protect them:

> *"The conversation we are having as journalists in political reporting [in my country] has been: 'Is it worth it to subject young reporters to the levels of misogyny and abuse - that is our political terrain?' You're sending out a young female reporter to quite possibly - almost certainly - be harassed, and sometimes or a lot of the time, by those in power. The advice we had was 'Grin and bear it' or 'It is what it is.'*

The news editor concluded that the solution is not to prevent women from reporting but to give them all the necessary tools to combat misogyny.

> *"...The conversation has to shift to say, 'It's difficult for a woman journalist to do her job because she's a woman.' ...how can we then assist or, in the spirit of fostering a gender equal society and a newsroom, how do we give the tools and the skills necessary to female journalists?"*

A male news leader from the global south provided a glimpse of how circumstances prop up the often circumstantial pro-male bias in editorial decision-making in relation to who stories are assigned to:

> *"I think that the discrimination is not really intentional. I'll give an example: it's around 7pm, or it's very early morning, and something crops up in the newsroom and you look around to see who is available, and some people have already left, maybe some of your reporters are mothers. So you find the next available person, and the next available person is a man."*

The challenges that women of color face in news leadership and newsrooms

> "When it comes to power, there is one playbook for white people and another one for people of color."

This is how a senior politics editor from the global north described one of the key challenges that people of color face in society at large. How does the playbook for people of color differ? Do people of color feel that they belong in news organizations and in news leadership? These are key questions which this section focuses on, seeking answers particularly for women of color. The interviews with news leaders conducted for this project uncovered that inclusion in news leadership is much harder to attain for people of color. This is due in part to the pitifully small proportions of people of color in newsrooms and in news leadership in the UK, the US, and South Africa compared to their proportion in the working population.

According to some news leaders from the global north and south, the strategy for making newsrooms and news leadership more racially diverse can be narrowed down to one element: hiring.

> "The thinking is very much about hiring: 'Let's hire some people who've got different skin shade from us'. Inclusion is a real blind spot. You say you want to hire people of color. How are you going to turn this into an inclusive newsroom? That is much harder. I don't think organizations are there yet,"

was the concerned opinion expressed by a news editor from the global north.

A significant downside to this mono-dimensional strategy, which was noted by the interviewees, is the **high attrition rate of people of color in news organizations**. In the view of one senior leader from the UK, this was attributable to the culture not supporting them to stay or get promoted.

> "What we have to do is support people who are already there, to retain them, and build them up. If you're somebody in a mid-level role, you're not thinking of going for those jobs, because you don't have the confidence, you don't understand the prep,…we need to approach people and then support them through the process, and encourage them to apply."

This issue of attrition was reinforced by a report released in April 2022 by the Washington Post Newspaper Guild, revealing that the Post was struggling to retain Black journalists[48]: in 2020 45% of those who left the newsroom were people of color, even though this demographic only made up 22% percent of the newsroom and less than 1 in 5 of those hired in 2020. According to the analysis, many of those who left were Black women. "*The people who fought the hardest to push the Post to evolve are the ones who had to leave, ultimately, because it is such an exhausting job.*"

To understand the specific cultural challenges that women, including women of color, face in news organizations, AKAS asked 23 senior news editors whether they had been approached by [other] women/people of color with stories of exclusion or inequity. Their responses were coded and aggregated to build a picture of the key challenges that individual leaders or their staff face. Figure 19 presents the list of the more commonly mentioned challenges, which were put forward by five or more editors. 14 other challenges were mentioned by four or fewer news leaders.[49]

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48. Chick, 2022
49. The pay gap, the impact of intersectionality, telling different stories to the ones accepted as the norm, undue emphasis on appearance and lack of confidence were among the other mentioned challenges

Figure 19: The most common stories of exclusion based on senior leaders' views (2022)

	Most common stories of gender or racial exclusion or inequity	No. of news leaders	%
1	Systematic sidelining in the past or at present	12	52%
2	Race-based exclusion	9	39%
3	Career stalling due to lack of support/opportunities	8	35%
4	No experience of exclusion of self or others	5	22%
4	Work-life balance challenges	5	22%
4	Harassment in and outside the newsroom	5	22%
4	Unconscious bias	5	22%

Source: Author's interviews (2022). Base: 23 news leader interviewees; Q: Have you ever been approached by [other] women or people of color with their stories of exclusion or inequity?

Systematic sidelining and race-based exclusion are the most frequently mentioned taxing experiences that women/women of color share

A majority of the news editors across the global north and south (52%) who were asked to share any stories of exclusion, imparted stories in which either they or women/women of color confiding in them had been systematically sidelined (see Figure 19). Women editors were more likely to share these stories than their male counterparts.

"I think, as women, we get to that point where you don't want to really fight, and you're better off just moving aside and doing something different,"

I heard a senior female news leader from the global south recount, exhausted from being systematically sidelined throughout her career. A female senior editor from a different global south country shared the ongoing and consistent sidelining that occurs for women journalists:

"My colleagues [in regional or vernacular media] have often spoken about the fact that they feel like there is this culture that keeps them out of the lead roles, that uses them 'like props', to prop up male colleagues. And so that, I realize, is a reality that we can't wish away. It continues to be a reality as of today."

39% of the news editors interviewed shared examples of race-based exclusion and career development challenges linked to race. A male editor from the global north shared stories of racial exclusion that members of his team had brought to the fore:

"I had some staff come to me and say they felt they weren't fully included, so we set up some meetings specifically about race and the department. And that was quite hard. Some people felt excluded because of their race. After the sessions, I got all my managers to go on a course where we talked about how we deal with issues of race, and how we work within our teams. It was quite a painful process. I felt concern and upset for the people who'd had to deal with this sort of behavior, and then I felt a personal sense of [guilt] I didn't know this was happening in my department."

Another female leader from the global north revealed that there was a striking difference in the racial composition of the newsroom in her organization during the night shift compared to during the day, and that the career development opportunities available to those on the night shift were limited.

> "One of my new team is a Black woman who's been at [the news organization] for years. She said to me: 'I've done overnights in the newsroom, and it's amazing how diverse the newsroom looks at night.' These are unsociable shifts. There are people in those roles who just stay there and stagnate. If you're on overnight shifts for a lengthy period, you're out of the loop, you aren't ready or all fired up for an interview. She applied for a job and they wouldn't shift the interview from after her overnight shift."

Many women, especially women of color, have experienced their career stalling due to lack of support and growth opportunities

Some news leaders highlighted the challenge that women of color face through not being identified with, either on the basis of race or gender. This quote from a white female senior journalist from the global north encapsulates this challenge:

> "My friend, who is a Black woman my age... just could not get any career progression [at the news organization] at all. And she found out she was paid less. She felt like there were other people working at the same level who were getting more opportunities than she was, and she left and she's doing the most amazing work now ... they didn't identify with her. They just didn't see themselves in her, someone to mentor, in the same way that they might if it was someone who looked like them... I think she just felt like she didn't have the same support basis that other people on her team did."

A senior news leader from another country in the global north offered a powerful example of how being "othered" and feeling different culturally inhibits the career development of people of color.

> *"The feedback was that these [diverse] members of staff were too afraid to tell their managers they wanted a career change. They didn't feel supported, they weren't being put forward to speak on calls, they couldn't get the big assignments. In some cases, sort of micro aggressions, but in others they didn't feel like they were heard or could speak out."*

Another senior female news leader from the global north explained how career-enhancing it is to cover big events such as the Olympics and how female and Black editors tend to get excluded from these assignments, thus not enjoying the same career boost as their white male colleagues.

> *"Certain people never get to go to the Olympics. The Black editors have never been, it's always a white person. We have to make sure we are challenging that and looking at the list of people getting those opportunities, because those opportunities help you get the experience so that you can get the next job. There are women that are left out consistently, and people of color, so they're not ready for the next job."*

A 2021 study by The Washington Post Newspaper Guild shows that Black journalists were underpaid, devalued and hindered in their career growth. They were overlooked for merit raises and promotions despite outperforming colleagues and being asked to take on extra tasks outside their roles, unlike their white colleagues.[50] Another 2020 study from the US found that Black journalists had little opportunity for job advancement, were overlooked for management positions, and were pigeonholed into token positions.[51]

As many as a fifth of the news leaders interviewed had not been approached by anyone with a story of exclusion

A noticeable minority of the news leaders interviewed for this project (22%) had not been privy to any stories of exclusion or inequity. They were more likely to be men and from the global south.

> *"I have never been approached by a woman with a story of exclusion… more than other [news providers], I think we've made more progress in terms of inclusion… So it's not a familiar story [here]."*

Another news leader from a different country in the global south suggested that women may be withholding their stories of exclusion for fear of being reprimanded and judged harshly.

> *"I think women have dealt with some of the issues that they've raised, but I think there's still that fear to come openly and maybe use the gender card to try and advance or raise a complaint."*

Top leadership's buy-in to the problem of the lack of racial diversity/cultural inclusion is often reactive rather than truly driven by an appetite for change

George Floyd's brutal murder in the US reignited the Black Lives Matter movement, and sparked protests and calls for systemic reform across the US and globally. George Floyd's story was mentioned in many of the interviews with senior news leaders from the global north, in the context of the news industry's reaction to the racial injustice that it epitomized. Many news organizations in the UK and the US had been jolted out of their complacency to introspect and examine their own processes and policies. In the words of one editor, this atrocity was a catalyst for change in newsrooms:

50. Chick, 2022
51. NABJ, 2020

> *"With race, I don't think we'd be even where we are now had it not been for the murder of George Floyd…And it's terrible that it took that kind of atrocity to get even the incremental change we're seeing. We're still nowhere near where we need to be, so it's that interaction between what's happening already in the newsroom, on the grassroots level, and also events outside…when you see something happening, that you think, 'Well, this is an opportunity to make a change.' Really make the most of those external opportunities, because that's where the change happens; when those two things meet."*

Approximately two years after George Floyd's death, some of the news leaders interviewed for this project have made the assessment that some news organizations had responded with "*a knee jerk reaction*" rather than a forensic exploration of the systemic, organizational, and individual barriers that obstruct racial diversity and inclusion. Moreover, there were some mentions of a senior leadership backlash which have also been reflected in research from the US. A news editor of color from the global north shared their take on the efforts to make the newsroom more inclusive and more racially representative of the population:

> *"I think what happened for a lot of people that I've spoken to, and for me, was that people had been pushing in that direction unofficially, the door was opened a crack…And I know that I and others went into it thinking, 'Well, we're just going to try and have some faith and take this opportunity… The door has opened again.' But the work was pretty much on the shoulders of those people. It slipped into the groove again, of what not to do. And then talking to other people, including people who work in law, employment law, in terms of race in the [country], it was perceived that the people who were tasked with that were suddenly facing quite a big backlash towards the two-year mark after George Floyd was murdered."*

Because the news boards' engagement has been so reactive according to some of the people of color interviewed, interventions undertaken to rectify the problem have felt "*gimmicky*". They often lacked targets and accountability measures. One senior news leader of color from the global north shared a story of a colleague who was on the senior leadership board of an organization and was asked to share his experience as someone from a racial minority.

> *"There was one person of color who was on the board, he was pushed forward, but other people on the board didn't turn up for that session. So if you're not listening to the experience in your own company, and taking responsibility for that, and saying: 'I'm really sorry, this is really shit, we're going to do something about it', then there's a problem."*

The same person perceived a lack of genuine desire to change.

> *"…there is also that lack of support and lack of willingness to change, really change, take action, not just come up with another scheme. I don't have the energy anymore to just keep going, it feels like bashing my head against the brick wall."*

The impossible expectations placed on victims of racial injustice to resolve the problem of their own underrepresentation and/or exclusion from leadership

Following George Floyd's murder, according to news leaders of color in the global north who were interviewed for this project, news leadership teams have often placed expectations on leaders of color to educate the rest of the leadership team and get involved in DEI projects to drive solutions. According to a senior leader from the global north this is partly linked to the fact that the proportion of people who are not white in journalism/leadership teams in the US and the UK is very small, which makes it hard to convey what the issues are and, worse, creates the assumption that those affected should educate the rest. Another senior news leader of color from the global north explained the burdensome expectations that fell on people of color who

were themselves trying to process the story:

> *"And in 2020, in the midst of a pandemic, explaining to xx white leaders about why the story about 'that guy who was killed in America by the policeman' - that's how it was referred to - was playing well with [local] audiences, to explain, essentially, racism to xx white people on Zoom is a lot for one person to take on."*

At the same time, some interviewees felt that leadership teams' response to the people diving into the problem of racial injustice at their behest was to put additional pressure on them through being defensive and pushing back on problem findings. Consequently, leaders who are women of color operate in a triply stressful environment. Firstly, they are being thrust into a situation that is deeply upsetting and opens them to enormous toxicity and personal vulnerability. Secondly, often victims of discrimination themselves, they are expected to come up with solutions to eliminate the discrimination, without been granted sufficient power to do so. Thirdly, this in turn can result in female leaders of color worrying about the impact their DEI efforts might have on their own future career progression, which is already under pressure, as exemplified by the account of a senior female leader from the global north:

> *"Women of color are consistently discouraged from applying for leadership roles. There is a perception that we are good enough to make the work happen, but not to lead the work, so you're the worker bee, but you're not supposed to be a leader. I have heard that over and over again, and experienced that myself".*

Another news editor from the global north gave a gripping account of the multi-faceted challenge they have been facing in their news organization:

> *"... the words that were used, that I feel leaderships were pushed into, were, 'Let's be open. We have to have these open conversations. It's going to be really difficult.' All sorts of great stuff, like, 'We have to prioritize certain things, whether it be hiring*

> *Black people, because they're the least represented. We've got to be measuring things.' But as things progress, a lot of that just slipped away. What you might find, as a person tasked with leading that work, is that open and difficult conversations are no longer welcome. And it's made clear through various means, often targeted at the people of color who are in those difficult conversations. And then it becomes really clear what you're up against, and you might ask yourself how much you can continue with this. You might start to think about how that's affecting your career. And after all these two years, people have been asked to ultimately help the business, because that's what this is about. It's about strategic adviserships for leaderships, who clearly have not taken this on themselves, but were handing this responsibility to people who have very little prospect of reaching that level of leadership themselves."*

Interventions aimed at improving representation or inclusion of racially diverse staff are rarely measured, which limits their success

To make change happen, leadership teams have to be "*uncomfortably deliberate*", in the words of a female political editor from the global south. According to many interviewees for this project, leadership teams are often not prepared to feel the discomfort that exploring the problems of racial or gender inequity brings. As a result, they rarely commit to diversity or inclusion targets that would make them accountable within their organizations. A senior news leader from the global north summed up the challenge.

> *"There are many diversity projects that don't have any real KPIs, they don't have any accountability, they're just projects so that people can say, 'Oh, yes, we're doing something about gender/race'... but there's nothing measurable at the end of it. Nobody's shifting the dial because nobody's accountable."*

Another senior news leader from the global south highlighted the performative nature of some of the interventions which stop at measuring representation, without veering into inclusion at all.

> "It really is not something that you can attend to by a box ticking exercise, and I think that has been the failures of the last while. 'Okay, we have two women editors. Yay, pat for us, out of five women editors', that's where the conversation starts and ends. Changing cultures has to be equally important."

The News Leaders Association (NLA) in the US had conducted an annual diversity survey since 1978, producing a report that was a key tool for understanding gender, racial, ethnic, disability and veteran diversity efforts in journalism in the US. However, as mentioned in the Introduction to this report, in 2020 the NLA was forced to pause the survey due to disappointingly low participation rates from news organizations. In 2022 the survey response rate fell to its lowest level of 12% of all organizations contacted, despite a big email campaign targeting thousands of news organizations.[52] Meredith Clark, who had led the diversity survey in recent years, resigned from the project, greatly disillusioned with the news industry's unwillingness to hold itself accountable for how representative it is of the population at large.[53]

The interviewed women of color news leaders feel disproportionately burnt out, isolated and/or dismissed

The women from a racial minority who were interviewed all shared one common characteristic: they were the support pillar, the "go to" person for their managers, peers and those working under them when it came to matters of race. Whether they had been supported during the months following George Floyd's death or not (and there were instances of both), women of color simply felt exhausted because they were the shoulder that everyone cried on. Some were burnt out and did not

have an ounce of energy left to keep going. Others redoubled their efforts in spite of their exhaustion. In the words of a senior female leader of color from the global north, who had not been supported by anyone in the months following George Floyd's death:

> "People [of color] don't have that resilience [to keep fighting discrimination within news and media] and even I've run out of steam."

Two female senior leaders – from the global north and south – shared their concern about the isolation that people of color, especially women, experience in news. A senior news leader from the global north revealed the bias that she felt people of color were subjected to in the organization where she worked:

> "There's so much inherent, implicit, and explicit bias against people of color in this business, it never ends. I am constantly dealing with issues related to people of color not feeling respected, not being included, and now, because we have [internal social media platform], sometimes you can see them disrespect people, being called the wrong names, people being paid differently. We're much better than a lot of places, but it's just not being heard… It's so automatic, and it's painful."

Another [white] female leader from the global south recalled a story of racial injustice that she was ashamed to have been unaware of at the time until her former colleague opened up about it years later.

> "There was one story that stood out for me of a woman who's my contemporary and a woman of color. We were in the same newsroom [and] for me, the experience was positive. I was able to progress. Her experience was completely different. She found the environment completely alienating. There were very few people of color in the organization. And to my shame, I never appreciated her alienation until much later."

52. Scire, 2022
53. Scire, 2022

Life in news organizations can be particularly lonely for women of color in senior leadership roles or in newsrooms. A senior female news leader of color from the global north divulged thoughts and feelings of acute loneliness.

"It's very lonely. Especially, I would say, 2020 was a very lonely place, and to not even be asked how you're doing [after George Floyd's death], and your take on the story, is just mind boggling to me."

In March 2021 Stacy-Marie Ishmael, the (Black) editorial director of the Texas Tribune in the US, defined 2021 as "*an absolute brutal year for many people, and especially for nonwhite people*" before stepping down from her role.[54] Research into Black journalists in the US has uncovered that they are disproportionately exhausted, with many factors feeding into this exhaustion, such as witnessing and reporting on the scale of loss during the pandemic within their communities; being subjected to racism while reporting on it; and often being dismissed when putting ideas forward for stories to cover in newsrooms where they continue to be marginalized.[55]

A Press Gazette survey about racism and bigotry in the UK media, conducted in the UK in 2021, uncovered that 41% of the media professionals who responded to the survey said they had personally experienced or witnessed racism or bigotry in the newsroom.[56] The figure rose to 55% for those who worked in the tabloids, 53% for those who worked in broadsheets and 59% for those who worked in broadcast media. Black journalists were most likely to have known racism in the workplace, with 74% responding affirmatively when asked whether they personally had experienced or witnessed racism whilst working in the UK media.

54. Gold, 2021
55. Gold, 2021
56. Mayhew, 2021

Fear of being blamed or seen as insensitive often prevents white leaders from fully engaging with the issue of racial injustice in newsrooms and news leadership. They often don't want to feel the discomfort

The interviews with senior news leaders, particularly in the global north, revealed that fear often inhibited white leaders in their actions with regards to racial injustice in news. Their fear might be driven by two main underlying concerns: being personally blamed for the existing racial injustice and, to a lesser extent, saying something insensitive which would upset a colleague of color. Both concerns can lead to superficial engagement with the cause at best and disengagement with the problem at worst. The first concern was encapsulated powerfully in the thoughts of a white male senior news leader from the global north.

"If you go around trying to say: 'You only have 37% of women in your stories, you're biased against women' that's incredibly divisive, and there could be another [structural] reason for that. I just think that [talking about bias] could be very toxic because it's assuming that a person is biased, and [then] basically the corner is up. I think there's a lot of fear about talking about gender and racial issues openly, and I think that if we were more open and a little more empathetic towards each other, and not so quick to stereotype or characterize other people, I think we'd come a long way."

A female senior news leader of color from the global north pondered over the deactivating impact that fear and guilt have on making progress in gender diversity in news leadership:

"I got more support from the organization outside of the news department. I think it's a fear of looking bad and feeling guilty, and just being uncomfortable about the conversation, but you don't learn, you don't get past that until you've had those uncomfortable conversations. These are the feelings that people do try and avoid."

Another female news leader from the global north also picked up on the barriers that self-protection creates against unpacking and resolving the problem.

"People might misinterpret questions about institutional bias as personal accusations of racism on their part, which is classic, textbook stuff, that we read about. There is a need for open discussions and willingness to enter into it in an open spirit of listening to people who experienced this stuff, to make that switch."

Out of the 41 interviews conducted for this project, only one (white female) news leader openly reflected on her own racial bias, in the context of being determined to work through it to advance racial diversity and inclusion in her newsroom.

"Being a leader made me realize my own blind spots in questions of diversity and representation. I was constantly looking at who I surrounded myself with and who I was getting inputs from, so I wasn't insulated - and if, particularly, there were senior women of color in my newsroom, who may not have been direct reports to me... I realized early on that I needed to make sure I was hearing from them regularly... Because it's a majority white newsroom in a majority white business, right?"

At the start of this chapter we asked ourselves how easy it is to hear women's voices once they are in the boardroom. To answer this key question, we examined the responses of a subset of the 41 senior news leaders who were interviewed globally for this project. Firstly, we found that women's seats around the decision-making table are still limited and secondly, once seated at the table, their voices often remain faint. The vast majority of the news leaders interviewed believe that newsrooms and news cultures are still dominated by men, across both the global north and south. Women's lower representation in news leadership teams and the gendered approach to assigning beats in newsrooms are the biggest obstacles to women's inclusion in decision-making at the most senior level. These barriers are underpinned by significant

power and authority gaps between men and women, which are particularly exacerbated for women of color. These two gaps result in the relentless need for women leaders to prove themselves over and over again. All-boys clubs still operate in news and parenting responsibilities continue to inhibit women's professional and pay growth. A significant minority of the interviewed leaders question the existence of a male bias in news or believe that women have not made their case for change well enough. The voices of women of color in news leadership are particularly faint if they are heard at all. The plight of women of color in South Africa, the UK, and the US is crushing because they are confronted with racial discrimination on top of all the other downsides that come with being a woman in a news organization. These women are being disproportionately sidelined, their careers frequently stagnating due to racial and gender exclusion. They often face the soul-destroying and impossible expectation that it is they who should resolve the problem of their own underrepresentation and exclusion from newsrooms and leadership in the face of a

fearful leadership team often unwilling to truly engage with the problem in the first place. This frequently results in burnout and the disproportionate attrition of women of color from news organizations.

In the next two chapters we will explore solutions to these pernicious barriers to women's (including women of color's) equal footing in news leadership. We will explore the learnings from groundbreaking practitioners in the field of diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as news organizations across the global north and south which have made positive change in their efforts to resolve some of these barriers. In the chapter that follows we will be zoning in on the groundbreaking research about the most prevalent organizational biases that lead to the exclusion of people of color. One of these biases is in-group favoritism and homophily i.e. the tendency for people to have affinity with those similar to them, which often unwittingly enhance the privilege of the majority group, primarily that of (white) men.

Chapter 8

Why diversity does not guarantee inclusion: the role of culture

Key biases affect organizational culture

We often discuss organizational culture without having a clear definition of what it actually means. In this report, the definition of organizational culture includes organizational vision, mission, strategy, and other overtly agreed intentions and goals; organizational systems and work processes (including hiring, performance evaluations, assignments, sponsorship, pay, promotions, compensations, policies); and the unwritten rules about how to navigate the organization which assist or obstruct employees' career progress and their wellbeing.

Bias Interrupted: Creating Inclusion for Real and for Good - authored by Joan C. Williams who is considered a leading expert in untangling and addressing structural inequalities in organizations - documents how bias affects a wide range of organizational work processes, concluding that white men in the US are (often dramatically) more likely to perceive processes as fair than any other group. Many of the

biases that affect people of color also affect women and first-generation professionals, i.e., gender, income, and race are interlinked to augment privilege or discrimination. In Williams' words, "*Like interest, bias compounds.*" In her book, Williams presents five key biases that stand in the way of achieving gender and racial equity in organizations. Most senior news leaders who were interviewed for this project spontaneously brought up stories illustrating these biases in their perspectives, pointing to the universal nature of Williams' findings and how they transcend US culture and specific industries. This explains why we have devoted a whole chapter to it.

Why diversity does not translate into inclusion

One of the most widespread myths that we come across in the news industry is that if an organization hires enough of an underrepresented group - be it women or people of color - the diversity and inclusion problem will be solved. Time and again this strategy turns out to be costly and yet not

particularly successful, as The New York Times case study included in this report powerfully illustrates. Improved diversity does not automatically lead to inclusion in the culture and decision-making of the organization. Why? Because there is a power imbalance between those who are already integrated within the culture, privy to its unwritten rules, and those who have just joined and are on the periphery. *"Expecting women or people of color to champion members of their own group may be unrealistic – not to mention unfair – because championing diversity can be costly for those who step up."*

Instead of championing diversity within the organization, marginalized groups are often pushed to compete with each other to carve out space for themselves at the decision-making table alongside the dominant group, which typically consists of [white] men.

According to Williams, in-group favoritism and homophily enhance the (often unwitting) privilege that white men have in an organization. In evidence, she quotes a study of architects that highlighted that white women, and women and men of color were twice as likely as white men (50% vs. 25%) to think that there were unwritten rules that they didn't know. 50% of Black women vs. only 20% of white men felt left out of informal information-sharing networks.

A very senior news leader from the global south shared the inclusion challenges she faced as she rose up the power ladder:

> *"...when I got into a decision-making role as Executive Editor, that's when I started to feel the barriers...the culture was different because I felt that I was the only woman in a decision-making capacity, and maybe it wasn't intentional, but I was kept out, they would go out and drink and decisions would happen."*

Even when women or people of color are more represented rather than being lone individuals, instead of supporting each other with what Williams calls in-group favoritism, they often

encounter the tug-of-war bias, whereby they are pitted against each other. This is most likely to happen when a representative from a minority group is a token appointment — e.g. one or a few women in a sea of men — as was the case with the senior leader who shared her perspective above.

Organizational barriers to change: five key gender and racial biases

The five gender and racial biases that Williams writes about have been derived from analysis of 18,000 responses to her team's Workplace Experiences Survey (WES), provided by employees in different industries and organizations in the US over nearly a decade. The survey results consistently found the same five patterns of bias, all of which were mentioned by some of the 41 senior news editors interviewed for this project and are quoted below.

1. *Prove-it-again* **bias** is revealed in the expectations that force less privileged groups, such as women or women of color, to prove themselves more than other groups, such as white men or men. White men are typically judged on potential, whereas women are judged on performance.

   A senior news editor from the global south shared her experience of having had to prove herself more than her male colleagues to be promoted:

   > *"It took me at least 12-13 years to become an editor [when I moved media]. I don't think it took the men that long - my previous boss went from a newspaper into television and still had a leadership position. I had to forgo my leadership position."*

   Another female senior editorial leader from the global north described the strategy that women leaders had to employ to effect change, which involved being near-perfect at their jobs.

Another senior female news leader from the global south echoed this strategy of having to exceed expectations to progress:

"[As a woman} you have to put together a compelling story, a compelling brand. They cannot ignore me... or they cannot drive me into irrelevance because what I have built today is the dominant brand in its space. It is one of the most credible, respected, and influential - and it's bringing in the most amount of money. I think that just makes it hard for them to not acknowledge the success or the leadership or my role."

2. **Tightrope bias** refers to some groups finding themselves between a rock and a hard place, needing to be politically savvier to succeed than other groups. Office politics hits women and minority groups harder than others. For example, being authoritative and ambitious are seen as desirable qualities for white men, but women walk a tightrope: if they are seen as too authoritative they risk being disliked, and if they are seen as not authoritative enough they are perceived as unqualified. People of color who are assertive may be perceived as angry, feisty, or untrustworthy, but unless they are assertive, they are unlikely to progress upwards.

Many female news leaders, especially women of color, who were interviewed for this project reported being stuck between a rock and a hard place. This is an account of a female senior news editor from the global north reflecting unprompted on the tightrope:

"You speak up and then you see that you're tagged as challenging, you're resistant when it's just – 'No, I'm here and I'm doing a job and I represent the newsroom and this is their point of view. I'm not getting emotional; I'm not being difficult.' I did feel like my male counterparts were held to a different standard and I always had to modulate and moderate my tone, and I felt like I had to think a lot harder. Men could get more emotional or angry and if I did, I would get executive coaching - the men would just be the men."

A male senior leader reflected on the unfair judgment women faced when being assertive:

"I think there is certainly a real prejudice against women who are assertive. There is an unfairness. When I'm assertive, they just expect it of me. Because our vision of a boss and past editors, are men who look like me and sound like me... When it's a woman, and they are assertive, people tend to label them 'bossy', 'aggressive', and all the rest."

3. **Tug-of-war bias** concerns the conflict that can emerge within a discriminated group, for example when bias against women and minority groups fuels competition within these groups. We often read or hear that women can be harder on other women or that women do not support each other's growth enough. This is often misattributed to women's personalities being unsupportive or power-hungry but there are systemic reasons for it. Bias against a group creates a conflict within the group. At the heart of this in-group conflict is the desire to fit in with the dominant group or indeed to acquire power by proxy. The tug-of-war bias explains why gender bias is passed from woman to woman as well as from man to man. It can also dissuade women or people from minority groups from participating in initiatives aimed at supporting their group. People of color of all genders are often first-generation professionals who are forced to prioritize financial security over any group identity.

When asked to identify the key drivers for improving women's inclusion in news leadership, 30% of the 23 senior news leaders interviewed suggested women leaders supporting other women to rise through the ranks. Interestingly, all those who believed this to be a driver were women, the underlying expectation being that women should support other women more than men should. Overall, it was a view held by almost half of the women who responded to this question (47%).

Figure 20: Impact of having children on women's earnings (2018)

Like mother, like daughter
Earnings relative to pre-child earnings, %
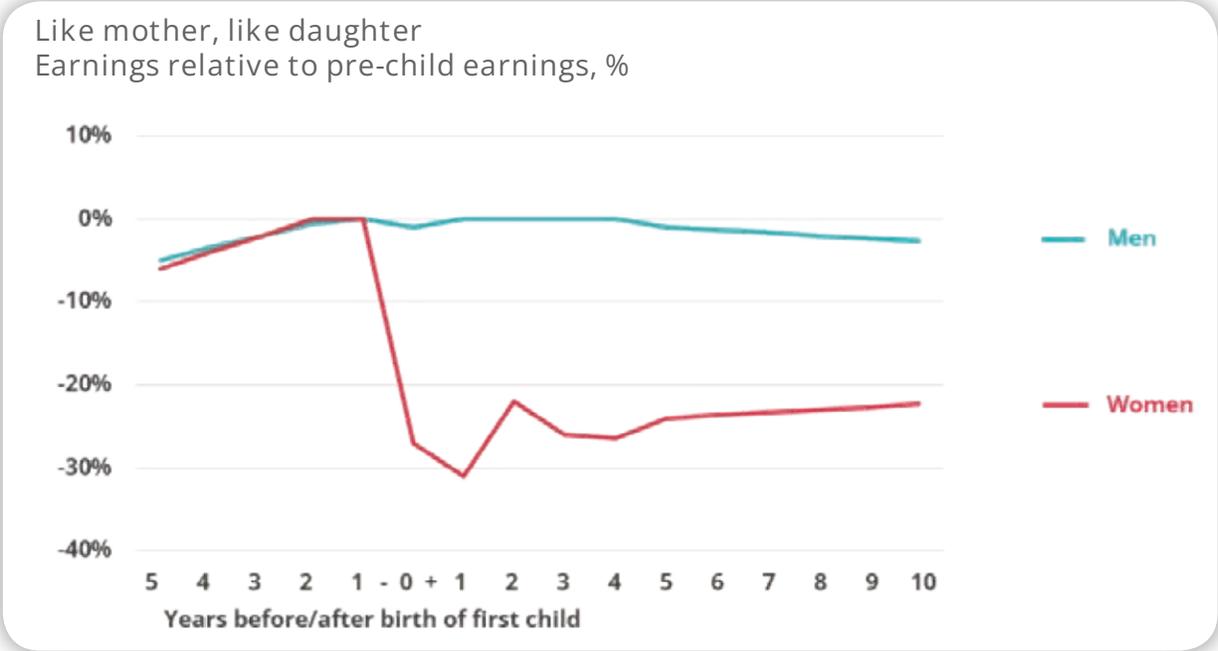
Source: The Economist, 2018

4. **Racial stereotyping** further disadvantages people of color. Williams cites examples of Asian Americans being seen as a great match for technical work but less capable of being great leaders, while Black professionals have reported high levels of social isolation and shocking levels of disrespect. According to a senior news executive in the global south, women in news, and especially women of color, are seen as "*workhorses*": great at doing the work, but not at leading. This was echoed by an interviewee - a very senior female news leader from the global north - who opened up about the frequent dismissal that women of color experience in news organizations when it comes to leading or to story angles:

> *"There are women of color who have been at [my organization] a very long time, that are just dismissed. There are women who've complained: 'I brought this story forward because I know what's happening in the community' and my white supervisor says, 'That's not a story'."*

Another perspective offered by a female senior editor of color from the global north demonstrates the interplay between two biases: tightrope and racial stereotyping.

> *"I've even had [racial stereotyping] from quite high up, a senior [white] woman in an editorial meeting [who] didn't like that I'd challenged her on an idea. She literally said - and I didn't raise my voice at all – 'No need to be so aggressive'. I had to say, 'I'm not being aggressive, I'm just giving my point of view of what I think would be best for the output'. Three white male board members came up to me afterwards and said, 'You had a really good point'. [They] didn't say it in the room, though."*

5. **Maternal wall** bias manifests in mothers being stereotyped as less committed and competent. According to Williams, this is the strongest form of gender bias. She quotes the study by sociologist Shelley Correll and coauthors that found that in the US, mothers are half as likely as those without children to get promoted, 79% less likely to

get hired, and earn less than women who have identical qualifications but no children. The dramatic impact on women's earnings of having children, relative to the impact on men's earnings, is shown in Figure 20.[57]

When asked why gender diversity in news organizations did not necessarily lead to women's inclusion in decision-making, more than half of the 19 senior news leaders who answered this question (58%) mentioned parenting as a key barrier specifically for women in this respect. News editors pointed out that the lack of work-life balance affected women more significantly through the long hours and frequent trips that journalism demands. They also alluded to the societal expectations that women restructure and adapt their careers to accommodate childcare much more than men.

One anecdote related by a female senior leader from the global north interviewed for this project drives home the reality of maternal wall bias in a world of male-dominated attitudes:

"This is a direct quote - the editor of the team told [my colleague] on her first day in a new job that she had great journalistic credentials and that he really liked her work. He casually added: 'Just make sure you leave your womb at the door'."

The attitude was so shocking that the anecdote continues to circulate within the news organization years later.

Bias can be interrupted by small, systematic, incremental, measurable changes to work processes and with individual training. It is critical to tackle systemic and organizational bias, not just individual bias

Williams optimistically argues that small steps can lead to big changes so long as they are measured and applied systematically rather than sporadically. *"We've all been looking for*

57. The Economist, 2018

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the grand gesture to solve the problem in one fell swoop. It doesn't exist. What does exist is a series of 1 percent changes that, with persistence, can help root out the bias that too often subverts our ideals of meritocracy."

The best place to start interrupting bias is at the level of organizational systemic processes, such as hiring, assignments, performance assessments, and promotions. "*We need to stop focusing nigh exclusively on helping people navigate systems that remain fundamentally unfair. We need to change the systems.*" Measuring the effectiveness of change is critical because you can only change what you can see.

Williams has found that one-off training workshops, so often provided in news organizations, do not lead to sustained results. "*You can't change a culture by doing anything just once, or once a year.*" She advocates **against sensitivity-based training** that aims to interrupt unconscious stereotypes because these are automatic and incredibly hard to shift. Instead, she argues that training should focus on circumventing stereotypes by **focusing on changing behavior** directly, thus correcting the bias outcome. "*Stereotype activation is automatic, but stereotype application can be controlled…behavior does not hinge on changing implicit biases.*" Williams calls this change concept "*cognitive override*".

The most effective training is anchored in social interaction; provides evidence that bias exists externally in the world (rather than in the person being trained) and on how it manifests at work; and gives autonomy to the participants to devise their own solutions for how to interrupt it. Depersonalizing

the training helps with what Williams calls "*identity threat*", which activates people's self-defense through a perceived threat to their dignity, or to their sense of competence or self-worth, thus being counterproductive. The interviews conducted with senior news leaders for this project included examples where feelings of threatened identity were expressed. None was more memorable than the statement by a very senior male news leader from the global north shared earlier in this report who argued that it was not a good idea for organizations to try to unpack individual bias because it was divisive and could be very toxic.

According to Williams, projecting the bias onto the external world rather than the person undergoing the training helps leaders and employees safely generate ideas on how to interrupt it, while feeling in control and committing to the suggested action themselves. Ultimately, achieving diversity and inclusion can be done with "*data, metrics, and persistence*" and through ensuring that championing diversity within the organization is not a precarious career move. **Williams' research suggests that the best way to accomplish change is to have the dominant group (white men in the global north and men in the global south) take the lead in implementing these concepts**.

In the following chapter we will be converting the insights from Chapter 7 and the suggested solutions approach from this chapter into practical interventions on how to improve women's representation and inclusion in decision-making in news leadership and in news culture.

Chapter 9

Solutions for how to close the diversity and inclusion gap in news leadership in high-profile beats

"*Diversity is not a crisis or a problem. It's actually a solution,*" reflected a senior female news leader of color from the global north with passion and frustration, perhaps in equal measure. With passion because she knew how many profound and important perspectives were hidden behind unheard journalists in newsrooms and members of the public beyond them; with frustration because she was exhausted from battling the same challenges cyclically, with no sustainable resolution in sight. In her foreword to *Belonging*[58], Karen Blackett OBE opens with a remarkably similar observation: "*Diversity is not a problem to fix. It is the solution.*" This chapter focuses on how to dismantle the brick wall that keeps women and women of color from boardrooms or from expressing their views once inside them. It draws upon the wisdom of the 41 senior news

editors who shared their perspectives as part of this project. They were asked what they thought were the key drivers for women/ethnic minorities' inclusion in decision-making in high-profile news beats or to rank different initiatives that exist to improve women's representation and inclusion in news organizations. Many were asked about the one thing in the news industry that they would change immediately if they had a magic wand. Their views were aggregated and are presented on the pages that follow. Furthermore, the ideas build on the recommendations[59] and checklist for news providers[60] generated in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News*, and on change principles derived from behavioral science insights. The solutions often blend gender and race because the interviewees often blended the two (where relevant) and it

58. Jacob et al., 2020
59. Kassova, 2020a, pp. 80-81
60. Kassova, 2020a, pp. 166-167

Figure 21: The most important interventions to implement to improve women's representation and inclusion in decision-making (2022)

	No. of interviewees	% of all who answered question	Area of focus
Changing the culture in the newsroom to be more inclusive	9	47%	Org. resources: culture/inclusion in decision-making
Developing and implementing gender equality policies	9	47%	Org. resources: people/policies
Measuring gender representation in outputs and setting targets	9	47%	Org. resources: analytical/content and outputs
Tackling unconscious gender biases among news leadership	6	32%	Org. resources: culture change/bias
Tackling gender biases of individual journalists in newsroom	3	16%	Org. resources: people/bias
Hiring a Chief Diversity Inclusion and Equity Officer	1	5%	Org. resources: strategic/change in leadership

Source: Author's interviews with 19 senior news leaders from across the global north and south (2022)
Q: Which two of the following six interventions are the most important for news organizations to implement to improve women's representation and inclusion in decision-making in news organizations...

would be impractical to attempt to draw two separate sets of solutions.

Changing the newsroom culture to be more inclusive; implementing gender equality policies; and measuring progress are perceived to be among the more successful tools in driving higher representation and inclusion in news organizations

Senior news leaders were asked to choose the two types of interventions (among six) that they thought were the most promising in improving women's representation and inclusion in decision-making in news organizations. None of the interventions, which encompassed culture, policies, biases, measurement/targets, and leadership structure received the endorsement of a

majority of the interviewed leaders. However, just under half selected three as powerful tools for change: changing the newsroom culture, developing and implementing the right policies (especially related to equal pay, childcare, and safety), and setting/measuring targets for gender representation in outputs (see Figure 21). In Chapter 7 I reported that a substantial majority of the interviewed news editors (84%) believe that newsroom cultures are still dominated by men. When asked about the one thing he would change immediately if he could, one senior male editor from the global south focused on the importance of changing newsroom culture:

> *"I think newsrooms are quite hostile environments to young girls... I think that, for me, the first thing to do will be to change that."*

The key drivers for the inclusion of women in news leadership: retaining talent, being intentional about change and introducing targets, improving women's representation in top-tier management, and modelling success on women trailblazers in high-profile beats

The most important driver of inclusion of women in senior decision-making - according to 70% of the 23 senior news editors who were asked that question - is the news organization's **ability to retain and develop editorial talent in-house** (see Figure 22). When asked for their opinion on the key drivers for improving women/minority groups' inclusion in editorial decision-making, many highlighted this factor's importance and news organizations' general underperformance in this area. The perception among many was that news companies struggle to retain and develop their talent, often because they are unaware of the problems, or are unwilling to tackle them. As we saw earlier in Chapter 7, in global north countries and in South Africa, this problem was perceived as particularly acute in relation to retaining and developing news leaders who are women of color. As previously stated, there is a need to encourage and support these groups through the processes of recruitment and promotion. In the words of a male senior news editor from the global south:

> *"[Today] there are so many openings and opportunities to excel... I would intentionally dedicate action to promoting and mentoring women [into] positions in the newsroom, end of."*

Another senior female news leader from the global north summarized the opportunity to retain diverse talent as follows:

> *"I would get creative. Unless you can make news organizations places where women can thrive and get paid properly and have opportunity, nothing else will change on what comes out of those news organizations. I do believe that this is a first step."*

Being deliberate and strategic about organizational change, including setting targets, was spontaneously highlighted as a key factor driving inclusive decision-making by more than half of those interviewed (52%). According to Laura Zelenko - a senior executive editor and founder of New Voices at Bloomberg (see the Bloomberg case study that follows this chapter) - to achieve impact in improving representation of women editors and content contributors, news organizations need to be intentional at all levels. A senior female editor from the global south eloquently articulated the opportunity:

> *"You have to be uncomfortably deliberate about the inclusion and empowerment of women. And when I say, 'uncomfortably deliberate', you have to go above and beyond your normal HR policies for those roles... [if] a woman is less qualified, less skilled or whatever it may be, and they count them out for that particular role, the question has to be, 'Why?' Because that female was not supported and not empowered along the way."*

A male senior news leader from the global north pondered the positive impact of quantifying and tracking representation and inclusion efforts.

> *"I think what helped at [organization] is being very purposeful about data: we did a fairly extensive staff study of what our leadership, our staffing and our community was, and how representative we were of the overall area... in staffing and in leadership. And tried to be very intentional about that. It's very refreshing. This is probably the first place I've been where we're actually quantifying what the gaps are numerically - and with data."*

To make its culture more inclusive, The New York Times is expanding cultural expectations to become part of employees' formal assessment (see The New York Times case study that follows this chapter).

Figure 22: Key drivers for improving inclusion in news leadership, especially in high-profile beats (2022)

	No. of interviewees	% of all who answered question	Area of focus
Retain and develop talent	16	70%	Org. resources: people/culture
Be deliberate about organizational change driven by targets	12	52%	Org. resources: strategic/analytical
Improve representation of women in top-tier management	11	48%	Org. resources: representation in leadership
Model organizational success on women editors/reporters who excel in high-profile beats	11	48%	Org. resources: people/culture
Support women's professional networks/women should support other women	8	35%	Communities/networks
Secure senior leadership buy-in	7	30%	Org. resources: people/strategic
Support family balance/improve provision of childcare	6	26%	Org. resources: people/policies
Develop coalitions with men	6	26&	Communities/networks

Source: Author's interviews with 23 senior news leaders from across the global north and south (2022)
Q: What are the key drivers for improving inclusion in news leadership, especially in high-profile beats such as politics, business, and health? (open-ended)

The interviews with senior news leaders revealed that they frequently, rightly or wrongly, automatically perceived **increased representation of women in editorial roles in high-profile beats as the solution to improving their inclusion in decision-making**. Just under half (48%) thought that having more gender and racially diverse leadership teams was the key to improving inclusion. They would use their magic wands to increase women's and minority groups' representation in senior roles and in newsrooms as a way of improving women's overall presence in news – encompassing their representation, inclusion, or portrayal (see Figure 23).

"Start by ensuring that every news team is exactly a representation of the population… We can't be having broader conversations if that itself is still up for debate… There just needs to be physically more women in the room."

This was the perspective of one senior female news leader from the global south. Another female news leader from the global north was definitive about the need to diversify representation at the highest leadership level.

Figure 23: The one thing to change immediately in the news industry to improve women's and minority groups' representation, inclusion, or portrayal in the news (2022)

	No. of interviewees	% of all who answered question	Area of focus
Improve representation of women/ethnic groups at the top: more women leaders	13	48%	Org. resources: strategic/change in leadership
Ensure equal pay	7	26%	Org. resources: people/policies
Change culture to be more empathetic/open to remove barriers for women	6	22%	Org. resources: strategic/culture change

Source: Author's interviews with 27 senior news leaders across the global north and south (2022)
Q: If you had a magic wand, what is the one thing you would change immediately in the news industry to improve women's and minority groups' representation, inclusion, or portrayal in the news? (open-ended)

"...the only way that I think that real change will come [will be] when those boards at the top have really, really diversified. It's too easy to say... 'Our [apprentice/intern] schemes are really diverse' - but they're not staying, are they? It has to be top down - I don't think anything else will really, really shift the dial."

The findings in this report point to representation being an important hygiene factor in empowering women and minority groups, but not truly a driver of their inclusion in decision-making.

Just under half of the interviewees who were questioned about the key drivers of inclusion highlighted strong examples of women journalists and editors running and excelling in high-profile beats such as politics, economy/business or foreign affairs. Modelling future success on these women trailblazers was seen as an important step forward.

Allyship, whether through networks, support groups, or female or male colleagues, is seen as critical for women/women of color's inclusion in organizational decision-making

The women news leaders interviewed, including those of color, almost always

referenced how important allyship had been for their career progression, for maintaining good mental health, or for combating the isolation which arose from the continuous pressures engendered by being part of a minority group in news leadership. One senior female news editor from the global north shared her perspective on the difference that women supporting other women makes in news leadership:

"I definitely have seen a difference. There have been many times where I've been the only female manager in the room, then I've been one of two, then one of four, you see that difference as the numbers grow, and that women start supporting one another... Women need to support one another."

A third of the interviewed senior leaders mentioned **external professional networks, in-company support groups or the support of other women acting as enablers** as a driver of inclusion (see Figure 22).

A senior female news leader from the global north reflected on the importance of in-house, cross-departmental female leadership support groups in helping women feel more integrated.

> *"I think it was essential for that kind of [women leaders'] support group to have been created to give us all the confidence and fortitude, that we're all not experiencing things in isolation."*

Another offered her ideas about the effectiveness of senior individuals and support groups in propelling women to leadership roles:

> *"There are people [at my organization] who are very interested in growing the voices at the table, and [support for increasing female leadership] sometimes comes from other leaders who are sponsoring women. There are also women's groups at different news organizations, so for instance, we have an employee resource group that focuses on women, and they support each other, and promote each other."*

A quarter of those asked about the drivers of inclusion highlighted the **important role that men leaders hold as allies** for women and minority groups. Their perceived role is encapsulated powerfully in this quote from a male senior news leader from the global south:

> *"There must be a concerted effort to build networks of solidarity amongst progressive men in the organization with women who are advancing other women and trying to get them into more senior positions. This sort of coalition can make a massive difference because they [men] can do the calling out - and it's helpful to have men in that camp who are calling out the discriminative behavior, or the silencing of voices [resulting from] the boys' club calling on the familiar voices again and again and again."*

Buy-in from both senior leadership and grassroots underpin the most successful initiatives for change

Almost a third of the interviewed news leaders who were asked about the drivers of inclusion mentioned the importance of ensuring **buy-in**

for change at the very top of the organization (see Figure 22). They argued that without it there was little chance of success. In the words of a senior male editor from the global north:

> *"The mechanism [for change] - you've got the business and you've got the owners, who apply policies. And so, it's about convincing them. Senior editors are very busy, they're operating as machines and so, if they're told these things from above, they do do them."*

Laura Zelenko, who is leading a very successful battery of initiatives for improving women's representation at Bloomberg, argues that senior endorsement and visible regular tracking of progress through data underpin the success at Bloomberg.

At the same time, the BBC's 50:50 initiative[61] – arguably amongst the most successful global initiatives in improving diversity in news outputs – has also been driven from the grassroots. According to Lara Joannides – Creative Diversity Lead at BBC News and 50:50 who was interviewed for this project – it is imperative that journalists who are involved in any diversity and inclusion initiatives buy into the vision and the process.

> *"...one of the things that we noted was, it really has to be voluntary. We're actually quite strict with ourselves, as a 50:50 team, in terms of applying this principle, where the team has to want to do it. There were instances where departments were signed up by the senior editor, which is great, because we do need senior buy-in. But then, there were certain teams within those departments who weren't brought on board. They were just told: 'You must do this', and if they didn't quite get it, for whatever reason, those teams ended up costing us as a 50:50 team so much time and effort with absolutely no results in the end."*

The BBC 50:50 initiative is championed by the BBC's leadership while being driven at grassroots level, which has proven to be a powerful and winning combination to drive change.

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61. See the BBC 50:50 case study in Kassova, 2020a, pp. 132-134

A senior news leader from the global north reflected that without genuine engagement at an individual journalist level, any efforts are doomed to stall.

> *"...I've worked really hard on changing culture, but you have to get the individual journalists who are doing the stories to help with that effort... when you involve individual journalists, they push the effort, sometimes past the news leadership. We tapped into a power I didn't know that we had."*

The role of social norms, tackling bias, and the impact of DEI officers are potential blind spots for news leaders when thinking about improving gender and minority groups' inclusion

Most of the questions about the barriers and drivers for inclusion of women and minority groups that were put to the senior news leaders as part of this project were open-ended, aiming to gauge their spontaneous views. The existence of pro-male social norms, which was highlighted in the previous *Missing Perspectives* reports, was a noticeable gap in their responses when asked to identify the barriers to inclusion. This systemic lens that is locked in people's upbringing and attitudes was almost entirely missing as a perceived barrier that needs to be tackled. The interviews also revealed a very weak, or even non-existent belief in the positive impact on change that a dedicated Chief DEI Officer or DEI Director would generate. Only one person mentioned this role as being important when presented with a list of interventions (see Figure 21). In addition, there was scarce endorsement of interventions which aim to tackle individual journalists' biases (endorsed by 16%) and only moderate endorsement of interventions that aim to tackle institutional biases at a news leadership level (endorsed by 32%). Joan Williams, in her *Bias Interrupted* - a focus of the previous chapter - has addressed the self-protection mechanism that is part and parcel of being human and acts as a barrier to embracing initiatives that aim to intercept unconscious bias. To circumvent this resistance, she advises that any training in this area is depersonalized but also culminates in a list of actions that the person undergoing training commits to. This will help in applying any newly gained self-awareness to real work situations.

Practical solution ideas for making change happen at the news leadership-level: from raising awareness to breaking down barriers and creating new habits

Insights from behavioral science[62] argue that to make change happen, be it including more women or women of color in decision-making or anything else, three key elements need to align (see Figure 24). Firstly, we need to be aware and accept that there is a problem that needs to be resolved. Secondly, we need to identify the barriers (e.g., habits, biases) that prevent change from taking place and thirdly, we need to develop new habits that replace the old habits, enabling new ways of working or behaving to be established. While behavioral scientists have traditionally focused on change at an individual level, I would argue that the same principles apply if we seek to introduce change at an organizational or societal level.

The news leaders who were interviewed for this project generously shared numerous ideas for improving women and women of color's inclusion in decision-making in news leadership. These ideas are presented below, grouped according to whether they aim to improve awareness, break down existing barriers, or create new habits at an organizational or individual level.

62. Behavioral science builds an understanding of how people react psychologically and respond behaviorally to interventions, environments, and stimuli.

Figure 24: Elements which drive change at societal, organizational, and individual levels

| Increase awareness | Remove barriers | Create new habits |
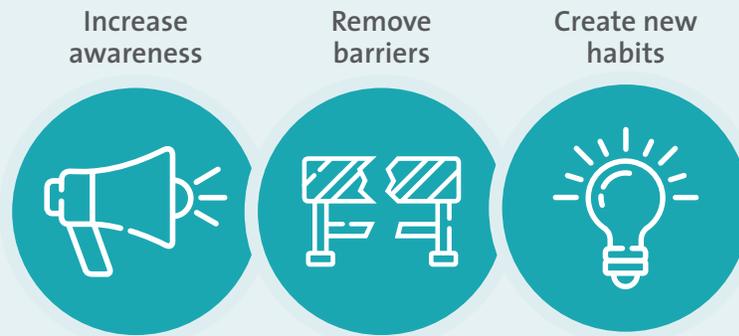
Source: AKAS analysis (2022)

Raising awareness of the problems is key

RAISING AWARENESS AT AN ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL:

1. Sensitize leadership through gender and racial sensitivity training including unconscious bias. Raise awareness of existing gender stereotyping in high-profile beats (e.g., politics, economics, health, foreign affairs)

A male news leader from the global south articulated the case for the importance of unconscious bias training to tackle the gendered assignment of beats:

"…To also include in our training programs, gender sensitivity modules - because sometimes people are biased, and they are not even probably aware of it. We all benefit at different levels from the rewards of discrimination… if you're a white person, if you walk into restaurants and sometimes you are treated differently than a Black person, because of your skin color, you will benefit, despite the fact that you are not racist, from a systemic problem that has been in place for centuries. Ditto for a male reporter. A male reporter and a female reporter enter the newsroom, and the editor feels, 'Oh, she's female, she's probably going to get married next year so I shouldn't put her in a

difficult beat like business, she should go cover entertainment'. He's being well-intentioned, but it's really from a place of ignorance, because [in effect] he has been discriminating against the females. So training, to get people to identify and become familiar with their biases that they are not even aware of, is also one way to redress the problem."

2. Create a more empathetic/caring culture by consciously toning down the competitive "win-lose" journalistic attitude in newsrooms

When asked how they would use a magic wand to immediately change the news industry, a fifth of interviewed leaders chose to change the culture to be more empathetic (see Figure 23). One quote from a senior news leader in the global north stood out for its emblematic description of an environment that had led to burnout and the shutting down of perspectives. They were explaining what difference female leaders had made to the newsroom culture:

"[Before that] it was just a one-dimensional leadership style: 'Are we winning? Are you losing? I don't care how you feel, I don't care that I worked you for a year and you haven't been home - are we winning? Oh, we're winning. Okay. We're losing? We're losing. It's your problem.' So, it was literally that one dimensional leadership versus three-dimensional leadership that understands that high performance goes with healthy minds and

healthy bodies, and healthy home lives and healthy workplaces."

3. **Roll out engagement surveys of employees which measure perceived inclusion of employees and leaders**

A female senior news editor shared her experience of the positive impact of engagement surveys:

"One good thing that the company did do was these engagement surveys of employees. What surfaced, very clearly, was that gap in female engagement in the news organization, across the board... that was a good tool to put numbers to the qualitative feedback they were getting... The survey showed that women did not feel supported or engaged, and that did kick off some more institutional focus on the gap in participation or engagement. And that followed years of us privately saying, 'This isn't an environment where women feel like they can thrive, or we all feel like we're hitting a glass ceiling here'."

4. **Measure and track the success of DEI initiatives. Measure diversity and inclusion intersectionally**

The New York Times in their case study argue that having diversity in a news organization does not equate to having an inclusive culture. Any measurement of success has to track progress in diversity (through counting) as well as in inclusion (through surveys and interviews). The Managing Editor of Mint in India, Sruthijith KK, whose news leadership team is significantly more gender-diverse than in the average news organization in India, argues that diversity needs to be approached intersectionally, factoring in identity categories such as ethnicity, regionality, religion and others (see the Mint case study that follows this chapter). Otherwise, organizations risk perpetuating privilege within each gender.

5. **Beware of reacting to external trigger events and then recoiling in discomfort. Accept fear and guilt as part of the journey to change**

Chapter 7 explored evidence from the global north which suggested that George Floyd's murder triggered a knee-jerk reaction among many news leadership teams, creating a number of conversations and initiatives aimed to improve the representation of minority groups, which were subsequently shut down. As shown in Chapter 7, some fizzled out partly because the motivation was reactive rather than born out of an earnest desire for change, and partly because of the uncomfortable fear and guilt that surfaced for the white majority in news leadership teams.

RAISING AWARENESS AT AN INDIVIDUAL LEVEL:

6. **Educate yourself about the taxing experiences of minority groups in the newsroom or news leadership. Be more empathetic than competitive**

A female news editor from the global north explained the importance of leaning forward and educating oneself about matters such as racial discrimination. The alternative is to place a psychological burden on the person from a racial/ethnic minority or women by asking them to fill in knowledge gaps for you. Another senior female news editor highlighted the importance of allowing a more empathetic and collaborative rather than competitive approach in newsrooms.

"... it wasn't easy at first to get to that point where I could say something and be respected and not get a black mark instead. Then my rise was roughly, I remember around 2014/15. They sent me to xx to try to take that combination of good journalism and empathy and wanting to create a good culture where people want to work."

7. Set up informal check-ins/mentoring sessions with people who are not direct reports

Taking responsibility for hearing all perspectives, especially when the leadership team was more homogeneous in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, or other identity-defining categories, served a senior female news leader well in both her leadership and her journalism.

"When there were senior women in my newsroom – high-level women of color but not my direct reports – I realized early on in my tenure that I needed to make sure I was hearing from them regularly. So I created touchpoints for some of them, where I would meet with them once every two weeks, individually. These were check-ins. I realized that if I was going to build successful career paths for people of color and women who are underrepresented, that I had to show specific interest in them. And therefore, I would probably hear more, in return, about the dynamics within a newsroom, that I wouldn't be exposed to if I didn't make those connections."

8. Voluntary reverse mentoring

One idea that was brought forward by some leaders was for senior members of news leadership who want to truly understand the pressures of journalists from marginalized groups, to consider asking to be mentored by a junior member of staff, thereby demonstrating their openness to listening and learning. In the words of a senior news leader:

"Some of the younger people coming in now are coming in with a much, much firmer and more passionate sense of identity, and the stories and things that aren't being talked about. We need to almost reverse-mentor, so that we go to those people and say, 'What are we missing here?'"

However, emphasis must be given to the voluntary nature of such initiatives because they may place additional burdens on more junior staff members from marginalized communities.

9. Gender/racial/cultural sensitivity and unconscious bias training at individual journalist level

"I would put in place programs to change the knowledge [self-awareness] profiles of people [in news organizations], starting from the youngest, so that we've armed them with knowledge and skills and attitudes that they wouldn't have had otherwise...and gender sensitivity, cultural knowledge – knowledge about what the culture that you live in does to you. The tools to manage, to know what's happening to you, and the tools that give you confidence to manage those patriarchies."

This was the case made for individual training by a senior female leader from the global south. Given the criticality of grassroots endorsement of any company-wide initiative, it is important that individual journalists are well-versed in the problems that women and minority groups face.

Breaking down the barriers that lead to women of all colors' exclusion from decision-making

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS AT AN ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL:

10. Develop and put in place equitable policies. Place special emphasis on safety policies

In its recommendations, *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* outlined seven policy areas that news organizations should address to counteract gender inequity. These are: an overall gender equality policy including equal pay; parental leave & childcare assistance; flexible working; recruitment; return to work after a career break; sexual harassment; and career development and training.

A senior editorial lead from the global south encapsulated the need to make the environment for women journalists safer and to resolve the ever-restrictive childcare problem for women.

"... If I could guarantee safety to all my women colleagues - and the safety of access to their stories - just mobility, that's huge for all of us here. And then give them the infrastructure support of taking care of their child because the child becomes our responsibility as well."

The Safety Gap chapter in Part 2 of this report explores the extraordinary safety problem that women face. Part of the problem that female journalists have reported is that news organizations remain largely unresponsive to the safety plight of their female journalists. This points to the urgent need to crystallize specific safety policies designed to protect women journalists. It is important to expand any sexual harassment policies to a general safety policy, ensuring that the institution protects women from general misogyny online and offline, at the workplace and on social media.

11. **Introduce a policy of transparency on pay gap reporting**

Tracking the pay gap is proving to be an effective tool in redressing it. For example, introducing legislation which forced all UK companies who have a headcount of 250 or more to report their gender pay gap from 2017 produced positive results in the UK. When these reporting requirements were eased during the COVID-19 pandemic, the gap again widened.[63]

A senior female news leader from a high-profile beat in the global south summed up her battles around ensuring she was paid fairly.

"I think you need to be built in a certain way, to be pushy and get to a leadership position. I have asked for [a pay rise] because I felt I was getting

much lower than I deserved... The problem is, a lot of us don't know what our peers get paid."

Another female leader from a different country in the global south shared her frustration at the persistent pay gap at leadership level. She believes this should be tackled more urgently than any of the other gaps.

"The pay gap is something that cannot be a reality in 2022, particularly because you now have more women in leadership, and what you find is that their low payment has been justified."

12. **Measure the diversity and inclusion baseline, introduce targets, and track success. Consider quotas temporarily**

To create sustained change, news leadership teams must be guided by evidence. Setting representation targets, tracking progress against them and adapting processes to meet them is key to success, suggested a male senior leader from the global south:

"I probably will put a positive discrimination policy in place, but then only for a period, to bring in more women, to also widen our recruitment process to specifically target women, because if there is underrepresentation... you will then have to expand the recruitment process and make it more robust to particularly attract women. And then do that until you have parity in place... to ensure equality and see the parity going forward."

13. **Review recruitment processes to accommodate diverse talent**

One of the steps taken by The New York Times, as outlined in their case study that follows, was to change the way they recruit, develop, and promote everyone in the organization, to ensure fairness and foster diversity and inclusive decision-making. A senior female

63. Urquhart, 2021

news leader from the global north remarked on the importance of adjusting the recruitment process to attract diverse talent.

"In the interview itself, we need to think about the questions we're asking. If we're supporting people to get them to the interview stage, just to ask them the same old questions that we've always asked - that are designed to get the same old people we've always got - then it's not going to make a difference. So, think about doing things differently - like a competency interview, but also to follow that up with a strengths-based interview."

14. Launch mentorship and bursary portfolio programs, media and confidence-building training, and initiatives that aim to increase a sense of belonging for women of all colors

In Part 3 of this report, we will be analyzing the initiatives that exist globally, that aim to redress gender inequality in news. One of the key gaps that has been identified is the scarcity of initiatives that focus on making cultures more inclusive of women. There is a need to create more such initiatives, targeting them at everyone within an organization. In addition, to boost women's confidence which has been held back by centuries of systemic discrimination, media training programs that contain confidence building modules would be beneficial to women's professional growth.

"There has to be some sort of levelling of the playing field, and that comes through deliberate programs, like mentorship programs, like a bursary portfolio for females' skills development. And somehow, to create the equitable outcome, it has to be secured in favor of females - so that you can have more women ready to take up positions that are meaningful and push the envelope",

commented a senior news leader from the global south.

On this issue, Bloomberg's Laura Zelenko shared that the organization's New Voices

training program has been successful not only in boosting women's visibility as contributors on TV news, but also in boosting their overall confidence to progress in their careers. Dr Yemisi Akinbobola, CEO of African Women in Media (AWiM), believes that media training tailored to women journalists helps them thrive and progress in their careers (see the case study about AWiM following this chapter).

15. Allyship: develop support groups for women of all colors, with men, and beyond the newsroom

The evidence presented earlier in this chapter points to the success of several types of allyship initiatives in improving the representation and especially the inclusion of women in news organizations. These include:

- external industry support groups
- internal cross-departmental support groups
- in-departmental support groups
- individual leaders supporting women journalists
- peers supporting peers.

BREAKING EXISTING BARRIERS AT AN INDIVIDUAL LEVEL:

16. Take on DEI initiatives for a finite period. Work in a "relay" manner to avoid burn out

As shown in Chapter 7, women news leaders of color who often lead DEI initiatives on top of their daily jobs, frequently reach a point of complete mental exhaustion and physical burnout. To avoid getting to this point, it is important for news organizations and individuals to ensure that a person's tenure working on these challenging initiatives is limited and that the work is handed over to someone else, preferably to an expert with extensive DEI experience. A senior female news leader reflected on how the process of work could be optimized and made more bearable.

"But I also feel and see around me and read in all the literature, and hear from other people, that there does come a point where you get burnt out. And a really good thing about what's happening now is that people accept the concept of being burnt out and are more willing to think, 'How do we manage that?' And for me, and lots of other people, it's, 'Well, maybe at this point, it's like a relay. You do your time; you try to be really aware of the point at which you can't help them to do any more. And then you hand over to other people.' You do what you can within the bounds of staying healthy and sane, and having a career....."

Developing new habits

DEVELOPING NEW HABITS AT AN ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL:

17. Walk the talk: be explicit about your endorsement of racial, ethnic and gender diversity in the organization's strategy and values

According to SK, Mint's Editor-in-Chief, to improve its representation of women in leadership and in coverage, a news organization must integrate that intentionality into the organization's strategy and values. This approach is also evident at The New York Times with its whole-company effort to make the news culture more inclusive.

18. Share responsibility for change across the organization

In its DEI strategy and action plan for a more inclusive culture, The New York Times stipulated that the work must span all functions and departments, and that the responsibility for transforming the culture lies with everyone (not one person, group or function). This prevents unfair and unrealistic expectations being placed on news leaders/journalists from minority groups to solve their own discrimination problems.

19. Develop talent retention programs. Launch initiatives that support the promotion of middle managers e.g., senior editor workshops

Bloomberg's Zelenko shared the organization's successful approach to promoting women by creating an initiative that aims to develop senior reporters into editors.

"You look at the reporter level, we're majority women, that's not uncommon. You look at the editing level, and I don't think we hit 40% globally, and if you look at certain teams, it might be under 20%. So how do you change that? So we designed a workshop, we call it a Senior Editor Workshop for Women... for people that we know have strong editing skills that have, for some reason, not been brought into that space. We've tracked what's happened to those women after they've gone through the program. I think we've put more than 60 through. One has left the company, only one, and the majority have been promoted into new roles."

Another senior news editor from the global north reflected on the critical role that a minority journalism workshop had played in her career choice and progression.

"I got into journalism because I took part in a minority journalism workshop in my hometown newspaper, and I was just encouraged very much to spread my wings, to try new things. They really supported my career and helped me learn new skills, so that bolstered me as I travelled through. I had mentorship from an early age, which I think is really, really key."

A senior news leader from the global south also reflected on the clear gap in programs aiming to prepare women for senior leadership:

"Improvement is important: at a junior level, at a middle management level - because it is the middle management level that is a funnel for top leadership - and then what are the training opportunities available for women, and for setting them up for senior management?"

One senior news leader suggested that to recruit a diverse team and then be able to retain them, it is important to **dedicate managers who monitor and create opportunities for all members of staff**.

"We have just hired, in the newsroom, a person focused on newsroom talent and career development, and a separate person focused on recruiting. One of the issues is that editors are really busy, they are doing everything from assigning to editing, to making sure people are safe and secure, so things like who gets to go [on assignments] gets left off the table, and people go to who they're comfortable with and who they work with. And that leaves out a whole bunch of people, so we're really trying to make an effort to look at who's getting those opportunities."

20. Launch initiatives that support individual women's psychological and physical safety and wellbeing

In view of the unique safety and inclusion challenges that women/women of color news leaders and journalists face across all the countries of focus in this study and beyond, which are evidenced in this part and Part 2 of the report, it is imperative to develop programs that aim to support women's mental health and safety as well as their wellbeing. These programs could be based on individual coaching and/or group support.

DEVELOPING NEW HABITS AT AN INDIVIDUAL LEVEL:

21. Lean forward if you are from the majority group in the news leadership/newsroom. Be proactive, not reactive. Champion the career progression of women and women of color

Almost every interviewed senior news editor who is a woman/woman of color highlighted key people in the newsroom they worked in who had helped them to grow and develop. Here is a powerful account – one of many – from a senior female news editor of color:

"There are individuals who definitely aided my growth and who, from day one have recognized what I've done. There are also people who have been there who have said: 'We see you, we see your commitment'. I've always had those people who have said: 'We want more from you. We expect more', and they've certainly given me opportunities."

If you are a [white] man in a position of power, lean forward.

22. Do not expect women or minority groups to lead and resolve their own underrepresentation or exclusion. Offer to support. Take initiative. If you are a woman of color, do not take on DEI initiatives if this is too emotionally taxing

The analysis of the interviews conducted for this project and laid out in Chapter 7 revealed the extraordinary pressure and high expectations that are placed on women, and especially on women of color, to resolve their own discrimination or exclusion, within a context of an existing power imbalance that is not in their favor. To stop this from happening, individual leaders and journalists must be aware of this pressure and actively seek to alleviate it by championing the cause of women/women of color in the news. Offer to support, and reduce expectations of the role that women and women of color should take in their own empowerment. If you are a woman or a man of color, only get involved in DEI initiatives if you are in a strong frame of mind. Grant yourself permission not to be involved, especially if you feel that you have limited resources at your disposal to resolve the structural issues. Remember that the power mostly sits with (white) men in the global north and men in the global south, and that they hold the most powerful tools to make change happen. If you are a man, lean forward.

Trailblazers who are advancing women's inclusion in news leadership

Introduction to four case studies

Part 3 of this report will focus on an analysis and overview of 168 news initiatives that have been implemented by 118 organizations in six regions globally. These initiatives, which AKAS researched over several months, are dedicated to tackling various aspects of the gender inequality that persists in news. At the forefront are news organizations which stand out for their innovative efforts to bring about change in women's representation and inclusion (including for women of color in countries with multi-racial populations) in decision-making at a senior level in their organization and/or in high-profile beats such as business/economics. The New York Times in the US, Mint in India, and Bloomberg across the globe are among the trailblazing organizations

featuring as case studies in this section. They are joined by the international NGO, African Women in Media, which aims to improve women's representation and inclusion in news media and coverage at a pan-African level.

The following four case studies are anchored in interviews with Mint's Editor-in-Chief Sruthijith KK, Bloomberg's Senior Executive Editor and founder of New Voices, Laura Zelenko; a spokesperson from The New York Times; and AWiM's founder Dr Yemisi Akinbobola. The interviews not only explore the work of each of these organizations in improving gender equity at leadership and organizational level, but also what has been learned along the way and what future endeavors are planned or envisaged in the areas of gender and racial equity.

Case study: The New York Times in the global north

The New York Times is the most read English-speaking newspaper website in the world. It reaches 90m monthly unique visitors in the US online[64], has 4m YouTube subscribers and 52m Twitter followers. 56% of its US audience are women.[65] 1,665,684 external websites link to The New York Times, of which 1,192 are governmental and 7,829 educational.[66]

In 2020 (and since), women represented 52% of both staff and leadership (a majority for the first time) at The New York Times; people of color represented 33% of the staff and 23% of leadership. The New York Times has set a goal of increasing the representation of Black/African American and Latino/Hispanic colleagues in leadership by 50% by 2025.[67] They have also introduced a new procurement process[68] to promote transparency, integrity, fairness, competition, diversity, and accountability. In an update in July 2021[69], they published for the first time data around staff retention and promotion by race and ethnicity to offer a complete picture of their current situation and where they need to improve. Their next report will be published in 2022 and they are confident they are currently on track to meet DEI goals and targets.

On reading The New York Times's diversity report[70] and watching Deputy Managing Editor Carolyn Ryan interviewed on CNN in February 2021, I was struck by the sophisticated narrative around the need for cultural change and why high levels of representation are not enough for inclusion in decision-making. "*Over the past several years, we've added hundreds of staffers of color to our company into our newsroom, but our culture really hadn't changed. Our workplace culture was essentially the same culture that was ... in the 90s... There are unwritten rules for how you get ahead, how you get the good beats, how you get the good assignments. That kind of culture really hurts people of color,*" stated Ryan.[71]

I approached The New York Times editorial team for an interview to understand the successes and learnings from its cultural transformation and was re-directed to the communications team. A spokesperson responded to my questions in writing. The answers which follow have been edited for brevity.

Q: What prompted The New York Times to announce so transparently in February 2021 that the newsroom culture wasn't inclusive enough and needed to change?

A: Our diversity, equity and inclusion assessment and strategy came after a clear signal from our staff — including but not limited to members of the newsroom — who told us that covering our world better means elevating and drawing more fully on the deep talent within our ranks. Our call was to transform the culture of The New York Times to become more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. The newsroom was part of the company-wide call to action, and subsequently the newsroom formulated a more specific plan informed by months of work by a committee of newsroom journalists.

64. Comscore, average of 2021 numbers
65. Comscore, average of 2021 numbers
66. Ahrefs, 21 March 2022
67. The New York Times, 2020
68. The New York Times, 2022
69. The New York Times, 2021
70. The New York Times, 2020
71. CNN, 2020

Diversity had not translated into an inclusive culture

At The Times, we had made significant progress in diversifying the company but there was still more work to be done. People of color — and particularly women of color — remained notably underrepresented in leadership. And the company's focus had primarily been on building a more diverse staff, with less attention paid to building a more inclusive culture. While welcoming more people of color to The Times was important, it is their experience once they are here that determines whether they are able to contribute to their fullest potential and rise into positions of leadership. Transformation and progress does not just come from DEI programs and initiatives, but embedding equality and inclusion into your culture.

Several months of interviews and analysis led us to conclude that The Times was a difficult environment for many of our colleagues from a wide range of backgrounds and demographics. This was particularly true for people of color, many of whom described unsettling day-to-day workplace experiences and did not see themselves reflected in leadership at The Times.

The New York Times started by acknowledging what was already working

Our mission attracts a diverse group of extraordinarily talented people to The Times. In past employee surveys, 95 percent of Times employees said they felt pride in working here and the majority of employees reported fulfilling careers and positive experiences. The Times has also made meaningful efforts in recent years toward achieving greater diversity, including rolling out unconscious bias training; requiring diverse candidate slates and interview panels in hiring; publishing a diversity and inclusion report annually; and launching a newsroom fellowship program to help diversify our industry.

Q: The New York Times has announced that transforming its culture is the most important element of its strategy. What are the elements included in that transformation?

The pillars of an inclusive culture: a behavioral framework, DEI being tied to mission, empowered teams, and a full launch of the strategy

A: We have identified elements of our culture that have made The Times an unwelcoming place for certain employees. We are committed to changing our company culture to address this challenge, including:

- Creating a company-wide behavioral framework that identifies the standards expected of all employees and managers to ensure effective people-leadership
- Explicitly tying diversity, equity and inclusion to our mission and values, which is a central component of the behavioral framework; and integrating the framework intentionally into our day-to-day programs, practices, processes, and interactions across the company
- Entrusting responsibility for continuing the work we have begun to functional leads and implementation teams with the authority and resources necessary
- Completing the launch of the Inclusion and Strategy Execution Office and building on our recent communications enhancements to ensure leaders consider a variety of voices and perspectives
- In the newsroom, we are changing the way we recruit, develop and promote all journalists — reporters, editors, producers, coders, designers, operations managers and others — as well as taking steps to support this work on an ongoing basis to encourage diversity, ensure fairness and foster greater inclusiveness in our culture. We have put in place infrastructure and initial steps to provide ongoing support for this work, including:
- A new Culture & Careers department, run by newsroom leaders in partnership with H.R., to provide guidance, support and resources to managers and employees in building career paths and improving newsroom culture
- New initiatives and programs to promote career development and mobility, creating internal opportunities for employees to grow and advance their careers
- Better systems for personnel decisions, with panels of newsroom leaders using a new, clearer process to ensure consistency and equity
- Creating diversity, equity and inclusion plans by department, making these a core commitment, with clear goals and plans for achieving them
- A wider range of voices shaping our report, using a range of forums and new tools to ensure that more people from a variety of backgrounds and roles in the newsroom participate in the creative process.

Diverse newsrooms result in broader audiences

Increasing the diversity of our newsroom — more people of color, more women, more people from outside major metropolitan areas, more younger journalists and more non-Americans — is critical. We believe a diverse workforce enables us to create the strongest news report and tell the best stories that resonate with a broad audience and more fully reflect the world we serve.

Q: What have been the key learnings in your journey since the report was launched in February 2021?

Shared responsibility for change

A: Our DEI strategy and action plan spans all functions and departments, and it is up to all of us (not one person, one group or one function) to transform our culture and create an environment that

makes everyone feel welcomed and supported. We must continue to build and routinely evaluate systems and people practices to enable sustainable change.

Changing culture takes time, and requires tenacity and multiple perspectives

We have also learned that it is important to be thoughtful in how we approach this work in order to be successful. It takes time, patience, and persistence to transform a culture sustainably.

Involving voices and inputs from a range of backgrounds and experiences has been a key driver of our success. In the last year, employees have helped make The Times a better place to work across a wide range of issues – from redefining our hiring practices, to improving fertility benefits, creating new policies like childcare reimbursement during the pandemic, and establishing our new series of Global Days Off.

Leadership development curriculum

Representation in the various leadership roles matters and makes our work at The Times stronger. We aim to build infrastructure that develops strong, diverse leadership pipelines, and provides a leadership development curriculum and mentorship opportunities. The people management curriculum offered to new managers has been enhanced, and we are revamping our mentorship program to better support growth and career paths. The honesty and transparency of our report has drawn a lot of great leaders and talent to The Times as they want to be part of this work. The Times has also hired nearly a dozen new deputies to support newsroom leaders and expand their capacity to focus on leadership, development and other team needs in addition to the core demands of running the news report. We will continue adding more such roles as well as further infrastructure to support and enable excellence in leadership.

Q: When the report was released top executives at The New York Times said that they were committed to bringing about fundamental changes to the company's workplace culture. Could you share some of the changes that have worked particularly well?

A: Company-wide, being direct about our challenges, our goals and how we plan to address them, and regularly discussing each across the organization, has been the most important first step to ensure our commitment is taken seriously and prioritized by the whole company.

The next step was to ensure the company had a shared understanding of what we want our culture to be and develop a company-wide behavioral framework to be our guide. This framework distills our six values — independence, integrity, curiosity, respect, collaboration, and excellence — into observable behaviors, defining how we should approach our work, as well as engage with, manage and lead each other. The framework tackles three parts of our plan to change our culture: first, tying diversity, equity, and inclusion to our values; second, setting clear expectations and norms for our employees; and third, outlining clear expectations for effective people leadership.

Of course, changing culture takes time, and it is still early days. In the newsroom, in addition to the early steps described above, we have launched a new development program that has given employees the opportunity to embed in a different area of the newsroom to get valuable experience, grow, learn new skills, collaborate, build relationships, recharge, and possibly find what their next job could be — within The Times. We have also expanded our commitment to having an impact on DEI in the wider journalism industry with career development and mobility programs like The New York Times Fellowship Program (a one-year work program for up-and-coming journalists). We recently launched The New York Times Corps (a pipeline program for early-college students to receive career guidance from Times journalists over a multiyear period) and Editing Residency program, announced a soon-to-launch local investigative journalism fellowship program led by outgoing executive editor Dean Baquet, and started an employee giving initiative, seeded with Times funding, to support several outside organizations dedicated to increasing diversity in journalism, technology and media.

Q: What are your plans for improving the inclusion culture in the next two to three years?

A: While we may very well launch new programs and initiatives building on those we already have, we primarily want to give our existing strategy and plan the time it requires to take shape and have its full impact, rather than spinning up new initiatives before others have had time to have their full potential impact.

Cultural expectations becoming part of formal assessment of employees

We wanted to ensure there was a shared understanding of expectations for all employees. Excellent work will always be a key determinant of success at The Times. But we will increasingly rely on this broader set of expectations as we consider career paths and opportunities for our staffers at every level of the company and are beginning to formally include them as part of the annual performance review.

Holding yourself accountable

Additionally, for several years now, we have published diversity data to hold ourselves accountable for progress in diversifying The Times and its leadership. We will also provide updates on progress beyond diversity data. Making The Times a more equitable place where all employees have equal opportunities for success will continue to be a top priority for our team.

Case study: Mint in the global south

What is Mint?

Mint is a leading business newspaper based in Delhi, India. It reaches 18m monthly unique visitors online[72], and has 253,000 YouTube subscribers and 2m Twitter followers. 41% of its audience are women.[73] 223,353 external websites link to Mint, of which 128 are governmental and 770 educational.[74]

In 2016 the Guardian reported that Mint was *"breaking ground in an industry that has largely been dominated by men and counts 50% women among its staff."*

When it launched in 2007, Mint was reported to have made gender equality part of its business plan, creating the role of gender editorial consultant to ensure diversity.[75]

I speak with Mint's Editor-in-Chief, Sruthijith KK (referred to as SK), about Mint's standing in diversity and inclusion since he took over the top editor job more than a year ago (having previously been part of the launch team as copy editor). Despite his impressive career ascent in the last 15 years, SK comes across as humble. He admits to having made an exception in speaking with me about Mint's D&I work, diverging from Mint's ethos of doing things *"without drawing attention to them"*. He is also quick to clarify that he cannot take credit for Mint's initial gender equality strategy, and instead is keen to give credit to the founding editor Raju Narisetti who *"had been conscious of the need to place gender as a key value in the organization's journey."*

> *"In many ways Mint was ahead of its time. It was conscious of diversity and inclusion before these dimensions became talking points in India. Now, of course, everybody cares and talks about them",*

concludes SK.

What makes Mint exceptional?

Gender diversity is viewed multi-dimensionally and supported by policies

SK explains that Mint's diversity efforts cover several dimensions: newsroom staffing, leadership, and coverage. The latter spans the diversity of issues relevant to women, as well as diversity in expert voices *"making sure that we are not just calling the same cohort of predominantly male experts."* Mint has adopted a policy that stipulates that its coverage should include at least one external expert voice; a further policy mandates at least one woman contributor to its op-ed pages in every issue of the daily.

It is this multi-layered approach to diversity that has allowed Mint to publish unique stories/story angles written by women journalists, tackling sensitive issues that are relevant to women. SK talks with excitement about a story that a female journalist in the newsroom has been working on at the time of the interview.

72. SimilarWeb, February 2022
73. SimilarWeb, Desktop and mobile demographics – Gender, Traffic-share as of February 2022
74. Ahrefs, 21st March 2022
75. Davidson, 2016

> *"So, while corporate India and many employers like to talk about diversity, one of our star reporters is working on a story questioning why the most fundamental needs of workers are not being met: access to a clean, hygienic washroom. She is covering important developments like the violence that erupted in an Apple factory in Chennai, drawing a direct link between the unrest and the lack of hygienic washrooms for workers, and for women workers especially, which is a big problem because they face issues like UTIs [urinary tract infections] when using unhygienic or overcrowded washrooms in the workplace."*

Mint has maintained near gender parity in the newsroom

Currently, 49.5% of journalists in Mint's newsroom are women, a figure significantly higher than the proportion of women journalists reported for India in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News*, which found that in 2019, 24% of journalists in top English newspapers and 18% in top Hindi newspapers were women.[76] According to SK, however, nowadays this high proportion is not unusual for English language newsrooms based in metropolitan areas such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Chennai, although it is perhaps higher than in regional/Hindi-language newsrooms. AKAS' 2022 research into gender representation at editorial level has corroborated a significant gap between national/English-language and regional/Hindi-language publications in their gender balance.

Conscious meritocracy has resulted in a proportion of women leaders that is higher than the national average

"*Where we are doing better than other news outlets, is in leadership roles held by women.*" SK concedes and is proud of Mint's higher than average representation of women in its leadership, currently standing at 41% of the editorial leadership team. This compares to the 14% of women in top level news management in India reported by Byerly a decade ago (the latest available data at a country level[77]). SK attributes Mint's success in gender diversity in the newsroom and news leadership to its consciously meritocratic approach to attracting talent.

> *"We have incredibly brilliant women journalists and business journalists in India. In the process of trying to attract top talent, it just so happens that so many of the people whose work we want to bring to Mint are women."*

New female voices are co-shaping the newspaper's discourse on pivotal societal issues

SK speaks with great pride about Mint's prestigious op-ed page. He quotes Arthur Miller's reflection that: "*A good newspaper is a nation talking to itself*" and goes on to explain that the op-ed page is where the big ideas are born and discussed. He observes that

> *"men are much more eager to be published. And it is always easier to rely on experts who already have a pedigree, a standing, they know how to write for media. This is certainly a reflection of how society distributes value between men and women."*

In addition, men are more likely than women to be able to afford PR support to push their op-eds; to occupy the higher echelons of business; and to prioritize their careers over family responsibilities. These barriers present structural inequalities which are overlaid onto men's existing cultural dominance. Despite all these barriers, SK is pleased that Mint has been able to create a

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76. UN Women, 2019
77. Byerly, 2011 and 2016

"roster of up-and-coming women commentators who tend to be university professors or scholars and who have started writing pretty regularly, authentically. Among the younger generation of women there is more willingness to write."

What has Mint learned along the way?

In a society as complex as India's, diversity needs to be approached in an intersectional manner

SK reviews staffing data periodically, usually twice a year. With women constituting 49.5% of journalists in the newsroom and 41% of editorial leadership, he believes that while it is a work in progress, Mint is in a good place in terms of gender diversity.

"Our approach to diversity and inclusion has become more intersectional. I would like it to be more intersectional than it is today. We would like to think that we are all here on merit, but privilege plays a role",

he states. He cites the multifarious sources of privilege: caste, education, religion, socio-economic background, a metropolitan location.

"We don't want a newsroom populated by people solely from a certain group. We want a mix from urban and rural, from south and north, as well as underrepresented groups, such as people from the north-east or Dalit or Muslim women. A diverse newsroom results in a richer harvest of stories and perspectives. We have a serious diversity issue, but it is not currently in gender."

Measuring and improving women's share of voice as business experts is an ongoing challenge

In India in 2020, the proportion of women quoted in the news as protagonists, experts, or sources was six times lower than that of men — a mere 14% — the lowest of all the countries measured.[78] SK admits that Mint too has more work to do in increasing the number of women's expert voices in its publication. He acknowledges the limitations of Mint not systematically measuring women's contribution to the paper's outputs in the way it measures their proportions in staff/leadership.

Conscious leadership goes hand in hand with continuity of organizational values

SK suggests that it is important for news leaders to be conscious and deliberate in their diversity and inclusion efforts while still ensuring continuity in institutional values.

"I think that it is very important that leaders are conscious, aware of and willing to work on better intersectional inclusion and diversity in the newsroom and in the product we put out. They should also be mindful of the history and promote continuous values."

Mint has stated explicitly in several written documents that it stands for freedom, independence, and an unbiased chronicling of Indian society.

"Mint has always supported inclusion and stood for women's rights. It has always flagged the decreasing share of women in the workforce in India, which is now worse than, say, 20 years ago."

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78. Kassova, 2020a, Media Ecosystems Analysis Group 2020

While SK perceives Mint's staff to be progressive, he reflects on the need for written statements to make explicit Mint's currently implicit ambitions for diversity.

What next?

From an organizational perspective, SK and his leadership team are in an early exploratory phase of launching a fellowship for journalists from backgrounds that are underrepresented, whether due to caste, geography, or socio-economic background, aiming to give their careers a head start.

From a societal perspective, SK is hoping for a time when Indian society removes the barriers that women face which result in continual unfair encounters at work.

"I wish for a society where it would be perfectly safe and normal, and culturally acceptable for women to work late nights. I also wish for a society which accepts assertiveness not only from people who look like me but also from women leaders, without deeming them 'aggressive' or 'unhinged'."

Case study: Bloomberg (global)

What is Bloomberg?

Bloomberg is the global leader in business and financial data, news, and insight. It reaches 36m monthly unique visitors online[79], and has 1.2m YouTube subscribers and 8m Twitter followers. 35% of its website audience are women.[80] 646,597 external websites link to Bloomberg, of which 710 are governmental and 4,014 educational.[81]

In 2018 Bloomberg News launched the New Voices initiative, which includes media training, representation tracking tools, and a database of female experts. It provides media training to female executives in business and finance across the globe to get them TV-ready for interviews on Bloomberg Television and other outlets. Initially launched in four cities, it has since expanded to 13 locations: London, New York, San Francisco, Washington DC, Mumbai, Dubai, Singapore, Hong Kong, Sydney, Johannesburg, Toronto, Tokyo, and Zurich. To date, the program has trained more than 400 female executives. The training includes message structuring, mock video sessions, and feedback and is conducted by an independent firm. As part of this initiative Bloomberg also expanded their database of female experts from 500 names in 2018 to an impressive 8,000 in 2022.

I speak with Laura Zelenko, a senior executive editor and founder of New Voices, who is accompanied by the Head of Communications at Bloomberg Editorial & Research. Zelenko's competence and passion, anchored in decades of editorial leadership experience, are arresting. Having experienced first-hand the feeling of being the only woman in a room full of leaders, then one of two, all the way to being one of many, Zelenko's understanding of representation, equity, and inclusion is not only conceptual, but deeply personal.

Zelenko explains that the New Voices initiative faced structural, organizational, and individual journalistic biases. Historically, journalists have often reached out to the same experts they have always used, who are mostly men. At the same time, firms and banks that Bloomberg reports on have been dominated by male experts. By identifying female executives in firms to be media trained, Bloomberg has simultaneously tackled the two sides of the problem of women's marginalized representation as experts, Zelenko explains. Another part of the strategy for improving women's representation in news has been to expand the database of female experts, which is now 14 times bigger than it was three years ago.

What makes Bloomberg exceptional?

Tripling female guests on Bloomberg TV in three years through the New Voices initiative

Bloomberg has set itself the goal of improving women's representation as financial experts across all platforms. "*The clearest indication of change has been our representation on Bloomberg TV*", affirms Zelenko, referencing the growth in the share of voice of women experts on Bloomberg TV from 10% in 2018 to 30% at the end of 2021. In view of the structural challenges in the distinctly male-dominated finance industry, although far from parity, this growth is noteworthy.

79. SimilarWeb, February 2022
80. SimilarWeb, Desktop and mobile demographics – Gender, Traffic-share as of February 2022
81. Ahrefs, 21st March 2022

> *"With the gained momentum and the repetition, and the constant reporting out, it's starting to become more part of the everyday workflow, so I am very confident that we can reach 33% this year, or hopefully higher,"*

states Zelenko, sounding even more positive about the future.

Visible regular tracking and senior endorsement underpin success

Zelenko had noticed a prevalent overly positive bias among the journalists in the newsroom, which manifested in their belief that gender representation was better than it was.

> *"What's similar almost in every case is that editors believe their representation is better than it actually is when we get the data and report it out regularly."*

Zelenko is convinced that the best way to break down journalists' resistance to changing their behavior is to track data publicly and to secure the most senior endorsement.

> *"You have to get to a point where you see results. And I think that was the hardest part. The most important thing is to protect the integrity of the data."*

A big part of the success of the initiative, she argues, is the fact that women's representation in content is not only tracked regularly but is also endorsed and amplified at the most senior level.

> *"We're tracking this every week, and reporting out, and we're putting newsroom-wide notes from the Editor-in-Chief saying where we are, and so it's very public."*

Teams can be held accountable by slicing the data in different ways, looking at different metrics, different Bloomberg properties (e.g. front pages, top pages, TV, print), teams, individuals, or the performance of particular stories. For example, Zelenko is able to identify the top 20 journalists globally who quote or cite women most frequently.

The main goal for Bloomberg is to show an upward trend in women's representation across different products with different baselines.

> *"I had one booker ask me why we had a 30% [representation of women on Bloomberg TV] target; he said it seemed random. I said that's this year's target to give us something to work towards; once we hit that, next year is going to be higher. We set it to push ourselves, but it's not the limit."*

Saying no to manels through policies

Zelenko shares that one policy has had particular success at Bloomberg: precluding journalists from participating in all-male external panels as moderators or participants.

> *"At first, some journalists found this to be a nuisance that their request to participate was rejected; but then they realized how the initiative was having impact. They would go back to the organizer and say we could help them find a female expert for the panel or make it clear that the organizer had to change the makeup for Bloomberg to participate. More and more of our journalists say to me this is an important thing to stand for."*

The New Voices training has a spillover effect for women's careers

In Zelenko's view, one of the benefits of the New Voices initiative media training program is that female senior executives who complete it are not exclusively tied to Bloomberg TV. She is excited to report that a high proportion of these women not only go on Bloomberg TV, but are also getting promoted.

> *"There is a spillover effect into their careers. By having this platform, they gain a bigger platform for their own work and career progression."*

Senior workshops designed for women editors are propelling women's careers

Bloomberg has designed inclusion workshops specifically for women journalists globally, focusing on long form, magazine level editing in response to a finding that women editors' representation is worse in the biggest enterprise and investigation teams than in other areas. More than 60 women have completed the training, with the vast majority being promoted into new roles, all of which are editorial.

Addressing the internal mobility challenge helps to hold on to diverse talent

Another inclusion workshop titled "*Hear Your Voices*" has been designed to help first level managers — who are directly responsible for an increasingly diverse workforce in terms of gender, race, and ethnicity — make sure they understand their roles in helping retain top diverse talent, making their coverage more inclusive, and supporting career growth. This new initiative has been well received.

What has Bloomberg learned along the way?

To achieve holistic impact you need to be intentional at all levels

Improving leadership and source representation has been difficult, admits Zelenko. "*It's not that everyone was suddenly on board. It takes a lot of messaging.*" Achieving discernible improvement requires intentional work at all levels.

> "*When I think of my role in making sure that we have representation in our coverage, I am looking at representation at every level of the workforce (reporters, editors, managers, anchors) as well as in coverage through sourcing.*"

Zelenko argues that to achieve success it is important to be very clear in your intentions with regard to both coverage and representation in teams. And to do that you need to change the culture in the organization. And that isn't easy.

The best way to break down barriers is to showcase the improved content

Another bias that Zelenko has observed among journalists in the past is a belief that bringing in more women experts would be detrimental to the quality of the content.

> "*When the journalists think they are being forced to check a box, that's a problem. It was once common for people to suggest that identifying and bringing on more female experts would somehow lower the quality of our coverage; I rarely hear that anymore and it's easy to point to improved coverage every week. But the more people are on board, the more senior managers are repeating the messaging, the more examples you can show of what works, the more successful the initiative becomes.*"

According to Zelenko, the argument most successful in persuading a journalist to change what they do focuses on how better representation improves coverage; how it makes it more relevant, more accurate, less biased, and more complete.

> "*It's also important for recruiting and retention as the next generation asks questions about representation - both in the workforce and in our content*",

she adds. She gives examples showcasing interviews that would not formerly have happened; stories that have won awards.

It is harder to shift representation in print or online than on TV and requires broader metrics

The number of guests on any given day on Bloomberg TV globally is in the dozens; but the stories that Bloomberg publishes in print daily are in the thousands. At this scale, it is more challenging to alter the makeup of the representation of experts.

To track progress online and in print, Bloomberg utilizes a broader set of metrics. Bloomberg News, and Bloomberg Businessweek and Bloomberg Markets magazines track the proportion of stories which have at least one female expert. These magazines also track the bylines of the biggest enterprise stories, as well as the gender of the freelance photographers. For Bloomberg Businessweek they track the gender of the bylines on features and the gender representation in photos.

In Bloomberg Businessweek, representation of female experts in stories was at a monthly average of 52% between June 2021 and January 2022. In January, Bloomberg's Breaking News and Markets

teams, together with the Economics teams — representing about a quarter of the staff — more than doubled the number of stories that quote or cite at least one female expert compared to the same month a year ago.

What next?

Zelenko's aim going forward is to expand the lens of representation in Bloomberg's tracking by including race and ethnicity. This new initiative started very recently, acknowledging that achieving racial and ethnic representation is a big challenge. Zelenko's team has started to implement this goal by asking guests on TV to self-identify in terms of race and ethnicity. Self-identification is the only way to get data, she argues. Her team has also launched Black Executive and Latinx training cohorts in the US, both of which include women and men and have proved successful. Bloomberg aims to build dashboards across platforms to understand the long-term trajectory of representation as a way of making everyone feel accountable for improving gender, ethnic, and racial makeup across platforms and teams.

Case study: African Women in Media

What is African Women in Media?

African Women in Media (AWiM) is an innovative international non-governmental organization, whose goal is to raise the profile and visibility of African women in media. It does so through multiple initiatives, among them an annual conference, a database of women experts, a training program and a news content offer. AWiM has 4.2K Twitter followers, 2.2K Facebook followers, and 2.4K subscribers to its newsletter.

Since its inception in 2016, AWiM has experienced rapid growth. In 2021 the AWiM conference was held virtually. It attracted 500 registrations and 380 active participants, a more than tenfold increase in attendance compared to its inaugural conference in 2017 in which 30 women and one man participated. Collectively, last year's attendees and speakers represented 45 countries. In the same timeframe, AWiM has successfully established SourceHer[82], an online database of African women experts across 60 fields from 28 countries in Africa and the African diaspora so far; AWiMLearning, a learning management platform through which it delivers media training exclusively for women; and a news platform, AWiMNews, which focuses on reporting issues that affect African women.

I speak with AWiM's co-founder Dr Yemisi Akinbobola - a former journalist, now academic, based in Birmingham, UK - who talks with conviction about the reasons that propelled her to set up the NGO; the importance of improving African women's representation in media; the innovative opportunities that bridging the gap between journalism and academia provides; and the benefits of joining up the abundant local knowledge that African women journalists and associations possess. Akinbobola shares that she set up the organization in the year she won the CNN African Journalist of the Year award, as a way of creating a much-needed, but until then lacking, forum for women journalists from Africa and the African diaspora to share their lived experiences, challenges, and visions for the future.

> *"It was really me reflecting on my journey, and what I needed at the time, and was not finding, and creating it because I realized that other women were experiencing the same thing. They needed more space for this kind of collective reflection on their experiences."*

What makes African Women in Media exceptional?

Overcoming the gendered allocation of opportunity through training and a conference targeting women

The annual conference that AWiM organizes is a flagship initiative which Akinbobola devotes much time to reflecting on. After five conferences, she remains convinced that a conference that prioritizes women is the right way to circumvent the barriers that arise from the male-favoring bias that exists in news organizations. According to Akinbobola, typically, women journalists in African countries are rarely given the opportunity to attend conferences or training because these are usually reserved for their male colleagues:

> *"Women journalists were always missing out on opportunities for training because their male colleagues were always favored over them, in terms of training and conference attendance."*

In her view, providing training that is reserved exclusively for women, and conferences that prioritize women, creates a safe environment for women to share their experiences freely and learn from

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82. https://sourceher.com/

one another. She acknowledges that this results in men hearing less about women's challenges first hand, but it is a trade-off she considers worth making to avoid the "*gendered allocation of opportunities in skilling up and research.*"

Media training tailored specifically to African women

African Women in Media set up a training platform (a learning management platform) which functions as an environment where knowledge about women's challenges in media in Africa is consolidated.

"We have developed our own pedagogical approach that speaks to the experiences and issues faced by African women journalists who are our main target audience",

explains Akinbobola.

The aim of this modular training pedagogy is to arm women with the skills they need to thrive as journalists, covering e.g. safety, digital journalism, and reporting gender angles. The numbers in each cohort of participating women have ranged from 25 to 200. In addition to the formal program, AWiM also draws its trainees together into communities of practice which are formed based on participants' specific areas of interest. This allows trainees to learn from each other as well as the formal program, while also preparing the ground for them to revisit and share their successes, and offer mutual support long after their training has been completed.

Elevating African women's voices through a SourceHer database

AWiM's SourceHer database of women experts was launched in 2021 in response to the need for more African women experts to feature in media content.

> *"The idea is that if, for example, you are a news producer and you want to know about biodiversity in Namibia, then we have female experts in that field you can find in the database."*

Funded by Fojo Media Institute, SourceHer is searchable by subject area, industry, and country. Currently AWiM is planning to utilize the expertise contained in the database by drawing on it to roll out a series of newsletters as well as media training for the women experts.

What has African Women in Media learned along the way?

It is necessary to raise awareness of gender bias across genders

I ask Akinbobola what weight should be given to collaborating with men, given that the power in news still resides mostly with them and therefore their role in moving things forward is important. She agrees that everybody needs to be involved in the conversation. One of the ways AWiM has ensured that this is the case has been to settle on a 75:25 split between women and men speakers at their annual conferences.

> *"We are more deliberate in having male speakers at the conference now, because we do recognize the importance of them hearing these stories. There is a lot more we can do in terms of direct one-to-one conversations with media organizations and leadership."*

Akinbobola speaks with enthusiasm about the conferences' positive impacts in challenging gender bias. For example, stories shared by women journalists from different African countries at the 2018 conference had a direct and profound effect on Dr Johnson Babafemi Akintayo, a media executive and lecturer at the Department of Mass Communication at Nigeria's Babcock University. Not only did the stories he heard challenge his gender blindness but they were able to completely overturn it, with Dr Babafemi becoming an active champion of gender equality as a result of his experience at the conference. This culminated in an article he wrote for African Women in Media, in which he shared his journey from bias to awareness and action.[83]

Akinbobola also remembers other "*lightbulb moments*" when raising women journalists' awareness of existing discrimination and bias has led to improved self-care.

> *"For example, in our research one of the respondents was talking about different types of sexual harassment that she'd faced. This helped others draw healthy boundaries by raising their awareness of what constitutes sexual harassment."*

Consolidating effort among media associations and the news industry will enhance progress

The African Women in Media conference in Nairobi in 2019 shone a light on how much local knowledge was being produced but not consolidated.

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83. African Women in Media News, 2018

> *"I spent time meeting with different media associations, women in media associations, and realizing that there's a lot of local knowledge being produced. These associations knew the pain points, and knew what the issues were in terms of media, but this knowledge wasn't always shared or implemented."*

In her work in recent years, Akinbobola has recognized the danger of NGOs dedicated to advancing gender equality in news being siloed.

> *"I feel that there could be better collaboration across associations, but at the same time, I think we also have to recognize, inasmuch as we use the continental name 'African Women in Media', we are talking about several countries with many different cultures, and they don't necessarily have to be collective."*

There are many more countries in Africa than those in the Eastern Southern region

There continue to be many different silos, not only among non-governmental organizations but also among foreign agencies who support initiatives in Africa, concludes Akinbobola.

> *"You find that there is concentration of support in particular regions, and I find that concentration usually to be the Eastern Southern axis, or Nigeria",*

she observes. She elaborates that money is usually concentrated on particular countries around specific issues — typically media accountability and corruption.

What next?

One of Akinbobola's hopes for African Women in Media's future is to focus on developing partnerships with major global news providers who could co-produce and co-publish stories with AWiMNews, drawing on the local knowledge of African women journalists and experts.

She also sees a need for greater communication between media scholarship in terms of research and curricula development, and civil society's interventions in media industries.

> *"Academia moves slower than these industry-focused interventions need. This is an important conversation we need to have with academic funding bodies and publishers too."*

If she had one wish however, it would be that there were clearly articulated gender policies in all newsrooms in Africa. This would ensure that

> *"all media organizations in Africa [..] have a clear funnel of progression for everyone, regardless of their gender; that there is transparency in career progression and collaborative will rather than tokenistic positioning of women in leadership."*

Part 2

How to include the
missing perspectives
of women in news
coverage: representation,
storytelling, and
portrayal. The problems
and the solutions

Report Navigation

Report parts

At a glance & Introduction	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5
• Background and objectives • Executive summary • Summary of solutions themes • Summary of key findings • Acknowledgements • Introduction • What has happened since 2019	Gender diversity and inclusion gap in news leadership	Women's representation, portrayal and stories in news coverage	News initiatives addressing gender equality	Gender equity business opportunity for newspapers	Proposed strategic and operational solutions

Case studies

New York Times	Khabar Lahariya		Amedia
Mint	Nation Media Group		
Bloomberg	The Fuller Project		
African Women in Media	Guardian		

Bibliography & Appendices

Bibliography

Appendix 1 and 2

Links to news value chain

Social norms
Socio-economic, political, technology, legal/regulatory changes

News sector change

News organization strategy change

News leadership and individual leader change

Newsroom and journalist level change

Representation, portrayal and storytelling news coverage change

News consumption change

News coverage impact change

Part 2 at a glance

This part of the report focuses on two elements in the news value chain: newsgathering and news outputs. It explores the missing perspectives of women in news coverage, including the underreported societal issues that disproportionately affect women such as the pay, power, safety, authority, confidence, health, and ageism gender gaps. It forensically examines why women's share of voice as protagonists and contributors in stories remains marginalized, and why their stereotypical portrayal mainly as non-experts and victims in the news has been stuck for decades. Importantly, it explores what drivers and solutions of positive change are available to improve the balance in women's representation in news coverage, storytelling, and portrayal. Four trailblazing news organizations are featured for their successes in reshaping news coverage to be more inclusive: Khabar Lahariya, Nation Media Group, The Fuller Project and the Guardian.

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This section uncovers that editors' lived experiences and their internalized journalistic standards influence their decisions about what to run in the news and often lead to them omitting stories/angles that focus on different gender gaps. The micro/human stories within the big political, economic, or health stories are often missed out, as are the perspectives of people of color (in the UK and the US) in political news. Status quo bias and gender blindness are two key institutional biases of news organizations. They lead to the gaps in newsgathering/coverage that manifest in women-centric stories or angles and women's voices being missed. In addition, journalism suffers from a short-term outlook, a tendency towards reductive storytelling, and resistance to a forensic analysis of its own shortcomings, all of which impede progress. Women's portrayal in the news is the news industry's blind spot. The problem is simply missed.

Optimistically, there are many institutional and individual solutions that are available to news organizations to unlock the stalled progress. Among them are those that cluster around raising awareness of the issues, removing existing barriers (e.g. appointing newsroom storytelling inclusion champions; launching gender or race desks) and creating new habits (e.g. 360 degree editing, or conducting cost-effective portrayal deep dives).

Chapter (1)

The existing but underexplored gender gaps in news coverage

The absence of an explicit gender lens in 99% of online news coverage in six countries from the global north and south, uncovered in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News*, indicates that the news fails to cover sufficiently, or indeed misses out altogether, the various gaps where women's opportunities and realities lag behind those of men. AKAS has identified seven such gaps which form the subject of the following chapters: gaps in power, pay, safety, authority, confidence, health, and ageism. In each of these areas, the male-favoring biases that underpin societal structures, cultures, and organizations provide men with an unfair head start over women.

I asked 22 editorial news leaders from India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the UK, and the US which two of the seven gaps they thought should be tackled most urgently in news coverage. Most, both in the global south (64%) and the global north (63%), identified the **pay gap** as the most urgent, not least because it is measurable and straightforward to track and address (see Figure 25). The pay gap was the only one which generated agreement among the majority of editorial leaders, whether men or women, and irrespective of their ethnicity.

> 66
> *"I think the pay gap is something that is data driven that we can tackle in a very [...] tangible way. It's something for which there are solutions... And the power gap, because ultimately, all the other things will relate to that."*
> 99

These were the thoughts of a male senior news leader from the global north on why the pay and power gaps should be prioritized in coverage.

Slightly less than half of the news leaders interviewed (45%) identified the **power gap** as requiring urgent coverage. It was seen as underpinning many of the other existing gaps and was particularly closely interlinked

Figure 25: News coverage priorities identified by senior news leaders (2022)

		News leaders	%
Pay gap	Women are paid less than men for the same work	14	64%
Power gap	Men have more power that women	10	45%
Confidence gap	Women tend to be less confident than men	6	27%
Authority gap	Women are seen as less authoritative than men in news and in life	6	27%
Safety gap	Women experience or are threatened with violence more than men	5	23%
Health gap	Women are taken less seriously than men when experiencing medical issues	5	14%
Ageism gap	Women are discriminated against more than men as they age	1	5%

Source: Author's interviews with 22 senior news leaders, February-April 2022. NB One respondent chose to prioritize three gaps. Q: Which two of these existing gaps between men and women do you think should be tackled most urgently in news coverage?

with the authority gap. One female news leader from the global south contextualized the power gap within the experience of news organizations:

> "Somebody can play up numbers and say, 'We have so many women in leadership positions'. But if you don't give those women the power to execute their mandate and their leadership, then it's just superficial. If women have their roles, they should also be given the authority to execute them. And then, of course, there's the power play in the newsroom, it's really a man's world. So you find yourself, a lot of times, not part of that power at all."

There was, however, no significant consensus among the news leaders interviewed about the urgency of covering any of the other gaps identified. The **ageism gap** remained under the radar for all bar one female news leader from the global south, while the **health gap** was chosen by a minority or by news leaders who tended to hold different interpretations of what actually defined it, suggesting that news leaders are less familiar with this gap.

The **confidence gap** was prioritized by 27% of the diverse group of news leaders interviewed. All of those who chose this gap were from the global south and within this group there was a perception that sometimes women impose their own glass ceiling by lacking the confidence to push themselves harder. One female leader from the global north, while not selecting the confidence gap as one of her top two to focus on in coverage, spoke in some detail about its detrimental impact:

> "So many people, especially women, don't have the confidence, or don't go for jobs, or I've suggested them for jobs and they've been like, 'What are you talking about?'... and then they've seen who's got it - a white male - and thought, 'Actually, no, maybe I am better than that'.... There are some brilliant people who work in our newsroom, who don't speak up as much as they should because they don't have the confidence."

As in the case of the confidence gap, the **authority gap**, which was perceived as closely related to the power gap, was prioritized by 27% of the leaders interviewed. Those selecting this gap as an urgent coverage lens highlighted

how often women were dismissed despite their expertise. A male news editor from the global north summarized the problem:

> *"I think that often women, even with the highest level of expertise, are not taken as seriously as men, and often it could be for whatever reason. Especially in certain areas, like science and finance, men have dominated for so long. I think women don't get the same automatic respect for their expertise and authority."*

Editors' lived experiences inform their decisions about what to cover in the news

Interestingly, the news editors I interviewed frequently considered the gaps through the lens of the journalism industry, rather than that of broader society. This was the case for 13 out of the 22 leaders who pondered this question. This emphasizes how important editors' own lived experience is in deciding which stories they should cover. To understand the level of news coverage each of the gaps has received, AKAS ran an analysis of global news coverage between January 2017 and April 2022, using the GDELT Project's global online news archive of over 900 million English and non-English online news stories.[84] Figures 26 and 27 show a significant alignment between the views expressed by global news leaders in the interviews and the proportion of global news coverage dedicated to each gap. While all the gaps received minimal attention in the news, as evidenced by the low proportion of coverage, the pay gap enjoyed more coverage than any of the others (see Figure 27). At the opposite end of the spectrum is the ageism gap, which received no attention either in news coverage or among news editors.

The following sections examine in more detail the seven gaps that exist between women and men, using global data and/or analyzed data from the six countries of focus in this report, as well as the opinions of the global news leaders who were interviewed for this project.

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84. The archive was searched to determine the proportion of articles that contained the terms "female" or "women" or "gender" and each of the seven gender gaps.

Figure 26: Proportion of news coverage containing any of the gender gap terms (2017-2022)

	All 7 Gaps	Pay Gap	Health Gap	Power Gap	Confidence Gap	Safety Gap	Authority Gap	Ageism Gap
2017	0.01890%	0.01819%	0.00032%	0.00023%	0.00012%	0.00004%	0.00005%	0.00000%
2018	0.02660%	0.02563%	0.00046%	0.00039%	0.00017%	0.00007%	0.00003%	0.00000%
2019	0.01630%	0.01543%	0.00040%	0.00032%	0.00024%	0.00003%	0.00001%	0.00000%
2020	0.00950%	0.00858%	0.00051%	0.00037%	0.00006%	0.00003%	0.00001%	0.00000%
2021	0.01040%	0.00930%	0.00052%	0.00031%	0.00011%	0.00017%	0.00004%	0.00000%
Jan-Apr 2022	0.01410%	0.01324%	0.00053%	0.00022%	0.00014%	0.00002%	0.00008%	0.00000%
2017 – Apr 2022	0.01620%	0.01529%	0.00045%	0.00032%	0.00014%	0.00006%	0.00003%	0.00000%

Very high share   High share   Medium share   Low share   Very low share

Source: AKAS analysis of GDELT Project global online news archive (2022)

Figure 27: Profile of the gender gaps in news coverage compared to one another (2017-2022)[85]

	Pay Gap	Health Gap	Power Gap	Confidence Gap	Safety Gap	Authority Gap	Ageism Gap
2017	96.4%	1.7%	1.2%	0.7%	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%
2018	96.4%	1.7%	1.5%	0.6%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%
2019	94.8%	2.5%	2.0%	1.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%
2020	90.0%	5.3%	3.9%	0.7%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%
2021	89.6%	5.0%	3.0%	1.0%	1.7%	0.4%	0.0%
Jan-Apr 2022	93.8%	3.8%	1.5%	1.0%	0.1%	0.5%	0.0%
2017 – Apr 2022	94.4%	2.8%	2.0%	0.9%	0.4%	0.2%	0.0%

Very high share   High share   Medium share   Low share   Very low share
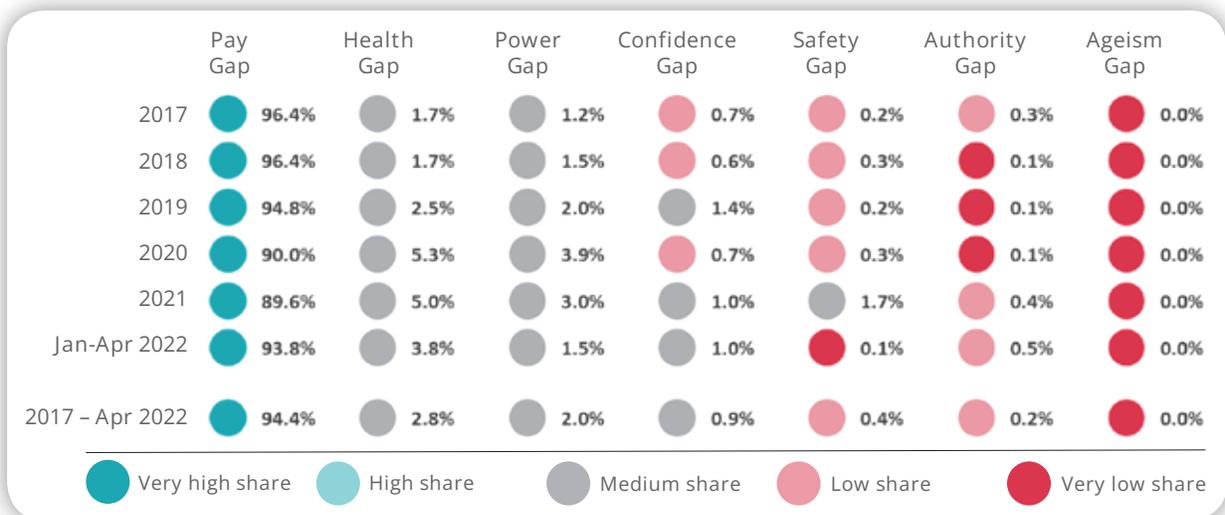
Source: AKAS analysis of GDELT Project global online news archive (2022)

85. All figures have been rounded to one decimal place, so rows may not total 100%.

The power gap

The power gap, which measures how much more power men have than women, manifests in multiple societal dimensions and can be analyzed through the prism of various industries across the private and public sectors. This section focuses on the gender power gap at the most senior leadership levels in global business and politics. It also briefly touches on the findings of a recent survey that exposes the current gender power gap in news media leadership in the UK.

Men are over 20 times more likely to be running Global 500 businesses than women. This is an improvement on the past

Every year Fortune publishes the Global 500, a list of the 500 largest companies in the world whose combined sales total $31.7 trillion, or one third of global GDP. This list provides a useful benchmark of who leads companies in the global economy. Fortune also records the gender and race of the CEOs who run these companies. Last year Fortune reported that "*The number of women running Global 500 businesses soars to an all-time high*"[86] while CNBC announced that "*A record number of women are now running Global 500 businesses*".[87] Seeing the actual numbers swiftly shatters the high expectations built into these headlines. It turns out that the "*record number*" of women is 23 out of 500, which equates to 4.6%. For every 21 CEOs running a Global 500 business, one is a woman. In the US the proportion of women running these most successful businesses in the world is higher (8.2%), meaning men are 11 times more likely to hold CEO roles than women.

Since Fortune began tracking the gender of Global 500 CEOs in 2014, the number of women in these roles has hovered between 12 and 17. Having 23 therefore, few as this is, represents a notable change. In 2021, the racial diversity of women running Fortune 500 companies also improved from one in the previous year to six, thanks mainly to entrants from the US and China. As a result, 26% of the female CEOs and 1.2% of all CEOs in 2021 were women of color. A more recent Deloitte analysis of CEOs from across the world shows that in the six countries of interest, women made up 5-7% of all CEOs.[88]

Men are 3.8 times more likely to be Members of Parliament than women globally. This gender gap in political leadership varies significantly by region. There have only been small improvements in recent years. Gender quotas work

The latest Inter-Parliamentary Union report[89], published in March 2022, revealed that the global proportion of women parliamentarians in 2021 was 26.1%, which is largely flat (up 0.6%) since 2020. However, in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Pacific regions, women's representation in parliaments actually declined, while in the Americas, Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa it grew. The proportion of women parliamentarians remained largely unchanged in Asia.

In the 48 countries which held parliamentary elections in 2021, the proportion of women parliamentarians was 2.1 percentage points higher than in countries whose elections had been held prior to 2021. The number of countries with gender parity or a higher proportion of women in parliament has grown from three to five, with Mexico and Nicaragua having joined Cuba, Rwanda, and the United Arab Emirates.

86. Hinchliffe, 2021
87. Connley, 2021
88. Deloitte, 2022
89. Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2022

Figure 28: Women in ministerial positions (2019, 2021)
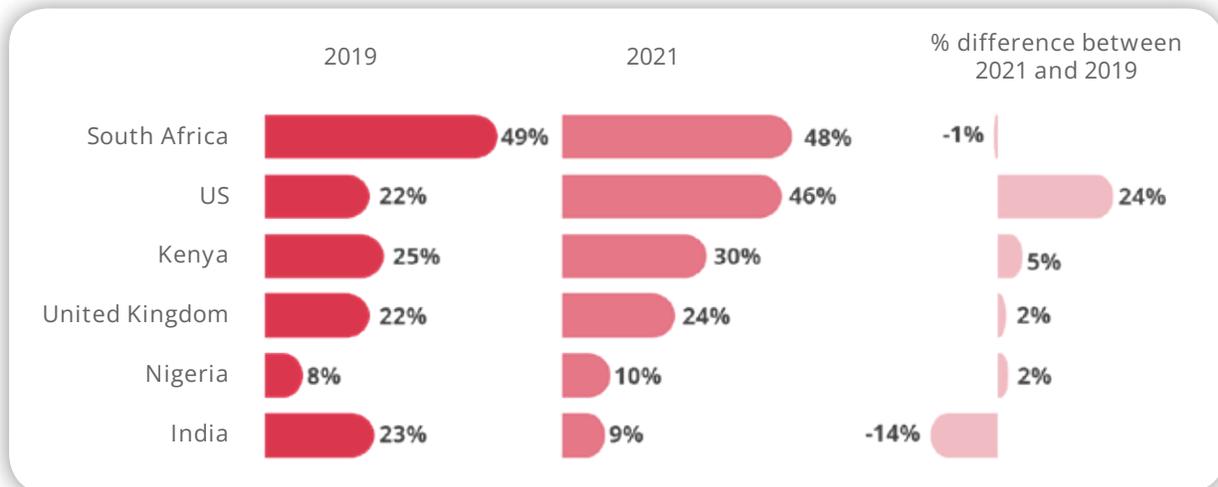
Source: 2019: World Economic Forum[91]; 2021: IPU Women in Politics 2021 report[92]

The marginal year-on-year uplift in the share of women in parliaments globally (0.6 percentage points) has been attributed to imposed quotas, particularly when they have been accompanied by well thought-through implementation and enforcement rules. In countries with some form of quota for the single/lower house in 2021, 32% of the elected MPs were women, compared to 20% in countries without quotas.

1 in 5 parliamentary Speakers globally are women

The 2021 IPU report found that on 1 January 2022 only 22% of Speakers in parliaments were women, creeping up from the previous year by 1.1 percentage point. The proportion of women was slightly higher for the 73 Speakers appointed in 2021: among these, women accounted for 25% of all Speakers, improving the female-male ratio to 1 in 4.

South Africa and the US are nearing gender parity in women's appointment to ministerial positions. The US has enjoyed the biggest increase since 2019, while India has suffered the steepest decline

Examining the change in the highest levels of political power since 2019 in the six countries of focus in this publication, it emerged that some movement had occurred since the publication of *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News*. Three of the six countries recorded improvement in the proportion of women in ministerial roles, the proportion remained stable in South Africa, there was a modest decrease in the UK, while in India it has collapsed. With the shift in power from President Trump to President Biden, the proportion of women in ministerial roles in the US has more than doubled. The share of women in ministerial roles in South Africa remains just below parity, while in Kenya it has grown moderately.[90] Cabinet ministerial positions for women have dropped to a recent

90. At the time of writing in September 2022, the new Kenyan Government's cabinet has not been formulated.
91. World Economic Forum, 2019
92. Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021

low of 23% in the UK. However, the proportion of women in the most senior political roles is worst in Nigeria and India where for every one woman in a ministerial position, there are 9 men.

In the journalism industry in the UK, power continues to reside with men. Leadership and newsroom culture has not shifted since *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* was published. Moreover, it has contributed to the marginalization and attrition of women journalists

A recent survey of 1,200 UK journalists[93] revealed that the industry is still perceived as very male-dominated, both at the top and in newsrooms. 70% of female and 59% of male respondents agreed that the most senior roles are dominated by men, while 74% of

all respondents deemed newsroom culture "*macho and intimidating*", a view endorsed by an even higher proportion of journalists (81%) in national newspapers.

A clear majority of female journalists (81%) felt that high-status journalism beats such as business and politics remain male-dominated. This is corroborated by the fact that in the past ten years, women have constituted just 23% of business/economics/finance shortlists and 26% of politics nominations at the Press Gazette's British Journalism Awards. By contrast, there has been gender parity in nominations in the arts and entertainment and interview categories.[94]

During the pandemic, the consequence of this male-dominated leadership and culture has been seen in women journalists being more than twice as likely to be furloughed and 40% more likely to be made redundant. [95]

93. Tobitt, 2021
94. Tobitt, 2021
95. Tobitt, 2021

The pay gap [96]

> **"Another generation of women will have to wait for gender parity. As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be felt, closing the global gender gap has increased by a generation from 99.5 years to 135.6 years,"**

stated the World Economic Forum's 2021 Global Gender Gap Report.[97] Its 2022 report, published in July 2022, indicated that the time to reach full parity had declined marginally, but was still 132 years.[98] The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index benchmarks the evolution of gender-based gaps across four key dimensions in 156 countries: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. According to the 2021 report findings, there was progress towards wage equality at a global level, albeit at a slower pace than previously due to the negative impact of the pandemic. The assessment was that income disparities had only partially been bridged and that there was a persistent lack of women in economic leadership. The latest analysis projects that it would take 151 years to close the economic participation and opportunity gap, which includes the pay gap. None of the countries in the global south or north that have been examined in this report are near to closing this gap.

The monetary gap extends well beyond the disparity in pay between men and women, to also encompass wealth (i.e. owning a business or property, shares, mortgage equity, and pensions). Recent research[99] has shown that women at the top of the income scale can still experience large wealth gaps compared to men as they own fewer wealth-based assets. In Germany for example, men's overall business wealth is more than five times greater than women's. AKAS' analysis of the GDELT database of global news coverage has revealed that a meager 0.0019% of online global news between January and April 2022 mentioned the wealth gender gap, a decline from 2019 when the figure was 0.0023%.

The pay gap in India

According to a Payscale report[100] in India, women's salaries are 18 percentage points lower than men's, although it is unclear which year this report refers to. Similarly, using data from 2018, the Monster Salary Index (MSI) showed that women's median gross hourly salary was 19% less than that of men.[101] The MSI also shows that "*that gender pay gap increases with more years of tenure*".[102]

The pay gap in Kenya

According to data retrieved from the Gender Gap Africa website[103] in August 2022, men in Kenya earn 39% more than women, which implies that the gender pay gap is 28 percentage points. The tool developed to report on the pay gap uses estimated earned income data from the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021.

The pay gap in Nigeria

AKAS was unable to find an official source that focused on the gender pay gap in Nigeria. The only academic source that our researchers were able to identify[104] implies that in 2015-16

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96. The difference in wages between men and women for the same type of work or work of equal value
97. World Economic Forum, 2021
98. World Economic Forum, 2022
99. Crow, 2022
100. Banerjee, 2022
101. Chakraborty, 2019
102. Monster Salary Index, 2019
103. Gendergap.Africa, 2022
104. Adeosun and Olowabi, 2021

the gender pay gap was 22 percentage points. This research also concluded that "*females are highly deprived when married, and when it comes to education, they are relegated to the back.*"

Data retrieved from the Gender Gap Africa website in August 2022 implied an even larger pay gap of 42 percentage points. An extensive gender report[105] of 30 leading Nigerian companies published in 2020 by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) - a member of the World Bank Group - contained a disclaimer about limited transparency around gender-segregated pay and leadership composition. None of the companies examined in the report had published pay information broken down by gender or a strategy to close the gender gap; 60% had not disclosed the gender composition of their management teams; and 47% had not published a policy to tackle sexual harassment. Similarly, UN Women[106] has found that more than half (53%) of the indicators needed to monitor the UN's Sustainable Development Goals from a gender perspective are unavailable in Nigeria, with observable gaps in important areas such as the gender pay gap, unpaid care and domestic work, and many others.

These data gaps could be a result of gender blindness when it comes to certain metrics or a deliberate attempt to conceal a dire discrepancy between men and women in areas such as earnings. After all, a company can only address what it knows to be a problem. Furthermore, addressing gender-based inequity can be costly and only deemed worth doing if high value is placed on gender equality.

The pay gap in South Africa

Statistics South Africa[107] quotes the gender pay gap that was highlighted in the Quarterly Labor Force Survey 2018 report, which showed that women earn 24 percentage points less than men per month for the same type of work. Similarly, data retrieved from the Gender Gap Africa website in August 2022 implied an even larger pay gap of 30 percentage points. Moreover, the quoted Governance, Public Safety and Justice survey shows that a majority of ordinary South African men and women may be resistant to closing the gap: 68% of men and 62% of women agree that "*women earning more than their partners would almost certainly cause trouble.*"

A more recent source[108] from 2020 suggests that South Africa's average gender pay gap is stagnant at between 23% and 35% vs. an average global gap of 20% as reported by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The report concludes that the gender pay gap therefore represents a stumbling block to gender equality in South Africa and seems to have greatest impact on women in the middle and upper wage bands.

The pay gap in the UK

In 2021 the Office for National Statistics[109] reported that the UK's gender pay gap for hourly earnings across all full- and part-time workers but excluding overtime was 15 percentage points in favor of men. This gap has nonetheless almost halved in the last two decades, having stood at 27 percentage points in 1999.

Worryingly, a recent survey of 16,000 women and men conducted in February 2022 by YouGov found that women in the UK are significantly less likely to request a pay rise than men, which exacerbates the existing structural inequity and points to the need to tackle the gap at the societal (e.g. through legislation), organizational (through policies) and individual (through confidence training) levels.

105. Nigeria2Equal, 2021
106. UN Women, 2021
107. Stats SA, 2021
108. Bosch and Barit, 2020
109. Office for National Statistics, 2021

The pay gap in the US

According to Pew Research Center's analysis[110] of the average hourly earnings of full- and part-time employees in 2021, the gender pay gap has been static in the US in the last 15 years or so. In 2020 men earned 16 percentage points more than women for the same type of work. The gap was smaller for younger women aged 25 to 34, where men's earnings exceeded women's by 7 percentage points. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics's analysis in Q3 2021, the gender pay gap among full-time employees in 2021 using median weekly earnings was also 16 percentage points.[111]

A 2019 report from members of The Washington Post's union[112] showed that women and people of color were paid less than their white male counterparts. Men over 40 were earning on average 1.5% more than women of the same age, while men under 40 were earning 14% more than women under 40. This suggests that women employees at The Washington Post were more likely to be employed at lower salaries, but that the discrepancy perhaps narrows as they progress within the organization. Young journalists of color, however, earned on average 7% less than young white journalists.

The disparity in men's and women's share of income remains substantial and stubbornly persistent, even when the number of women in the labor force is taken into account. If current trends continue, parity will take hundreds of years

Whereas the *gender pay gap* is a micro indicator at the individual level, *women's share of labor income* in a country is a macro indicator that aggregates all men's and women's labor income. In simplified terms, it is the gender pay gap adjusted for women's participation in the labor force. As set out in Figure 29, the World Inequality Report 2022[113] presents women's share of labor income in five of the six countries of focus. This analysis shows that in the last three decades there has been some progress towards gender earnings parity (where women's share of income is 50%), with the exception of Nigeria where women's share stagnated at 28% in 2020. In the US (at 39.4%), the UK (38.3%), and South Africa (36.3%), women's percentage share was in the high 30s in 2020, whilst in India it was only 18.3%. Even more worrying for all the countries in question was that, based on the 30-year trend between 1990 and 2020, it would take between 203 and 343 years to reach gender parity in earnings. For Nigeria, gender parity will never be achieved if the 30-year trend persists.

110. Barroso and Brown, 2021
111. Sheth et al., 2022
112. Connley, 2019
113. Chancel et al., 2022

Figure 29: Women's share of labor income across countries where 50% represents gender earnings parity (1990-2020)

	1990	2000	2010	2020	30 year annual trend	Years to gender parity
US	34.1%	34.7%	37.7%	39.4%	0.18%	343
United Kingdom	30.4%	32.1%	37.6%	38.3%	0.26%	234
South Africa	26.9%	29.6%	33.7%	36.3%	0.31%	203
Nigeria	28.5%	29.6%	29.9%	28.0%	-0.02%	Never
India	10.6%	11.3%	15.4%	18.3%	0.26%	318
Kenya						n/a

Very high share · High share · Medium share · Low share · Very low share
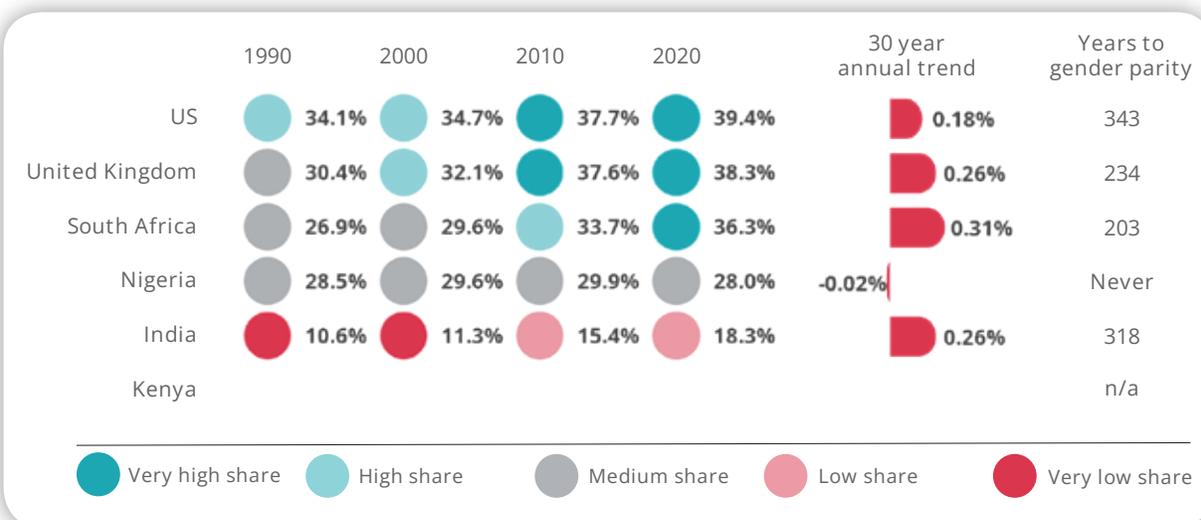
Source: The World Inequality Report 2022 [114]

Figure 30: Levels of cultural tolerance of the pay gap (2020)

"It is natural for men to earn more than women, as they should be the main providers": % who agree

Women   Men

	US	Kenya	South Africa	Nigeria	India
Women	20%	37%	48%	65%	77%
Men	26%	51%	56%	78%	83%
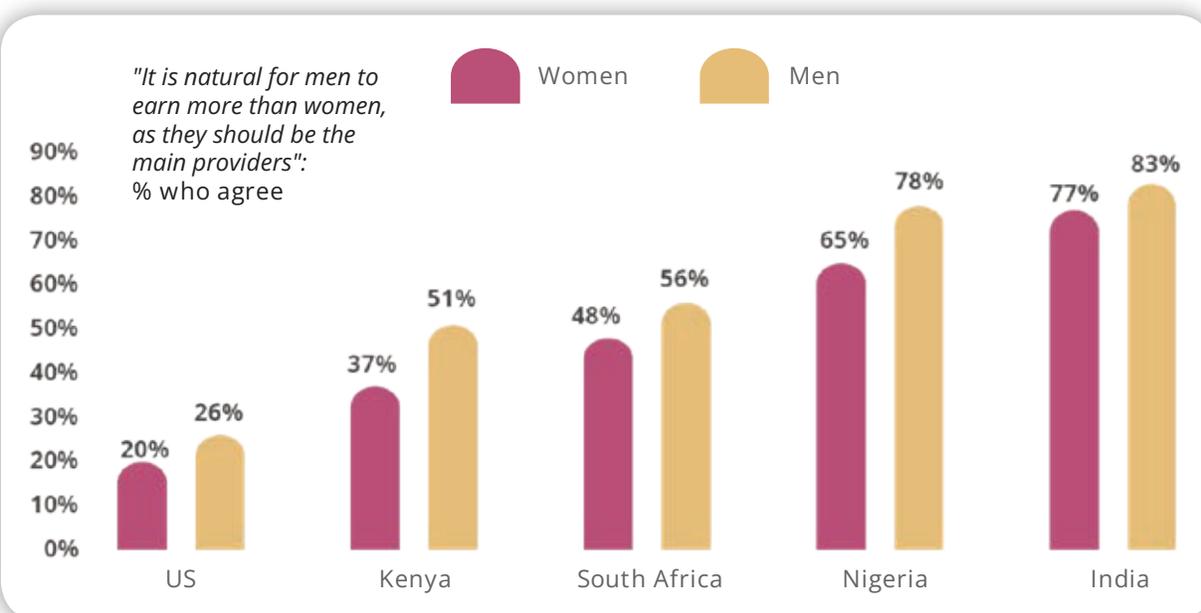
Source: UN Women [115]

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114.   Chancel et al., 2022
115.   UN Women, 2022

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In countries where research is available, up to four fifths of women expect there to be a pay gap

Perhaps one of the most concerning aspects of the gender pay gap is its cultural acceptance across gender. Research undertaken by UN Women (see Figure 30) illustrates how tolerant men and women are of the concept of men earning more than women. The majority of men and women in India and Nigeria, the majority of men in Kenya and South Africa and almost half of women in South Africa agree with the statement that "*it is natural for men to earn more than women, as they should be the main providers*".

1 in 5 women and 1 in 4 men in the US, and almost 2 in 5 women in Kenya agree with the statement too. This cultural acceptance of the pay gap contributes significantly to suppressed progress and the maintenance of the pay gap. Addressing the cultural barriers to equality in pay at a societal level would be crucial to closing the pay gap.

The pay gap in journalism is significant and a source of much discontent among female news leaders

Global evidence, including from the UK and US, confirms a significant existing pay gap in journalism. According to a GMMP study of pay inequity in journalism, women journalists and media professionals reported earning 61% of what their male counterparts earned.[116] A recent AKAS analysis of the pay gap in 18 news outlets in the UK in 2022[117] revealed a median pay gap ranging between 4.6 and 22.4 percentage points, with a crude average of 15.2 percentage points. A gender pay gap analysis of news organizations in the UK[118] revealed that 95% of those tracked have not reached gender parity in pay, with gaps varying between 5 and 20 percentage points.

In the US, a first-of-its-kind pay equity study of 14 Gannett newsrooms also uncovered stark pay disparities for women and journalists of color: women earned $9,845 less, or 83% of men's median salary, while women of color earned $15,726 less, or 73% of white men's median salary.[119] The majority of the news leaders who were interviewed for this project (64%) highlighted the pay gap as the most urgent gender gap to cover in the news. Some also thought it in some ways the easiest for news organizations to tackle as it was easy to measure.

116. Mohamed, 2022
117. AKAS analysis of UK News Organizations Annual Gender Pay Gap Reports (2021-22)
118. Kassova, 2021b
119. TNG Gannett Caucus, 2021

The safety gap

The evidence examined in this section is not able to consistently present a gap between men's and women's safety because the available data is often not differentiated by gender. It is, however, a widely-accepted truth that women are overwhelmingly less safe in the world we live in than men. In March 2021 the World Health Organization published the devastating statistic that 1 in 3 women globally experience physical or sexual violence in the course of their lifetime, whether caused by an intimate partner or a non-partner.[120] The research concluded that violence against women is endemic in every country and culture, causing harm to around 736 million women globally, a number that has shown no improvement in the last decade. Moreover, violence is exacerbated in emergencies such as the COVID pandemic: during the first wave when many countries introduced lockdowns, the World Health Organization reported a 60% jump in calls to domestic violence hotlines in Europe.[121]

The safety gap affects women journalists even more adversely than other members of society, with online and offline violence frequently devastating their personal lives and impairing their ability to uphold democracy through their journalism. This section examines the extent of the problem that women journalists face and the scale of the problem for women generally in the report's six countries of focus. Analysis of news content and of the interview responses of the senior editors presented at the start of this chapter illustrates how little space is given to the gender safety gap in the news. Only 0.4% of the coverage of the seven gaps AKAS examined was dedicated to the safety gap, a stark contrast with the 94.4% dedicated to the pay gap. When examining the total news coverage between January 2017 and April

2022 through analysis of the GDELT database, AKAS found that only 0.00006% of all global coverage mentioned this gap in relation to gender.

India, South Africa, and Nigeria are among the least safe countries for women. The UK is among the safest; the US is average. However, even in the UK there have been high-profile cases exposing women's safety concerns

The 2021/22 Women, Peace and Security Index (WPS Index), published by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and the PRIO Centre on Gender, Peace and Security, ranks the UK ninth in terms of women's security, inclusion and justice (see Figure 31). The US is placed 21st, followed by South Africa and Kenya, ranked 66th and 90th respectively. Nigeria ranks 130th while India ranks 148th out of 170 countries.

Women's security is defined across two dimensions: intimate partner violence and perception of community safety. Intimate partner violence measures the proportion of women who experienced physical or sexual violence committed by their intimate partner in the preceding 12 months. Perception of community safety records the proportion of women aged 15 and above who report that they "*feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where [they] live*".

According to the WPS Index, women feel most safe at home and in their community in the UK, followed by the US. However, in these countries in the last year, 4% and 6% of women respectively have experienced violence from their intimate partner. Among our six countries of focus, the proportion of women enduring violence from a partner was highest in Kenya

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120.   World Health Organization, 2021
121.   Campistron, 2020

Figure 31: Women's security, inclusion and justice (2021)

Gap	Title	Metric	UK	US	South Africa	Kenya	Nigeria	India
The gender safety gap	Security	Intimate Partner Violence (%)[1]	4%	6%	13%	23%	13%	18%
	Security	Perception of community safety (%)[2]	77%	71%	33%	48%	42%	56%
	Inclusion, justice and security	Rank on WPS Index 2021 (out of 170)[3]	9	21	66	90	130	148

◻ Most favorable with respect to women   ◻ Least favorable with respect to women

Sources: (1) World Health Organization, 2022; (2) Gallup Global Law and Order report, 2021; (3) PRIO Centre on Gender, Peace and Security and Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2022

and India in the last 12 months, with almost 1 in 4 and 1 in 5 women respectively affected. In Nigeria and South Africa, the proportion is approximately 1 in 7.[122]

Women in South Africa are least likely to feel safe out at night, with only a third reporting feeling secure vs. 77% in the UK and 71% in the US. Again, in Nigeria and Kenya, a minority of women feel safe out at night (42% and 48%), although 56% of women in India report feeling safe.[123] It is, however, important to note that surveys aiming to measure safety in India often reflect a less acute picture for women than that borne out by the statistics. One wonders whether the stigma that exists for women around being violated, which is linked to the country's strong patriarchal norms, represses the likelihood of Indian women admitting to having been subject to violence or generally feeling unsafe.

India, South Africa, and Nigeria are often identified as being among the world's least safe places for women. During the first wave of the pandemic, governments in Nigeria and South Africa were forced to act on the prevalent gender-based violence by passing legislation or declaring a national emergency against gender-based violence.[124] The Women's Danger Index[125], produced for the 50 most popular tourist countries in the world, ranked South Africa as the most dangerous country for women travelers.[126] This ranking is partly based on the estimation that over 40% of South African women would be raped in their lifetime. South Africa also has the highest levels of intentional homicide of women. India is ranked the ninth most dangerous country for women but first in the gender inequality index. The UK was ranked 11th safest out of 50 countries, and the US 32nd safest. Kenya and Nigeria were not among the 50 countries examined.

122. World Health Organization, 2021b
123. Gallup, 2021
124. Kassova, 2020b
125. The Women's Danger Index is based on eight factors: street safety for women, intentional homicide of women, non-partner sexual violence, intimate partner sexual violence, legal discrimination, global gender gap, gender inequality index, and attitudes towards violence against women.
126. World Population Review, 2022

Figure 32: Level of tolerance towards violence against women (2017 – 2022)

Justifiable for a man to beat his wife % choosing 2-10

Legend: Women (pink), Men (yellow)

Country	Women	Men
Kenya	n/a	
UK	10%	14%
US	11%	15%
India	22%	28%
South Africa	33%	40%
Nigeria	54%	52%
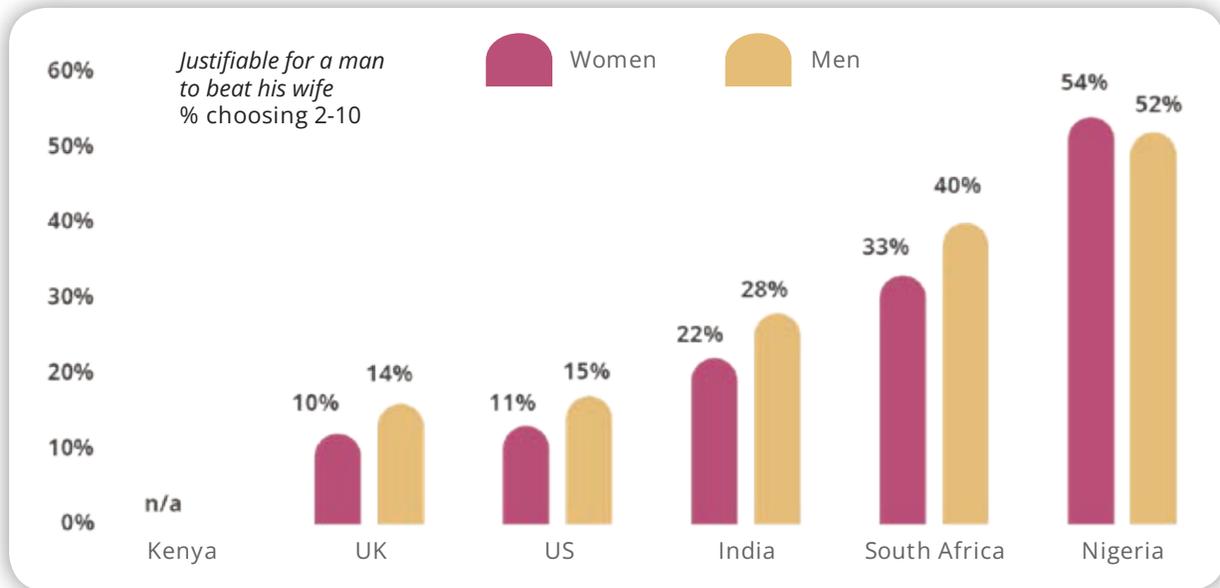
Source: Haerpfer et al., 2022

Violence against women correlates with the strength of the pro-male/anti-female norms and stereotypes prevalent in a country

Members of the public in Nigeria, South Africa, and India – men and women alike – are more likely to tolerate male violence against women than people in the UK and US, as shown in Figure 32. This broadly correlates with how safe women feel in each country.

The results from the latest UN Women's Gender Equality Attitudes Study, released in 2022 (illustrated in Figure 33) show that, firstly, media is perceived as strongly reinforcing gender stereotypes across the six countries of focus, whether in the global north or south. Secondly, Indian men and women exhibit the highest level of endorsement of gender stereotypes, followed by Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa. Gender stereotypes receive the lowest reinforcement in the US (no data is available for the UK). These results correlate with the assessments of how unsafe the different countries are. For example, India,

which has been shaken by a series of horrific incidents of men's extreme violence against women in the last ten years, is also shown to be extremely gendered when it comes to attitudes towards women's and men's roles in society. A recent devastating story of a young married woman who was sexually, physically, and verbally assaulted and abused in Delhi, having been accused of causing a man's suicide by rejecting his advances, stunned Indian society not only because of the extreme brutality of the victim's treatment, but because of the alleged active involvement of women in it.[127]

The vast majority of women journalists are experiencing some form of online or offline violence which has a chilling impact on their mental health and work. News organizations are "*turning a blind eye*"

The latest ICFJ global research into online violence against women journalists[128], based on nearly 1000 responses from women journalists

127. Mitra, 2022
128. International Center for Journalists, 2022

Figure 33: Strength of gender patriarchal stereotypes prevalent in countries (2020)

Question	Gender	US	Kenya	South Africa	Nigeria	India (2020)
		% all who agree				
In the media women are typically portrayed in traditional female roles (wife, mother, caregiver or supporting tasks)	Women	69	73	75	84	88
	Men	61	75	72	78	86
In the media men are typically portrayed in traditional male roles (providing for the family, as a leader or businessman)	Women	80	76	72	82	85
	Men	71	82	71	80	87
In general, men are better business executives than women	Women	14	27	36	45	72
	Men	22	39	51	63	78
Service jobs (i.e. secretarial, administrative, cleaning) are better suited to women	Women	19	49	53	55	83
	Men	26	49	62	64	80
In general, men are better political leaders than women	Women	20	45	47	65	71
	Men	27	50	58	74	73

Source: UN Women, 2022

and experts across the world, uncovered that 73% of women journalist respondents had experienced online violence in their work but only 25% had reported it to their employers (a similar proportion to the one reported by journalists in the UK in a survey described below). The findings emphasized that these high levels of violence have severe consequences not only for the individuals targeted, but more generally for press freedom and gender equality in the news media.

Women hold back from reporting aggression partly because they know that while a few news organizations deploy effective and empowering responses to violence against women journalists, the vast majority do not. The researchers have concluded that there is a need to shift the onus for managing gendered online violence away from the individual journalists affected to the organizations they represent, and to systemic actors such as

politicians and the digital platforms who are deemed to facilitate and fuel this violence.

New data published this year in a WAN-IFRA[129] global study that examined the sexual harassment of journalists in 20 countries found that on average 4 in 10 women media professionals have experienced sexual harassment of some kind in the workplace. Women and gender non-conforming media professionals are almost three and a half times more likely to experience harassment than men.

A recent qualitative study of 32 print and broadcast journalists in the US[130] suggests that journalists have been so accustomed to harassment that they now see it as part of their job. Although the study needs further validation, women journalists reported seeing harassment and attacks as the price they pay for being female journalists. Male journalists

129. WAN-IFRA Research, 2022
130. Chakradhar, 2022

by contrast saw it as a source of pride and validation that they must be doing their job right. Despite being trained to be objective and not put themselves at the center of stories, journalists are realizing that their emotions play a large part in the journalistic process and that they need help, which they are often not getting from their employers. The researchers concluded that gender identity is an intrinsic part of being a journalist for women, but not for men: unlike women, men are not forced to deal with their gender identity while doing their work. This phenomenon, however, is not confined to the US. A few of the editors from the global south who were interviewed as part of this project, particularly those in India, were preoccupied with the problem of women's and women journalists' safety. The following quote from a senior leader in the global south illustrates this part of the problem:

> *"If you look at the example of Rana Ayyub[131] in India, a man would have never been subjected to the level of misogyny and trolling that she is... The misogyny that comes out in the attacks [on women journalists], the threats, the violence - it's always rape, [and] sexual violence that's being threatened - and definitely the trolling and abuse of journalists is gendered. And that is a huge problem with social media because now you don't need someone threatening you in a dark corner, they can just threaten you on Twitter. The level of threats that female journalists get is far, far, far more than male journalists."*

A government survey of 360 journalists in the UK[132] exposed the high level of harassment that journalists face. 80% of all those surveyed said that they had experienced threats, abuse, or violence as a result of their work. Over a third reported both online and offline abuse that included intimidation, threats of violence, violence, death threats, bullying, sexism, racism, and homophobia. 1 in 5 said that they had chosen not to report the issue to their employer. 1 in 10 feared that doing so would affect their career prospects. More than a third of female journalists stated that they felt unsafe doing their jobs while a third of non-white journalists had experienced racism. Around 1 in 5 non-white journalists felt extremely affected in their work compared to 1 in 10 white respondents. Journalists thought that organizations and the police held the key to the solution to this far-reaching problem, making the heartfelt appeal: "*Take it seriously. Pursue the matter. Prosecute.*" Unfortunately, as with the ICFJ's global findings quoted above, most of the respondents in the UK felt "*not at all*" confident that reports of abuse would indeed be taken seriously and just under half were "*extremely dissatisfied*" with the existing processes put in place. This call to action was encapsulated by a senior editor from the global south, who was interviewed for this report:

> *"Women journalists deal with a much harder presence online, in terms of intimidation, in terms of threat, and I think that kind of behavior needs to be called out. The fact that it is harder for women to do the same jobs that men get to do - whether it's journalism or outside of that – [is] a reality that needs to be confronted, and... addressed by governments, by all stakeholders, by organizations, because very often, it's a blind eye that's turned... It'll be the headline for one day and then it's forgotten. It is an everyday problem for women, and it holds them back from being able to do the things that they would want to do."*

131. Rana Ayyub is a prominent Indian Muslim journalist who has been subject to a sustained ongoing and brutal campaign of personal intimidation and abuse on account of her work in publicizing allegedly state-sponsored mistreatment of the Muslim community in India and corruption in the Modi administration.
132. Tobitt, 2021b

The authority gap

"The authority gap is the mother of all gender gaps" states the prominent UK journalist Mary Ann Sieghart in her book *The Authority Gap.* *"If women aren't taken as seriously as men, they are going to be paid less, promoted less and held back in their careers. They are going to feel less confident and less entitled to success."* Sieghart defines the authority gap as twofold: it is the gap in the influence granted to men and women, firstly on the basis of their expertise, and secondly in terms of them being in charge. I interviewed Mary Ann Sieghart about her book and her thoughts on the authority gap in the context of journalism. Originally a high-profile business and then political journalist at the Financial Times, The Economist, The Times, and The Independent, Sieghart has a wealth of experience and wisdom to share on the impact of the authority gap on women, not only in society at large but also specifically in the news industry.

"Power is a subset of authority"

When asked to prioritize seven gender gaps, some of the senior news leaders interviewed for this project explicitly linked together the power and authority gaps. It was a common belief that the power gap preceded the authority gap. Sieghart holds a different view: for her, authority is wider than power.

> *"So power is a subset of authority, but authority also means things like being an expert on a subject, or having an interesting enough view that people think they ought to listen to what you are saying. And so many of the behaviors associated with the authority gap, such as interrupting women, not listening to them as attentively as to men, patronizing them, challenging their expertise, have nothing to do with power. They have to do with another form of authority: expertise."*

Thus authority is based on knowledge, skills, talent, and status, while power rests on status alone.

In our interview, Sieghart recalled one of her most frustrating personal encounters of the authority gap, which was in fact in no way related to an imbalance of power. Staying at a friend's house in the UK during her tenure as a presenter of BBC Radio 4's flagship program Start the Week, she endured an entire dinner party sitting next to a man who failed to ask her a single question throughout the evening. Happily answering her polite questions about his life, work, and family, he remained ignorant of her high-profile and prestigious role until the following morning, when a fellow guest asked her a simple question about it. As she remarked:

> *"I thought to myself: 'Four syllables would have elicited that from me last night, mate. "What do you do?" is all you had to ask me.' It was so rude to ask me nothing. Extraordinary."*

That man's apparent sense of superiority and entitlement to all the attention, which resulted in this lopsided encounter, is a facet of the authority gap which Sieghart unpacks with ample evidence in her book.

In essence, according to the author, the authority gap not only subsumes the power gap but also underpins other gaps, such as those of pay, confidence, and ageism. In the news industry it manifests in multiple ways, including in women's muted voices as experts and opinion editors, and their role as token leaders.

The macro impact of the multiple microaggressions that make up the authority gap

In her book, Sieghart lays bare the numerous manifestations of the authority gap for women. Her analysis of hundreds of survey findings and interviews with famous women — global leaders in their field of expertise — reveals the extent to which women are systematically patronized, underestimated, interrupted, unnecessarily challenged, talked over, labelled, and ignored. All these microaggressions have a cumulative effect

which crystallizes into systemic discrimination, limiting women's career choices, pay, and progression.

For her, the problem is systemic:

> "I think it comes from the way we are brought up. So in that sense, I think it is systemic. I don't think it's innate in our genes or our hormones, or evolutionarily determined, because there are matriarchal societies in which women are more confident and competitive than men. But I think that girls are taught to be quiet, well behaved, wind their neck in, be modest and uncompetitive. And they're taught that by both their parents, and teachers, and also by their peer group."

The asymmetrical world of judgment that the authority gap creates for women leaders

In her book and during our interview, Sieghart highlighted the damaging effect of the asymmetrical world that the authority gap has created for women. The asymmetry consists in what is societally accepted as positive in men being rejected as negative in women. In leadership this manifests in women being penalized for being assertive, determined, self-promoting, and decisive; qualities encouraged as positive in men. Where men are applauded for being in charge or being good negotiators, women are seen as power-grabbing, ruthless, and greedy. This asymmetrical judgment of women, holding them to higher standards than men, results in high levels of self-doubt and an erosion of women's confidence. As Sieghart alludes to in her book, research[133] demonstrates that more than twice as many female leaders as male experience strong feelings of being an imposter (54% vs. 24%).

The asymmetrical judgment of women compared to men was also evident in the interviews I conducted with news leaders as part of this project. Some news leaders, especially in the global south, placed women

at the heart of the problem of their lower representation and inclusion in decision-making in news. The deliberation over the historical performance of top male and female news leaders in a news organization by this senior male editor from the global south, exemplifies the implicit bias against women leaders and the asymmetrical judgment they receive:

> "If you look at the history [of this organization], you will find that most of the news makers have been men, but the people who have worked here before will tell you that also some of the most efficient, and some of the most ruthless editors, were women."

The biases powering the authority gap were amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to be in the war in Ukraine

Nothing exacerbates the authority gap in society and in news more than crises, be they wars, conflicts, or global health emergencies. *The Missing Perspectives of Women in COVID-19 News* revealed that while women were dramatically and disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, their share of quoted voice as experts or story protagonists in online news about COVID was additionally marginalized compared to that of men. Early on during the emergency, many heads of state and news outlets framed the global pandemic in war terms, activating the bias that warfare is a "*man's affair*" and significantly eroding women's authority, thereby widening the authority gap into more of a gulf. Women were pushed out of COVID-related political decision-making at a country level in five of the six countries the report focused on. In India, Kenya, Nigeria, the UK and the US, male politicians formed between 80% (Kenya) and 100% (in England) of the decision-makers on pandemic matters. Journalists reverted to well-established sources who were more likely to be men. Women scientific experts were crowded

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133.   Muller-Heyndryk, in Sieghart, 2021

out by men scientists in the news. The existing (and historical) bias of using more male protagonists in news stories deepened.

One of the most alarming quotes I read early on during the pandemic, that exemplified the authority gap, came from US and European women scientists voicing their desperation about battling the pro-male biases in science as well as their marginalization in the COVID-19 story: "*As women who are deeply involved in COVID-19 science, it has become clear to us that our expertise means little when it comes to real decision-making in this public health emergency. We are frustrated that our work is being overlooked and misrepresented in the media. We're exhausted knowing that after this is all over, we will have a powerful fight on our hands to reclaim the professional ground that is slipping away from us during this emergency.*"[134]

Research which AKAS conducted for an article in Foreign Policy[135] found that at the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the gender gap in news coverage widened further. Gender bias was even more pronounced in Ukrainian news coverage of the war than in the global coverage: as the war gained momentum, indicators imply that only 18% of the quoted voices in Ukrainian news media belonged to female experts, sources, or protagonists, versus 23% globally. Once again, women's authoritative voices were muted in times of acute crisis.

The authority gap occupies a marginal space in the minds of editors and in news coverage

When asked about which gaps should be prioritized in news coverage, from the choice of the power, pay, safety, authority, confidence, health, and ageism gaps, only 27% of the senior news editors questioned (six out of 22) prioritized the authority gap. The same number prioritized the confidence gap whereas

134. Buckee et al., 2020
135. Kassova and Scharff, 2022

many more prioritized the pay and power gaps. Interestingly, of those who did prioritize the authority gap, two thirds were from the global north, with the same proportion being women. The authority gap was rarely picked up by leaders from the global south - unlike the power gap, which was prioritized more by leaders from the global south than north.

Women news leaders who focused on the authority gap did so in the context of either not being listened to or being dismissed outright.

"I think the authority gap is a real issue in our society, the way that women are perceived. It's just in everything - we're just dismissed,"

were the words of one female senior news leader from the global north. A male senior leader from the global south acknowledged the unfairness of the intertwined authority and power gaps:

"In newsrooms, you'll notice that reporters are more likely to listen to the authority of a male editor compared to that of a female editor. We still have female editors, but my sense is that it's a power issue. Men tend to project power more, and that has a bearing on how reporters, male or female, respond to assignments."

The most pernicious aspects of the authority gap in news lead to a vicious cycle of reinforcement

When I asked Sieghart her opinion about the most pernicious aspects of the authority gap in the context of the news industry, she emphasized two, both of which highlight the underrepresented perspectives of women in news coverage. Her first was the absence of "*female authority figures*" writing in newspapers.

"So I counted, in The Times last week, on the Op Ed pages, full columns, there were 14 men and three women giving their views on the world. The previous week, it was 12 to six, but it's still either twice or four times as many men as women. And that is subliminally telling us that men have more important things to say than women, that men have more authority than women."

The second most pernicious aspect of the authority gap according to Sieghart is the inadequate number of female experts quoted in news stories.

The importance of counting representation in news as a debiasing technique and a remedy for the authority gap

Sieghart dedicates many pages of her book to various unconscious biases that intersect to produce the authority gap. These biases include gender or affinity bias[136], and internalized misogyny by men and women alike. Nonetheless, she is optimistic that once these biases are "*spotted*" they can be corrected through systematic intentional work. This encompasses reaching gender parity in experts quoted in the news, in which respect Sieghart references the success of the BBC 50:50 project.[137] She also shares her admiration for Ed Yong – a well-known science-focused staff writer at The Atlantic – who publicly corrected his own pro-male expert bias, increasing the proportion of female experts in his work from 25% to 50% through systematic counting of each of his outputs. "*But you have to keep counting*," warns Sieghart, aware of the pitfalls of a one-off intervention,

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136.   Hiring and surrounding oneself with people similar to oneself
137.   *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* contains a BBC 50:50 case study which includes analysis of the factors which have led to the initiative's success

> *"and you have to keep monitoring, because our brains are so skewed, that we think if women make up only 30/35, at a pinch 40% of anything, we've got equality, and we really haven't. At 30% it's still two to one. But it's a bit like if a man and a woman speak for the same length of time, we think the woman has dominated the conversation. We're so skewed that we're expecting women to be lesser. And if they're just equal, we think women are dominating. And I think it's the same with female experts. With all these things, if you don't count, you get it wrong in your head."*

I ask Sieghart about the one thing she would change immediately in the news industry if she had a magic wand, to improve either representation, inclusion, or the portrayal of women in the news. She responds readily, without faltering, by asking whether she could present two ideas instead of one. One of her two immediate fixes is to systematically count the gender of experts as a way of rewiring our biased brains, with a target attached to keep monitoring success and to stick with this intervention over a long period of time.

> *"It [the effort to correct the male-expert-bias] is like an elastic band: as soon as you stop pulling, it just snaps back to the default of having many more men than women."*

The other immediate fix Sieghart proposes is also aimed at correcting individual journalistic behavior.

> *"...Whenever a journalist is writing about a woman, he or she should always ask themselves, 'Would I have said this about a man?' So when gratuitous comments on what women are wearing, what they look like, their hairstyles, their voice are made, ask yourself, 'Would I say this about a man?', and if not, delete them."*

She goes on to share what feels like an uplifting and hopeful manifesto for how the global news industry could close the authority gap in news.

> *"I want 50/50 in terms of executives. I want 50/50 for Op-Ed columnists. I want 50/50 for experts quoted in new stories. And count and hold people to account if they don't achieve it."*

The confidence gap

There is no consensus among industry practitioners and academics as to whether a confidence gap between men and women truly exists, and whether it is completely socialized through nurture, or also contains a biological component. Some place women at the heart of the problem, arguing that while the gender confidence gap is starkly real, it is up to women to close it through their own personal efforts. Others place societal systems and organizational structures at the heart of the problem, arguing that there is in fact no confidence gap between women and men. Instead, they contend that in-built systemic and organizational anti-women biases result in women being discriminated against, with the outcome of a "*felt*" confidence gap, or "*imposter syndrome*", although this is viewed as a 1970s biased construct that is no more prevalent among women than men. This system-centric framing questions the highly individual-centric lens that is propped up by a multi-million-dollar industry of self-help books, coaches, and other self-improvement tools. Furthermore, it condemns the narrative of the individualized confidence gap for blaming women for their lack of confidence rather than shining a light on society and organizations, with whom, according to them, the blame squarely sits.

This binary way of looking at the issue, which forces an opposition between systemic and individual factors that create a confidence gap, is misplaced, and reduces the potential for solving the problem in the first place. The confidence gap is experienced profoundly on a personal level by millions of women around the world, as was spontaneously recognized by a few of the senior editorial leaders who were interviewed as part of this project. For example, systemic misogyny that manifests in endemic violence against women results in the demolition of women's feelings of self-worth and confidence at a personal level. To deny the experiences of women at an individual level would be to gaslight the perspectives of millions of women who feel "*less than*" or not good enough. Self-worth is socialized and to improve it, it needs to be re-socialized at a systemic and an individual level.

Among our interviewees, one female senior news leader from the global north made a strong case for the role news plays in alleviating women's feelings of loneliness through covering the gender gaps and unveiling the taboos surrounding their gender and racial identities.

> *"You can feel very much on your own, or like you've been over the top. Society sometimes gaslights women, and I think it's really important to set out in a journalistic way, why there are gender differences, and provide the evidence. For me, it's always about the audience. And it's an education thing, especially for younger women of different socio-economic backgrounds. Let them see that they're not alone."*

Another very senior woman news leader, this time from the global south, delivered a compelling call to action to improve the portrayal of women in the news as a way of closing the confidence gap:

> *"Very often, you have a situation where women almost feel apologetic for getting a job because they think, 'Am I really good enough?' And the men never think that way. I think that through the way we portray women and their stories and narratives in the media we can bridge this confidence gap in a significant way."*

There seems to be a north-south divide on the perceptions of the importance of the confidence gap which needs to be explored further

We have already established in this chapter that the confidence gap, as well as all the other gender gaps, is not being covered in news nearly enough. Only 0.00014% of the global news coverage between January 2017 and April 2022 included a confidence gap angle. The

interviews with 22 global news leaders who were asked about the existing gaps revealed an interesting north-south cultural difference. Although it was mentioned by news leaders in the global north too, the confidence gap was given more weight among global south news leaders. Just over a quarter of all interviewees (27%) chose the confidence gender gap as one of the two key gaps they thought should be urgently prioritized in news coverage. All of these were from the global south (two men and four women). Just under half of all news leaders from the global south who were interviewed chose the confidence gap as a top priority to report on. It should be noted that the insights from different pieces of research outlined in this chapter are skewed towards Western practitioners and academics, which begs the question as to whether we may be missing some important cultural, gender, and racial lenses which should be researched further.

The existing confidence gap between men and women is seen as the problem of individual women

Katty Kay, a former BBC World News America anchor, and Claire Shipman, a senior national reporter for ABC News, co-authored *The Confidence Code: The Science and Art of Self-Assurance—What Women Should Know*,

first published in 2014. They examined the confidence gap through the lens of the individual (rather than organizations or the system) and quoted research that uncovered that confidence is as important as competence for success. After interviewing some of the most influential women in the US and analyzing dozens of global studies, they concluded that women had ample competence but were lagging significantly behind men in terms of confidence. The two authors were taken aback by the extent to which women suffered from self-doubt.[138] They downplayed systemic explanations for the slower trajectory of women's professional success compared to men's and settled on women's acute lack of confidence as the problem and the solution: *"Some observers say children change our priorities, and there is some truth in this claim... Other commentators point to cultural and institutional barriers to female success. There's truth in that, too. But these explanations for a continued failure to break the glass ceiling are missing something more basic: women's acute lack of confidence."*[139]

Kay and Shipman noticed that women often explained their success away through luck or factors external to themselves, whereas men attributed their success to their own competence. The authors concluded that while much of what they found was relevant to both women and men, there was a *"vast confidence gap that separates the sexes"*. Their conclusions were based on multiple

138. Kay and Shipman, 2014
139. Kay and Shipman, 2014

research studies[140] which showed that women underestimate their abilities, are less likely to apply for promotions, and believe that they will do worse in tests than men. Moreover, men were found to overestimate their performance by as much as 30%. Women were also found to be more likely than men to assume blame if things went wrong and to credit others for their successes.

Kay and Shipman admitted to female and male brains being a lot more similar than different, and claimed that there are genetic factors unrelated to sex that influence people's confidence levels. However, they also quoted studies using fMRI scans which found that women's amygdalae tended to be more easily activated in response to negative emotional stimuli. Women were also more apt to ruminate over things that had gone wrong in the past, resulting in them being less likely to take risks. In addition, the authors pointed out women's and men's vastly different levels of testosterone (up to 10 times higher in men and a fuel for confidence) and estrogen (higher in women and a fuel for connection and bonding). They highlighted that it was unclear whether these differences between men and women are inherited or a result of life experiences (influenced by culture and systems).

"Confidence is the factor that turns judgments into action. Women can increase their confidence by acting."

The two journalists were very optimistic about the solution to closing this confidence gap, which they saw as sitting squarely in women's hands. They endorsed the definition of confidence provided by Richard Petty, a psychology professor at Ohio State University, who states that confidence is the factor that turns thoughts into judgments about what we are capable of, and turns those judgments

into action. Kay and Shipman were convinced that with individual effort and women pushing themselves to act, confidence could be acquired. In their words, *"… confidence accumulates—through hard work, through success, and even through failure. The natural result of low confidence is inaction. When women don't act, when we hesitate because we aren't sure, we hold ourselves back. But when we do act, even if it's because we're forced to, we perform just as well as men do. Almost daily, new evidence emerges of just how much our brains can change over the course of our lives, in response to shifting thought patterns and behavior. If we keep at it, if we channel our talent for hard work, we can make our brains more confidence-prone. What the neuroscientists call plasticity, we call hope."*

The pernicious side of this women-centric argument is that women are seen as solely responsible for their career growth (and blamed for it stalling). This way of thinking was detected in the views of a minority of the senior leaders interviewed for this project. Nothing encapsulates the argument better than this quote shared by a senior female news leader from the global south:

> *"A lot of women in our line of business today are very, very comfortable looking for the easiest stories to cover. They don't read wide, they don't want the challenge… Women kind of impose ceilings on themselves, 'I believe I cannot go beyond this'. That makes a lot of people overlook women who have demonstrated that their lack of self-confidence is one reason why they shouldn't be promoted beyond a certain level."*

A softer, more understated argument that still viewed women as limiting their own careers was shared by a few news leaders, including a woman news leader from the global north who stated:

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140. E.g. The Institute of Leadership and Management, UK, 2011, a survey of British managers about their confidence in their professions; Hewlett-Packard review of personnel records which found that women working at HP applied for a promotion only when they believed they met the job requirements 100% (vs. 60% for men); Ernesto Reuben, a professor at Columbia Business School, studying "honest overconfidence" prevalent among men, 2011.

> *"Women feel that if we're going to apply for the job and there's a list of requirements, we have to meet every single one. If men are going to apply for the job, they may meet only a few but would still go for it."*

The confidence gap opens up in childhood because it is underpinned by structural barriers manifested in patriarchal norms

Girls' confidence declines early in their childhood. Different research has pinpointed different starting points in girls' declining confidence.[141] According to one US study, girls' self-confidence plummets by 30% between the ages of eight and 14. It identifies that at 14, girls' self-assurance is 27% lower than that of boys.[142] Once this confidence gap opens around puberty, it remains in place throughout adulthood.[143] Other evidence suggests that the gap appears much earlier: that by the age of six or seven, girls are 20-30% less likely to assume that people deemed highly intelligent are of their own gender.[144] The fact that the confidence gap is absent in very young children suggests that girls absorb "*not being as good as boys*" subtly and gradually through gendered norms that bias their outlooks and self-perception.

The confidence gap is a structural issue, not an individual one, some argue

A growing number of practitioners are rejecting the framing of the confidence gap as a woman's (individual) issue, making way for the previously neglected systemic framing of the problem. In their new book *Confidence Culture*, Shani Orgad and Rosalind Gill[145] argue that at the heart of the problem of the corporate glass ceiling lies not poor self-esteem or imposter syndrome but gender inequalities perpetuated by organizational cultures. The co-authors argue that *"fixing the women's workplace confidence 'problem' has generated a cottage industry of courses and training programmes"*[146] which place the responsibility for solving the problem with women, letting organizations off the hook. They believe that organizations' efforts are too individual-centric and are aimed at fixing women instead of fixing existing institutional bias. They reject the notion of a confidence gap for women leaders and believe that women are being undervalued and experiencing unequal treatment. They advocate changing the world, not women. *"We urgently need to shift this emphasis and tackle the structural inequalities that the pandemic has so clearly spotlighted and that the cost-of-living crisis is now highlighting so brutally. We need to challenge the endless encouragement of women and girls to work on and care for themselves (because no one else will). Rather than an individualised and psychologised confidence culture, we need to invest in building and sustaining social structures and policies that support, ensure and reinforce women's safety, well-being and power."*[147]

This view was presented earlier by Ruchika Tulshyan and Jodi-Ann Burey, who argued that the confidence gap and the imposter syndrome concept developed in the 1970s came at the expense of a structural lens shining light on systemic racism, classism, xenophobia, and other biases.[148] The study which gave birth to the concept of the imposter syndrome excluded women of color, and people with different levels of affluence, professional backgrounds, or genders. Tulshyan and Burey argue that the imposter syndrome misattributed systemic inequality. *"Even if women demonstrate strength, ambition, and resilience, our daily battles with*

141.   Kassova, 2021a
142.   Ypulse, 2018
143.   Shipman et al, 2018
144.   Bian et al, 2017
145.   Jacobs, 2022
146.   Jacobs, 2022
147.   Gill and Orgad, 2022
148.   Tulshyan and Burey, 2021

microaggressions, especially expectations and assumptions formed by stereotypes and racism, often push us down. For women of color, self-doubt and the feeling that we don't belong in corporate workplaces can be even more pronounced ... because the intersection of our race and gender often places us in a precarious position at work." They concluded that it was important to fix the bias, not women.

The harmful side of the systemic argument when taken to its extreme is that it denies the experiences of millions of women who perceive themselves as lacking confidence at a personal level. It can also come across as somewhat patronizing in telling women that what they feel is "*wrong*". In addition, this argument is primarily a Western narrative, which does not take into account any potential cultural differences that women in the global south carry. Condemning the multi-million self-help industry and individual growth programs could lead to stalling progress at an individual level and potentially to sacrificing altogether a generation or two of women, while organizations and society were busy correcting biases against women at a structural level. To tackle the deeply ingrained systemic problem of gender and racial discrimination, the problem has to be tackled jointly at the societal, organizational, and individual level (the latter being a consequence of societal and organizational biases).

The tension between the systemic, organizational, and individual responsibility for tackling professional growth was poignantly illustrated by a female senior news leader from the global south who was interviewed for this project:

> *"While there are issues that newsrooms have to attend to, women themselves [also] have to put their hand up, and sometimes there is that lack of confidence from some of them. I do think the confidence gap [matters]. And certainly the pay gap, because it is linked to confidence as well – people should have that confidence to be able to state their case and ask for what they believe they deserve."*

While systemic discrimination in societies and organizations is the fundamental cause of this confidence gap, its effect is felt at a deeply personal level. To close this gap therefore, efforts need to be directed at a societal level (by tackling the anti-women biases built into the fabric of society), at an organizational level (by raising awareness of the systemic problems and tackling the built-in discriminatory biases within organizational cultures and processes) but also at an individual level (by tackling the individual damage that has been caused to women through being subjected to the deeply-ingrained patriarchal norms). In this latter aspect, women benefit from individualized tools that support them in reframing wrongly internalized blame, guilt, and a feeling of inferiority. Only when the problem is addressed at these three levels can the confidence gap be reduced and eventually closed.

The health gap

> ❝
> *"At the hospital I felt like a nuisance. The doctor saw me as a nuisance and wanted to get rid of me immediately. Because if they had taken my pain seriously, they would have done an actual consultation, whereas that didn't happen. It was me starting to talk, her stopping me every 10 seconds and telling me I was having a meltdown. She dismissed me before she had heard me."*
> ❞

Listening to Caroline earlier this year about her experience at the Accident & Emergency (A&E) department of a London teaching hospital was my first encounter with the health gender gap. Despite experiencing the most excruciating pain she had ever felt, Caroline was told there was nothing the hospital could do for her, and that she should go home and do some yoga. The pain and her feelings of powerlessness were so intense that for a few hours Caroline contemplated taking her own life.

Although I have written two reports and numerous articles focusing on various aspects of gender inequality, I was yet to be acquainted with the vast and multi-layered health gender gaps prevalent globally. The pain gender gap, which Caroline experienced that traumatic day, represents just one facet of the overall health gap that has been a reality for millions of women worldwide for centuries and continues to cause great detriment to their health and wellbeing. When triggered to investigate this gap in more depth, I discovered unsurprisingly that the gap in men's and women's health experiences was widespread in many countries

and, like other gaps, contained systemic, organizational, and individual components. As the interviews with senior news leaders revealed, this particular gap remains largely under their radar, in line with our analysis of GDELT data which demonstrated how marginal the coverage of it is in global news (see Figures 26 and 27). The frequent ethnic homogeneity of health news editors that the AKAS research uncovered also goes some way to explaining why the substantial health gap that exists between white populations and ethnic minorities is rarely covered in news.

The systemic, institutional, and individual elements of the health gap

At a systemic level the health gap manifests in gender (and racial) societal biases, and the historical mistreatment of marginalized groups, exacerbated by income and educational inequalities. It is equally endemic in the existing system of medical research and cuts across as many as 90 of the 156 countries around the world[149] where the health gender gap has been measured. At an organizational level, the health gap is seen in disproportionately delayed treatments for women; the selective commissioning of services (especially during the pandemic); misdiagnoses caused by the dismissal of symptoms or systematic misattribution of physical symptoms to psychological volatility; delays in dispensing medicines or painkillers; woeful data collection; and information based on knowledge of male anatomy being used in decisions about female anatomy. At an individual level, the health gap is manifested in health professionals' prejudice against women and other under-served groups (e.g. Black and Asian populations in the US, UK, and South Africa), and in return these groups' lack of trust in health professionals, institutions, and the system. It tragically also manifests in diminished quality of life for women wracked with preventable and enduring pain, and in higher rates of cancer, cardiovascular disease, despair, and distress.

149. Manual, 2022

Awareness of these gaps may be being undermined by the perception that the health gender gap has been all but closed. The World Economic Forum's Gender Gap index[150], for example, shows the health and survival subindex to have a much lower gender gap than the subindices relating to political empowerment and economic participation and opportunity. However, this low gender gap for the health and survival subindex is explained by the subindex being based on only two indicators – sex ratio at birth and healthy life expectancy. Consequently, this measure is too narrow to pick up on a range of areas where health gender gaps are prevalent.

As we discovered earlier, the health gap occupies very little editorial mind space and features very little in global news coverage. Among our interviewees, the editors who thought that the health gap should be prioritized in news coverage interpreted it more in the context of women-specific issues. One female senior editor from the global north saw the need for more news coverage of women-centric health issues as a way of serving women audiences better, while educating men along the way. Another male editor from the global north saw the need for it exclusively through the lens of bridging the knowledge gap between women and men around issues such as menstruation, childbirth, breastfeeding, and menopause.

"Men need to be more sensitive and take more seriously the medical and health issues of women because, by nature, these are mostly things that will not resonate with us because we do not experience them..."

150. World Economic Forum, 2022

151

Figure 34: Women's and men's relative health ranking in six countries
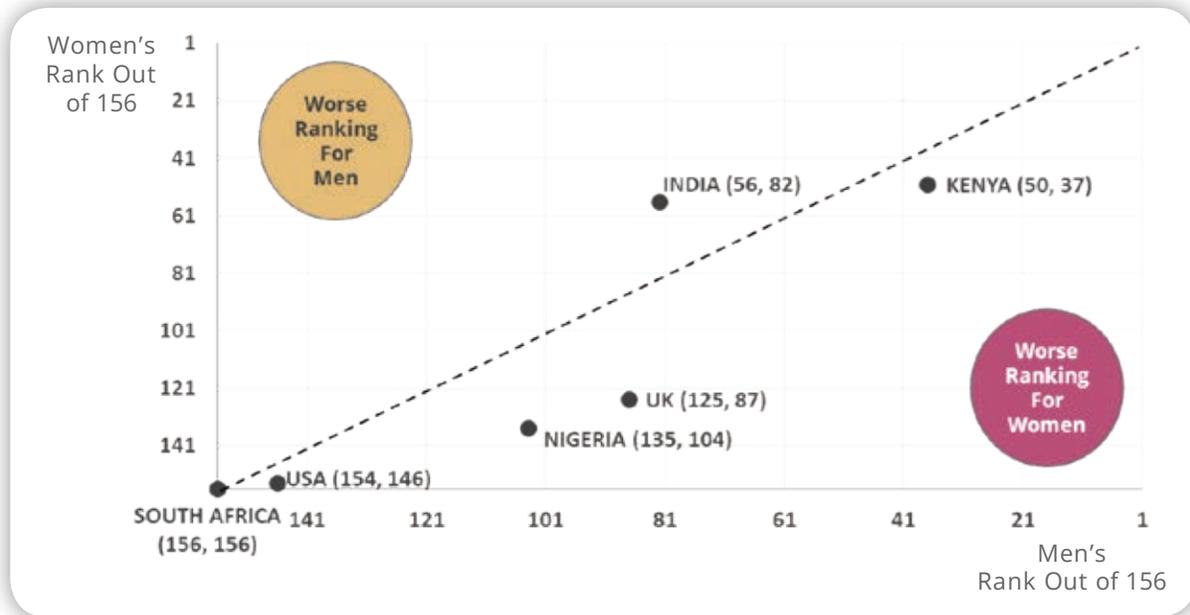
Source: Manual (2022)

The UK's women suffer the biggest gender gap in health rankings, followed by Nigeria, Kenya, and the US. There is no such gender gap in South Africa, although the country ranks bottom in health rankings. In India the health gender gap is in favor of women

Despite the scant attention paid to it by news media, the gender health gap remains significant across all six countries of focus. Research by Manual[151], which examines the health gap between men and women across 156 countries around the world in terms of the prevalence of disease, health outcomes (both physical and mental), and access to healthcare, makes sobering reading. In 90 countries (including the UK, Nigeria, Kenya, and the US) women's health ranks lower than men's (see Figure 34). South Africa ranks worst among the 156 countries for both men and women. Among the six countries of interest for this report, only India displays a gender gap in favor of women.

Nonetheless, the Manual study recognizes the complexity of the issue, stating that *"in most countries, men are in more positions of power, have more privilege and more wealth than women. However, all this advantage doesn't necessarily translate into better health."* In 66 countries, men's health ranks lower than women's. Intriguingly, a WHO study[152] found that men were less healthy in countries where levels of gender inequality were high (although this does not explain the unusual case of India, which demands more research).

As shown in Figure 34, among the six countries, the UK's women were found to suffer the largest gender health gap. Indeed this relative gap is the largest in the G20 and the 12th largest globally.[153] Interestingly, relative to the other four countries in this study, women in Kenya and India enjoy a better health ranking, with women's health ranking notably higher

151.   Manual, 2022
152.   World Health Organization, 2018
153.   House of Lords Library, 2021

than men's in India. The overall poor health ranking of South Africa, the US, Nigeria, and the UK, as opposed to Kenya and India, can be attributed to various factors, including obesity rates, which are lowest in India and Kenya and highest in the US.[154] Another factor could be the relatively lower annual death rates in Kenya and India (5 and 7 per 1,000 respectively) compared to between 9 and 11 per 1,000 in the other four countries.[155] The youth of the populations in Kenya and India may also play a role, with under 15s comprising 39% and 26% of their populations respectively vs. 18% in the UK and US.[156]

The pain gap is at the heart of the health gap. It is also linked to misdiagnosis, delayed treatment, wrong medication, and withheld painkillers

Caroline, a psychotherapist herself, shared this reflection on her hospital experience:

> *"When you are burnt out and in great physical pain, your defenses are very low: I was already questioning myself. And then I went to the hospital, and was told, 'Your pain is worthless'. And it fed right into this feeling of: 'You are worthless'."*

Women's experience of their pain not being taken seriously is age-old, with documented examples dating back hundreds of years. An increasing number of studies have shown that bias against women's expressions of pain adversely impact the diagnosis and treatment of their health conditions. A 2018 study analyzing journal papers on sex, gender, and pain published in the UK, US, and Europe since 2001, revealed that terms like *sensitive*,

malingering, *complaining*, and *hysterical* are applied more frequently to pain reported by women.[157] Meanwhile a study[158] of men and women presenting at emergency rooms in the US with abdominal pain revealed that on average, women waited 16 minutes longer to be seen by a doctor than men and were also less likely to be given painkillers. When these were prescribed, women also had to wait longer to receive them.[159]

Research in the UK echoes these disparities. A study of 93,000 UK patients, conducted by Oxford University, found that women were 13% less likely than men of the same age to receive life-saving drugs after a heart attack.[160] Women have also been found to be twice as likely as men to die in the 30 days following a heart attack.[161] UK studies show that misconceptions of female pain as being anxiety-induced contribute to women being around 50% more likely to be misdiagnosed after a heart attack.[162] Furthermore, a 2020 survey of women with endometriosis found that the misattribution of gynecological pain to mental ill-health led to delayed and missed diagnoses in 50% of cases.[163]

In countries with multi-racial populations, the pain gap is even wider for women who are Black, Asian or from other minority ethnic backgrounds

Women who are Black, Asian or from other minority ethnic backgrounds experience greater health inequalities than white women, their accounts of pain often being underestimated and discounted due to false beliefs about racial difference and pain sensitivity.[164] As the UK's Royal College of

154. World Obesity, 2022
155. The World Bank, 2022a
156. The World Bank, 2022b
157. Cleghorn, 2021
158. Chen et al., 2008
159. House of Lords Library, 2021
160. Conrad et al., 2019
161. Bakker, 2018
162. Cleghorn, 2021
163. Cleghorn, 2021
164. Cleghorn, 2021

Obstetricians and Gynaecologists reported in 2020, the effects of implicit racial bias on perceptions of Black women's pain contributes to missed and delayed diagnoses, particularly in the areas of maternal and reproductive health.[165]

Globally, women experience more chronic pain than men through conditions such as endometriosis. It is therefore critical to close the gender pain gap by raising awareness of different biases in play, introducing gender-sensitive diagnostic processes, and increasing gender-based research into the biological and psychosocial origins of pain differences. "*But to fully achieve gender equality in healthcare, medicine must also examine its past as it looks to the future. Historical cases show how gendered myths about pain resonate powerfully across centuries of scientific and biomedical advances.*"[166]

Research has revealed a strong racial bias in UK healthcare, leading to worse care and poor health outcomes for Black, Asian, and other minority populations. The intersection between gender and race leads to even worse outcomes for female minority ethnic groups

A recent comprehensive study of the health system in the UK exposed shocking racial inequality affecting Black, Asian, and other minority populations in every aspect of healthcare, harming the health of millions of patients.[167] Substantial disparities have been identified in rates of miscarriage[168], and particularly psychiatric referral, assessment

and treatment[169], with for example, "*clear, very large and persisting ethnic inequalities*" in the compulsory admission of ethnic minorities to psychiatric wards, particularly affecting Black people.[170] The issue of mental health is also significant in gender gap terms with Black British women more than twice as likely as Black or white men to suffer a Common Mental Disorder[171] (32% vs. 14%), and one and a half times more likely than white British women (13%).[172]

These findings compound those of an earlier study that concluded that Black, Asian, and minority ethnic women in the UK received a lower quality of care and experienced poorer health outcomes than other women, including higher rates of morbidity and mortality.[173] Meanwhile, a number of organizations in the health and medical research sector have admitted that racism exists in their institutions.[174]

The result of this systemic and institutional racial bias manifests at an individual level in a negative feedback cycle in which Black, Asian, and other minority ethnic women and men in the UK avoid seeking healthcare assistance and interaction with health services because previous poor experiences lead them to fear implicit racial bias and potential prejudice and discrimination.[175]

A gender and racial health research gap exacerbates the biases in healthcare

A significant data gap in medical research contributes to health disparity outcomes in the UK. Women generally, but especially those

165. Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, 2020
166. Cleghorn, 2021
167. Gregory, 2022
168. BBC News, 2022
169. Gregory, 2022
170. Gregory, 2022
171. Generalized anxiety disorder, depressive episode, phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder, panic disorder, common mental disorders not otherwise specified
172. NHS Digital, 2016
173. Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, 2020
174. See Farrar, 2022, NHS England – Midlands, 2022, Mind, 2022
175. Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, 2020

from ethnic minorities, are less likely to be invited to, or participate in medical trials and research - despite women comprising 51% of the population.[176] In addition, more research is needed to better understand the institutional and individual impact of racial bias in women's healthcare and how it can be eradicated.[177]

Unfortunately, the top global health-related decision-makers responsible for closing the health gap are between 3.4 and 19 times more likely to be men than women

Given the existing health gaps between women and men, which are riddled with unconscious bias, it is imperative that women are included in the decision-making efforts to improve health and healthcare. However, despite comprising 70% of the health workforce globally, women account for a mere 25% of senior and 5% of top positions in health organizations.[178] To ensure women- and racially-transformative policymaking, it is important to seek greater gender and racial diversity at decision- making level. News media can facilitate this by introducing a gender lens as a default when covering health and healthcare news.

176.   Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, 2020
177.   Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, 2020
178.   Batson et al., 2021

The ageism gap

The issue of ageism particularly impacts women, exacerbating gender inequality in multiple areas including participation in work, rates of pay, and the portrayal of women in media. As we saw earlier in this chapter, the ageism gap was not even on the radar of the editorial leaders interviewed for this publication. Only one of the 22 editors interviewed - a senior woman from the global south - felt that this gap was an urgent enough issue to be prioritized in news coverage. A GDELT content analysis of global news coverage of all the gender gaps identified revealed that the ageism gap has not been receiving any attention in the news, providing yet more evidence of how women become hidden in society's shadows as they age.

This section looks at ageism predominantly through the lens of news media and highlights the results from various research pieces that have focused on understanding the gap that ageing opens up between men and women.

Ageism is a problem amplified for women that exacerbates gender inequality in news throughout the value chain

The latest research[179] into news protagonists and experts shows a marked difference in the profile of men vs. women in the news stories told in print. As Figure 35 shows, the majority of male subjects and sources are aged over 50, while the majority of female subjects and sources are under 50. This sends a strong signal that women's presence in the news may be linked to their physical looks, while men's is not. The ongoing gendered ageism in the news media increases with age. Only 3% of all women in the news are found to be in the 65-

79 age group, compared to 15% of the men.[180]

Figure 35: Age distribution of subjects and sources in print news (2020)

Age of subjects and sources in print news globally. Percentage distribution by sex		
	Women	Men
Under 49	65	41
50+	35	58

Source: GMMP, Macharia 2020

Another research study found an inverse relationship between gender, age, and visibility so that as a woman's age increased, her visibility in the news decreased while the reverse was true for men.[181] Both the Global Media Monitoring Project[182] and a study by the European Commission[183] found a marked age-related pattern among female news presenters and reporters that stood in contrast to their male colleagues: women dominated in younger age-groups and men in older age-groups. Among presenters, women made up 83% of those aged between 19 and 34, 49% of those aged 35 to 49, and 28% of those aged 50 to 64. A similar pattern emerged among television reporters, where women constituted 50% of those aged 19 to 34, 28% of those aged 35 to 49, and 24% of those aged 50 to 64. Female presenters or reporters over the age of 65 were virtually non-existent.[184] The European Commission study reported a similar trend. In recent decades, successful court challenges against news media organizations by high-profile female television presenters in the UK have provided further evidence of an ageism problem.[185] The one and only senior editor (a female from the global south) who raised the issue of ageism during the interviews we conducted for this project had the following to say, which corroborates remarkably the quantitative research findings shared above:

179. Macharia, 2020
180. Macharia, 2020
181. Ross et al., 2018
182. Macharia, 2015
183. European Commission, 2010
184. Macharia 2015
185. Ross et al., 2018; Ross & Carter, 2011

"Whether we like it or not, the business of television is sexist. You see the female anchors getting younger and you see the male anchors who have been there forever... and then you're doing away with the older women who have experience at their fingertips. It's something you see around the world, and it's unfortunate that, in our line of business, we're starting to look for the young, the pretty, not too big/buxom women — you want them spaghetti thin — you want them to be soft on the eye, because that is what sells the ratings."

Women protagonists are unnecessarily identified by age in news stories. Age is also linked to an increasing pay gap in newsrooms

The Global Media Monitoring Project[186] found that in newspaper reports, a woman's age was often mentioned even when it had no direct relevance to the story. Age was quoted for 21% of women that featured in news stories, but only for 11% of men. Data from a different study in the UK and Ireland provided similar evidence: 36% of women who featured in news stories had their ages included despite no relevance to the story, compared to 19% of men.[187]

Previous academic research has also identified that the gender pay gap in many countries tended to increase with age as women were overlooked for promotion.[188]

Older audiences, especially women, are left out of news coverage, as well as neglected in policy making and political focus

In investigating the issue of those most affected by the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, AKAS conducted a content analysis of global news articles published between 24 February 2022 (the date on which Russia launched a

186. Macharia, 2015
187. Ross & Carter, 2011
188. Ross & Carter, 2011

full-scale invasion of Ukraine) and 22 April 2022. The analysis was looking for articles that mentioned Ukraine, children, and elderly people or elderly women in their title. Given that older people make up a third of all those who needed humanitarian aid in Ukraine at the time[189], that two thirds of Ukraine's over-65s and 71% of its over-75s are women[190], and that the Ukrainian population is the sixth most female in the world[191], we were interested to understand how much relative attention elderly women received in news coverage. The analysis found that 97% of the articles focused on children and only 3% on elderly people. Of those articles, only three (which is 3% of all articles mentioning the elderly) had zoned in on elderly women. This illustrates just how invisible elderly women are in the news, despite being in dire need of assistance. According to Justin Derbyshire, CEO of HelpAge International, the disproportionate impact on the elderly of the ongoing war in Ukraine, which makes it the world's oldest humanitarian crisis, must serve as a wake-up call for governments and the international community to urgently reset their approach, which he views as ageist.[192] If ageism prevails across news media, governments, and international and intergovernmental institutions, the world will be increasingly poorly equipped to address the needs of its ageing population.

For its 2020 report, the GMMP investigated for the first time the representation in the news of people aged 80 and above. Despite the global population getting older and age having been considered *as a common denominator* for being at risk during the global COVID-19 pandemic, it found that the over-80s had not attracted much attention in the news. Instead, people in the oldest age group were rarely in the limelight: "*Only 3 percent were above 80 years in the newspapers and in television news less than 1 percent were above 80 years of age. Women 80+ were even more invisible than the men in that age group.*"[193]

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In this chapter we explored seven substantive gender gaps which are grossly underreported in news coverage globally. We zoned in on the power, pay, safety, authority, confidence, health, and ageism gaps, all of which are global in nature, affecting women in all of the countries of interest in this study. In the following chapter we will explore the reasons why women-sensitive storytelling is out of news focus. We will also examine why women's representation as news contributors and protagonists is still marginalized and why their portrayal in the news is one of the news industry's blind spots.

189. Derbyshire, 2022
190. United States Census Bureau, 2022
191. World Bank Data, 2022
192. Derbyshire, 2022
193. Macharia, 2020

Chapter 2

The existing systemic, organizational, and individual biases in news coverage

Why is it that women's share of voice in news coverage as protagonists, experts or sources has been stuck between 15% and 30% globally for decades without significant movement? And how detrimental is this in view of the substantial and wide-ranging gender gaps established in the previous chapter? Why does gender parity of voices in coverage remain so unattainable? These are the questions that will be tackled in this part of the report. Contrary to the popular belief that was dispelled in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News*, it is not solely due to a structural underrepresentation of women in public life, important as this factor is. To unpack the barriers holding the news industry back, I spoke with dozens of senior news editors from the six studied countries, as well as with trailblazing news practitioners and academics from around the globe, including Canada, Norway, Sweden, and the UK, all of whom were steeped in various aspects of the issue. Importantly and unusually, we have explored the problem on three levels — societal, organizational, and individual — and have delved into various aspects of news coverage, some of which remain a blind spot in the news industry as we will discover later in the chapter. To understand women's presence in news coverage we have examined:

- the barriers and drivers in improving women's **representation in news** (e.g., who is the story about, whose perspective it amplifies)
- the **stories** that are told or missed (e.g., which topics are written about more by women/men or feature more women/men, what angles are relevant to women, what stories are missed)
- how women are **portrayed** (what role they play in the story, what questions they are asked, how they are described, how much space they are given to express their opinions, how frequently they are represented visually).

The problem related to the representation of women in news coverage

The glass ceiling for women's voices in news coverage hovers between 15% and 30%

Let's start with a reminder of what we already know. *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* revealed that women's share of voice as protagonists, experts, or sources in online news in 2019 in the six countries of interest was between 14% in India and 29% in the UK. During the first wave of the pandemic in 2020, their share of voice was between 16% in India and 25% in the UK.[194] According to the latest Global Media Monitoring Report, in 2021, as reported by the long-standing report editor Sarah Macharia who was interviewed for this project, women's presence in news globally averaged 25%, ranging between 17% in the Middle East and 33% in North America.[195] Maite Taboada, professor of linguistics at Simon Fraser University in Canada, who leads the Gender Gap Tracker there, found that in the last four years of tracking the gender of quoted voices in news, women's share of voice only reached around 30% on the best performing days.

There is a terminology problem… experts, contributors, sources, protagonists, case studies, witnesses, spokespeople…It is unclear who the news industry is talking about

One of the problems that surfaced during the data gathering and interviewing phase of this study was the absence of a shared convention within the news industry around the types of contributors that feature in a story. When speaking with Lara Joannides – Creative Diversity Lead at BBC News and 50:50 – I learned that the BBC distinguishes between *presenters*, *reporters*, e*xpert contributors*, *case studies* and *vox pops*. To keep the methodology simple, however, and to maximize teams' participation in the 50:50 initiative, at a company level the expectation was for teams to only report the proportion of women contributors in aggregate across all these categories. In addition, when counting the contributors who are women, the BBC teams are instructed to count "*only what they can control*", which, for instance, leaves out the gender of central protagonists in a story, such as Prime Ministers or the only witness to a calamitous event. Jane Barrett – Global Editor, Media News Strategy at Reuters, who was interviewed for this project – explained that she breaks down contributors into three categories: *protagonist sources* (those that are central and indispensable to the story), *discretionary sources* (everyone whose voice the journalist chooses to amplify in the story) and *secret sources* (the whistle-blowers, whose identity is never revealed). In the Gender Gap Tracker, Maite Taboada's team at Simon Fraser University counts *people mentioned* – men or women who are mentioned in the story by name – and *people quoted* – those whose voices are reflected in the story. The Global Media Monitoring Project adopts yet another approach, distinguishing between *subjects*, *spokespeople*, *experts* or *commentators*, *eyewitnesses*, *a person expressing popular opinion*, and *a person with a personal experience* who expresses their own view of a story. For *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News*, AKAS and the Media Ecosystems Analysis Group, who conducted the content analysis, agreed the following delineation of news contributors: *experts*, *sources* and *protagonists* (the latter being defined as those whose name was mentioned in the headline of the article).

These different conventions point to a two-fold problem: firstly, we cannot size the problem of

194. Kassova, 2020b
195. Macharia, 2020

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women's underrepresentation in coverage at an industry level if we do not share a similar understanding of what we are measuring; and secondly, we cannot see, let alone change, what we do not measure. Unlike the measurement of the proportion of women in newsrooms or in news leadership teams, which are consistent across the industry, quantifying the proportion of women who feature in the news becomes a more subjective and company-specific exercise. This makes sharing best practice across organizations harder. Perhaps the news industry's inconsistency in thinking around women's share of voice in news coverage is also partly a reflection of the low priority that the industry affords to resolving the issue.

The good news: the proportion of women news experts has grown in the last five years globally. Databases and lists may be making a difference

In our conversation about the factors that drive success in improving women's share of voice in news, Sarah Macharia revealed that the first

"appreciable increase in the proportion of experts who are women quoted in the news"

in the GMMP global longitudinal study occurred in the latest wave of reporting. The proportion of women experts, although still marginalized, increased by five percentage points, up from 19% in 2015 to 24% in 2020.

"Previously it had been fluctuating, one point down, two points up, but now we saw that five-point change. And I think it's not a coincidence that, in the past few years, there has been a push to develop directories of women experts. And maybe they are working. Research needs to take place to understand to what extent media organizations are actually using the directories, but I think that this might be one of the reasons why we saw this jump in women's share as experts."

Macharia believes that organizational intentionality, which we will be covering in more detail in the next chapter, is at the core of giving more voice to women's perspectives

in the news, and highlighted the BBC's 50:50 initiative as a case in point.

Societal and institutional barriers are impeding the improvement of women's representation and portrayal in news coverage. Beware the combination of the status quo bias and gender blindness

The most common reason news leaders interviewed for this project suggested for the intractability of this newsgathering problem was **institutional and individual status quo bias**, noted by 14 out of 22 respondents or 64% (see Figure 36). The harshest criticism voiced by an interviewee was that journalists were not sufficiently organized to widen their networks and proactively source female contributors. More commonly, interviewees acknowledged that to change things it is necessary to overhaul established professional networks and habits which typically favor men (who are usually the most senior experts already on the books) and undertake some original research. A senior female news editor from the global south zoomed in on both male and status quo biases.

"Sometimes we say: 'This is what is normal.' So when you need to talk to people on economic issues, you go for well-known economists, , and they all just tend to be men. And you are not thinking consciously. We need to say: 'Okay, we know so and so, but let's find a woman's voice'."

Lara Joannides explained how the 50:50 initiative helped journalists break the status quo bias by reaching out to less senior sources who were more likely to be diverse.

"Now we're saying to teams: 'Actually, do you need to speak to the scientist who's the head of the department? Or can you speak to one of the researchers who may be less senior, but has actually been at the core of this work, and may be doing the more detailed or manual tasks relevant to this scientific story?' And yes, maybe they've only been working in the field for five or ten years, and

Figure 36: Barriers highlighted as key to improving the proportion of women featuring in news (2022)
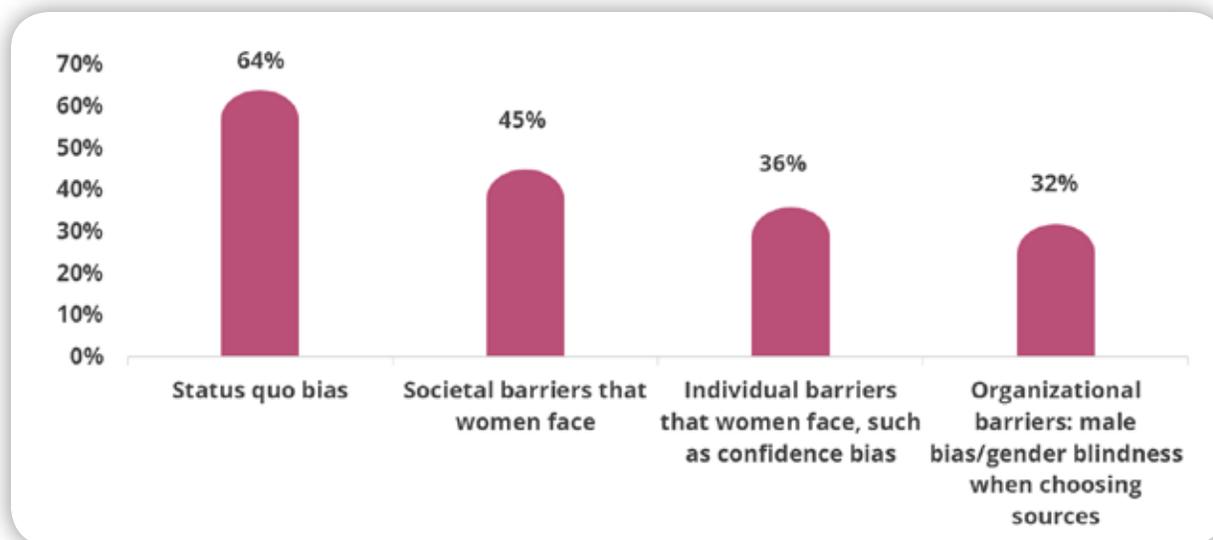
Bar chart:
- Status quo bias: 64%
- Societal barriers that women face: 45%
- Individual barriers that women face, such as confidence bias: 36%
- Organizational barriers: male bias/gender blindness when choosing sources: 32%

Source: Author's interviews (2022) Base: 22 senior news leaders across the global north and south
Q: Academic and news research has shown that there is a long-standing male bias in news coverage, with the proportion of female protagonists and experts in the news stuck at around 20 to 30%? What are the key barriers to improving that proportion in your view?

> *not 25 years, and don't have their name on the department, but maybe they're a better person to speak to, and they will also more likely be more diverse."*

A male global news leader also referenced the structural challenge that journalism faces:

> *"[Social] movements take time. We have new reporters who have come through educational systems that are trying to emphasize more equitable approaches to reporting. But often reporters - new and veteran - are habituated in particular ways of reporting, so it does take a long time to change old habits."*

Women face structural barriers in every society, especially in terms of their representation in sectors such as politics, economics, and business

Just under half of the interviewed senior news leaders (45%) recognized the structural

barriers that inhibit the progress in women's visibility in news coverage (see Figure 36). These fundamental barriers were also acknowledged by the industry experts who were interviewed for this chapter. Women's lower visibility in some key sectors such as politics, economics, and business was emphasized in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News*. In the words of Reuters' Jane Barrett:

> *"I think it [the lack of women as news protagonists] is a sign of how slowly things are moving in society as a whole. And I don't know whether society moves on, or whether we have plateaued for a while. So the elected officials, whether they're corporate or political, are a reflection of the world that we live in."*

Agnes Stenbom – Head of IN/LAB (Schibsted) in Sweden and project manager for the AIJO[196] project in 2020 – reflected on the structural barriers that journalists face when covering stories.

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196. AIJO is an industry-wide platform for collaboration around AI. Through the LSE JournalismAI Collab, representatives from eight major news organizations across the world have together explored how we might leverage the power of AI to understand, identify and mitigate newsroom biases, particularly around gender. The participating organizations were: Schibsted (Scandinavia), Reuters (global), AFP (France), Deutsche Welle (Germany), Nikkei (Japan), La Nacion (Argentina), Nice Matin (France), and Reach (UK).

> *"Journalists report on what's happening in the world and in this particular week, we had ongoing world events where the majority of people involved were men. We had political meetings, the G20 summit, we had the Space X rocket launch, Joe Biden and Donald Trump were competing for the presidency. So the focus points of the big news stories were men. And of course, then we write about men and we depict men in pictures."*

Taboada highlighted the structural barrier that women face in war coverage in Canada and Spain, (her home country), which resulted in women's quoted voices declining at the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022:

> *"...all the war experts seem to be men. You look at NATO experts. So the kinds of topics that are being covered are security, war, energy, where men seem to dominate."*

Some news leaders also mentioned women being more likely to be abused and harassed online which results in their media visibility coming at a higher psychological cost, a factor that at times dissuades them from being in the public eye.

The global ecosystem of international organizations and non-profits, which deprioritizes progress in news media

Macharia outlined another systemic barrier, in this instance related to the global ecosystem of international organizations and non-profits, which deprioritizes progress in news media. To her, the main barrier to improving women's visibility in news coverage is

> *"the lack of prioritization of media in gender-focused initiatives. Media are usually at the periphery of gender equality work. You have health at the center, education, but there's still a lack of common understanding of media as one of the ways through which discriminatory social and cultural norms can be dislodged. As such, media continue to remain at the periphery of attention."*

Macharia argues that there are very few international agencies that provide funding for work that focuses on gender in media and, moreover, that this funding has shrunk over time.

> *"...We are getting a fraction of what we used to get. And that lack of prioritization, lack of acknowledgement or recognition of the role of media in advancing gender equality and women's rights is a big challenge."*

Individual barriers that women contributors face include lack of confidence and media training

Around a third of the interviewed senior news leaders noted the existence of **individual barriers that women experts face** which may result from the long-standing structural inequality women face (see Figure 36). Some interviewees, especially in the global south, and media experts, perceive women to have less confidence in offering their opinion than men. This perception was encapsulated memorably in the following quote from a senior female political editor from the global south:

> *"When I was in TV, I would reach out to women and they'd be like: 'No, TV's too showy.' We don't want to share our opinion because we feel shy – 'am I qualified to have that kind of opinion or not?' I think many women do that... So I think all of us are kind of responsible as well. We choose to let other people speak instead of thinking that our opinion has any kind of value."*

A female news leader from the global north noted the apparent confidence gap between women and men who are approached to share their expertise in media news.

> *"A lot of the women I get in touch with will say: 'This is a really fascinating question, thank you for emailing me about it, but I think X Y Z is better qualified to answer your questions on this.' Whereas I'll email a man who might not actually work on this specifically, and they'll often say: 'Yeah, yeah, of course, here's what I think'."*

As part of this project, I interviewed Svein Tore Bergestuen – Norwegian co-author of *A Guide to the Professional Interview* and a former journalist – about his views on the differences between men and women sources and journalists. He highlighted behavioral differences between female and male sources, recognizing that the stereotype didn't apply to everyone.

"So journalists try to gather information that confirms the story that they have in mind. They often miss extremely important, both information and sources, such as women, who basically - in journalism at least - don't come forward as often as men to say: 'Listen, I have something I want to say'. So you have to find that information. And when you are in a conversation or an interview with a source, if you don't use the method of asking open-ended questions, with empathy, you won't get high quality information from people."

Some senior leaders noted that women are also less likely to have had access to media training, so they are more hesitant to pursue opportunities and are therefore losing out to men who have fewer qualms about sharing their expertise. For example, Barrett shared her view that men politicians tend to be better equipped to navigate the media than women:

"...they're very good at getting the headlines. They play the game. They know how to give a good soundbite. They know that if they say something outrageous, they probably won't be held to account for it, but they will get some column inches."

Male bias resulting in gender blindness inhibits improvements in women's share of voice

The fourth barrier to improving women's share of voice in news coverage, highlighted by a third of the interviewed leaders and also covered at length in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News*, is the male bias in newsrooms and news leadership. It is captured in the observations that **newsrooms and organizations are largely run by men, making**

them less sensitive to the differences that female perspectives bring to stories. In the words of a senior female news leader from a high-profile beat from the global south:

> "[Source and protagonist gender imbalance] goes back to who's making the decisions - and we use the phrase 'old boys' networks'. They call on one another because they are familiar and at ease with one another, and they're calling the shots."

Jane Barrett reflected powerfully on why this bias prevails across the newsroom culture, among men and women.

> "I think one of the really difficult things, and I'm sure I'm guilty of this as well, is that as we've come up through the newsroom, very often we've been learning by osmosis. You learn by what you see around you, and so as I was growing up in the newsroom, I learned from a lot of very good, very successful, very excellent men. And so, naturally, you've kind of almost copied, you've taken on board their view of what's the news story - not just their view, but how to report something. The vast majority, maybe 90% of people I learned from in my first year, were men."

Journalism-specific barriers: short-term outlook, reductive journalism, and organizations' unwillingness to report on themselves

Three journalism-specific barriers, mentioned by a minority but noteworthy nonetheless, emerged in the process of interviewing the 41 senior news editors for this project. The first is the short-term outlook that journalists typically display due to the nature of their work, reporting on the here and now. This short-term outlook plays out in two ways: the constant need for trade-offs between limited resources to cover breaking stories, and the lack of capacity/space to think through strategic issues, which include gender- and racially-balanced news coverage. Barrett summarized the issue as follows:

> "...Journalism is a very, very busy, constantly stressful industry. People don't necessarily have the time to sit back and actually think about where the business is going, where the industry is going... When you're stuck in operational and managerial tasks, you don't give yourself that time to think at the top of the leadership pyramid and consider: 'What are some of the structural faults that we currently have, that might look like a little crack in the wall at the moment, but might become devastating?' Diversity has been a crack in the wall for such a long time, but so far we've mostly dealt with it by hiring people from different backgrounds. That's a great and important start but diversity is much bigger than that. Diversity is also: 'Who are we talking to? Who are we talking about? What stories are we going after?' It's a much bigger issue."

Joannides highlighted the barrier that big breaking stories, such as the war in Ukraine or COVID, impose on journalists who try to maintain a diverse contributor story base.

> "I think really, it [the biggest barrier to achieving gender parity in news coverage] is more resources and time. It's not a lack of ambition, or motivation, or will. And it's not lack of there being the people out there for us to get on the news. What we found is that when the teams are super stretched, and producers are up against it, and you've got half the team off sick with COVID, and you're trying to get a program on air, it can be really hard to keep doing that counting and then trying to say: Right, the first person who picks up the phone to agree to your interview is a man, are you going to then spend another 10 minutes trying to find a woman when you have a program to put on air in half an hour?"

It seems that in these circumstances of time and resource pressure, journalists revert to well-established sources who tend to be men.

The resource trade-off, which often leaves diversity initiatives at the end of a long tail, was encapsulated in the words of a senior news leader from the global north.

> *"You come back with these great ideas, this great foundation of something, but the resources are always so tight, that putting them into practice takes extra work, extra resources, and this is constantly a problem, because you are told: 'Oh, but we already have a roadmap. We don't have any space on the roadmap till October…'"*

Another barrier to progress in diversifying perspectives in news coverage was articulated beautifully by a senior female news editor from the global north in her response to a question about the drivers of inclusion of women news leaders of color. She defined it as **perspective reductionism**, which partly stems from the incredibly fast-paced and pressurized news agenda, and which can lead to an oversimplification of arguments.

> *"Making room for people to have diverse points of view is a challenge. We in journalism can be very reductive, we don't really like complex stories sometimes. We say: 'This is the story. Here's the solution, or not the solution. And here's the situation and that's it'. Bringing diverse viewpoints inherently adds complexity to our conversations, and our coverage, which is a good thing, but not everyone has that perspective."*

Finally, a third common barrier that inhibits progress towards gender balance in news arises from journalists' inhibited ability to be introspective and report on their own organizations and industry, despite being wonderfully skilled at holding other organizations and industries to account. It was referenced vividly by a senior news leader who summed up the state of affairs as follows:

> *"…Journalists have that sort of slightly ivory tower mentality that still lives on. On the other side, we always say that we're not the story … So we try to get ourselves out of the way. And then there's probably an element of shame and fear. We've been bashed a lot over the last 15 years. Our business model has been totally upended. And now, we've been told there's something else that we don't do right."*

The problem with the missing gender angles in news storytelling

The Missing Perspectives of Women in News uncovered that online news coverage in the six countries of interest was essentially missing gender equality angles with under 1% of the news coverage in all six countries containing a gender equity or equality angle.

I asked most of the news editors I interviewed for this project why they thought the proportion of stories that contained a gender equality angle was so pitifully low. Notably, the top reason offered was a **lack of awareness of and sensitization among journalists to gender issues** (see Figure 37). That is, the majority of the interviewees (61%) recognized the gender blindness within news that indicates that reporters may simply not see the gender angles inherent in the stories they are covering (e.g. the gender ramifications of particular economic policies or new political or health legislation). A senior female editor from the global south summarized the problem:

> *"I think that what is missing is that sensitization of journalists to actually look at the gender angles of the stories that they cover. If a journalist was trained to look for a gender angle in [a current health news story in my country], then they would look at the proposed [policy] changes - how are they going to affect men and women differently? For example, has the maternity cover been increased, or has it been reduced? How many women are likely to benefit?"*

Figure 37: Suggested reasons for the low proportion of gender equality stories/story angles in news coverage (2022)
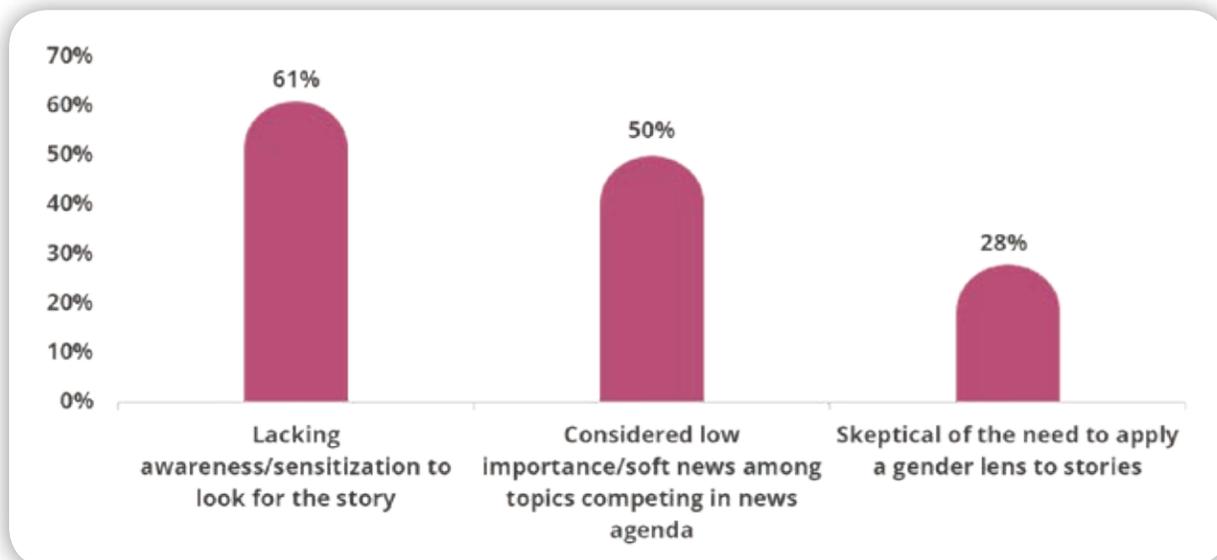
Source: Author's interviews (2022). Base: 18 senior news leaders across the global north and south
Q: Currently less than 1% of online news coverage contains gender equality story angles. In your view, is it that gender equality story angles are of lower importance to newsmakers? If so, why is this?

The second most frequently mentioned barrier was that **gender stories are likely to be considered of low importance or interest**. This was put forward by half of those who were asked the question and often interlinked with the fact that men drive news organizations, which leads to a gender lens simply being overlooked (see Figure 37).

"I think it is a couple of different things. That it's considered lower importance is definitely one of them. I think there's definitely a perception that there's not as much interest in or focus on them",

reflected a male news leader from the global north. One female news leader from the global south explicitly made the connection between low perceived importance and the male-dominated culture in newsrooms.

"The issues confronted by women are not top of mind for the people who are setting the agendas in those newsrooms. I think it's actually quite simple... I think it's because men set the news agenda and some men don't think about the world through a woman's lens."

Another female leader from the global north highlighted the pressure that a competitive news agenda puts on the decision to include gender angles.

"I think people are sometimes scared to put a lens on certain subjects because they think, 'Well, we've only got so much capacity to cover certain stories, and we're going to cover these because we know that this and that will fly'."

Story segregation due to the gender-stereotypical assignment of editorial roles in beats may be suppressing women's consumption of high-profile news genres

In Part 1 of this report we discovered that the journalists who take editorial decisions with regards to political, business, and foreign affairs news in the six countries of interest are overwhelmingly more likely to be men (and in the UK and US, white men). Here is how Macharia summarized the problem, drawing evidence from all GMMP study editions.

> *"Topics such as politics are the movers and shakers in the newsroom, these are the more prestigious beats, as are international stories. International stories tend to be assigned to men rather than women. Political stories as well are reported largely by men, as revealed by the global media monitoring research. The story assignment patterns in legacy news media are replicated in digital news media. The digital newsroom continues the kind of job segregation, story assignment segregation found in the traditional, physical newsroom."*

Barrett reflected on a prevalent belief that enables this segregation:

> *"There has been this belief that women will go off and do the 'mushy stuff'. We need to break that bias. What you find is that when you send female reporters into hard news stories you don't just get great journalism but also new perspectives. For example, the story of how terrifying it is, as a mother, to carry your child across the country to get them to safety and to leave everything that you've worked for behind. That's not mushy, it's important storytelling."*

Part 4 of this report will reveal that women globally have a higher level of interest than men in 11 out of 16 news genres and lower interest in just five news genres. Politics, business, and international news happen to be among those five, along with sports and science/technology. One can't help but draw a link between who makes the editorial decisions and the appeal of the news genres to different audiences. In other words, the genres in which men dominate the editorial roles tend to appeal more to men and less to women.

What stories are being missed?

The micro stories within big political, economic or health stories are often missed out

Having measured women's share of voice in English-speaking Canadian media using the Gender Gap Tracker for four years, Taboada confirms that more men are quoted in business and finance news genres. However, when analyzing the economics genre, she found that

> *"when you look at micro level, like local businesses, especially during COVID, there were a lot of articles about the impact of COVID on small businesses, on the local economy, then you would see more women."*

According to the Reuters Institute research reported in Part 4 of this report, women audiences are most interested in local news, and more so than men (62% vs. 56%). Agnes Stenbom from Schibsted in Sweden found that topics focusing on micro-aspects of the pandemic, such as personal finances, holidays during the pandemic, or family health[197] were consumed more by women. In Part 4 we shall also find out how increasing women's share of voice at every stage of the value chain has a positive impact on women's news readership (see Amedia case study).

When asked to summarize the stereotypical way of thinking about important stories, Joannides found that macro angles, which are less likely to appeal to women audiences, dominated over micro angles.

> *"I think for our flagships, it's often the main political stories: things like the economy and Brexit, and the latest scandal. And I think, often, with all of those kinds of big political stories, it then does just become very Westminster and Millbank-centric[198], and you kind of lose that voice of, 'Well, actually, there are probably angles that you can look at on all of those stories in terms of how it affects women'. We had with COVID, for example, it took a little while, but eventually, we did start talking about how COVID was disproportionately affecting people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic representative backgrounds, and then also women, particularly, having the longer effects of how it's impacted them in the workplace, and things like that. But it was kind of the afterthought."*

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197. Stenbom, 2020
198. Westminster and Millbank are UK Government locations.

With the knowledge that high-profile beats rarely have editors who are people of color, it is no surprise that it took so long for the news industry to spot the structural inequalities stories disproportionately affecting people of color in relation to the pandemic story. Jane Barrett passionately evolved the argument by focusing on what she believes are the broader societal consequences of not covering stories that are relevant to diverse audiences:

"The lack of understanding from people at the top [in the news industry] about how some people actually live, creates such a huge gap, that no wonder those people start to feel that they don't belong at all. That starts to sow the seeds of people just disengaging from politics, or from journalism, not thinking it's for them and opting out. That then leaves the ground really fertile for misinformation, for revolt, for some quite nasty things that can happen if people don't feel that they're heard, or represented, or listened to, or being helped."

The perspectives of people of color are missed in political news

A few of the news leaders who were interviewed for this project mentioned story angles being missed, even on big stories such as the US elections or Brexit, due to the homogeneity of the newsroom. This can result in a disconnect from swathes of audience communities. A senior leader from the US spoke about the political angles relevant to ethnic and racial minority audiences who were simply not considered important.

"We [in news organization] have a politics team that covers politics in America. I realized early in my tenure that if you cover the Senate, you should be covering all dynamics about what it takes to get re-elected to the US Senate. And that means you should focus on how they're trying to drive out appealing to voters of color. And those types of stories, frankly, tended to fall really low down on the priority list. The editors weren't people of color either."

A news editor from the UK also offered their perspective on how big stories had taken the

news industry by surprise due to its blind spots in the areas of ethnicity and race.

"During the last US election the question came up about Hispanic voters, and lots of other people made assumptions about what Hispanic voters were going to do. And then we were kind of shocked and surprised when they didn't do that. What we should have thought was: 'Oh, we don't have anyone in our newsroom who looks like that, we should get some people who look like that, because we missed that story'. Just start from thinking about what your newsroom looks like, what your audience markets look like, and who you want to reach, and then make your newsroom look like that, instead of trying to fill in gaps retrospectively."

Greater weight is given to news relevant to white people and little use is made of a structural inequality lens when covering crime

Some senior news editors from the global north raised the issue of story coverage being tilted towards the interests of white audiences at the expense of those of audiences of color. A senior news leader from the global north alluded to the lower weighting that newsrooms give to shootings of people of color in the US vs. of those who are white.

"So thinking about the Buffalo shootings, for me, that was like, 'Are we really covering this? Are we treating it as a [news organization name] story? Or are we treating it as a kind of, 'Oh these things happen. Black people get shot, like, what can you do?'."

A very poignant manifestation of the coverage bias in the US and the UK being tilted in favor of white people is well-documented in the "*missing white woman syndrome*" in news coverage. The term was coined as far back as 2004 by the American newsreader Gwen Ifill and it seems that this syndrome is as vigorously in play today as it was then. It encapsulates the tendency for news media to cover the disappearance of attractive white women more than that of Black or Brown

women. Recent examples include the extensive coverage of Gabby Petito in the news cycles in the UK and the US compared with the modest coverage in the UK of the murder of Sabina Nessa, a woman with south Asian heritage, in the same week in 2021; or, again in the UK, the extensive coverage of Sarah Everard's murder compared with the significantly lesser coverage of that of Black sisters Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry during the same period. AKAS' analysis of the GDELT database of stories found that in UK online news coverage, Sarah Everard was mentioned over eight times more than Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry combined in the period from April 2020 to September 2022 (37,203 mentions vs. 4,337). In the critical first 10 days of media coverage, Nicole Smallman or Bibaa Henry received 96 mentions whilst Sarah Everard received 11,121.

Another worrying problem is the fact that stories in news about missing people of color often lack a structural inequality lens in news, which would highlight their disproportionate vulnerability and invisibility in society. *"You cannot miss what is not seen. Because US society often renders Black women invisible, public outcry may be muted or absent when we go missing. That absence can best be understood as part of a larger societal attitude toward Black girls and women, in which the American body politic keeps us on the margins of society,"* wrote Julia Jordan-Zachery in The Washington Post.[199]

"Women's stories" vs. "news angles relevant to women": Both editorial approaches to improving women's visibility in news storytelling have value

The research for this project, including the case studies of news companies and interviews with senior news leaders, unraveled two distinct editorial approaches to covering gender issues. The first defines women's stories or

199. Jordan-Zachary, 2021

women's issues as a discrete topic area that must be covered vertically in a dedicated beat. The second approach argues that the gender lens cuts horizontally across all stories, that it is an angle that can be applied to any story. Interviewees often viewed gender equality stories as a stand-alone category of news coverage relevant exclusively to women in a way that diminishes their appeal. Examples include period poverty, menopause, childbirth, maternity, or successful female business entrepreneurs. Here is the account of a senior female news editor from the global south juxtaposing the two editorial approaches.

> "It's [news coverage of gender issues] a consideration that it's soft news. And I think that having that exclusive lens through which gender empowerment stories are reported on is probably a bigger problem… It has to be filtered throughout news coverage, it shouldn't be this special story that you have."

This editorial approach creates a false opposition between "*real news*" and "*gender stories*" in which the latter invariably lose out in the context of an intensely competitive news agenda and publics or decision-makers who do not prioritize gender issues.[200]

> "So how do editors determine what is important? Editors basically try to read the mood of the audience. So it [the low coverage of gender issues] is not really a newsroom problem, it's a general problem of society. Society itself does not assign any priority, high priority, to issues of gender imbalance."

This was the structural explanation offered by a male senior news editor from the global south to explain the low proportion of coverage of gender issues. Those editors who defend the horizontal approach expressed a worry that dedicating a beat to covering gender issues "*ghettoizes*" the gender lens, thereby discouraging all journalists from applying it to the stories they cover. Lara Joannides made a compelling case for the need to look for angles

relevant to different audience groups in the coverage of all stories.

> "We need to make sure that the stories we're telling, and the angles we're coming at them from, are going to be appealing and representing all sorts of different kinds of voices and perspectives. So I just try and keep the representation and the perspective sides separate."

In the next chapter, we will argue that given the low proportion of stories that contain a gender angle, it is helpful and indeed perhaps necessary to combine both editorial approaches.

News industry's blind spot: women's portrayal in the news

In the last few decades, the news industry has not succeeded in shifting the stereotypes which women fall captive to in society. These stereotypes - which unfortunately news coverage globally is much more likely to reinforce than to challenge – are related to an undue focus on women's appearance and age, sexuality, traditional societal roles as mothers and men's side kicks, and on personality traits (rather than professional competence). Women are significantly more likely than men to be described in the news in terms of how they look, how old they are, whether they are mothers and wives, or in derogatory terms relating to their personality, physique, or sexuality. None of the company-specific gender initiatives which AKAS has analyzed to date in any of the *Missing Perspectives* reports target understanding or improving how women are portrayed in the news. **Portrayal**

200. See Kassova, 2020a

Figure 38: Proportion of stories which clearly challenge gender stereotypes. Responses on print, television and radio news and internet (2020)
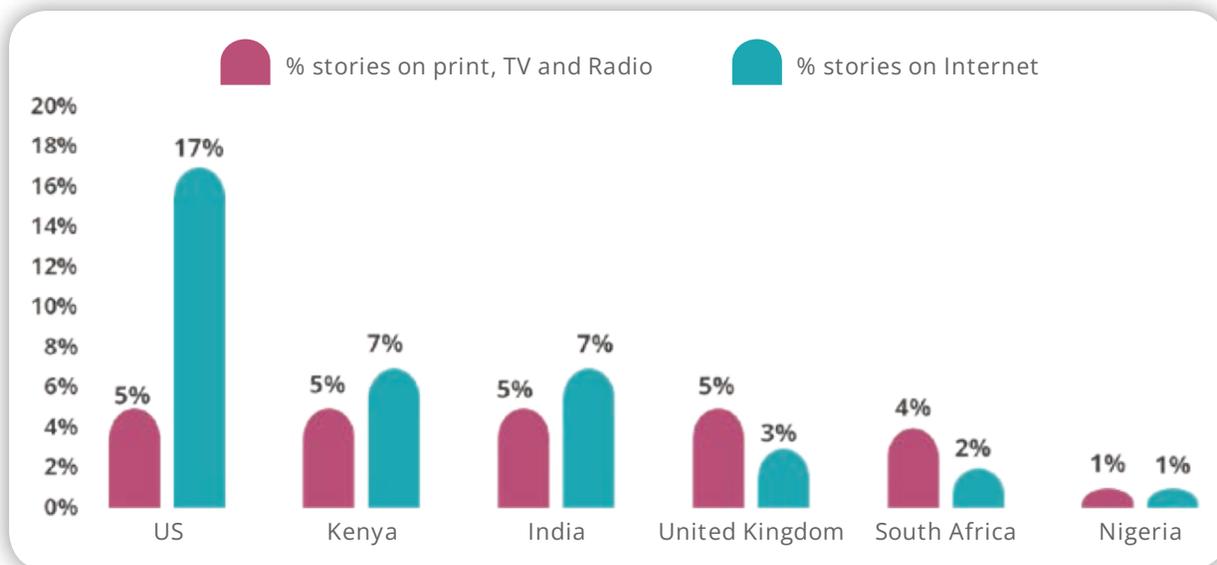
Source: GMMP, Macharia, 2020 Sample sizes: Number of stories analyzed on print, television, and radio news: UK (480); South Africa (133); US (188); Kenya (105); India (486); and Nigeria (179). Number of stories analyzed on internet news calculated using GMMP data: UK (433); South Africa (100); US (188); Kenya (100); India (514); and Nigeria (200).

is not measured systematically within the news industry. Some news organizations focus on counting how many women are represented in the content, but not how they are talked about. This is a problem, because unless women are portrayed as empowered individuals, their roles in society will remain perceived as inferior to those of men. The portrayal analysis offered in the latest edition of the Global Media Monitoring Project report exposes the extraordinarily small proportion of news coverage that challenges the existing stereotypes across the six countries of focus in this report (see Figure 38).

Sarah Macharia voiced her concerns regarding the news industry's lack of progress over the years in dismantling gender stereotypes.

"We see a bit of [upward] movement in sources and subjects who are women, women experts, but really, as we saw in the GMMP results, change has occurred in what can be counted. But in the really structural issues – what we call the qualitative indicators which look at gender stereotypes in the news e.g. the proportion of stories that raise issues about gender equality, sexualization of women in the stories, etc. That has either been on a plateau, or on a downward trend."

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Case study: Bulgaria

Bulgaria is a standout examplar of the undetected but substantive portrayal problem. It was the gender equality in media leader: the only country out of 123 measured which achieved a positive score in the newly developed gender equality in media index (GEM-I) in 2020.[201] This means that according to the index, women in Bulgaria were uniquely accorded marginally higher status in news than men. In their article *Axes of power: Examining women's access to leadership positions in the news media*[202], Carolyn Byerly and her colleagues analyze the relationship between women in the news industry across all professional roles[203] and the percentage of women who are subjects or sources in news stories. Their analysis pointed to positive and weak to moderately-strong correlations between these two elements. Based on advanced statistical analysis of data from 2010-2011, they concluded that for every one percentage point increase in the proportion of senior women professionals, there was a 0.32 percentage point increase in women's proportion as subjects and sources. Bulgaria stood out among the analyzed countries, the poster child performing exceptionally well in terms of both the high proportion of women in news organizations and in news coverage as subjects and sources. We may get very excited by these results until we discover how women are portrayed in news coverage in Bulgaria. But portrayal was not measured in the index.

Despite having reached gender parity as reporters and as subjects in news coverage, women in Bulgarian news are often portrayed in a traditional, often submissive, and even offensive light

As a Bulgarian I have had the opportunity to regularly follow news coverage from leading and smaller news outlets. What has become abundantly clear to me over my years of news consumption is that reporters, regardless of their sex, portray women mostly in stereotypes. Women are often described in terms of their appearance, age and sexuality, family status (e.g. as mothers, wives or mistresses), as men's side kicks, and as victims. Men are widely accepted by both men and women as superior in many areas of public life including politics and business, and the news coverage mirrors these beliefs. For example, 41% of adults in Bulgaria agree that men make better political leaders than women[204], while 34% hold the view that men make better business executives. This places Bulgaria in 53rd and 52nd place in terms of the strength of endorsement of men over women out of 88 measured countries. A gender equality lens in Bulgarian news, as in news coverage in other countries, is mostly absent. Male-favoring norms are at the heart of the issue and unless news organizations conduct portrayal analyses/deep dives, these norms will not be on anyone's radar, thus having little to no chance of being softened and eventually eradicated.

To illustrate this argument, the AKAS team conducted a portrayal analysis of the main protagonist in a story which gripped Bulgaria between June and August 2022. The central protagonist was Lena Borislavova – a Bulgarian lawyer and politician, and Harvard graduate – who headed up Prime Minister Kiril Petkov's government's political cabinet between 2021 – 2022. During her short political career, she became the target of several media attacks. These attacks were not of a political, but were rather of a personal nature, specifically accusing Borislavova (more than Petkov) of an improper intimate relationship with the Prime Minister. None of the supporting evidence in the form of photos or video footage provided conclusive evidence of any wrongdoing. The last item of photographic evidence proved to be a purposely fabricated material that caused outrage in society. Nevertheless, these attacks took their toll on Borislavova who withdrew from participating in the forthcoming

201. Djerf-Pierre and Edstrom, 2020
202. Byerly & McGraw, 2020
203. Excluding governance
204. World Values Survey data, 2017-2022

parliamentary elections. A portrayal analysis of the news coverage of the story in Bulgaria[205] revealed that the majority of the articles (58%) included a sexual reference about Borislavova. 33% of the articles made reference to her appearance and the same proportion used derogatory terms to describe her. Two articles bore the headlines: *"Lena cocked up again. She made an appearance almost in her bra and a skirt with a deep slit"* and *"Seduced and abandoned. The fate of much trash"*. Another article concluded: *"Borislavova undoubtedly possesses excellent physique but it is out of order for her to parade it in the Ministerial Cabinet."*

Other articles referred to her as *pushy*, *fiery* or an *ambitious brunette*. 29% of articles mentioned or focused on her family status. An article in a major Bulgarian newspaper *Trud*, made the following damning statement: *"There is a Bulgarian saying: 'She washes his feet and drinks the water.' It refers to women who tend to men in power, and instead of being looked after, are turned into pathetic concubines."* Only a minority of the articles (38%) quoted Borislavova herself. Her perspective, published on her social media platforms, was that the personal attacks on her were a result of the government's unique attempts to break away from the corrupt past, and in the absence of uncovering thefts, dirty dealings or other incriminating actions, the government opponents attacked her personally. *"Being involved in politics in Bulgaria has its price"*, she reflected.

To conclude, Bulgarian women's representation in newsrooms and in news leadership exceeds parity, and, according to the GMMP 2010 data, their representation as protagonists was also very high then. However, measuring these two indicators can create a falsely positive picture of gender equality in Bulgarian news, which is far from being the case. Only through a portrayal analysis, an exercise which need not be extensive or costly, could we get an accurate reading of the true positioning of women in society and in news, as well as a sense of the prevalent gender norms in the society.

205. The analysis is based on the top 24 articles discovered through a search in Google news between 15th June and 29th August 2022

The identity question trap that diverts attention from the expertise of women of all colors

The questions that journalists ask the experts, protagonists, and sources in their stories are critical to how these contributors are portrayed in the news. In our conversation Bergestuen argued that journalists ask leading questions to confirm their own story hunch.

> *"The problem with journalists has always been that they are trying to get people to confirm their theories, their stories. Instead of gathering information in an objective way, they are trying to gather information that supports their story."*

The questions which journalists ask frame the story that is being told. For example, are protagonists and experts asked about their expert knowledge or about their gender, racial or other identity? According to academic research conducted in Canada[206], women and racial minority protagonists in news about politics, such as political candidates, are frequently asked more questions related to their gender or racial identity than men and white candidates. This line of questioning detracts from any portrayal of women or women of color as leaders in their areas of expertise and instead presents them through the lens of their gender and/or racial identity. Taboada commented on the findings of this research.

> *"Of course, many women who run [for political positions], run because they want to fix things for women. But I think it's a problem also, if that's the only kind of platform that they have – their condition as women. Because many of them will want to talk about policies for local businesses, or international relations. But when a reporter puts a microphone in front of them, and says: 'So how do you balance work and life?', that is a question that takes away from other more policy-oriented questions."*

Women who feature in the news are given less space than men. They may be more concise but they are also more likely to be edited down

One of the unique insights that the AIJO project offered is that women's quotes were shorter than those of men. In the period which the AI analyzed, the average quote length was 103 characters for men and 97 for women.[207] Although this represents just a 6% gap, it is consistent with other research[208] showing that women tend to get less speaking time. I asked Taboada and Stenbom, both of whom participated in the project, for their views on why this might be the case. Stenbom admitted to having been surprised by the realization that it is not just about who journalists quote, but also how they are quoted. While she expected more men to feature in stories due to their societal dominance, she did not expect the women quoted in the articles to be given less space.

> *"Okay, unfortunately, we had to write more about men this week because men are holding more offices of power than women, and they are more represented in senior leaderships and in the business world, etc, etc, but at least we should give men and women the same amount of airtime."*

Taboada added a further nuance to the thinking by introducing a potential hierarchy of quotes and introducing the concept of a filler quote.

> *"I think it's a result of women being added as sources, rather than the main source. One good thing of all this measuring, is that reporters are more aware. So we have more quotes by women. But to the extent that they're aware, sometimes quotes by women are fillers, or they're an additional perspective, compared to the main perspective of the expert or the politician."*

206. Henderson, 2019
207. The AIJO Project, 2022a
208. Vos, 2013

Bergestuen offers a very different perspective when I ask him to highlight the differences between women and men sources. In his view women tend to be briefer in their answers partly because they are more diligent in following the instructions and answering the question they have been asked as closely as possible. Men are more likely to embellish their answers when they are asked a closed question, whereas women do not.

"So, whereas the men will say, 'No', and then give a long answer, or, 'Yes', and a big answer, women sources, in my experience are more disciplined, they are keeping it short because they were only actually asked for a yes or no answer. So that means that if you want to have more reliable information from female sources... well then you have to ask different questions."

Women are marginalized in images in news coverage. For every four images of men there is one image of a woman

One of the most universal currencies that is comparable across news providers is the use of women in photographs. Images are also the easiest and perhaps the most subliminal way for audiences to calibrate the likelihood of the issues that matter to them being addressed in the news. They either recognize people who look like them in the news or they do not. Agnes Stenbom shared that the eight news partners working on the AIJO

project from across the world decided to use images as one way of measuring gender bias in online news coverage because "*images don't speak a language, they are universal.*" The findings predictably fall within the ranges of proportions we reported in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* reports. The analysis of 28,051 images collected between 9th and 15th November 2020 from Schibsted (Scandinavia), Reuters (global), AFP (France), Deutsche Welle (Germany), Nikkei (Japan), La Nacion (Argentina), Nice Matin (France) and Reach (UK), which contained 31,660 faces, revealed that on average, out of every four images one was of a woman (23%). The ratio varied between 4.8 to 1 and 1.8 to 1 (17% and 36%).[209] Surprised by the finding, Stenbom warns against potential complacency among Scandinavian media born out of Scandinavian countries' higher levels of gender egalitarianism.

"I think it's very important that despite Scandinavia being more gender-equal than many other countries, we also recognize the issues that we have in our newsrooms and in our news products. We are not doing as well as we should when it comes to gender diversity in the newsroom and in the output that we produce."

The following chapter will explore ways of closing the gender gap in women's representation and portrayal in news coverage. It will also provide ideas for news coverage which focuses on the needs of a broader and more diverse audience.

209. The AIJO Project, 2022b

Chapter 3

Solutions on how to improve women's representation and portrayal in news coverage and their centrality in storytelling. Drivers of positive change and recommended interventions

Having examined the barriers and biases that contribute to the flatlining marginalized proportion of women in news coverage, in this chapter we are turning to the drivers of progress. When asked to identify the key drivers that would improve women's representation as protagonists and experts in news coverage, the interviewed senior news editors highlighted four key factors, with one in particular standing out. This was the central need for **organizations to be proactive and targeted about change in a systematic way**. It was not enough to tinker around the edges and hope for improvement,

most of the interviewees (64%) noted; newsrooms needed to prioritize the issue, quantify it, and maintain momentum (see Figure 39).

News leaders from the global north and south mentioned organizational initiatives such as the BBC's 50:50 project, developing and using female contributors' lists, launching industry-wide initiatives, or creating champions at a newsroom level. In the words of a male senior news editor from the global north:

Figure 39: Perceived drivers of improving women's representation in news coverage (2022)

Source: Author's interviews (2022). Base: 22 senior news leaders across the global north and south
Q: What are the drivers of improving women's representation as experts and protagonists in the news?

> *"The barriers are outdated assumptions, and a bit of laziness, and people not being sufficiently organized or sufficiently creative. You need to put some work into it, be organized, develop a network, and share information, and all those things are entirely doable, and we've had real success doing it."*

A male news editor from the global south explained how becoming conscious of the problem helps to tackle it but also how sporadic, rather than systematic, the nature of the initiatives currently is.

> *"Often when you raise [the issue of representation in sources] it improves. Resistance is not like, 'I don't want to do it'. We do it when it is highlighted by someone. If the editor says: 'We need to do this', it is done, but if it is not monitored, people then just revert back to old positions."*

A minority of the senior news editors (27%) who were interviewed about this also spontaneously noted the specific importance of **monitoring the data and setting targets/quotas** to maintain internal motivation for dismantling established habits. A female senior

news leader from the global south made a strong case for the need for targets.

> *"Within the newsrooms, you set quotas. You make your people count [source and protagonist use], because unless you count [the bias] and name it, it goes unnoticed and people don't even recognize that they are pursuing their biases. A quota is one way of forcing some kind of counting, some kind of reckoning to happen, and then setting a target for trying to change that."*

At the launch of the BBC's Impact report in March 2022 in London, the instigator of the BBC 50:50 initiative[210], British journalist, editor, and broadcaster Ros Atkins, explained in his opening speech why he thought the initiative had been so successful: it relied on facts and competition. "*Journalists like facts and competition. We didn't have enough facts and therefore could not compete [in increasing the proportion of diverse contributors in coverage] in a friendly manner.*"

210. The BBC 50:50 initiative relies on a simple methodology of counting the gender (and more recently ethnicity) of news contributors with a view to improving diversity.

Practical solution ideas for making change happen: from raising awareness to breaking down barriers and creating new habits

Similarly to Chapter 9 of Part 1, which explored potential solutions to closing the diversity and inclusion gap in news leadership in high-profile beats, in this chapter we are exploring ideas and solutions that drive gender (and racial) balance in news coverage. All the ideas outlined have been put forward by the interviewed news leaders or are underpinned by other evidence. They are clustered according to whether they aim to **increase awareness**, **remove barriers**, or **create new habits** (see Figure 24 in Part 1) and whether they aim to bring about change at an **organizational** or **individual** level. Every idea is labelled according to whether it tackles the **representation** of women in news coverage, **story coverage** or the **portrayal** of women/people of color in the news.

All the solutions generated in this chapter build on the recommendations outlined in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* and *The Missing Perspectives of Women in COVID-19 News*.[211]

211.   Kassova, 2020a, pp. 153-161; Kassova, 2020b, pp. 67-69

Raising awareness of the problem and solutions is key

When presented with the robust evidence of how marginal the news coverage containing a gender angle is, three out of the 22 news leaders who were asked this question (14%) felt very surprised and four (18%) felt that their organization regularly covered issues with a gender lens. Awareness of the problem of male bias in the news industry is thus still patchy. Moreover, this lack of awareness is rarely recognized or addressed. Only two of the 22 senior news editors (9%) who were asked to identify the drivers of improving women's visibility in news, highlighted raising awareness of the problem. This makes the focus on raising awareness of the issue that much more important both at an organizational and industry level, as well as the individual level. A female news editor from the global north

highlighted the importance of stories in raising awareness of the gender dimension.

> *"[There's a] need for organizations to understand what the current news issues are and how they might be able to address that particular subject in relation to gender... Just connect the dots. If they're interested in a story about the economy, how does gender equality factor into that?"*

No one made a more convincing case for raising awareness as a solution to women's underrepresentation than this male editor-in-chief from the global south.

> *"When you go through our news stories, you would find that it's like a ratio of eight to two in terms of the voices. But I wouldn't say that it stems from deliberate acts of discrimination, I would say it's just about insensitivity and ignorance, which I think might be cured by embracing the thought option, which is to have more training and more workshops and to deal with the subject."*

RAISING AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEMS AT AN ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL:

1. Portrayal: raise awareness of existing biases/stereotypes related to how women and people of color are typically viewed by society. Put in place behavioral tips for journalists for how to circumvent these in coverage

Earlier in this report (Part 1, Chapter 8) we examined the cultural stereotypes that women and people of color are burdened with, which are often reinforced by news organizations. Being aware of these biases, or at least not reinforcing them, is important for news organizations if they are to break them in coverage. Here is an example list of common biases:

- Women being seen as less competent or committed once they have children
- Men being judged more on potential, and women on performance
- Being authoritative and ambitious being seen as a positive for men, but not for women
- Asian minorities in the UK/US being seen as a great match for technical work but not for leadership
- Black professionals being seen as more aggressive and pushy than other groups
- Black women being seen more as angry where other groups are seen as assertive

2. Representation/portrayal/storytelling: raise awareness of existing gender and racial biases in representation, portrayal and storytelling within the news industry

During the interviews with senior news leaders and experts in the industry, it became apparent that news organizations, journalists, and leaders all tend to underestimate the extent of the problem, believing representation to be more balanced than it actually is. This makes initiatives which rely on evidencing assumptions, such as the BBC 50:50 project, very useful not only for raising awareness of the problem of women's underrepresentation in news coverage but also for intercepting it by the mere act of counting. In the words of a news editor from the global south:

"I think you don't see it until someone makes you aware. A lot of people just don't have that orientation...They don't realize how wrong it is that everybody on the opinions page are men."

The existing biases in storytelling which need to be understood at an organizational level are:

- The marginal focus on gender equality angles within coverage of key stories such as the pandemic[212]
- The marginalization of female/racial perspectives in key political, economic, foreign affairs, and health stories

212. Kassova, 2020b

- The prevalence of macro angles over micro angles, including in more human interest stories[213]

3. **Portrayal: raise awareness of the existing stereotypes in women's portrayal in news, especially related to victimhood and support roles, and find ways of circumventing them**

In the previous chapter we established that portraying women in a stereotypical way is a serious blind spot in the news industry, with no examples found of news organizations measuring this issue systematically. News editors from the global north and south highlighted the women-as-victims bias that prevails when portraying women in the news. In the words of two different women news leaders from the global south:

"I think we are guilty, as newsrooms, of still depicting women largely as victims. Also depicting women largely as people who do not have a voice. When we change the angles we choose, we will hopefully start to see change and progress." "[Changing coverage] depends on the mindsets of those who control the business and on the kind of example of women you have at whatever level...You must tell stories of success, as opposed to women [only] being raped and beaten and trafficked and prostitutes. We must tell stories of women who are leading organizations, blazing the trail, dying on the frontline, of women Generals, and women who have been silenced..."

A male editor from the global north delved beneath the stereotypes, touching on one of the reasons why women are depicted as victims in news.

"Where they're the victims, women tend to be picked because they are, especially in developing countries, the matriarchs running things and have direct contact with children. So reporters wanting to choke heartstrings and build empathy, will typically talk to women."

To intercept this tendency to portray women in a certain way, consider training journalists to interview male sources where they would typically interview women and vice versa.

RAISING AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM AT AN INDIVIDUAL LEVEL:

4. **Representation/portrayal/storytelling: take time periodically to assess your own use of contributors and protagonists in storytelling. Examine your storytelling from all three perspectives**

The three previous recommendations focus on the importance for institutions of raising awareness of the existing skews in coverage. However, it is important for every journalist and editor to measure the skews in their own coverage/beats in terms of representation, storytelling, and portrayal, just as The New Yorker journalist Ed Yong did.

Breaking down the barriers that lead to marginalizing women's/people of color's coverage in the news will facilitate change

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS AT AN ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL:

5. **Representation/portrayal/storytelling: measure the impact of journalism to improve understanding of the role of journalism in triggering societal change and to secure more funding**

213. Kassova, 2020b

One of the case studies that follows this chapter relates to The Fuller Project, who specialize in reporting on women's issues globally. The Fuller Project's leadership argue that it is crucial not only to produce and publish high quality journalism about women, but also to track its impact in order to develop the case for the importance of journalism in changing societies. Demonstrating impact activates the large community of foundations and donors, who are more likely to invest in journalism (vs. other programs on the ground) if they understand the positive impact it has on societies. Measuring and demonstrating impact has the potential to also address the structural problem of international and inter-governmental organizations' growing under-investment in media initiatives relating to gender, which was raised by Macharia in the previous chapter.

6. Representation/portrayal/storytelling: ensure that the initiatives you launch are sustainable

Some of the news leaders who have experience of trying to redress gender imbalance in news coverage drew attention to the importance of sustainability. For initiatives to be sustainable, they need to be designed with the end user i.e. busy journalists and editors, in mind. According to Joannides, to make the BBC 50:50 initiative a success, the methodology had to be simple, the participation had to be voluntary, and there had to be buy-in at the top.

"We keep the methodology really simple to make sure that teams can do it and sustain doing it."

The three core principles that power the BBC 50:50 counting methodology are for journalists to count only what they can control; to only count a contributor once; and to always use the best contributor for the story, regardless of their gender or ethnic identity. Expertise trumps gender or any other identity characteristics.

7. Representation/portrayal/storytelling: rejoice at incremental change. Expecting a sweeping step change fast is unrealistic. Find different arguments to involve different stakeholders

A senior news leader from the global north involved in diversity-enhancing initiatives in news coverage argued for the importance of planning for and expecting incremental change.

"So, rather than having this big explosion of: 'This is our answer to gender inequality in our output', you can do it more incrementally, but it's more sustainable. You're not having to force anyone to do anything. Some teams will participate because the majority of people in that team feel it's important to have gender balance. For another team, it will be getting disapproving looks from the editor if you're not involved. It's trying to figure out what works for different people."

This point was also highlighted by Joan Williams in her book *Bias Interrupted*, which was discussed earlier (Part 1, Chapter 8). She argues that bias can be interrupted by small, systematic, and measurable changes to work processes and with training.

8. Storytelling: appoint newsroom inclusion champions or experts to facilitate expansion of coverage perspectives from grassroots level

When asked what drove the increase of gender balance in news coverage, a senior news editor from the global north offered an important tip.

"Dedicate somebody to it, don't make it everybody's job, because you need to build up expertise and you need somebody whose focus is that. And that way, they'll become a kind of champion for it, and they can go around sharing their expertise with everybody, rather than hoping it will just happen by osmosis... Make it somebody's job."

Another news leader from a different organization in the global north hailed a similar idea:

"We created a team of inclusion champions, there's like 100 people across [the news organization] that are really involved in the effort, and it's just changed the tenor of our coverage, the conversations around coverage."

9. Storytelling: the role of weekly editorial meetings and resource groups in identifying story angles

The BBC's Joannides highlighted how difficult these initiatives are to implement and how they can only succeed if there is a group effort.

"...it just needs to be a group effort, which is what we're trying to do with 50:50 through our partners network as well. Because it's really hard to do."

A senior news leader from the global north put forward the suggestion of dedicating weekly editorial meetings to exploring diverse perspectives of big stories, or what stories are being missed.

"I think the one initiative that seems like such an easy lift and yet it is so hard, is to have a weekly, very open meeting where we are specifically talking about diverse perspectives on the news. We have a huge newsroom. So it's very, very hard to engage people through that massive bulk. It's much easier in a newsroom of 100."

The news leader's suggestion was to reach out to various organizational support groups dedicated to underrepresented population groups and

"bring them into the news decision-making."

10. Representation: don't always target the most senior expert or protagonist. Less senior experts are more likely to be women and as likely to understand the work

Joannides highlighted the benefit of reaching out to experts who are at the level below the most senior in their organizations, as a way of diversifying sources and experts.

"Can it be someone else who's also senior level, but is a woman, and we can speak to? And then she might be the director one day, which is great."

She suggested that this approach has brought the additional benefit of uncovering unique story angles, which otherwise would not have been spotted. Dorcas Muga, the Gender Editor in the Nation Media Group in Kenya, who was interviewed for the case study that follows this chapter, shared her team's experience in diversifying their pool of story protagonists by redefining the narrow view of what constituted a protagonist in business news. They expanded the definition to include owners of small and medium-sized businesses who were more likely to be women, rather than just owners of multi-million corporations, who tended to be men.

11. Representation/portrayal: make newsrooms more inclusive and accessible through outreach training to help women experts develop a media presence and boost their confidence

In the previous chapter we explored women's experience in navigating media typically being more limited than men's. A news editor from the global south summarized the issue as she perceived it.

"... women in [country] are not cultured to take advantage of news coverage, they're not really

well equipped to know how to handle the media, how to look out for opportunities. The men are more experienced. They know who to talk to in the newsroom, they know when to call the editor, when to issue a statement or convene a press conference. You find that the women… are quite laid back, so you almost have to make the extra effort to get them into the media."

In Part 1, we read about Bloomberg's New Voices initiative which provides media training (via an independent external company) to female experts in the sphere of business and economic news, in which men are typically over-represented. According to its manager, Laura Zelenko, it has proved successful and seems to have had positive spillover effects on the participating women's career progression. A senior female editor from the global south heading a newsroom admitted to her own need for help and to the solution she thought would boost women's visibility in coverage.

"I can't tell you how many times I've been asked to do an interview and I've declined because I don't think I'm 100% on top of the subject matter. I think you change it by… helping women develop their confidence and get over this."

12. Representation: give more advance notice to female experts before engaging them in an interview

In the Nation Media Group's case study which follows this chapter, the Gender Desk editor Dorcas Muga highlights the childcare barrier and appearance pressures that women in Kenya often face, which impedes their ability to participate in expert interviews as freely as their male counterparts. To evade these barriers, Muga suggests giving female experts a longer lead time when inviting them for interviews, to allow them to prepare and make any necessary adjustments to childcare or other arrangements.

13. Storytelling: look for gender angles that do not alienate men. All stories are women's and men's stories

Several of the news editors who were interviewed for this project from the global north and south, including Tracy McVeigh from the Guardian, and Eivor Jerpåsen and Igor Pipkin from Amedia (see the case studies in Part 2 and Part 4), argued for the need to tell stories that include gender angles in a way that does not alienate men. McVeigh argues that men are part of the solution to gender inequality and therefore to push them out of the conversation would be damaging. Pipkin and Jerpåsen argue that it makes more business sense to find story angles that appeal across different audience groups.

Developing new habits accelerates positive change

DEVELOPING HABITS AT AN ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL:

14. Representation/portrayal: count contributors broken down by category to avoid reinforcing stereotypes in your news coverage

Counting the proportion of women and women of color in news is critical to curtailing the existing male-dominated bias in news coverage. The need for simple methodology has to be weighed against the importance of ensuring that women contributors are not only clustered around non-authoritative news roles (e.g. story witnesses, case studies or vox pops) and victims. To avoid this, it is important to count at a slightly more granular level. Joannides from the BBC explained that while the BBC at a company level only collected the aggregated proportion of women vs. men contributors in news coverage, the individual teams were encouraged to count the contribution that women made across different contributor categories and ensure

that women contributors do not just fall primarily in the case studies category.

15. **Storytelling: hire editors with lived experiences from underrepresented groups to mitigate the risk of homogenous storytelling**

The evidence gathered and presented in the first two chapters of Part 2 of this report builds a convincing case for hiring editors and reporters whose lived experiences come from communities underrepresented in news. Their experience would enable them to spot stories and story angles that would otherwise be missed by a more homogenous editorial group, dominated by men globally and white men in the global north. While evidence also shows that having diverse editors and reporters is not alone sufficient to achieve gender- and racially balanced and relevant news coverage, it is an important success factor. Both Khabar Lahariya in India (whose case study follows this chapter) and The Fuller Project rely heavily on the lived experiences of their reporters and editors in producing high quality women-centric journalism relevant to their audiences.

16. **Inclusive storytelling: 360 degree editing**

Reuters' Barrett introduced the concept of 360 degree editing, which encompasses the perspectives of different communities and audience groups in terms of how a particular story affects them. For her this type of editing starts with considering what angle the news organization might be missing and finding *discretionary sources* who can fill in the gaps. The protagonist sources are typically men with higher socio-economic status but filling in the gaps demands finding different sources. She walked me through the thought process:

"How are we going to report that story? Where's the data that we should be getting? Who should we be speaking about? Who are the discretionary sources that we should be going to speak to? It's 360 news editing, because you're truly trying to look at, for example, not just

what Rishi Sunak said yesterday, but how this is going to impact people. It's telling you the story from more of a female perspective, or more of a different ethnicity perspective, as well as bringing more of a socio-economic angle."

The previous chapter highlighted the tension that exists between the two editorial approaches to raising the visibility of women and racial/ethnic minorities in the news. One was vertical, dedicating a beat to produce gender- or race-focused coverage, the other striving to offer a gender or racial/ethnic lens horizontally, across beats. The content analysis of millions of stories across the six countries has previously shown that the coverage of gender in the news is pitifully low. This means that there is room for every editorial approach to increase coverage relevant to women (and ethnic minorities).

A female senior news leader from the global north spoke enthusiastically about inclusive storytelling across topics, whereby every story is covered through the lens of multiple key audience groups as a means of moving away from over-representing (white) men's perspectives.

"…We tend to go to official coverage, which then inherently leads to covering more men, and inclusive storytelling is broadening your sources, deepening your social relationships, going to different communities which would inherently produce more stories about women."

Another female news leader from the global south made the case for horizontal coverage of gender issues.

"I think there is a low proportion of gender equality stories because all the other issues - politics, economics, and all of that - are taken as separate from the conversation on gender, on equality. When you look at human development indices, the countries with the best human development indices are the countries where equality is important. Where you get equality right, you will be better with your politics, better with your economics, because you're thinking about 'people'."

The following two recommendations explore ideas which focus on vertical news coverage of gender and race. The two approaches are by no means mutually exclusive. Organizations might start off with vertical coverage of gender/race issues and move to a more horizontal approach once inclusive thinking about stories has become embedded in the organization. That will, however, take time, given the structural, institutional, and individual biases in play.

17. Representation/portrayal/storytelling: launch Gender or Race Desks if the culture is open to it

In 2019, the Nation Media Group in Kenya launched Africa's first Gender Desk, which has had a notably positive impact in amplifying women's voices as reporters, protagonists, and sources in the coverage of one of the biggest news providers in East Africa.[214] Muga, the Gender Desk's editor, shared that the trailblazing work of the Gender Desk has been emulated by competitor news providers, leading to additional amplification of women's voices in the news and the challenging of male-favoring norms.

Examples of other vertical editorial interventions also exist in the global north. A female senior news political editor from the global north shared her progress in creating a small but important team dedicated to covering politics and race. The team formed part of the politics beat and focused on issues affecting Black and Hispanic voters.

"I evolved over the years from feeling like it's everybody's responsibility to cover these issues to, no, we need to be very specific and purposeful about covering Black politics and race and issues of diversity. I tried over the years to make the argument to my mostly white male leadership that we had a responsibility to be more representative of our audience and the conversations and dynamics that are happening and shaping politics. And you can't cover politics unless you understand that we have to

cover diverse communities and not just look at everything in one way. My arguments had to boil down to business imperative. And of course, after George Floyd, it became a lot easier to make that argument."

At the end of the interview, she added poignantly:

"I hope that maybe one day this won't be necessary, but it is now."

18. Storytelling: the power of newsletters/publication sections/newspaper pull-outs

During the research for this project some editors shed light on various initiatives they had launched to amplify the voices of women. Tracy McVeigh spoke about the bigger than anticipated success of *In Her Words* newsletter, and Muga about the success of *The Voice*, a monthly pull-out magazine within *The Nation* newspaper, which is dedicated to women's stories and female protagonists. When done well, these interventions attract a broader audience than women, even though they are primarily targeted at women. A business news editor from the global south spoke about the importance of not ghettoizing news coverage about women by confining it to key moments such as International Women's Day (important as this date is for amplifying women's voices globally).

"I think, as newsrooms as well as people who set the agenda, we need to push gender stories more. You get a lot of attention on women's issues and gender issues on specific dates but otherwise, it is covered, but not adequately. One of the things I used to be proud of, the publication that I edited, one day every week, we dedicated our center spread, a double spread, to women's issues, women's profiles, and we did that throughout the year."

214. AKAS, 2022

19. Storytelling: invite members of marginalized groups in society to be editors for a day

One idea that was shared by a news editor from the global north, which had been implemented at their news organization in the past, was to invite members of the audience from marginalized groups in to be news editors for the day as a controlled learning experience. This would involve them having the opportunity to decide what stories should make it on air or on the website or what the running order of stories should be.

20. Representation/portrayal: audit the gender and race of people in photo images used in your news output

In the previous chapter we discovered that the images used in news coverage are as male-biased as the story coverage itself. To raise awareness of and course-correct this imbalance, it is transformative to conduct periodical audits of the people used in images in news coverage, as AIJO did in 2020 (see previous chapter). Agnes Stenbom from Schibsted in Scandinavia - one of the eight news organizations participating in the AIJO project - shared enthusiastically the positive impact the project had had on the various Schibsted newsrooms.

"So we now have different initiatives, for example, reaching more young women, which is informed by this type of analysis."

21. Portrayal: conduct cost-effective deep dives to understand how news contributors/protagonists are portrayed

As revealed in the previous chapter, news organizations have no consistent understanding of how women or women of color are portrayed in their news coverage. What proportion are portrayed as victims, power brokers, men's sidekicks, perpetrators, sources of authority/knowledge, sexual objects, primary care givers or key family members?

The answers to these questions are largely unknown. Without this knowledge, news organizations are much more likely to be unaware of how deeply they reinforce gender and racial stereotypes and consequently, are less equipped to improve their audience portrayal. Understanding the portrayal of women and women of color need not be an expensive exercise. Newsrooms could take a slice of their coverage on a chosen day or take 50 randomly selected online stories, or find another cost-effective methodology for analyzing a slice of their content with this lens in mind. This could be supported by in-house audience research and insight teams, where these exist. Portrayal analysis is guaranteed to deliver important insights for journalists and editors as to where their journalistic biases lie and what needs to be done to soften/dissolve the stereotypes reinforced in the coverage.

DEVELOPING NEW HABITS AT AN INDIVIDUAL LEVEL:

22. Storytelling: use more micro angles, including human stories, in storytelling. Combine these with global angles highlighting the universality of women's problems

In Chapter 2 we uncovered that micro angles, which are more likely to feature women and be relevant to women, are often underexplored in news coverage. In the words of an editor from the global north:

"... I remember an audience and they all spoke at length about social care. They had either worked in care homes, or had relatives they were carers for, or were fighting a battle to care for elderly parents. This was a subject that meant the world to them, and they just weren't seeing the story being told in a way that they could connect with. That's because we're telling it from our [journalistic] perspective all the time, which is about arguments over policy, or economic priorities. We're not engaging people on the ground and bringing these bigger macro political issues to life through real people's stories in a way that is engaging them."

As shown in the case study that follows, The Fuller Project have found that the highest quality journalism about women combines a local or hyperlocal angle with a global perspective, demonstrating the universality of an issue to women around the world.

23. Portrayal: assess women's portrayal in own coverage and measure length of quotes by gender/race

If you are a reporter or an editor, consider taking a small random sample of your/your team's output and analyzing how women/women of color are portrayed in your news output. You will almost certainly be surprised by the results.

24. Portrayal: focus on expertise, rather than identity when interviewing contributors

When interviewing women/women of color, ask questions that delve into their areas of expertise rather than their identity. Doing otherwise risks reinforcing existing stereotypes and undermining their authority. An example of the identity trap that journalists fall into was shared by a senior editor from the global north:

"Often, when we do tell stories about race or gender, we go to people to tell stories about their community, rather than about more general stories like politics or education. Somehow you have to be the spokesperson of what your characteristic or your community is. I think we still think stereotypically and pigeonhole people: 'Well, we'll go to a woman of color to tell the story about bringing up her boys and their relationship with the police'. And you

can tell that story, but I'm not necessarily going to ask you what you think about xxx political story."

A senior female editor from the global south shared a different aspect of the opportunity to ask women experts questions based on their expertise rather than their gender identity:

"There needs to be a female CEO, and she needs to be put on a panel with her male counterparts and given enough time, just like everybody else. And the conversations put to her should not be limited to the fact that she's a female in that position, and that's the problem that we have, we approach women only from that perspective. So what happens is that men are having the conversations around the issues at hand, while women are made to speak about the fact that: 'Yay, I'm a woman in the room'."

25. Portrayal: ask more open-ended (rather than closed) questions which draw more out of female sources

Svein Tore Bergestuen, whose views were introduced in the previous chapter, makes an impassioned case for using much more open-ended questions in journalism to avoid the confirmation and cognitive biases that frequently stand between journalists and the truth. He also argued that women are less forthcoming as sources, being less likely to offer information they have not been asked to share. When asked a closed question, in Bergestuen's view, women typically give much more succinct answers than men. He therefore recommends asking a lot more open-ended questions than journalists usually do, and doing so in an empathetic manner.

Trailblazers who are reshaping news coverage of gender issues in the global south and north

Introduction to four case studies

As previously indicated, Part 3 of this report will provide an overview and analysis of 168 news initiatives, implemented by 118 organizations in four regions and globally. These initiatives, researched by AKAS over a period of months, address various aspects of the gender inequality that exists in news. In the research process, certain organizations stood out for their innovative efforts in reshaping coverage about women and other marginalized audiences whose voices have traditionally been rarely heard in the news, causing them to remain outside the focus of policy-making. Khabar Lahariya in India, Nation Media Group in Kenya, the Guardian's Global Development desk in the UK, and The Fuller Project in the US are among these trailblazing organizations and feature as case studies in this section. Khabar Lahariya – the subject of the Oscar-nominated 2021 documentary *Writing with Fire* - is an extraordinary all-women news operation whose coverage of the most underprivileged rural audiences is making waves throughout

India. Nation Media Group has set up Africa's first Gender Desk in Kenya, its coverage leading to the enhancement of the lives of thousands of women in Kenya. The Fuller Project, with whom Nation Media Group partnered in launching the Gender Desk, is a not-for-profit newsroom dedicated to reporting on issues that impact women globally. The Guardian's Global Development desk, whose reporters are predominantly women, has reached gender parity in bylines. In 2022 it launched *Her Stage,* a newsletter featuring and targeting women in developing countries.

The four case studies that follow are anchored in interviews with Khabar Lahariya's Editor-in-Chief Kavita Devi, Nation Media Group's Gender Desk Editor Dorcas Muga, the Guardian's Global Development Editor Tracy McVeigh and The Fuller Project's CEO Xanthe Scharff. The interviews not only explore the work of each of these organizations in improving gender equity in news coverage, but also lessons learned along the way and future plans for reducing gender inequity in news.

Case study: Khabar Lahariya in India

What is Khabar Lahariya?

Khabar Lahariya is a trailblazing and unique all-women news service in India which has been operating since 2002, telling stories from a feminist perspective. It delivers ultra-local journalism, focusing on the plight of underprivileged rural audiences who rarely feature in mainstream news. Khabar Lahariya has grown from an eight-page weekly newspaper with a circulation of 4,000 to a fully digitalized multi-platform news proposition reaching millions. It has 556,000 YouTube subscribers and c170 million cumulative views on YouTube[215], 20,100 Twitter followers[216] and 11,930 monthly unique visitors.[217] 462 websites have linked to Khabar Lahariya, eight of them educational.[218] To date, the organization has won 13 awards. From its launch, when women formed "hardly two or three percent" of its audience, the news provider has succeeded in reaching an increasingly gender-balanced audience, with women comprising 33% by 2016.[219] The latest gender profile data from SimilarWeb estimates that 46% of Khabar Lahariya's website audience is currently female.[220] Together with its parent company, Chambal Media, today the organization has a team of 30. Khabar Lahariya employs 20 full-time reporters from marginalized communities (including Dalit, Muslim, Tribal and Other Backward Castes), as well as women from the so-called upper castes. Many, including Kavita Devi, its Editor-in-Chief, are Dalit, previously characterized as "*untouchables*" – the most discriminated-against community in India. Three of Khabar Lahariya's female reporters are the main protagonists in the 2021 Oscar-nominated documentary *Writing with Fire*.

When I speak with Kavita Devi and Outreach Manager Srishti Mehra, who interprets for us between Hindi and English, I am amazed by Devi's warmth, by how lightly she seems to wear her ego, and by the friendly banter between the two women. Devi, a child bride at 12 and illiterate until that age, talks with passion and pride about the feminist vision and future direction of Khabar Lahariya.

A co-founder of the news service, Devi has been a part of Khabar Lahariya's courageous journey of success for the past 20 years. She takes most pride in the fact that for two decades, despite financial and safety pressures, and the gender-, caste-, language- and education-based discrimination that reporters have encountered along the way, Khabar Lahariya has been able to deliver independent journalism relevant to rural audiences as an all-women-led organization. She considers "*the transition from pen to digital a massive achievement*." Devi is also particularly proud of the Chambal Academy, a recently launched program which aims to train women in the journalism trade, imparting knowledge that once opened the door to journalism and professional fulfilment for Devi herself.

What makes Khabar Lahariya exceptional?

An egalitarian and highly collaborative culture

The management team, reporters, and staff at Khabar Lahariya are bound by a strong sense of community that "*drives and brings everyone together*". Many of the reporters have been with the news service for at least a decade, which has meant that their sense of belonging there has deepened. Devi explains that there has never been a rigid hierarchy or a strong segregation of departments within the organization. No idea is ever dismissed, whoever its author. With the responsibilities in the organization shared, the culture is one of mutual learning and support for individual and collective growth. A lot of emphasis is placed on collaboration and learning.

215. YouTube data, March 2022
216. Twitter data, March 2022
217. SimilarWeb, February 2022
218. Ahrefs, February 2022
219. Ananya, 2016
220. SimilarWeb, February 2022

> *"Because it has been a long journey – we have naturally been through rough patches as a service and in our personal lives – we derive strength from the community. Our success has only been possible because we believe in teamwork and transparency. We can only grow and progress individually when we are together as a collective."*

Kavita Devi recognizes that a lot of organizations claim to do this, but at Khabar Lahariya these values are truly applied in practice.

A vision of delivering feminist journalism

Devi is crystal clear that the reporters and management are fully aligned around Khabar Lahariya's vision of delivering what she describes as *"feminist journalism"*. She gives a broad and very inclusive definition of this as a journalism that strives to give equal voice not only to men and women, but to any community that is underrepresented or discriminated-against:

> *"We are feminist and believe in equality. When we were starting out and defined ourselves as feminist, there was usually the perception that we were anti-male or that we were against certain communities, but we have been very conscious not to be that. We approach every story and everything we do, through the lens of equality."*

Giving voice to the marginalized: as reporters or sources/protagonists

Devi denounces the negative impact of India's rigid caste system on the professional growth opportunities for Indian journalists. She also denounces the undue emphasis Indian newsrooms place on how a person looks, how fluent their English is and which university they graduated from.

> *"None of these things are what makes a Khabar Lahariya journalist. And yet despite missing out on all these checkboxes, they are journalists, reporting on issues that audiences care about. This is what feminist journalism is."*

One of the immense strengths of Khabar Lahariya's reporters is their lived experience and their connectedness to the problems of the communities they report on. This is a critical factor in the success of the news outlet. In Devi's view, no one understands the issues of a community better than someone who comes from that community, so, for example, if a piece is about what it is like to be a Muslim woman in India, the person best placed to write it will be a Muslim woman.

Compassionate journalism: human-centered rather than headline-centered

Khabar Lahariya and Devi herself spend considerable amounts of time thinking about and protecting the safety of their reporters as well as pre-empting and/or mitigating the impact of their journalism on the protagonists of their stories. There have been times when a rural crime story has made it to the headlines of mainstream Indian news and where Khabar Lahariya's reporters have worked alongside mainstream media reporters. On these occasions, Devi has seen a stark difference between Khabar Lahariya's approach to stories and that of mainstream media reporters. For example, she has witnessed mainstream reporters *"bombard the victim's family"* with requests, their pressing hunger for the story *"bite"* leading them to ignore all concerns for the family's safety, privacy, and wellbeing. By contrast, Khabar Lahariya reporters had chosen to speak to the victim's family at a later point with sensitivity and care.

> *"The lens of sensitivity and empathy for our own safety and for the safety of the people we report on, is something we are very conscious of and spend a long time discussing in training."*

What has Khabar Lahariya learned in its 20-year existence?

Khabar Lahariya has faced two principal challenges in the last two decades: securing financial stability and editorial independence and ensuring the safety of its journalists and sources.

Securing financial stability and editorial independence

Kavita Devi acknowledges that Khabar Lahariya has gone through its fair share of financial challenges in its two decades of existence. However, she talks with pride about the fact that all Khabar Lahariya reporters have been employed full-time until now. Devi understands the economic imperative for the women who join the organization - often as the sole earners in their family - to have a steady income. So she is hopeful to maintain this reporter-centric model of employment in the future as well as introducing a freelance model in states like Bihar where Khabar Lahariya is currently expanding.

In the interests of editorial independence, which forms the bedrock of Khabar Lahariya's journalism, the leadership team made an early decision not to allow advertising on any of its properties, seeing this as potentially compromising. Khabar Lahariya's current financial model consequently relies on partnerships with other newsrooms and NGOs, as well as on subscriptions. They offer a monthly, quarterly, or annual subscription of their premium product called *KL Hatke*, which is English content delivered on a bi-monthly basis.

Safety before the scoop: ensuring the safety of journalists and sources

Preparation and planning form a large part of Khabar Lahariya's strategy for keeping its reporters and sources safe. The editorial approach is to plan for pressure points in advance of covering a story that is deemed sensitive. This pre-work on every story, whether it focuses on violence against women or on a political election, is seen as critical by the Khabar Lahariya team. Similar to great chess players, the pivotal question that Khabar Lahariya's reporters ask themselves is: "*What could go wrong?*"[221] They then map out these risks and sensitivities, identifying whether they are to do with a potentially violent situation, likely distrust towards the reporters, or indeed simply a complex topic. Sometimes reporters are paired up on more sensitive stories as a safety measure. Because Khabar Lahariya reports extensively on marginalized communities, the editorial team is often concerned with the safety of their story protagonists and reporters are specifically trained to put the safety of the protagonists before the story scoop. The editorial team has also developed explainers and guidelines which are used in training reporters to cover different types of stories.

What next?

Looking ahead, Kavita Devi sees the subscription-based model as a major source of revenue in Khabar Lahariya's future. She also envisages continuing to partner with other news or non-governmental organizations. Khabar Lahariya will remain an all-women organization which will deliver human-centric rural journalism in a culture defined by inclusivity, transparency, and a nurturing spirit. As a concrete expression of this, the Chambal Academy represents a huge source of excitement for Kavita Devi. The first training program which was piloted in 2021 has been a success, training 270 young

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221.   Tough, 2013

rural women in mobile journalism, audio, video production, and other media-related skills. Some of these women have already started writing stories for Khabar Lahariya in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar, while others have secured internships and fellowships. Devi is thrilled to be expanding the network of empowered female journalists. She is also excited to have come full circle, taking forward what she loves doing most: independent feminist journalism, challenging those in power and holding the mic for people whose voices would never otherwise be heard.

Case study: Nation Media Group in Kenya

What is Nation Media Group?

Nation Media Group is the largest independent media house in East and Central Africa with operations in print, broadcast and digital media in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda. Its flagship newspaper *Daily Nation* is the largest print newspaper in the country and the second largest online.[222] It also publishes a monthly supplement, *The Voice*, that focuses on women protagonists and women's issues. *Daily Nation* reaches 1.4m monthly unique visitors online[223], and has 753,000 YouTube subscribers and 2.8m Twitter followers. 40% of its audience are women.[224] 53,436 external websites link to *Daily Nation*, of which 18 are governmental and 256 educational.[225]

In 2019, Nation Media Group launched Kenya's (and indeed Africa's) first Gender Desk – a news beat – under the leadership of Pamella Sittoni, who was Managing Editor at the time. The beat was funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and launched in editorial partnership with The Fuller Project.

I speak with the Gender Desk's editor, Dorcas Muga, about Nation Media Group's pioneering work, the lessons learned in the last three years, and what she dreams of achieving in the future. While Muga is excited about the waves the Gender Desk has made in Kenya, she is ambivalent about Nation Media Group being the only news organization with a gender desk in Africa. She would rather see more media houses offering the gender lens in news to improve women's visibility and status in news and in society.

> *"It is exciting in the sense that we are pioneers, but it is also sad. You see: the more news houses cover gender stories the merrier, the more the gender agenda becomes a real issue to the media houses, stakeholders and policy-makers around the world."*

What makes Nation Media Group exceptional?

Elevating women's voices as reporters, protagonists, and sources in Kenya

The launch of the Gender Desk has made a dent in the male-favoring society and has brought unique success to Nation Media Group through elevating women's voices and delivering a more gender-balanced vertical readership. Bylines in the Gender Desk are nearing parity (49%) vs 42% in Kenyan newsrooms.[226] At the same time, a portrayal analysis of a sample of stories showed that 94% of experts featured in the Gender Desk stories were women[227], in contrast to the 14% identified in the COVID stories that emerged from Kenya in 2020.[228] Women's share of voice in Gender Desk stories in 2020 was 59%, much higher than, for example, the 22% recorded on nation.africa.[229]

Trailblazing new ways of gender-based reporting, picked up by other media

The launch of the Gender Desk has enabled Nation Media Group to ramp up their reporting on important gender-based issues such as violence against women. For example, for the last three years, during the annual *16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence* campaign, Muga has been

222. Reuters, 2021
223. SimilarWeb, February 2022
224. SimilarWeb, Desktop and mobile demographics – Gender, Traffic-share as of February 2022
225. Ahrefs, 21st March 2022
226. Hanitzsch et al., 2019
227. AKAS/The Fuller Project portrayal analysis of Gender Desk stories in 2021, AKAS 2022
228. Kassova, 2020b
229. AKAS/The Fuller Project analysis using Google search engine, Google search analysis of NMG urls, AKAS, 2022

given a page each day in the flagship *Daily Nation* print newspaper to feature stories dedicated to highlighting the problems and solutions surrounding gender-based violence. She has noticed that in the last year or two other media, such as *The Standard*, have emulated the approach taken by the *Daily Nation* by featuring their own women-centric content more prominently.

"Now more media houses are talking about women's issues, after seeing what The Nation is doing, which helps socialize the issue of marginalization of women in society."

Sensitizing the newsroom to the need for gender-based reporting

In 2019, in advance of launching the Gender Desk, Nation Media Group conducted gender-sensitivity training with all its reporters and editors, an action which Muga assesses as pivotal in paving the way for the successful launch of the beat. The training created momentum and broke down some of the barriers to women-centric reporting that exist, especially among male journalists/editors. Some got so excited that they even started submitting their own story ideas. However, according to Muga, this momentum is now in need of a velocity boost, having been somewhat interrupted during the pandemic.

"Yes, we have made some strides, but there is still a lot of room for improvement,"

Muga reflects, emphasizing the critical importance of ongoing gender-sensitivity training in the newsroom.

> *"Ongoing sensitization to gender issues at all levels is very, very important. We need to do it regularly for people (especially for anti-feminists) to accept that we have to tell women's stories."*

If training is not offered on an ongoing basis, the default male lens for looking at the world draws journalists back into their familiar bias, leaving women's voices on the margins.

Impacting policy making

One of the key successes that Dorcas Muga identifies following the launch of the Gender Desk is the fact that policy-making bodies in Kenya have "*noticed the work*" that the beat is doing and are alerting the editorial team to various events happening in the country. Moreover, the government has made tangible policy changes as a result of Gender Desk story coverage, which is a source of pride for Muga.

What has Nation Media Group learned along the way?

Giving women experts more advance notice

The Missing Perspectives of Women in News[230] report found that at 20%, women's share of voice as experts, protagonists or sources in Kenya is 3.7 times smaller than that of men. I ask Muga how the Gender Desk goes about finding women experts, particularly for higher-profile subjects such as politics, business, and health. While she acknowledges the structural challenge that results from there being a smaller pool of women experts in these areas, Muga also highlights some successful ways of securing women's contributions as news experts or sources. She has observed that one important requirement is to give women more advance notice than men. In her view, men are more than ready to show up at short notice. Women, on the other hand, face gender-based challenges such as the need to organize childcare or to ensure that they look as presentable as possible because social opinion judges their looks harshly, unlike those of men.

> *"When their photos appear in the paper and their hair is not well done, social media is all over it, judging them for being a prominent woman who looks bad."*

So, giving women more time to prepare or even pre-record their segments, and reassuring them of the importance of featuring their stories, allows women to organize their time and appearance in a way that allows them to participate in panels or contribute to news stories.

Unlocking the pool of women protagonists in business and politics news

A significant pool of businesswomen protagonists became available to Nation Media Group when journalists reframed the way they defined this category. They broadened the definition from well-recognized women – "*The 'Bill Gates' of women in Africa*" – to ordinary women who own small and medium-sized businesses, of whom there are many: the women who generate $1,000 a year; or those who sell fruit and vegetables on the streets. Telling the stories of these women is as important to the Gender Desk as showcasing the uber-successful role model businesswomen.

Muga explains that being an election year, 2022 presented a great opportunity for the Gender Desk to amplify the voices of the women who were vying for political seats. To do so, the Gender Desk not only profiled female candidates in the *Daily Nation*'s monthly print pull-out *The Voice* in a column titled *The Aspirant*, but also covered up to three candidates online weekly in the months preceding

230. Kassova, 2020a

the election. It had come as something of a shock to Muga to find her WhatsApp/inbox inundated by women eager to tell their stories when this column was launched.

The need for a gender champion in every company department

Besides the need for ongoing gender-sensitivity training, which Muga believes should be extended beyond the editorial team, she also sees value in establishing gender champions in different company departments as a way of helping the organization's culture facilitate gender equity. This idea came about after Muga noticed that colleagues from different departments had started approaching her about gender-based issues, zoning in on maternity leave or the need to allocate a private space for breastfeeding mothers.

What next?

Muga is looking forward to a time when the Gender Desk will have the resources to carve out a dedicated space for a small team of journalists who will focus their efforts exclusively on gender investigative pieces (protected from the relentless daily news cycle), producing work that will generate even bigger local, national, and international impact. She believes that going forward, it is important to include gender-based reporting more prominently on television, as the most powerful platform in the multimedia mix. Muga's personal dream is to create an empowering current affairs strand covering forums which feature ordinary women from across Kenya in discussion with experts, focusing on important topics such as the negative impact of early marriage or the importance of education.

Case study: The Fuller Project in the US – a global remit

What is The Fuller Project?

The Fuller Project is a global non-profit newsroom which is dedicated to reporting on issues that impact women. It has 16,400 Twitter followers and a website that attracts 18,700 monthly unique users.[231] 1,100 external websites link to its website[232], 15 of them educational.[233] Women make up 51% of the project's website traffic.[234] Through partner sites, The Fuller Project achieves considerably greater reach: its coverage of Afghanistan for instance netted 3.85 million+ impressions on Twitter and 83K+ profile visits[235] in August and September 2021.

From small beginnings, with just two stories at its inception seven years ago, The Fuller Project has since published over 300 stories. In 2021, it produced more than 100 stories through investigative and enterprise reporting, and collaborated with 23 outlets around the world, from *TIME* to the *Lesotho Times*, reaching more than 10 million readers. Astoundingly, approximately 1 in 10 of their stories received an industry award (achieving 11 industry awards in 2021 alone). The team has grown from a loose network of freelancers to 16 full-time staff and many editorial contributors, 92% of whom are women.

I speak with The Fuller Project's CEO Xanthe Scharff, who co-founded the organization in Istanbul in 2015 in response to women's increasing disempowerment in Turkey (and Syria) under President Erdogan's autocracy. We discuss the newsroom's global pioneering work, what they have learned in the last seven years and what lies ahead. Scharff is resolved to accelerate progress in amplifying women's voices in the news,

> *"especially those facing race and identity bias, who have been left out of news and mainstream narratives for centuries. History is written without women's voices. The barriers and harms they face are considered tangential – instead of central to security, economic, legal, environmental, and other issues that impact everyone."*

What makes The Fuller Project exceptional?

Impact-driven journalism

"*Impact is our north star*" shares Scharff.

> *"That means that we aim to do journalism that makes a difference, whether in terms of spurring policy change, informing our audience, or exposing abuses."*

By telling stories about women and the barriers they face daily, The Fuller Project's journalism raises awareness about systemic and structural inequalities that disproportionately impact women, inspiring action in response. Since 2015, their investigations have led to tangible changes in multiple areas: changes in policy to address child trafficking; in pushing for historic new levels of funding for maternal care; in banning abusive practices; driving news cycles and front pages; and leading to large

231.   SimilarWeb, February 2022
232.   Ahrefs, March 2022
233.   Ahrefs, 21 March 2022
234.   SimilarWeb, Desktop and mobile demographics, traffic share as at February 2022
235.   The Fuller Project estimates provided on 22nd April 2022

Jessie (Kai Tsehay: The Fuller Project)

scale releases of data. Their reporting brings not only a gender lens to the journalism, but often also prompts editors to re-think the framing of stories.

Investigative and enterprise reporting across beats

The focus of The Fuller Project's newsroom is on investigative and enterprise reporting that centers on women. Collectively, the team has expertise in gender issues that span areas from health to violence to climate.

"The reporters don't parachute in or chase headlines. They are on the ground before a story breaks, and stay long after other news organizations move on."

They bring context, history, and a systems-lens to produce reporting that makes a difference.

Globally relevant and locally rooted journalism

One of the distinctive features of The Fuller Project's journalism is the connections it makes between the local and the global, driven by the belief that what happens to a woman in one part of the world affects women everywhere. Scharff believes that the common factor in some of their greatest successes is the linkages they have found between women's experiences across the globe.

She argues that global news is often driven by the assumed perspective of a US audience that has limited knowledge about the world. The Fuller Project challenges this with reporting that is rooted in marginalized communities both globally and across the US. Audiences are invited to engage with global issues in a way that is informed from on the ground, with authentic sources and local journalists producing reports that are then shaped by editors in the region.

For example, in a story about supply chain disruptions The Fuller Project profiled two women, a JCPenney employee in California and a garment factory worker in Lesotho, whose livelihoods had been destroyed by the collapse of the retail industry. They wanted readers to understand how two women's lives — in two very different worlds — were inextricably linked. The story, with a rare global angle, has been published by the Associated Press and picked up by more than 100 news outlets globally and within the US.

Partnerships make the global-local link possible

Partnerships are central to The Fuller Project's model because they support local reporting, deep sourcing, and a connection to audiences in the places where the newsroom reports. Through partnerships they also foster a community of editors and reporters who together are disrupting bias in news.

In some contexts, such as Kenya's Nation Media Group, The Fuller Project has a staff reporter embedded in the partner newsroom. Here, they were able to support the launch of a Gender Desk and subsequently provide global coverage of issues affecting women. Co-reporting, co-editing, and co-publishing makes the journalism locally rooted but also globally relevant. Its success often rests on cross-publishing reports for both a regional and a global audience.

Xanthe Scharff reflects with pride on the Nation Media Group partnership. The deep expertise in gender reporting that The Fuller Project brought to the collaboration through their embedded reporter has supported the Gender Desk's efforts to redefine the standard for reporting on women in Kenya, bringing global stories about women to their audience.

> *"We brought our co-reported journalism to global outlets such as The Guardian, The Telegraph and Foreign Policy, elevating the prestige of the Gender Desk and the gender reporters within the broader company, contextualizing locally-rooted reporting for a global audience, and spurring impact with reporting that was noted, engaged with, and acted upon by a large number of policy influencers."*

Staying on a story to provide a fuller account when others have moved on

Since its founding, the expertise of local contributors has enabled The Fuller Project to report on the ways in which US and global policymakers fail to listen to, protect or serve women during warfare. Building on years of reporting in Afghanistan, many months before the US withdrawal, they partnered with the women-led Afghan newsroom Rukhshana Media to launch an enterprise series in *TIME* magazine. When Kabul fell, The Fuller Project broadened this series to include urgent dispatches from women across the country, amplifying the voices of ordinary women — students, journalists, dressmakers, and pharmacists, among others. Instead of ending their coverage a month or two after the Taliban takeover like many other news outlets, the editors maintain daily contact with Afghan women reporters, and The Fuller Project is still reporting on women's day-to-day lives under the Taliban: their challenges, their fight, their strength.

Contributor Zahra Nader, a former New York Times reporter and the first Afghan woman to report for a western news outlet, led The Fuller Project's Afghanistan reporting. She appeared on *CNN Newsroom*, MSNBC's *The Week with Joshua Johnson*, and *Democracy Now*, among others, to discuss the experiences of women on the ground in Afghanistan.

What has The Fuller Project learned along the way?

Sustainability rests on building up all organizational functions

According to Scharff, many young non-profits invest all their capital in their journalism. But ultimately, this works against their potential for long-term sustainability and more significant growth.

> *"Like many early-stage non-profit newsrooms, for years we invested almost exclusively in our reporting. We have learned the importance of building the other functions of the organization that support the potential for impact and sustainability."*

Additionally, as a newsroom that focuses on impact, The Fuller Project decided to develop its capacity to communicate about its journalism (rather than just produce it) through evidence gathering and external communications.

Pitching stories centered around gender issues requires time and editorial guidance

I ask Scharff about the difficulties of pitching women-centered stories in an industry that sees gender story angles as less relevant to audiences, barely covering them. She acknowledges that when The Fuller Project was first formed, many of the reporters experienced this issue in their freelance work.

> *"However, since we built a platform and set up a model where reporters would have time, editorial guidance and support; and resources to do deep enterprise and investigative journalism, we have had no issue placing our stories or building partnerships with news outlets."*

Her conclusion is that when there is investment in reporting about women, the journalism that results is revelatory, engaging and read by a wide audience, making editors want the story.

How to avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes in reporting

One of the reasons Scharff set up The Fuller Project was to counteract women's frequent portrayal in the news

> *"as victims and by family status, which propels harmful stereotypes about victimization."*

To avoid reinforcing these stereotypes, the project's journalism is produced by expert reporters who are well-versed in their beats and local contexts. They carve out time to go beyond the surface of the story to uncover layers of history and context.

Similar to Khabar Lahariya's humane and source-centric approach, The Fuller Project's reporting centers on their sources' lived experiences, reported by journalists who are immersed in the sources' communities. Moreover, the reporters are deliberate in being thoughtful and respectful of how they project the images and voices of the sources in their stories. *"We do not chase headlines"*, Scharff affirms definitively.

No less important in combating stereotypes is the diversity of the team. The Fuller Project newsroom limits the blind spots in coverage that can lead to stereotypes by actively welcoming the informed and editorial perspectives of its diverse team.

What next?

Xanthe Scharff is resolute that The Fuller Project's vision will remain steadfast:

> *"journalism that fully represents women, giving readers The Full Story, and spurring gender equality."*

The Fuller Project will continue working on ramping up its newsroom and growing the impact of its journalism. *"Where there is injustice against women, The Fuller Project is there, exposing the story and spurring positive change."* There is no doubting Scharff's determination that the newsroom will be a global beacon for reporting that lifts women's stories from their communities clear of any noise.

Case study: The Guardian's *Her Stage*

The Guardian's Global Development website, which is a vertical of the Guardian newspaper, is dedicated to global development issues. Gender equity is a significant area of its focus and in January 2022, under the leadership of the site's editor Tracy McVeigh, the website launched the newsletter *Her Stage*, to cover issues relevant to women but in a way that is also accessible to men. The newsletter is published on a roughly monthly basis.

The wider Guardian website is the third most-read English-speaking newspaper online in the world.[236] It reaches 92m monthly unique visitors[237], has 1.9m YouTube subscribers and 10.5m Twitter followers on its main account.[238] 44% of its traffic is women.[239] 1.2 million external websites link to the Guardian, of which 1,066 are governmental and 6,593 educational[240], making it one of the most linked-to news providers in the world. Of the external websites linking to the Guardian, nearly 67,000 link to the Global Development website - 832 educational and 63 governmental.[241]

An analysis by AKAS of the volume of feminine vs masculine pronouns ("she said" vs. "he said") used in news coverage on the Guardian's Global Development website between 1st January and 10th June 2022 uncovered that the phrase "she said" received a 49% share of the total (vs. 36% in the Guardian as a whole). This indicates near-gender parity in the use of experts, sources, and protagonists on the Global Development website. Gender parity has been exceeded in the vertical in terms of bylines, with women contributing to 51% of all bylines. Unusually, a large majority of the journalists in the global development team (83%) are women, which represents an inverse picture to that of the foreign desk, 83% of whose staff are men. The proportion of women in the Global Development desk is also double the global average for poverty and development beats, where 39% of the journalists in 2019 globally were women.[242]

Her Stage newsletter focuses on issues relevant to women in developing countries and targets unique audiences to complement the Guardian's statistically older and slightly more male readers. I speak with Tracy McVeigh about her editorial vision for *Her Stage*; what she has learned since the launch of the newsletter; and the gender issues within the wider news industry. I am taken by her distinctive honesty, unburdened by self-censorship, and by her understated demeanor that is so out of sync with the significant role she plays in such a prestigious brand.

What makes the Guardian's *Her Stage* exceptional?

McVeigh highlights two key measures of success that the Guardian tracks (among others) for *Her Stage*. The first is sign-up rates; the second, open rates. "*The open rate is the more important one*", she clarifies. Quantitative analysis of the open rates of *Her Stage* points to a much higher engagement than that expected according to established industry benchmarks. The average open rate for *Her Stage* so far has been 65% vs. an average of between 15% and 25% for industry newsletters.[243] The sign-up rate has grown threefold in the five months since the newsletter's launch.

236. Majit, 2022
237. SimilarWeb, May 2022
238. YouTube and Twitter audience figures as of 10 June 2022
239. SimilarWeb traffic share, as of 10 June 2022
240. Ahrefs, 21 March 2022
241. Ahrefs, 10 June 2022
242. ICFJ, 2019
243. Othen, 2021; Campaign Monitor, 2022

Targeting an audience beyond the Guardian's core readership

Her Stage aims to attract and engage an audience that falls outside the Guardian's "*core audience*", targeting audiences in African countries and India. The stories are carefully curated by McVeigh so that, while focusing on women sources and protagonists, they in no way alienate men.

> *"I think it's a lot easier to sell a newsletter that pops into somebody's email. It's very bright, it's very mixed in tone. You could be engaged in that newsletter, I hope, all the way to the bottom before realizing that it is, perhaps, a woman's place, a woman's newsletter",* she explains. *"I didn't want it to be a women-only space. I wanted it to be a women-dominated space, but not exclusive. So it felt that the format of a newsletter worked. It fitted into the work we were already doing and fed into what we were trying to do."*

Bringing in voices that nobody has heard before

McVeigh explains that the newsletter is proving a good vehicle for driving two goals simultaneously: introducing more indigenous women writers and photographers as Guardian Global Development website bylines, and investigating more deeply the lives of women in the developing world. These were the reasons behind McVeigh's decision to target less established women writers and, unlike other newsletter publishers, to steer away from big names in the op-eds.

> *"The idea is to try and bring voices that nobody's heard before."*

I ask McVeigh what she is most proud of in the context of the site's coverage of gender equity and she singles out her team's dedication to amplifying women's voices in their storytelling. This is borne out by the statistics already cited, which shine a light on how much more gender-balanced the Global Development website's coverage is than the benchmarks reported in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News/COVID-19 News*.

> *"Most of the reporters on the team here wouldn't even think twice about making sure their stories are full of women. And actually, a news journalist, a home news journalist, often wouldn't even think about that. But I think, within this team, people are thinking about that all the time. And some of it has to do with representation. We do have a heavily female team."*

What are the learnings along the way?

"*All the issues are women's issues*". Pushing men out of the conversation would be damaging

I ask McVeigh why she chose to launch a newsletter instead of a vertical or a column dedicated to women's issues. Her answer is rich, alluding to past deliberations:

> *"I have always felt slightly uncomfortable with this idea of women's issues, because women are 50% of the population. All the issues are women's issues. And in order to achieve proper equality, issues have to stop being called 'women's issues'. If you don't have men as part of that journey towards equality, we will never achieve equality. It has to be an inclusive place."*

McVeigh offers evidence of the critical role that men have in solving issues that affect women exclusively, such as FGM [female genital mutilation].

"I think that siloing women's issues is not the way to go. Obviously, there are issues, like abortion, like reproductive rights, that are more important to women, but also, I think if we push men out of that conversation, we're not going to win the battles. We must have men involved, otherwise we're never going to get anywhere. FGM is a perfect example. I was in Kenya a few months ago, looking at FGM. I was stunned by how many men were involved in the anti-FGM movement. Dads, young activists. It was remarkable to look at how many men were there. And it felt really powerful."

Gender balance in reporting: *"I have interviewed a man, I need to look for a woman"*

While the Guardian Global Development website does not have targets for the proportion of women bylines, sources, experts or protagonists, the success in achieving gender parity or near-parity could in part be attributed to the reporting culture within the team, where considering the gender of quoted sources is innate. In McVeigh's words:

"I think only once on this desk I've had to say: 'Actually, that's disproportionately male'. And that was when I'd asked somebody to gather a whole lot of voices and they'd gathered something like 80% men, and so we didn't run it. I think most people do automatically think: 'Okay, I've interviewed a man, I need to go and look for a woman'."

The missing women of color in the news

As we discuss the culture of awareness of the diversity of sources, McVeigh candidly recalls an incident early in her career when she had not included a person of color in a story she was about to file and was emailed by someone she did not know to make her aware of the fact. I ask her how well the news industry in the UK covers issues relevant to women of color now. *"I think appallingly,"* is her immediate response. She goes on to clarify:

"If you do not have representation in your organization, then you will always be on the back foot when it comes to being on top of those issues. I think that's a problem. Newspapers [in the UK], traditionally, have been places where Oxbridge white men have kind of cut their teeth and sat around and rubbed their chins and talked about the great issues of the day. Obviously, that's changing, and for the better and there's some wonderful people working here who don't have those kinds of backgrounds, but there's still that problem."

"There is nothing more to say about gender equality here." The persistent gender blindness in the news industry

According to McVeigh, a key barrier to increasing the volume of news coverage dedicated to gender equality issues is the misperception, reported in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News,* that the gender inequality problem has been resolved. Her observation is insightful:

"Journalists go: 'Nothing to see here. Of course, you've got equal pay, of course you've got maternity leave. I couldn't sack you if I wanted to.' Despite the facts, which clearly show it's not the case, I think there's a genuine belief that there's nothing more to say here."

Misogyny is keeping women off news platforms. News organizations must be watchdogs

Perhaps most depressingly, McVeigh brings up another structural problem which the news industry faces at present. Namely, platform capture on social media, which allows the large-scale abuse of primarily women journalists.[244]

244. See "The double-edged sword of technological advancements", p. 55 in Kassova, 2020a

> *"Women are less keen to stick their heads above the parapet, for very obvious reasons. They get shut off a lot of times, whether on social media, on TV, even in newspapers. The misogyny is successfully keeping women off those platforms, I'd say, very successfully. I don't say anything controversial on social media at all, unless I'm really angry, because I just don't want to invite that kind of nastiness, because I carry it about with me."*

She too touches on the childcare barrier highlighted by Dorcas Muga in the Nation Media Group's case study in Kenya. According to McVeigh, women journalists are less likely than men to be able to accommodate out of hours media requests because of clashes with their childcare responsibilities.

From an organizational perspective, McVeigh sees the solution lying in news leadership demanding that their output is gender-balanced.

> *"And then for journalists, and TV producers, and radio, who I think are the worst offenders at not giving women the air they need, they need to be forced, they need somebody who turns and says, 'Hang on a minute, this isn't going out until you get a proper gender mix' on this board, or panel, or discussion. Everybody needs to be watchdogging this."*

What next?

Assuming the newsletter continues to perform well, McVeigh's future vision for *Her Stage* is for it to get its own dedicated editor. She believes it could do with its own voice. In the ideal scenario, McVeigh would find two or three women in the developing world who would guest-edit it on the ground, curating its feature stories, and writing the op-ed.

What would McVeigh change right now about the news industry to improve women's representation, inclusion, or portrayal in the news, I ask. Her response is unique and profound. It highlights the systemic economic barriers that women journalists from certain backgrounds face from the outset in their attempts to enter the profession.

> *"Making housing cheaper in London. Because if you're a young woman of Bangladeshi origin, who's just gone to journalism school in Manchester, you have got very little chance of coming to work in a London newspaper. You can't afford to come down and do the work experience. You can't live in London unless you're lucky enough to have a friend. You can't come here and get into an industry in the way that other wealthier young people can. So there's actual physical, economic barriers to an awful lot of people coming into this industry. There were for me, there's an awful lot, and that's not gone away. In fact, it's probably getting worse."* It is these systemic disadvantages that McVeigh would like to eliminate first.

Part 3

Progress – Existing initiatives aiming to reduce gender inequality in news

Report Navigation

Report parts

At a glance & Introduction	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5
• Background and objectives • Executive summary • Summary of solutions themes • Summary of key findings • Acknowledgements • Introduction • What has happened since 2019	Gender diversity and inclusion gap in news leadership	Women's representation, portrayal and stories in news coverage	News initiatives addressing gender equality	Gender equity business opportunity for newspapers	Proposed strategic and operational solutions

Case studies

	New York Times	Khabar Lahariya		Amedia
	Mint	Nation Media Group		
	Bloomberg	The Fuller Project		
	African Women in Media	Guardian		

Bibliography & Appendices

Bibliography

Appendix 1 and 2

Links to news value chain

Social norms Socio-economic, political, technology, legal/regulatory changes	●		●	
News sector change	●	●	●	●
News organization strategy change	●	●	●	●
News leadership and individual leader change	●	●	●	●
Newsroom and journalist level change	●		●	
Representation, portrayal and storytelling news coverage change	●	●	●	●
News consumption change	●		●	● ●
News coverage impact change	●		●	● ●

Part 3 at a glance

This part of the report focuses on all parts of the news value chain: resources, newsgathering, news outputs, news consumption, and impact. It analyzes 168 existing initiatives around the globe which aim to improve women's representation or inclusion along any element of the news value chain, with a view to understanding what the existing solutions to gender inequity in news are and what other opportunities are available to make progress towards closing the gender gap in news.

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AKAS' analysis has revealed that the global north is leading the efforts in redressing gender balance in news. For positive change to take place, efforts must be directed at societal, organizational/industry and individual levels. Worryingly, only a tenth of the analyzed initiatives aim to target change at the societal level. The majority of initiatives aim to assist individuals rather than change news organizations or the industry, which poses a question about the sustainability of any change that these initiatives instigate. A significant proportion of initiatives in news have been dedicated to improving women's visibility as news experts, which may have contributed to the growth in the proportion of women news experts globally in the last five years. To achieve sustainable progress in the areas that matter most for improving gender equity in news, organizational initiatives must tackle structural change, as well as change at an individual level; focus on targeting every element of the news value chain rather than just one; and build in collaboration, moving away from the hyper-competitiveness that defines journalism culture.

Introduction

We read many reports, narratives, and articles that focus exclusively on the problem of gender inequity in different sectors. Much less is written about the solutions available to redress gender inequity in media in different societies, let alone along the news value chain. The AKAS team dedicated some months to researching existing initiatives that aim to improve women's (including women of color's) representation and inclusion in news leadership and news coverage, as well as those aiming to improve women's engagement with the news. Although not claiming to be exhaustive, this unique project led to the unearthing of 168 initiatives from 118 news, non-profit, international, and governmental organizations operating in North America, Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, or globally.

The global north is leading the efforts to redress gender imbalance in news. Approximately 64% of all the recorded initiatives and 69% of the organizations behind them are based in the global north (North America and Europe). As shown in Figure 40, North America hosts the largest proportion of these initiatives (38%), followed by Europe (26%). Only 8% of the initiatives AKAS identified are based in Africa, despite gender inequality in news representing a significant barrier to women's participation, visibility in news, and involvement in decision-making on the continent. There is no positive correlation between the extent of the problem and the initiatives developed in different regions globally.

Figure 40: Number and location of initiatives

Region	No. of initiatives	% of initiatives		No. orgs.	% of orgs.	
North America	63	38%		44	37%	
Europe	44	26%		38	32%	
Asia (unc Australia)	25	15%		14	12%	
Global	21	13%		11	9%	
Africa	14	8%		10	8%	
Unclear	1	1%		1	1%	
Number of **entries**	168	100%		118	100%	

Source: AKAS news initiatives database (2022)

Where are the news initiatives aimed at bringing about change at systemic level?

The Missing Perspectives of Women in News established that given how deeply entrenched the problem of gender inequity in news is across the whole news value chain, for positive change to take place, efforts need to be directed concurrently at three areas: the individual, the news organization/industry and societal systems/norms. If change is blocked or not tackled at one of these three levels, progress cannot be sustained. Much has been written recently in the UK and US about the failure to tackle racial and gender inequality at a societal/system level, which is the root cause of the problem and its persistence. This prompted us to ask ourselves which level(s) of the problem the existing news initiatives aim to tackle. Analysis of the 168 initiatives revealed that all of them are aimed, directly or indirectly, at impacting individuals, be they journalists or leaders, women journalists, women as members of society, or news audience members. Only 10% of the ongoing initiatives (16) aim to tackle change at a societal level (see Figure 41). This is a matter of concern, given the criticality of changing the system to ensure lasting progress.

The 16 initiatives we identified that aim to tackle change at a systemic level include intergovernmental (G7) and governmental gender-based initiatives (in Japan, the UK, and the US) and gender-focused reports that include a news media component; a broadcaster (NPO in the Netherlands) that has entered into an agreement with national government about the gender balance of its output; campaigns driven by non-profits targeting change at a societal level (Association of Media Women in Kenya, We Will Stop Femicide platform in Turkey and TIME'S UP); journalism non-profits challenging gender stereotypes in Iraq and Ukraine (Internews), and addressing gender-based violence (Journalism Initiative on Gender-Based Violence); a news provider (South China Morning Post) organizing a conference aimed at tackling systemic gender inequality in Asia; an international news channel (France 24) broadcasting a weekly program about reshaping the world; and an Oscar-nominated documentary about the only all-women news outlet in India, Khabar Lahariya, which gives voice to the voiceless in rural India.[245] Finally, the Global Media Monitoring Project is also a system-level change-targeting initiative – the only global longitudinal study of the representation and portrayal of women in news media.

What part of the news value chain do initiatives cluster around? Change at an individual level prevails

Perhaps unsurprisingly, research into the existing gender-based initiatives found that the majority (115 or 68%) target people within news organizations, either as journalists or leaders (see Figure 42). The elements in this category include: developing women as leaders (51), training (37), safety/anti-sexual harassment initiatives (25), DE&I initiatives

245. Manring, 2022

Figure 41: 16 news-related initiatives which aim to tackle a systemic element of gender inequality in society (arranged in alphabetical order)

No.	Organization	Name of initiative	Initiative description
1	Association of Media Women in Kenya	n/a	AMWIK seeks to use the media to promote an informed and gender responsive society in Kenya and Africa.
2	Bureau of International Information Programs, US Department of State	Global Women's Issues: Women in the World Today, Extended Version, Chapter 10, Women and the Media	Provides history of exclusion and stereotypes, as well as a narrative about the new era of women's rights.
3	Center for Women's Global Leadership	Journalism Initiative on Gender-Based Violence	The Journalism Initiative on Gender-Based Violence (JiG) of the Center for Women's Global Leadership works to shift the global narrative toward better reporting on violence against women. The work has four thematic objectives: • Increase the global standard of reporting on gender-based violence to reduce its prevalence globally • Advocate for a survivor-centered and survivor-led approach to reporting on gender-based violence • Highlight and assist women journalists at risk because of their reporting on gender-based violence • Facilitate connections and the sharing of best practices between journalists reporting on gender-based violence globally
4	France 24	'The 51%	The 51% is a weekly program about women who are reshaping our world, broadcast by the international TV news channel France 24 and hosted by Annette Young
5	G7	Report of the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council 2021	This report, which includes a media section, is the result of the individual insights and collaborative judgment of the members of the 2021 G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council. Its first imperative was to ensure that women, and particularly women of color, were not overlooked in the recovery, as they so often were during the pandemic.
6	Internews	Iraq – Women's Voices	Internews' "Women's Voices" is working to challenge societal attitudes that stigmatize survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in Iraq. Women's rights activists and journalists in Iraq rarely work together. Internews is connecting these groups for the first time, to learn from each other and help shed light on sensitive issues with reporting and advocacy.
7	Internews	Ukraine – Girl Power	"Girl Power: Little Stories of Big Acts," is an inspirational children's book which tells the stories of successful Ukrainian women who overcame hardships, including those caused by conflict and displacement, to make their communities healthier, safer and stronger. The book shows women in non-stereotypical roles, such as IT entrepreneurs, mathematicians, doctors, and soldiers, and is designed to promote gender equality and inspire those who have suffered and been displaced due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.
8	Japan Cabinet Office	Diversity in News Coverage	30 women journalists from 12 countries and regions throughout Asia gathered in Tokyo for an event sponsored by Japan's Cabinet Office to discuss diversity in news coverage.
9	Khabar Lahariya	*Writing with Fire*	*Writing with Fire* is a 2021 Indian documentary film directed by filmmakers Sushmit Ghosh and Rintu Thomas about three of the journalists running the all-women-led news provider in India, Khabar Lahariya, as they shift from 14-years of print to digital journalism using smartphones. It is the first Indian feature documentary to be shortlisted for an Academy Award.
10	NPO	Regulatory agreement with Dutch Government	The Dutch broadcaster NPO signed a performance agreement with the Dutch Government which includes a balanced presence of women on and off screen and which has an annual reporting obligation.

No.	Organization	Name of initiative	Initiative description
11	South China Morning Post	Women of our Time conference	The South China Morning Post's Women of our Time conference aims to deal with wider societal issues. It puts the spotlight on the myriad achievements of female trailblazers and pioneers in Asia who have been influential in tackling the many challenges posed by an ongoing pandemic and a depressed economy, against a backdrop of ever-changing global diplomacy. As efforts toward diversity and inclusion become less of a novel concept, and rather an ingrained facet of global business and politics, the conference will look beyond ideas of empowerment and equality to examine how today's women in power and tomorrow's emerging female leaders are sparking new ideas that spur generations of followers and collaborators in building a new world for a more sustainable future.
12	TIME'S UP	Campaigns	TIME'S UP Now aims to create a society free of gender-based discrimination in the workplace and beyond. Its "*Say no to sexist media attacks*" campaign is dedicated to media
13	UK Government	Gender Pay Gap	Focus: news organizations. Gender pay gap at UK agencies widens as industry progress stalls. New data on the gender pay gap that exists in British companies shines fresh light on the scale of gender discrimination at businesses across the country (including news).
14	UN Women	*The Levers of Change: Gender Equality Attitudes Study 2022*, UN Women	UN Women and the Unstereotype Alliance, an industry-led coalition convened by UN Women to eradicate harmful stereotypes in advertising, launched "*The Levers of Change: Gender Equality Attitudes Study 2022,* the latest iteration of a bi-annual global study that tracks attitudes towards gender. The 20-country-wide survey shows that some antiquated views of gender have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study, developed under the leadership of UN Women in partnership with Johnson & Johnson, Kantar, Procter & Gamble and Unilever, examines perceptions across a multitude of areas including leadership and political participation, education, healthcare, the workplace, media representation, marriage and family life, safety and violence, and control over personal decisions.
15	WACC (World Association of Christian Communication)	GMMP (Global Media Monitoring Project)	The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), WACC's flagship activity, is the largest and longest-running research on gender in the world's news media. Every five years since 1995, GMMP research has taken the pulse of selected indicators of gender in the news media, including women's presence in relation to men, gender bias and stereotypes in news stories and other content. The sixth research in the series took place in 2020-21. The GMMP is also the largest advocacy initiative on changing the representation of women in the world's news media.
16	We Will Stop Femicide platform	We Will Stop Femicide platform	The platform strives to stop femicide and ensure women's protection from violence through branches across Turkey. It fights against all types of women's rights violations, starting with the violation of the right to life. The activity fields of the platform branches include law, the press, social media, graphic design, donations and financial support. Specific activities include: • Revealing the truth about the "doubtful death" cases treated as "suicides" and closed, by encouraging local courts and The Court of Appeals to make precedential decisions in the cases regarding women's protection, sexual assault and femicide. • Keeping records to elucidate femicide facts in Turkey, collecting data on femicide and sharing it with the public on a monthly basis.

Source: AKAS news initiatives database (2022)

Figure 42: Gender news initiatives categorized in terms of where they sit in the news value chain[246]

News value chain element	No. of entries	% of all entries	
External context	62	37%	
Organizational resources: strategic	50	30%	
Organizational resources: people	115	68%	
Organizational resources: analytical	40	24%	
Newsgathering	61	36%	
Content and outputs	78	46%	
Audiences	30	18%	
Communities/networks	40	24%	
Number of entries	168	100%	

Source: AKAS news initiatives database (2022)

Figure 43: Organizational resources (people) initiatives

Detailed initiatives	No. of entries	% of all entries	
Women as leaders	49	29%	
Training/development	37	22%	
Safety/sexual harassment	25	15%	
DEI initiatives	24	14%	
Analysis of diversity stats	18	11%	
Guides/resources/kits	17	10%	
Mentoring/coaching	15	9%	
Employee-led	7	4%	
External speakers	7	4&	
Leadership development initiatives	6	4%	
Career management	5	3%	
Voluntary in nature	5	3%	
Self-reflection tools	4	2%	
Fellowship	4	2%	
DEI part of performance assessments	3	2%	
Explicit confidence support	3	2%	
Quota system	2	1%	
Pay gap	1	1%	
Financial incentives	1	1%	
Checklist	1	1%	
Number or org. resources: people entries	115	68%	
Number of total entries	168	100%	

Source: AKAS news initiatives database (2022)

246. Please note that the number of initiatives shown in tables total more than 168, due to some being categorized across two or more elements.

(24), guides/resource kits (17), mentoring/ coaching (15), external speaker initiatives (7), career management (5), self-reflection tools (4), fellowships (4), and quota systems (2) – see Figure 43 for the full list.

The second, third and fourth most common areas of the news value chain for initiatives to cover are news content and outputs, external context, and newsgathering (see Figure 42). Initiatives that include news content and coverage elements include improving women's representation or helping them to develop as reporters (50), improving women's role as protagonists (42), seeking gender balance in image portrayal in the news (23) and increasing the number of women on air, including helping them become more media-ready (21). The 37% of initiatives that examine the external context encompass research, reports and story coverage (42), advocacy campaigns (17), governmental/regulatory initiatives (5), tackling social norms (5), education (5) and tech platforms (1). Initiatives that target newsgathering elements focus on improving women's representation as experts and sources (61), including in some cases developing

databases/directories of women experts for journalists to draw upon (16).

Less than a third of the initiatives are dedicated to using strategic organizational resources to tackle gender equality in news (30%). These initiatives which contain a strategic element include public pledges and commitments to improve gender or racial equity (23), culture change (11), marketing or increased communication (11), gender goals (8), best practice case studies (7), and changes in leadership or the approach of leaders (5).

Approximately a quarter of the initiatives include an analytical element (24%), a network/community aspect (24%), or an audience engagement element (18%). The analytical elements entail counting/tracking women (30), data analysis (14), technology tools (8) and regular feedback (8) while the community-based initiatives include support networks (26), conferences/summits (14), and awards (8). 19 of the 30 audience engagement initiatives contain an audience performance measurement element.

Figure 44: Gender news initiatives categorized by key areas of focus and whether they aim to tackle representation or inclusion

Key element of the news value chain	No. of entries	% of all entries	
Representation in leadership	51	30%	
Representation in newsroom	44	26%	
Inclusion for women in the newsroom	21	13%	
Women as news sources (inc. experts)	61	36%	
Women as protagonists	42	25%	
Women's audience performance	22	13%	
None of these	39	23%	
Number of entries	168	100%	

Source: AKAS news initiatives database (2022)

Gender initiatives do not focus sufficiently on inclusion of women in the news culture

Approximately a third (30%) of all initiatives have a component which aims to improve women's representation in news leadership while a further 26% contain elements which aim to improve women's representation in newsrooms (see Figure 44). Only an eighth of all initiatives (13%) contain an explicit mention of improving women's inclusion in news culture. Separately, only 11 (7% of all initiatives) have a clearly articulated culture change element within them.

Almost 4 in 10 initiatives in news have been dedicated to improving women's visibility in news as experts. It may be working...

36% of the 168 gender initiatives in news unearthed by AKAS were dedicated to or contained a component aiming to improve the traditionally low proportion of women experts or sources in the news (see Figure 44). Of the 61 initiatives devoted specifically to improving women's presence as sources and experts, more than a quarter (16) mentioned building databases of women experts whose expertise journalists could access at short notice. This is a significant effort, which has been undertaken by news organizations and journalism non-profits around the world. In Part 2 of this report I aired a perspective from Sarah Macharia, the GMMP reports' lead writer and a leading gender and international consultant. She suggested that the unique uplift from 19% to 24% recorded in the proportion of women experts globally between 2015 and 2021 – notwithstanding its low base – may have been aided by these numerous databases.

What are the observable gaps in gender initiatives in news?

To sustain change there is a need for more news initiatives targeting change at societal level

Unless the news sector, including news organizations and the non-profit organizations dedicated to journalism, focus part of their initiatives on targeting change at a societal level and monitoring their impact, there is a risk that those initiatives that have achieved change at an organizational and individual level will struggle to sustain this change. Given that so few of the initiatives include a systemic element, this risk is substantive. To achieve change at system level, the news sector should consider sector-wide initiatives that aim to improve women and women of color's representation and inclusion in news leadership and in leadership roles in society at large (through coverage). Despite the general reported reluctance of journalists to tie themselves to targets, initiatives should have targets attached to them. News organizations should aspire to holding themselves accountable, just as journalism holds people in power accountable for their actions.

There is a real opportunity to tackle issues that are easy to monitor, such as the gender pay gap in society and in the news industry. The interviews undertaken with senior editors for this project not only highlighted how deeply relevant this issue is to news leaders and newsrooms across the global south and north, but also how straightforward it would be to monitor progress if only the industry committed to change. Instead, only one of the 168 initiatives we uncovered has been focusing on the gender pay gap. The industry can draw some inspiration from the increase in the proportion of women experts featuring in news (albeit from a low baseline) which is

potentially linked to a multi-organizational effort to raise women's visibility and profile as experts in the news.

The sector would benefit significantly from a greater number of initiatives that examine the impact of news on breaking or solidifying gender stereotypes in society. Considerable scope exists to do so in collaboration with governments, international organizations, and philanthropic organizations.

Initiatives focusing on inclusive cultures, increasing a sense of belonging

Part 1 of this report exposed the substantive problem that non-inclusive, male-dominated (white male-dominated in multi-racial societies) cultures present for recruiting and retaining diverse teams in newsrooms, and for ensuring that decision-making is driven by all leaders, rather than just a sub-set of them. For change to happen, initiatives that focus on improving the representation of women of all colors in news need to also include a component that focuses on improving the inclusivity of the news culture. The consequence of not doing so would be increased attrition within newsrooms and news leadership teams, as well as frustrated leaders whose editorial perspectives are repressed for fear of not fitting in with the dominant culture. Only when women and women of color feel a sense of belonging within the organizations where they work, will they be able to contribute their own editorial and reporting blueprint for stories that reflect the missing perspectives of different audiences in the news.

More initiatives aimed at understanding women audiences as news consumers and revenue generators

The interviews with senior news leaders from the global south and north, conducted for this report, brought to the fore the significant appetite for understanding the added revenue that growing women audiences contributes to the bottom line of the news industry. However, our research into the existing initiatives exposed that only a handful of initiatives (13%) focus on measuring the performance of women audiences in news consumption. We can only change what we can see, and we can only see what we can tangibly measure. To grow female audiences, the sector needs to understand this group's performance, coverage needs, and the issues of relevance to it (and key subgroups within it).

In an industry notorious for its competitiveness, there is a sector-wide deficit of collaborative initiatives

Someone recently asked me whether there were any cross-sectoral initiatives that aimed to track women's representation, inclusion, and portrayal in the news - by news provider - thus holding news organizations to account. The answer to that question is "no". Moreover, our research of different initiatives has shown that only 1 in 4 of the news initiatives (24%) aims to engage journalistic communities, a peer group or indeed the industry (via awards). Given how entrenched the problem of gender inequity in news is, there is significant room for collaboration between players in the industry, including news organizations, non-profit organizations, and international organizations.

In the next part of this report, we will be examining, among other things, the business benefits of producing more women-centric content that features and targets more women.

Part 4

Solutions for reframing the need for change and sizing the business opportunity that women represent for the news industry

Report Navigation

Report parts

At a glance & Introduction	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5
• Background and objectives • Executive summary • Summary of solutions themes • Summary of key findings * Acknowledgements • Introduction • What has happened since 2019	Gender diversity and inclusion gap in news leadership	Women's representation, portrayal and stories in news coverage	News initiatives addressing gender equality	Gender equity business opportunity for newspapers	Proposed strategic and operational solutions

Case studies

	New York Times	Khabar Lahariya		Amedia	
	Mint	Nation Media Group			
	Bloomberg	The Fuller Project			
	African Women in Media	Guardian			

Bibliography & Appendices

Bibliography

Appendix 1 and 2

Links to news value chain

	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5
Social norms – Socio-economic, political, technology, legal/regulatory changes	●		●		
News sector change	●	●	●		●
News organization strategy change	●	●	●		●
News leadership and individual leader change	●	●	●		●
Newsroom and journalist level change	●		●		
Representation, portrayal and storytelling news coverage change	●	●	●		●
News consumption change	●		●	●	●
News coverage impact change	●		●	●	●

Part 4 at a glance

This part of the report focuses on the audience consumption element of the news value chain. It examines news leaders' motivation for change and the business benefits that getting closer to gender parity in news consumption would generate for news organizations.

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The interviews with news leaders revealed that the most convincing arguments for change are anchored in journalists' duty to give voice to all audiences and the need for news to be relevant to all audiences. In addition, the vast majority of the interviewed news leaders shared their long-standing desire to understand the gender parity business opportunity, as well as their frustration that this work had not been done.

In this section Richard Addy, with the support of the AKAS team, researches this business opportunity for the (online and print) newspaper industry. He finds an 11-12 percentage point addressable gender news consumption gap between women and men, and that if this gap were closed by one percentage point each year over the next decade as a result of news organizations taking targeted strategic, editorial, creative, and tracking actions across the whole news value chain, then global revenues in the newspaper industry would increase by a cumulative $11bn by 2027 and $38 billion by 2032. This part ends with the trailblazing case study of Amedia in Norway which shows that Amedia's women-sensitive coverage is correlated with higher revenues from women subscribers.

Chapter (1)

Narratives that are more likely to persuade news leaders to strive for gender and racial equity in newsrooms, news leadership, and news coverage

Narrative frames, i.e., the perspectives applied to the stories we read, have a significant impact on our responses to those stories. A powerful narrative galvanizes us into action. In *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* we identified 11 distinct narrative frames that could be instrumental in bringing about change in news media to redress gender imbalance and improve women's representation and inclusion in decision-making.[247] Four of these - journalistic ethics, rights-based journalism, organizational culture-based change, and

change as a responsibility to women audiences - were found to be commonly used in academia and organizations. The two that have been used most heavily in the last two decades are the frames focusing on journalism ethics and on rights-based journalism as a way of ensuring that all audiences, including women as 50% of the population, are reflected accurately and honestly in news. Unfortunately, this framing of the need for change has not led to the desired outcome. The remaining seven[248] were less frequently observed or were yet to be

247. Kassova, 2020a, Part 4
248. Journalists as change agents of social norms, the business case, the audience relevance, reputation, legal compliance, audience-targeting growth ambition, and technological advances narratives.

adopted, but were considered to have potential for addressing male bias in news.

AKAS asked senior news leaders across the global north and south who were interviewed as part of this project, which of the key arguments/frames were most persuasive in their view. We tested five arguments for the need to change with the most senior leaders in the industry across the countries in the study. These were a mix of: economics/business success, audience relevance, organizational reputation, change agents of social norms, and journalistic duty. 21 news leaders from across the globe were presented with five arguments and asked to choose the two they thought the most persuasive in making the case to male news leaders that they should strive for gender parity in leadership, among journalists, and in news coverage (see Figure 45).

By fulfilling their duty to give equitable voice to women/minority groups and being relevant to all audiences, news organizations will increase their revenues and improve their volatile business models

News leaders identified the need to create a compelling and defensible strategic narrative for change which combines:

a. the journalistic duty to understand, cover, and give voice to all audiences including women, people of color, and other minority groups
   with
b. the need for gender and racial diversity at the top of the organization and in newsrooms to improve the relevance of the coverage to audiences
   which leads to
c. a more sustainable business model.

More than half of the interviewed leaders chose the journalistic duty (67%), the

economic/business success (57%) and the audience relevance (52%) frames as the most compelling in building the case for more equitable journalism. They were most engaged and elaborate in their reasoning when they deliberated over the business case narrative. Those who chose this argument took over 40 sentences to explain this choice vs. 14 sentences for those who chose the journalistic duty narrative and 11 for those who chose the audience relevance frame.

The journalistic duty argument speaks louder to news leaders from the global south, while the audience relevance argument speaks louder to news leaders from the global north

The interviews indicated a north-south divide in the strength of the appeal of different arguments, which would need to be validated in any further investigation. The majority of news leaders who selected journalistic duty as a driver for more equitable journalism were from the global south.

> *"I think that, generally, colleagues are very much alive to what their duties are, why they are journalists, what their contribution to society ought to be. So [a duty to represent our audiences fairly] is amongst the values that I think are quite important in our newsroom",*

argued one male senior news leader from the global south. There is some evidence from the *Worlds of Journalism Study* presented in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* showing that journalists from India, Kenya, and South Africa are more likely than journalists from the UK and US to believe that the role of journalists is to *"promote tolerance and cultural diversity"*[249]. A female senior news leader from the global south created an explicit link between the journalistic duty and business case arguments:

249. Worlds of Journalism Study, 2012-2016

Figure 45: Narratives/arguments for striving for gender/racial equity in news (2022)

Narratives/arguments for striving for gender/racial equity in news	No. of senior leaders who chose argument	Proportion of senior news leaders who chose argument
We have a journalistic duty to represent all audiences fairly. That includes women, people of color or other minority groups who have the right to be seen	14	67%
The news model is broken. Targeting women is one of our survival solutions	12	57%
To be relevant to all our audiences we need to improve diversity in leadership and in news coverage	11	52%
It is important to tackle diversity and inclusion for the reputation of the organization	4	19%
We have a responsibility to change society for the better by giving women an equitable share of voice	3	14%

Source: Author's interviews (2022) Base: 21 senior news leaders. Q: In your view, what are the two most persuasive arguments for convincing male news leaders that they should strive for gender parity in leadership, among journalists and news coverage?

"The media is supposed to tell full, fair stories, it is its responsibility to tell stories, and to neglect half the population is not acceptable... The first [argument] is the social responsibility of the media as a social entity. The second is the media as a business entity... The news model is broken in so many ways, and inclusion is one of the ways to survive."

A senior news editor from the global north echoed the importance of duty as a driver for journalists:

"Duty is very important to journalists - the reason we got into it is because it's a service, it's about telling the truth, and so I think that [argument for change] speaks to people on an emotional level."

Most of the journalists who selected audience relevance as the main driver for more equitable journalism proved to be from the global north.

"I think that the one thing that people stress so much about at work here is [audience relevance] - we have a readership, how are we going to best serve our readers and tell stories that matter to them?"

asked a female senior leader from the global north, summarizing this argument. A male news leader from the global north made an even stronger link between audience relevance and journalism's raison d'être:

"If we're not relevant to our audiences, there's no point in us being here."

A senior news leader from the global south highlighted the empathy gap created by storytelling which is not produced by women or relevant enough to women:

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> *"As journalists and communicators, even if it's been said for a long time or it's a bit boring, we have to make it relevant. And I think that if you have women storytellers, then it definitely makes things much more relevant to so many people. Maybe it's a cliché, but I think this whole thing of storytelling is also so much about empathy - and storytelling needs to be that."*

The business need for change was embraced by similar numbers of news leaders from the global north and south.

> *"If women are 50% of your population, why would you not represent them in some meaningful way? It's not just a social choice, it's a smart economic business choice as well, so why would you leave them out?"*

This was how a female leader from the global south presented the case. Another female leader, again from the global south, highlighted the power of women as one solution to the problem of the broken business model in news.

> *"News subscriptions and the advertising model isn't working. Reading business papers tells me that women are a substantial, volatile market, so anything that targets them. And we need newer revenue models, and everybody in [country] is desperately searching for that."*

A senior news leader from the global north shared the concern that they thought leadership teams commonly feel about their business, making them more receptive to hearing about all potential solutions:

> *"Most news leaders are really concerned about the sustainability of their news model. So, if you're talking about the pocketbook, that's where you meet a lot of people."*

There was notable appetite for and alignment around emerging solutions to more equitable journalism across the global north and south

Most of the news leaders from across the globe who were interviewed for this project expressed enthusiasm for reading a report which evidentially showcased examples of a positive relationship between improved diversity in newsrooms and in news leadership and improved coverage and increased audience performance, which in turn result in an improved business model. This is something they felt was missing from thought-leadership today. It is for this reason that AKAS has included case studies of success in this report, including that of Amedia, which showcases the work of this Norwegian news provider (see Part 4, Chapter 3). Following their efforts to target women as a key audience for growth, Amedia has been generous in sharing their valuable perspectives, key insights, and data findings. Furthermore, the following chapter, authored by Richard Addy, is dedicated to AKAS' groundbreaking research sizing the business opportunity that lies before the news industry.

Chapter 2

Business case investigation: what would happen if women were as likely as men to consume news? A focus on the newspaper industry

Authored by Richard Addy

Introduction

This chapter investigates the business case for gender equity in news, specifically in the newspaper industry[250], and sets out the potential revenue gains from adopting practical measures that would increase the likelihood of women consuming more news. To our knowledge, this is the first attempt to measure the size of the financial opportunity that might come from closing the gender gaps in news, an industry that has been battered by economic and technological change and whose business model is under strain.

This report's interviewees highlighted the importance of the business case

One of the three early insights from the 41 interviews carried out for the wider report (which focused mainly on the six countries of interest - India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the UK and the US) was that there was a need for a clear business case for gender

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250. Throughout this chapter, generic references are made to news, news media, news organizations, the news industry and journalism for narrative flow. Please note however, that this business case investigation is based on revenues for commercial newspapers (both online and in print) only.

equity in news. In addition, in the previous chapter we saw that the interviewees felt that journalistic duty and audience relevance were key arguments that needed to feature in a compelling and defensible strategic narrative for change around gender equity. They also recognized that in challenging times, when resources for journalism are under severe pressure, a business case needs to be made for why gender equity should be prioritized. As a senior news leader from the global north explained in Part 2,

> "
> *"Resources are always so tight, that actually putting them [diversity, inclusion and equity ideas] into practice on an ongoing basis takes extra work, extra resources, and this is constantly a problem."*
> "

Actions to achieve gender parity should not be based solely on the business case

However, it should be noted that recent evidence[251] shows it is not advisable for news leaders to make the business case the sole or primary reason for aiming for gender parity. Doing so risks alienating underrepresented staff and undermining their sense of belonging, probably due to increased levels of cynicism. In addition, relying solely on a business case argument will limit the importance of cultural change in newsrooms, as highlighted by The New York Times' Deputy Managing Editor Carolyn Ryan in Part 1. The business case should therefore support and underpin (in the background) the more fairness-based journalistic duty and audience relevance arguments.

The revenue estimates for the global news industry are based on four sources

The core revenues estimated for the news industry in this business case study are based on newspaper consumption (in both print and online news), and the most comprehensive global newspaper revenue forecasts available from WAN IFRA's annual *World Press Trends*[252], PWC[253], IBISWorld[254] and QYResearch.[255]

As shown later, we found evidence of gender consumption gaps in newspapers online and offline, but not in TV news, radio news or social media. Consequently, this business case investigation does not include any assessment of TV news, radio news or social media. However, this business case will still be of interest to TV and radio news providers that experience gender consumption gaps between men and women in their audiences.

The business case investigation is structured around seven areas:

1. **Review of gender equity-related business cases in general and in news:** An examination of the business case for gender equity and diversity in general, and in news in particular. We found no example of a study taking a comprehensive, quantitative approach to business case development across the news value chain.
2. **News consumption trends for men and women:** An assessment of the long-term global consumption trends for news. This section finds that there have been recent declines in news consumption and attention and that these declines have a relationship with gender, with higher levels of avoidance (and larger losses of interest) among women.
3. **Gender gaps across the news value chain (with a focus on consumption):** An analysis at a global level of the extent to which men consume more news than women, which identifies a 15-16 percentage point gender consumption gap over the next 10 years to 2032 in a base case.

251.   Georgeac and Rattan, 2022
252.   WAN-IFRA, 2021
253.   PWC, 2022
254.   IBISworld, 2021
255.   Valuates, 2022

4. **Organizational constraints limiting the complete closure of gender consumption gaps:** Due to systemic societal and economic factors that lie beyond the control of the newspaper industry, such as patriarchal values and labor market barriers, the actual addressable gender consumption gap is closer to 11-12 percentage points.

5. **Financial assessment and revenue forecasts:** An assessment of the financial state of global newspaper revenues over the next five years. Based on extrapolations from four sources, we project that the size of news revenues globally will be $79bn in 2027 and $69bn in 2032.

6. **Revenue opportunities:** The potential revenue implications for news media and individual news organizations of closing the gender consumption gap. We find that closing the gender gap completely translates into a cumulative $43bn over five years (2023 to 2027) and $83bn over ten years (2023 to 2032). However, this scenario, which we label "*optimistic*", is unlikely as it would require the newspaper industry to take immediate action on all 12 solutions themes in one year. We have therefore adopted a gradual parity model, which we have called the "*conservative*" scenario, which assumes that the gender consumption gap is closed by one percentage point each year starting in 2023. This more likely scenario would yield additional revenues of $11bn over five years and $38bn over ten years.

7. **Actions for success:** Finally, we restate 11 of the 12 solutions themes that need to be acted upon across the news value chain, including strategy, leadership, recruitment, representation, inclusion, and coverage. While not all of these can be directly linked back to a financial benefit, taken together they can increase women's interest in and consumption of news, in turn improving the position of hard-pressed news organizations.

1. Review of gender equity-related business cases in general and in news

A rapid literature review of the business cases relating to diversity, inclusion, and gender was carried out using Google searches and Google Scholar. We found 224 relevant articles and studies covering this area. By far the most influential report among those identified was McKinsey's *Diversity wins – How inclusion matters*, published in May 2020[256], one of several studies on the subject undertaken by McKinsey. The report's key finding was that between 2011 and 2015, tracking 991 executive teams globally (including teams in the UK, US, India, South Africa, and Nigeria) revealed that the most diverse executive teams had 21% higher profitability than the least diverse teams. As of August 2022, this McKinsey study had been linked to by 6,701 sites, including leading news providers such as The New York Times, The Guardian (UK), Bloomberg, Reuters, The Financial Times, Indian Times, The Guardian (Nigeria) and Pulse.ng. Despite its influence, the McKinsey approach has been criticized by other commentators for its crude measurement of impact.[257] Specifically, the report has been shown to be irreplicable and no links between diversity and a range of financial performance measures such as sales growth or gross margin were found.

Looking at the 224 articles and studies found more widely, over half of these failed to clarify

256. McKinsey & Co, 2020
257. Edmans, 2021

Figure 46: The research focus of business case studies for gender equity in news

Change area for gender parity along the news value chain

| Social norms Socio-economic change Political change Technological change Legal/regulatory change | News sector change | News organization strategy change | News leadership and individual leader change | Newsroom and journalist level change | Representation, portrayal and storytelling news coverage | News consumption change | News coverage impact |

Research Focus

Source: AKAS (2022)

what specific change had taken place (e.g., a change in the Board, CEO, executive team, representation, product or offer) that had generated business benefits. Those that did refer to the catalytic change tended to refer to one or two factors – most commonly a change in the composition of the Board or Executive team. A very small minority examined the consequences of a change in the Chair or CEO, and an even smaller number looked at a change made in their offers, with the aim of engaging women.

Data on the gender composition of Boards, CEOs, and CFOs in the six countries of focus in our study shows how far off gender parity is in news leadership positions. Although the proportion of Board seats held by women ranges from 17% in India to 36% in Kenya, the percentage of Chairs of Boards is much lower, ranging from 4% in India to 21% in Kenya.[258] When it comes to women CEOs the picture is even more dire, with the range being between 5% and 7% in the six countries studied.

In terms of articulating the benefits of greater diversity, less than half (43%) of the relevant articles found referred to financial benefits such as increased profits or return on investments/assets/equity, while only a quarter referred to non-financial benefits such as increased creativity, staff engagement or audience/consumer engagement.

Indeed audience/consumer engagement or consumption was only referenced by 5% of the studies as a gender equity benefit, pointing to these areas being under-researched and not well understood.

For the news industry, we did not find any study which provided a comprehensive, quantitative approach across the value chain that supported the business case for gender equality in the news industry. We found just nine articles and studies out of the 224 that referenced news media at all. Two of them were the previous *Missing Perspectives* reports that we had produced. The remaining studies focused mainly on the leadership dimension of the value chain (see Figure 46). There have also been some survey-based studies focusing on representation in news[259] but mostly these were not linked to finances. This lack of research is the gap we are filling with this investigation.

A further element of the AKAS research involved assessing whether annual diversity and inclusion reports produced by news organizations made any reference to costs, revenues or profits which are business case concepts. We found that out of the 19 reports found in the UK, 90% made no reference to these terms, pointing to a lack of connection between how diversity and inclusion drives business cases.[260]

258. Deloitte, 2022
259. Gottfried et al., 2022; Cherubini, 2022
260. AKAS analysis of UK news organizations' diversity reports, 2022

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2. News consumption trends for women and men

Engaging audiences so that they consume news - an increasingly challenging task - is not only important for democracy but underpins the business model for news organizations. Audiences either fund newspapers directly through the cover price, subscriptions, and membership fees, or indirectly as the key target of advertising and sponsorship, or as citizens that non-profit funders are interested in (e.g. governments and philanthropic organizations). Hence understanding the long-term engagement trends provides a window onto the future trajectory of the news industry.

Figure 47 presents global searches for online news using Google Trends as an indicator of news consumption. It shows that monthly searches for news tripled between 2004 and 2020, peaking at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, since then there are indications that **for the first time in two decades, searches for news are declining globally**. Focusing on news searches in May of each year between 2004 and 2022 shows this trend very clearly. Indeed, it is clear that the

rate of growth had already started to decline a few years before the peaks in interest caused by COVID in 2020.

This pattern is underpinned by the findings in the latest Reuters Institute *Digital News Report 2022* which shows that in the last seven years, interest in news has declined in many countries (see Figure 48). For example, in the UK, those who claim to be extremely or very interested in the news declined from 70% in 2015 to 43% in 2022, while over the same period the US saw a 20-percentage point drop to 47% in 2022. Further evidence from the report shows that audiences, especially **women, are increasingly actively avoiding the news** (see Figure 49). Across the 46 countries surveyed, covering 93,000 respondents, 35% of men stated that they often or sometimes avoided the news; for women the figure was 41%. The underlying reason for this avoidance varies but the two most common reasons given by those who avoid the news are that there is too much politics and COVID-19 news (43% for all: 41% for men and 45% for women) and that the news has a negative effect on their mood (36% for all: 31% for men and 39% for women).

Figure 47: Google searches for "News" as a broadcast genre - worldwide (May 2004 – May 2022)
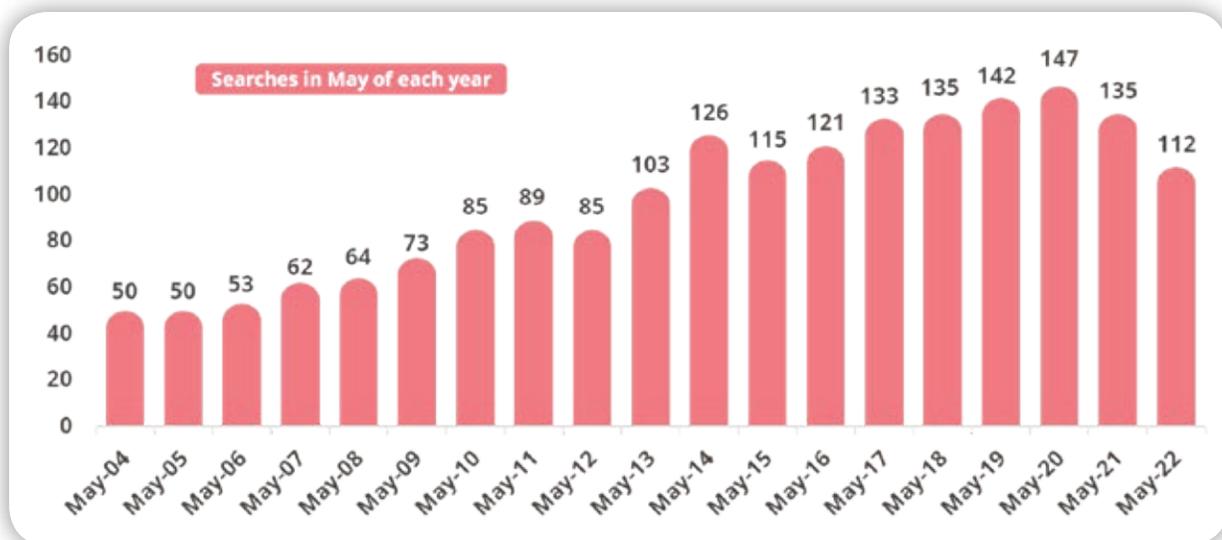
Source: AKAS analysis of Google Trends (2022)

Figure 48: How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news?
(% who are extremely or very interested in news, 2015 to 2022)

Selected countries with more stable levels
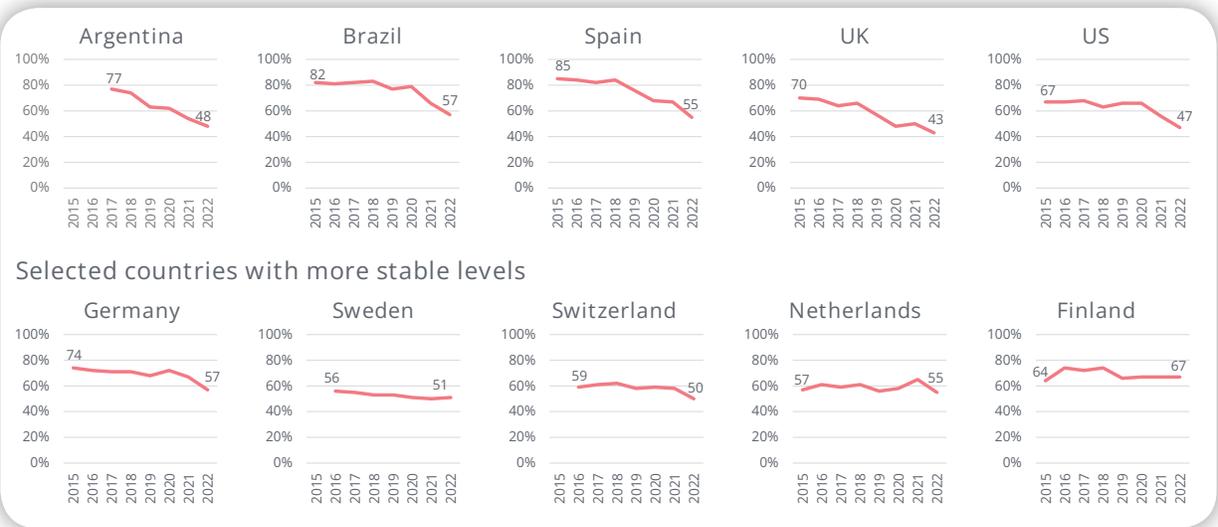
Source: Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2022)
Base: Total 2015–22 samples (n≈2000)

Figure 49: Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days?
(% who sometimes or often actively avoid the news, 2017 vs 2019 vs 2022)
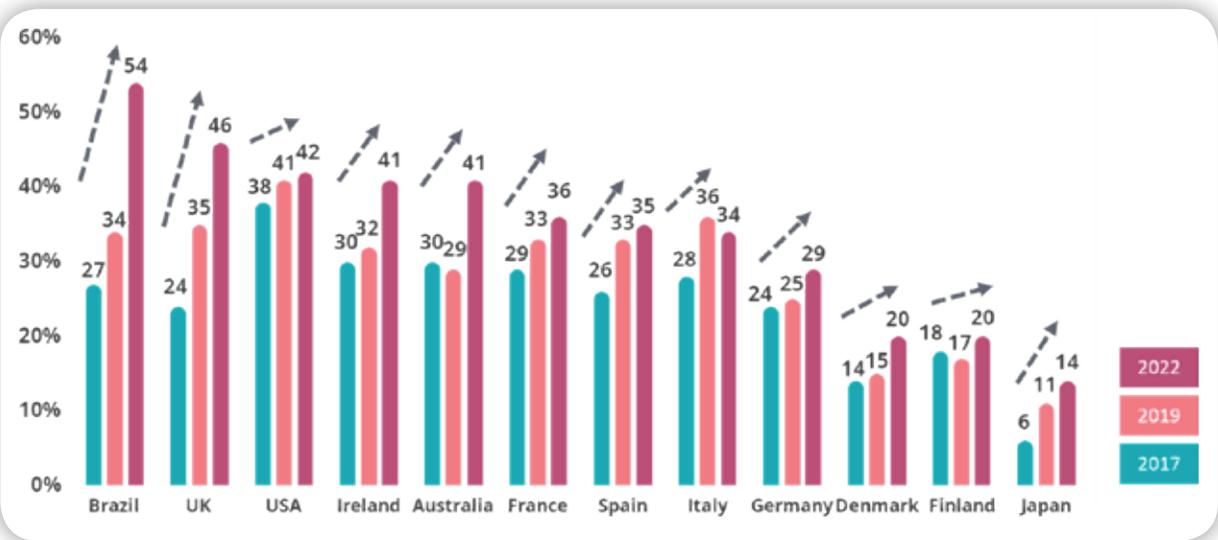
Source: Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2022)
Base: Total 2015–22 samples (n≈2000)

All of this points to further pressure on news organizations on top of the other structural pressures they face (e.g., digital transition, the decline of print circulation, the proliferation of information providers, and the switch of classifieds and advertising in general to online and social media giants). The industry may have lulled itself into a false sense of security following the uplift in consumption and revenues that occurred in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, however this should not blind the industry to its long-term pressures.

3. Gender gaps across the news value chain (with a focus on consumption)

The key challenge in this assessment is to understand the extent to which women are consuming less news than men. To understand this, we have used two approaches:

1. **Behavioral approach for digital consumption** – Using SimilarWeb data to understand the gender composition of monthly visits to online news providers from across the world in September 2022, based on the news organizations from 46 countries tracked in the Reuters Institute *Digital News Report* as well as an additional 22 countries

Figure 50: The proportion of women represented at different points of the news value chain (in the six countries of focus unless stated) (2011-2022)
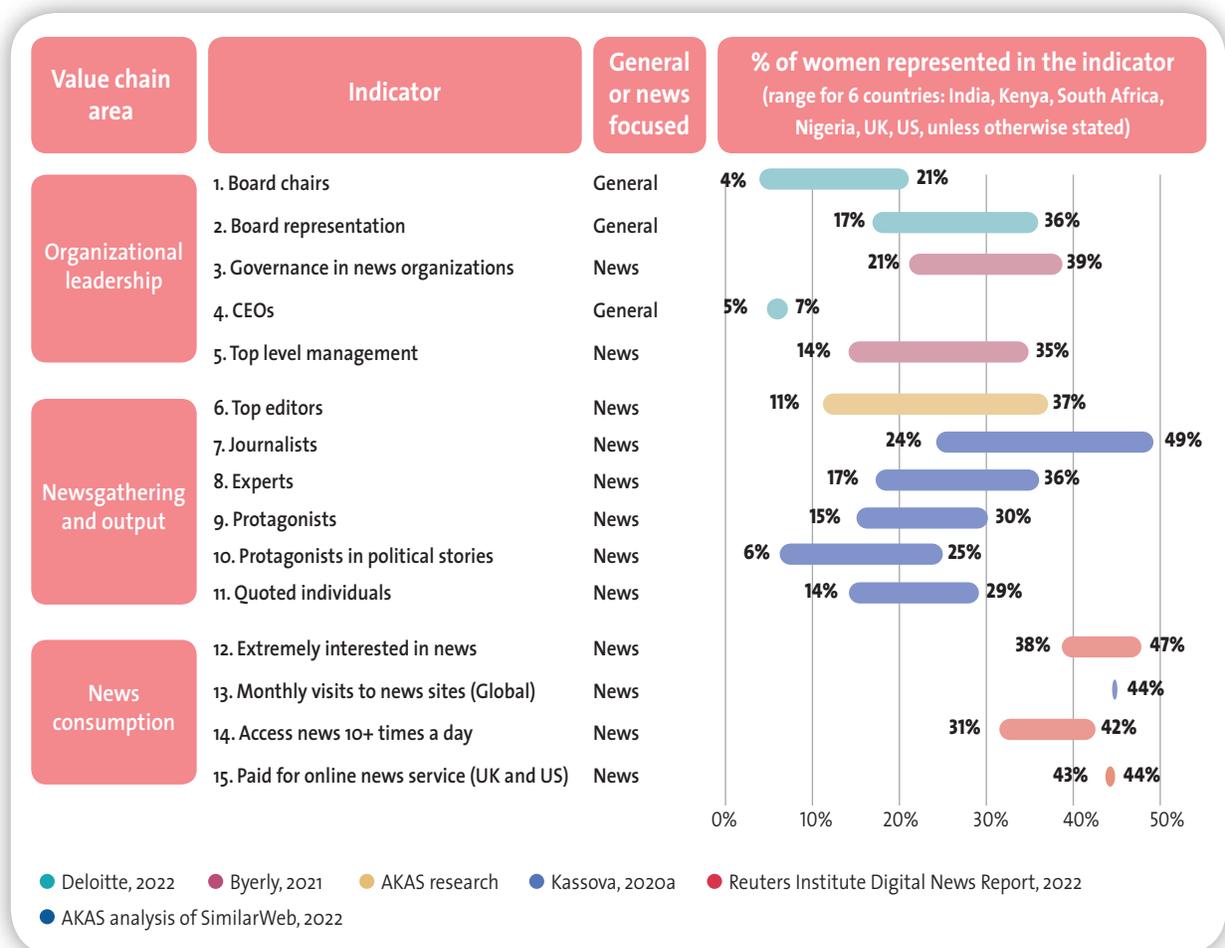
Sources: 1, 2 and 4: Deloitte, 2022; 3 and 5: Byerly, 2011; 6: AKAS research; 7, 8, 9, 10, 11: Kassova, 2020a; 12, 14 and 15: Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022; 13: AKAS analysis of SimilarWeb, 2022.

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Figure 51: Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? Please select all that apply (2022)

Topic No.	Topic	Men	Women	Who has highest interest
1	Local news (e.g. about my region, city or town)	56%	62%	Women
2	News about coronavirus	44%	52%	Women
3	Lifestyle news (e.g. food, fashion, travel etc.)	28%	45%	Women
4	Environment and climate change news	40%	44%	Women
5	News about crime and personal security	39%	43%	Women
6	News about mental health/wellness	26%	41%	Women
7	Culture (e.g. music, books, film, arts etc.)	34%	41%	Women
8	Entertainment and celebrity news	23%	36%	Women
9	Fun news (e.g. satire, news that makes me laugh)	32%	36%	Women
10	Education news	28%	35%	Women
11	Social justice news (e.g. race/gender inequity, LGBTQ+ rights etc.)	24%	29%	Women
12	International news	57%	50%	Men
13	Political news	53%	41%	Men
14	Science and technology news	52%	35%	Men
15	Sports news	50%	22%	Men
16	Business, financial and economic news	44%	32%	Men

Source: Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2022)
Base: Total 2022 samples (c93,000)

2. **Claimed consumption survey-based approach** – Using the survey of claimed consumption of "*printed newspapers*" as the main source of news, as tracked in the Reuters Institute *Digital News Report*

These methods showed that **men consume more news than women**:

- Men's share of monthly visits to leading news sites was **22 percentage points** higher than women's. In September 2022, monthly visits to 1,680 news websites from 68 countries totalled 38 billion. 23 billion (61%) were from men and 15 billion (39%) were from women (AKAS analysis of SimilarWeb data, September 2022)
- Men's share of those who had used print newspapers as their main source of news in the last week was **13 percentage points** higher than women's – 56.5% for men and 43.5% for women (Reuters Institute *Digital News Report 2022*)

From these research findings, we calculated the blended gender consumption gap between 2023 and 2032 for digital and print newspapers. Since the ratio of digital newspaper revenues and print revenues will change over the next ten years, the gender consumption gap changes from 15.0 percentage points in 2023 to 16.3 percentage points in 2032 in the base case.

Across the news value chain there are additional gender gaps which in part help to explain the existing gender gap in consumption. Figure 50 shows the range in the proportion of women's shares in news media for the six countries of interest in our study, based on a variety of sources. The chart demonstrates that women's shares are broadly low across the areas of organizational leadership, newsgathering, and outputs, indicating considerable scope for improvement.

We also have additional evidence that the gender consumption gap is in part driven by the news genres that news organizations focus on. The data in Figure 51 show men's and women's interest in 16 different news genres, according to the Reuters Institute *Digital News Report 2022*. It reveals the fascinating result that men have a much greater interest in business and political news in the form in which it is delivered currently. AKAS research using GDELT has found that globally in 2022, business and politics were the most published news genres online, demonstrating that men's interests dominate the news agenda.

4. Organizational constraints limiting the complete closure of gender consumption gaps

Although this 15-16 percentage point gender consumption gap makes an attractive headline, closing it fully needs to be labeled as an "*unrealistic*" scenario. This is because changes

in the behaviors of news organizations alone cannot fully close the gender consumption gap. As has been explained in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News*, there are a number of systemic factors that weigh against women consuming as much news as men. These include but are not limited to prevalent patriarchal values[261], barriers to entry in the labor market[262], lower income levels[263], unpaid work, and time pressures.[264] Indeed, a couple of studies have argued that in countries with strong patriarchal values, gender diversity initiatives will struggle to be sustained at all.[265]

To take account of this, we reduced the 15-16 percentage point gender consumption gap by an estimate of the systemic factors that lie beyond news organizations' control. To do this we applied the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index 2022 estimate that globally there is a 31.9% gender gap across the economic, education, health, and political domains. When this is applied to our model the addressable gender consumption gap for news is closer to 11-12 percentage points – we have called this the "*optimistic*" scenario.

Another potential limitation in closing the gender consumption/revenue gap is that news genres or subjects that appeal to men can often be easier to monetize via growing subscription models. Women are more likely than men to access news via social media which may make it harder to build loyalty and ultimately revenue.

5. Financial assessment and revenue forecasts

To obtain base cases for the revenues in the global newspaper market, AKAS averaged extrapolations from four sources: WAN-IFRA's *World Press Trends Report*[266], PWC's *Media Outlook report 2022-2026*[267], IBISWorld's *Global*

261. Kassova, 2020a
262. International Labor Organization, 2022
263. Oxfam International, 2022
264. Eissler et al., 2021
265. Hoobler, 2016
266. WAN-IFRA, 2022
267. PWC, 2022

Figure 52: Global newspaper revenues (print & digital), 2016 to 2032 $ billion
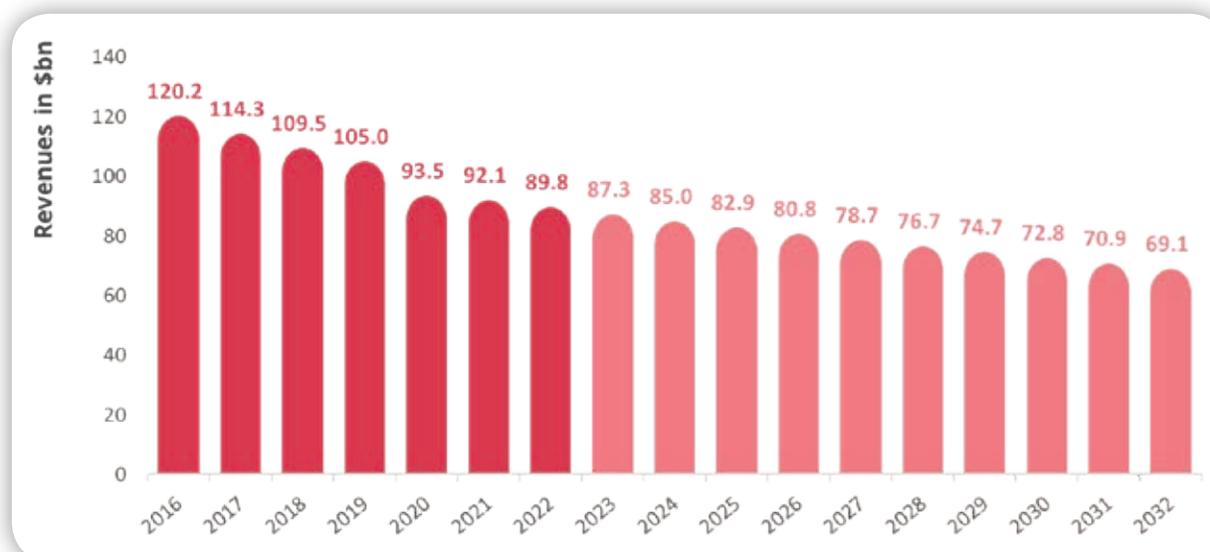
Source: AKAS global newspaper market model (2022)

Newspaper Publishing (including forecasts up to 2026)[268], and QYResearch's *Global Newspaper Publishing Market Insights, Forecast to 2028*.[269] The base case shows that global newspaper (print and online) revenues have experienced an underlying decline of 5.2% per year between 2016 to 2021 with revenues totaling $92 billion in 2021. As shown in Figure 52, for the next ten years (from 2023) the underlying declines in the global newspaper market are less aggressive but persist at 2.65% a year leading to revenues of $79 billion in 2027 and $69 billion in 2032.

6. Revenue opportunities

Given the 11-12 percentage point addressable gender consumption gap in the "*optimistic*" scenario established earlier, it is clear that if this gap was closed completely (critically whilst holding men's consumption steady) the newspaper industry would experience increased revenues. In global terms, closing the 11-12 percentage point gender consumption gap every year between 2023 and 2032 would cumulatively generate $43 billion additional revenues by 2027 and $83 billion additional revenues by 2032.

However, it is highly unlikely that news organizations will be able to close the gender consumption gap immediately or even quickly. A more realistic case would be to assume a one percentage point closure of the gender consumption gap each year between 2023 and 2032 as news organizations start to take action on the 12 solutions themes. This "conservative" scenario would generate $11 billion cumulative additional revenues by 2027 and $38 billion cumulative additional revenues by 2032. Figure 53 sets out the "*conservative*" and "*optimistic*" scenarios for the global newspaper industry over the next decade.

Revenue opportunities at a country and organizational level

Up until now we have discussed the implications of closing the gender consumption gap at a global level. However, we have also looked at the implications at a

268. IBISWorld, 2021
269. Valuates, 2022

Figure 53: Conservative and optimistic scenarios - the annual and cumulative revenues from closing the consumption gap (2023-2032)
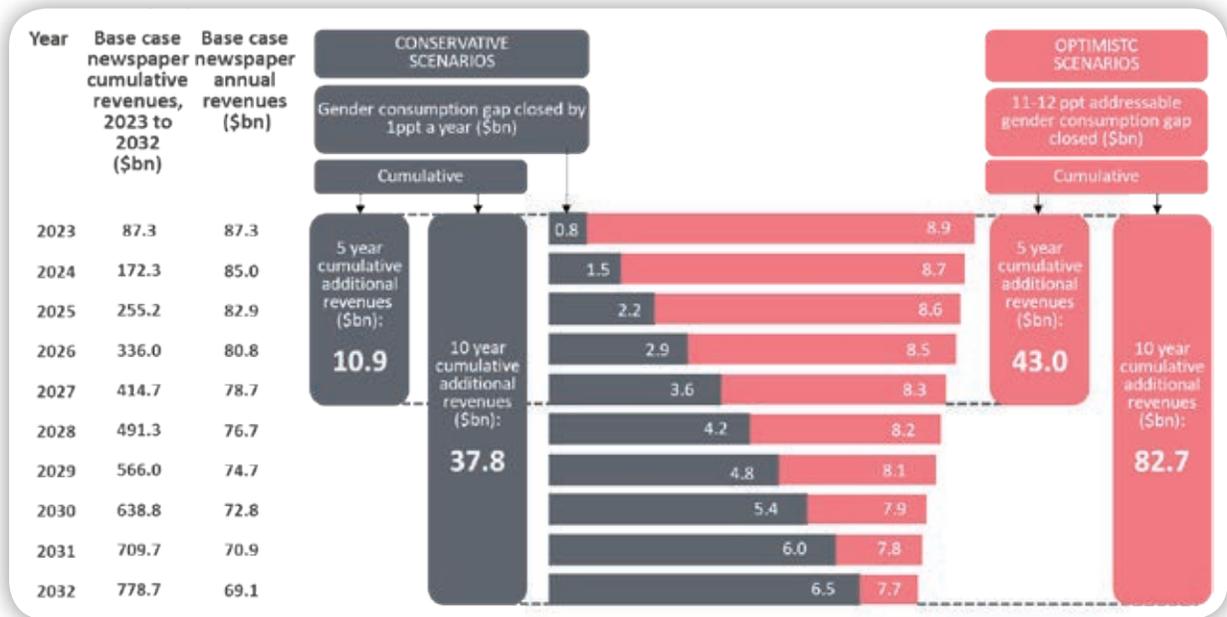
Source: AKAS global newspaper market model (2022)

Figure 54: What the conservative gender consumption gap scenario means for the six countries of focus in terms of additional cumulative revenues (2023-2032)

Cumulative revenues $m	Global $m	South Africa $m	Nigeria $m	India $m	Kenya $m	UK $m	US $m
5-year (2023 to 2027)	10,946	38	10	487	11	413	2,715
10-year (2023 to 2032)	37,779	130	34	2,020	43	1,415	9,447

Source: AKAS global newspaper market model (2022)

country and organizational level. Figure 54 shows the five-year and ten-year revenue implications of adopting the "*conservative*" scenario for the six countries in the study. Over the next five years, the Figure shows a potential cumulative revenue opportunity of $2.7 billion for the US newspaper industry, $487 million in India, $413 million in the UK, $38 million in South Africa, $11 million in Kenya, and $10 million in Nigeria. The ten-year figures are substantially higher by a factor of over three.

For some individual news providers, the revenue opportunity might be even larger than the global gender consumption gap. AKAS' analysis of 1,680 online news brands across 68 countries using SimilarWeb showed that in September 2022, 17% of these news brands had a share of women audiences lower than 35% (which equates to a consumption gap of at least 30 percentage points – double the global average). This and the women's share of all the other categories is shown in Figure 55.

Figure 55: Distribution of online news providers by their share of monthly visits made by women (September 2022)

Share of monthly visits made by women (%)	Share of 1,680 online news providers in each category (%)
0% *to* 9.9%	0.0%
10% *to* 14.9%	0.4%
15% *to* 19.9%	1.5%
20% *to* 24.9%	1.3%
25% *to* 29.9%	4.3%
30% *to* 34.9%	9.9%
35% *to* 39.9%	21.8%
40% *to* 44.9%	32.3%
45% *to* 49.9%	20.1%
50% *to* 54.9%	6.0%
55% *to* 59.9%	2.0%
60% *to* 64.9%	0.4%
65% *to* 69.9%	0.1%
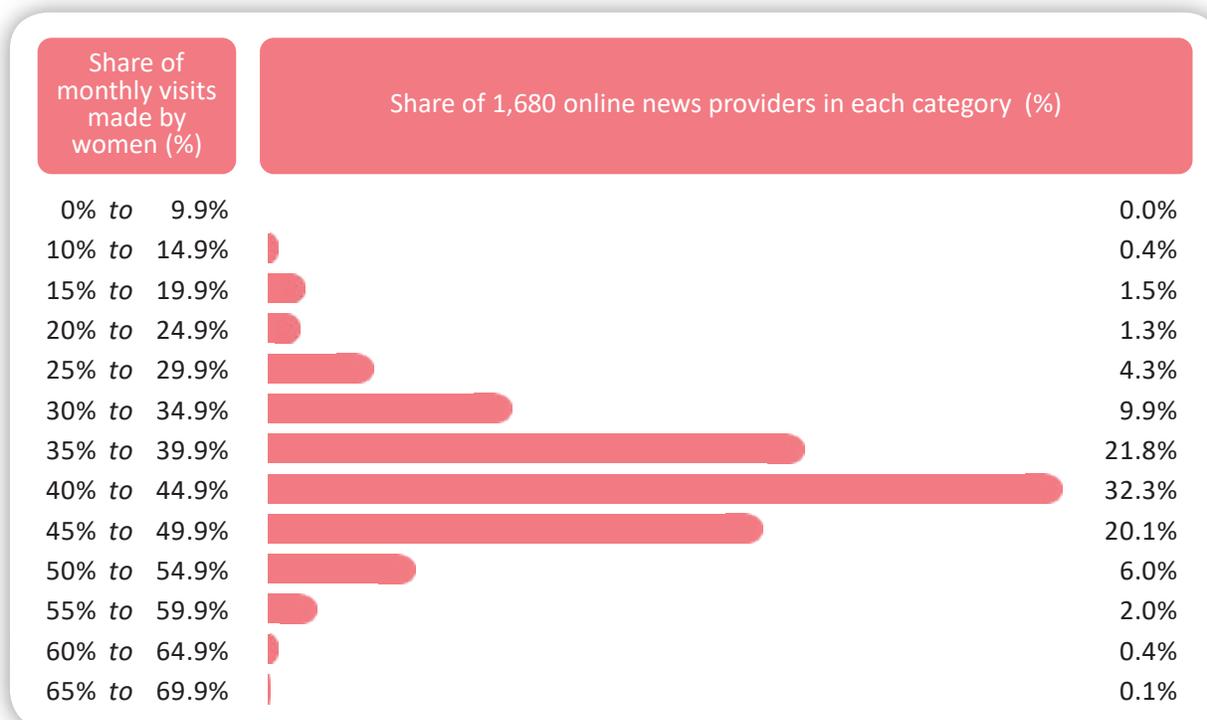
Source: AKAS global newspaper market model (2022)

7. Solutions themes for success

We believe that there is a strong case that the gender gap can be narrowed through news organizations and journalists engaging in a number of concrete steps. This report has identified 12 solutions themes across the value chain (see Figure 56) which would increase the likelihood of women consuming more news and of news organizations thereby generating more revenues. The critical insight is that no one action on its own will lead to the gap being closed. The most successful organizations will be those that adopt the full range of actions across the news value chain. Solutions theme 1, which relates to improving industry-wide collaboration (discussed in Part 3), is not explicitly covered as part of the solutions themes for success in the business case. All the other 11 solutions themes are discussed below.

News organization strategy change

Using the available data, news organizations need to assess how they perform in each part of the value chain in relation to gender, and how this compares with the wider news industry. Once this audit or review has been completed, news organizations can set out their plans and targets, and regularly publish their progress as part of an overall strategy.[270]

- **Solutions theme 2:** Conduct an audit of the existing gender balance along all elements of the news value chain. Intersect gender with race/ethnicity
- **Solutions theme 3:** Make the goal of pursuing gender balance in your news organization and coverage explicit in the organization's strategy

270. The New York Times, 2020

Figure 56: Solutions themes in the news value chain

Change area for gender parity along the news value chain

Social norms Socio-economic change Political change Technological change Legal/regulatory change	News sector change	News organization strategy change	News leadership and individual leader change	Newsroom and journalist level change	Representation, portrayal and storytelling news coverage	News consumption change	News coverage impact

1. Consolidate efforts at an industry level to enhance progress	2. Conduct an audit of the existing gender balance along all the elements of the news value chain. Intersect gender with race/ethnicity 3. Make the goal of pursuing gender balance in your news organization and coverage explicit in the organization's strategy	4. Improve the representation of all women in news leadership 5. Improve specifically the representation of women of color in news leadership 6. Improve the inclusion of women in news leadership decision-making 7. Improve specifically the inclusion of women of color in news leadership decision-making	8. Improve the representation and inclusion of women in newsrooms. Implement recommendations on gender diversity in the workplace for newsrooms from the "Gender Parity in News checklist" in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* report	9. Improve the representation of all women as contributors, especially experts and protagonists 10. Ensure that storytelling is relevant to women by utilizing a vertical or/ and horizontal editorial approach. Tackle the seven gender gaps when telling stories 11. Measure and improve portrayal of all women in news coverage (currently mainly reinforcing stereotypes)	12. Reframe the case for change to include the significant business opportunity that gender parity in news consumption will bring	

Source: AKAS global newspaper market model (2022)

The importance of identifying gaps was highlighted by a male senior news leader from the global north:

> "It's one thing for me to say: 'Oh, we should be more representative', it's another thing for me to say: 'Our population here is 52% female, and our leadership is 56%, and our staffing is 65%.'"

Metrics to track

- The number of initiatives at each part of the new value chain (to ensure the gap is filled)

News leadership and individual leader change/Newsroom and journalist level change

As set out in the news initiatives discussion (see Part 3), representation and, critically, the following inclusion actions at a leadership and newsroom level form a core part of any credible diversity plan:

- **Solutions theme 4:** Improve the representation of all women in news leadership
- **Solutions theme 5:** Improve specifically the representation of women of color in news leadership
- **Solutions theme 6:** Improve the inclusion of women in decision-making in news leadership
- **Solutions theme 7:** Improve specifically the inclusion of women of color in decision-making in news leadership
- **Solutions theme 8:** Improve the representation and inclusion of

women in newsrooms. Implement the recommendations for gender diversity in the workplace from the "Gender Parity in News Checklist" from *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* report (p. 166).

Metrics to seek to improve include:

- The percentage of women in news leadership roles
- The percentage of women of color in news leadership roles
- The percentage of women in editorial roles (especially high-profile beats)
- The percentage of women of color in editorial roles (especially high-profile beats)
- The percentage of women in the organization (especially high-profile beats)
- The percentage of women of color in the organization (especially high-profile beats)
- Engagement scores of women in news leadership roles in staff surveys
- Engagement scores of women of color in news leadership roles in staff surveys
- Engagement scores of women in staff surveys
- Engagement scores of women of color in staff surveys

Representation, portrayal, and storytelling in news coverage

Closing a range of editorial gender gaps lies at the heart of the opportunity for news organizations, from which stories to cover, to who covers a story, to who is covered in stories

- **Solutions theme 9:** Improve the representation of all women as contributors, especially experts and protagonists, in news coverage
- **Solutions theme 10:** Improve storytelling about women of all colors, ensuring it is relevant to women by utilizing a vertical or/and horizontal editorial approach. Tackle the seven gender gaps when telling stories (see Part 2, Chapter 1). Assess the gender angles of all stories and target stories/genres that appeal to a significant proportion of women and men (see Figure 57). This could be supported by researching and developing innovative women-friendly news products and formats

- **Solutions theme 11:** Measure and improve portrayal of all women in news coverage (which currently mainly reinforces stereotypes)

Metrics to seek to improve include:

- The percentage of bylines by women
- The percentage of women in high-profile beats
- The percentage of experts who are women/audit lists
- The percentage of protagonists who are women
- The percentage of women protagonists portrayed as empowered
- The percentage of images that depict women as empowered
- The percentage of stories that have a high appeal to both women and men
- Portrayal of women and men in the news as power brokers, sources of knowledge, victims, perpetrators, sexual objects, primary care givers, and key family members

News consumption and impact

Understanding what progress has been made and how audiences are reacting to the actions is key to keeping interventions on track. Surveying and interviewing audiences directly, as well as tracking behavior online and impacts on finance, brand, influencers, and decision-makers, provide meaningful information to assess the success of strategies

- **Solutions theme 12:** Reframe the case for change to include the significant business opportunity that gender parity in news consumption will bring

Metrics to track

1. Engagement and consumption by women – understand what genres, angles, story treatments, and products are most attractive
2. Impacts on
   - Finance - the business revenues
   - Brand - perceptions of your audiences
   - Individuals - how the news coverage has changed individuals' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors

- Influencers – other media, NGOs, international institutions, academia, think tanks, etc. reacting to the coverage
- Decision-makers – Governments, legislators, business leaders taking action as a result of the news coverage

Recent evidence has shown that philanthropic organizations want to see more information on the impacts of their grants and investments in the journalism space.[271]

The first editorial step to take on the journey to increase revenue from women audiences

The first editorial step news organizations can take on their revenue-generating journey is to look at the genre mix of their output (solutions theme 11). According to AKAS research using GDELT, the genres that men are most interested in – business and politics – were the most-covered news areas online in the first half of 2022. So, in short, these highly-covered genres of business, politics, and international news are preferred by men, reported by men, dominated by male protagonists, and more likely to be viewed by men.

As highlighted by Sarah Macharia:

"Topics such as politics are the movers and shakers in the newsroom, these are the more prestigious beats, as are international stories. International stories tend to be assigned to men rather than women. Political stories as well are reported largely by men, as revealed by the global media monitoring research."

(See Part 2, Chapter 2)

To attract more women news audiences, news organizations should experiment with ways of making the news in high-volume genres such as politics, business, and international affairs more relatable to women (for example, by using more local angles, and women journalists, protagonists, and experts). In addition, news organizations could devote more attention to some of the 11 (out of the 16)

271. AKAS, 2022

Figure 57: Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? Please select all that apply. Comparing women and men's preferences, highlighting those that appeal to at least 30% of women and men (2022)
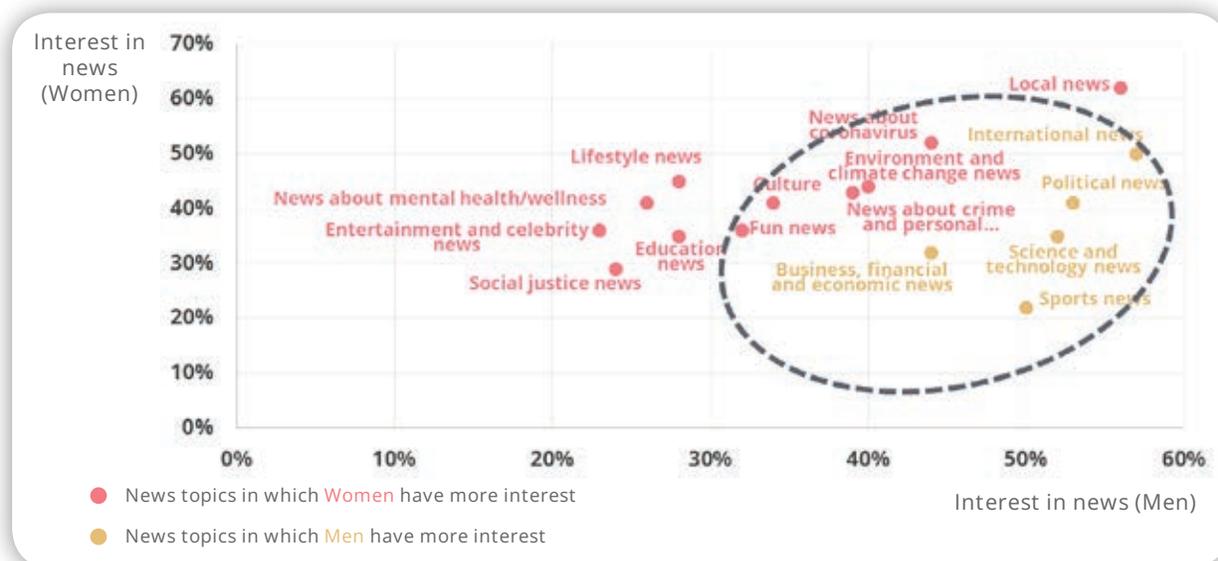
Source: Reuters Institute, Digital News Report 2022

areas that generate relatively higher interest among women compared to men (although interest in many of these genres is still high among men). Figure 57 shows that there are a range of genres that appeal to at least 30% of women and men.

The case study from Amedia which follows this chapter, touches on this point. This action would provide news organizations with a range of options to shift or adjust their coverage towards including more women-friendly genres and treatments without alienating their male audiences. As Figure 58 shows, this is not about targeting women-only genres and having stories fronted only by women journalists, women protagonists, and women experts. It is about having a more gender-balanced portfolio of stories and coverage.

8. Conclusion

The newspaper industry is in trouble. It is losing consumption, attention, and money. This is partly structural but also partly of its own making. In this chapter we have shown that it has increasingly lost touch with many women,

half of the available audience, consistently underrepresenting their interests.

For the first time to our knowledge, we have carried out a comprehensive business case investigation of how global news media having a more diversified and inclusive approach to their news strategies, teams, production, and outputs can address women's news needs and preferences. We have pulled together a set of evidence-based actions that enable news organizations to take advantage of the opportunity offered by closing the news consumption gender gap.

We have found that boosting consumption by women could substantially benefit the bottom line. A one percentage point cut in the gender consumption gap (assuming male coverage is sustained) would generate $11 billion cumulative additional revenues by 2027 and $38 billion cumulative additional revenues by 2032.

The financial argument is not the only reason to aim for gender parity but at a time when the news industry is under huge pressure,

Figure 58: Men vs women - The news industry's current and desired positions on genres covered and journalists, protagonists, and experts used
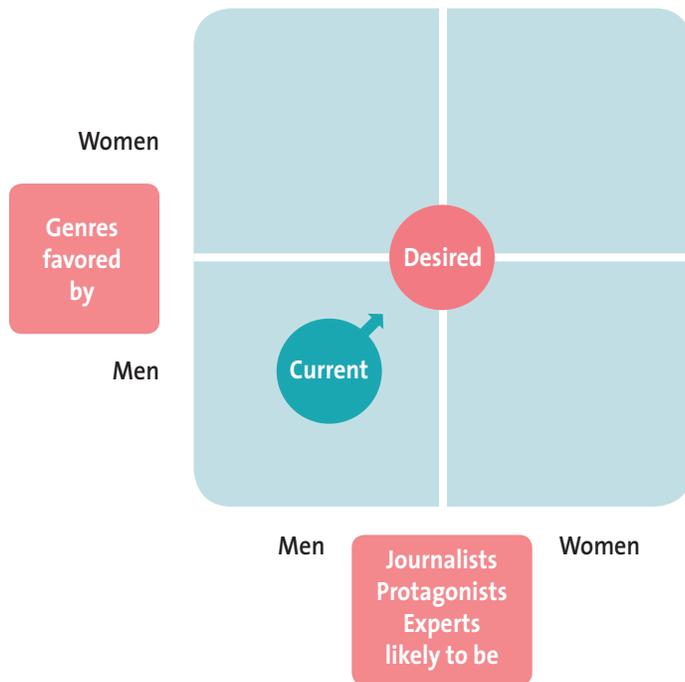
Source: AKAS (2022)

it may help make the wider case for greater diversity and inclusion within news media companies. The global newspaper industry is set to experience brutal declines in its revenues in the next decade. Many individual news providers will be extinguished. Time is running out. The industry needs to find new audiences and news revenue streams that are aligned to its ethical and audience-centric mission. One untapped and under-served audience is screaming for attention – women. For those news organizations that approach this challenge seriously and strategically, rather than symbolically, there is the prize of accessing the untapped multiple millions of dollars that women news audiences would generate.

Chapter 3

Women-sensitive coverage leading to improved business model: Amedia case study

The Missing Perspectives of Women in News revealed that neither the news industry nor academia have yet definitively understood the complex relationship between the gender of newsroom reporters, the sources or protagonists interviewed, the portrayal of women in news, and the engagement of women audiences with news stories.[272] The business case for gender equity in news outlined in the previous chapter did not find a single research study that focused on correlations between elements of the news value chain with the purpose of building the business rationale for investing in expanding female audiences. The correlations between the proportion of women in news leadership and among reporters, sources, and protagonists, and female audience engagement remain unclear, not least because of a lack of relevant data. The AKAS team was therefore excited to find an initiative (just one among 168) driven by Amedia, which sought specifically to understand the relationship between the gender of the reporters, women's share of voice in articles, and female audiences.

Who is Amedia?

Amedia is the largest publisher of local newspapers in Norway, with 80 titles that attract a combined 2.4 million daily readers across all platforms.[273] In 2016, the company set up a new editorial department which began to analyze data from different newsrooms to gain a better understanding of their audience profile, audiences' engagement with content, and audience needs. Their objective was to make news content more relevant to, and increase subscriptions among under-served target audiences, one of which was women. In the words of Executive Vice President Pål Nedregotten, "*Data is our superpower.*" [274]

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272. Kassova, 2020a
273. Amedia presentation by Pål Nedregotten to WAN-IFRA LATAM, 19 November 2020: "Reaching and capturing women & the below-40 as news subscribers"
274. Amedia presentation by Pål Nedregotten to WAN-IFRA LATAM, 19 November 2020: "Reaching and capturing women & the below-40 as news subscribers"

The relationship between women readers and women sources

As part of a wide-ranging investigation into gender balance across 660,000 stories from 64 newspapers published over the same 21-month period, in 2019 Amedia examined articles from 19 newspapers to measure women's share of voice and found that 36% of the share of voice belonged to women, but there was variation by topic. For example, in business, finance, and economics, women's share of voice was 32%; in politics 36%; but in health it was 48%. Importantly, the analysis discovered that the publications that featured more stories containing female sources (which were more likely to be written by women reporters) had more women readers.

Fast-forward six years and I am speaking with Amedia's Director of Content Development, Eivor Jerpåsen, about the key insights and learnings from the last years, as well as the company's future plans in relation to growing its female audiences. Jerpåsen speaks with conviction about the importance of data monitoring and metadata in informing editorial decisions about the stories that are relevant to audiences. According to Jerpåsen, women reporters are underrepresented to a greater or lesser extent across many newsrooms. She finds it fascinating that even newly established newsrooms produce content which often appeals more to men. Given this fact, it is perhaps unsurprising that women form a minority (42%) of Amedia's readership/subscriber base.

Evidence of the impact of women-sensitive news coverage at key points of the news value chain

It is notoriously difficult to assess the financial impact of moving towards gender parity in any part of the news value chain. As explained in the business case in the previous chapter, most studies that look at the business case for gender equality (which are mainly outside the news media arena) focus on how increasing the representation of women on management boards or in executive leadership teams (the start of the value chain) is correlated with improvement in financial metrics (towards the end of the value chain). Igor Pipkin, Chief Data Scientist at Amedia, generously provided AKAS with access to Amedia's latest data from 2022 on the gender-related performance of news outlets at key points in the news value chain. The results of the analysis are revelatory. What is evident, as shown in Figure 59, is that at each point of the value chain between newsgathering and news consumption there is a positive correlation between variables. That is, there is a positive relationship between: the share of female authors and the share of female protagonists (40%[275]); the share of female protagonists and the share of female readership (51%[276]); and the share of female readership and the share of female subscribers (66%[277]). However, the direct correlation between the share of female authors and the share of female subscribers is weaker (21%[278]). This points to the significant conclusion that to increase the probability of financial benefits from gender equality initiatives, news organizations need to take action at every stage of the news value chain – a key recommendation of the business case.

It should be noted however that there are some caveats to this analysis. Firstly, correlation is not the same as causation – future investigations will need to provide more comprehensive analysis of a causal relationship between the elements of the news value chain. Secondly, this analysis relates to Norway, a country in which social norms are strongly pro-gender equality. Studies from 2016[279] and

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275. This means that if the proportion of female authors increased by one percentage point, the share of female protagonists or experts is likely to increase by 0.4% i.e. 40% of 1%
276. This means that that if the proportion of female protagonists/experts increased by one percentage point, the share of female readership is likely to increase by 0.51% i.e. 51% of 1%
277. This means that that if the proportion of female readership increased by one percentage point, the share of female subscribers is likely to increase by 0.66% i.e. 66% of 1%
278. This means that that if the proportion of female authors increased by one percentage point, the share of female subscribers is likely to increase by 0.21% i.e. 21% of 1%
279.   Hoobler et al., 2016

Figure 59: Correlations between gender-related elements across the news value chain (2022)
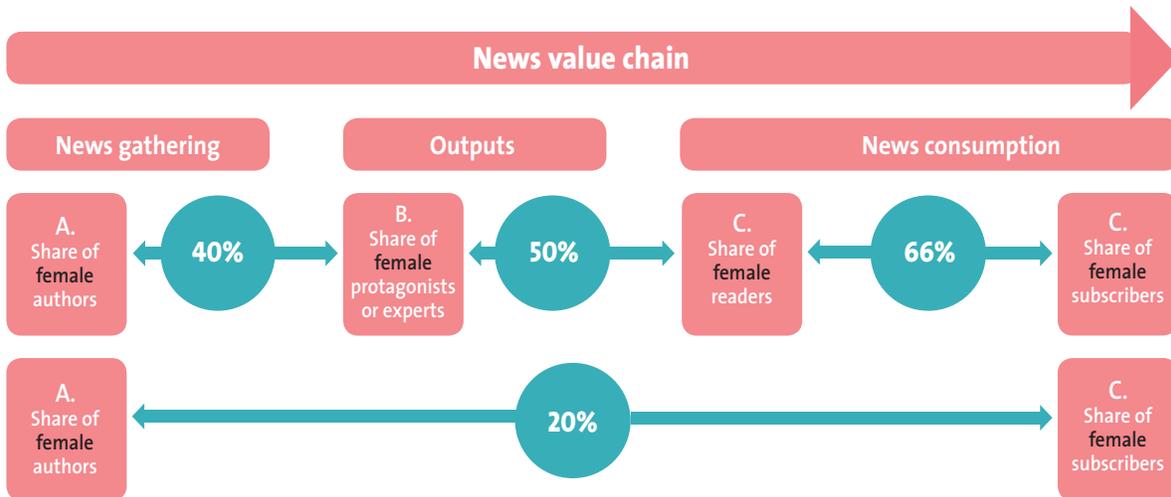
Source and notes: Analysis of Amedia data covering all articles between 01 Jan 22 and 30 Jun 22. *Correlation coefficients are used to measure the strength of the linear relationship between two variables. For example, a 40% correlation between B and C mean that a 1% increase in B is consistent with a 0.4% increase in C.

2019[280] point to how social norms can support or hinder organizational initiatives. Hence it might not be possible to generalize the very positive correlations exhibited in the Amedia analysis for countries with more patriarchal values. Finally, it should be noted that in earlier research Amedia found that, rather than producing content targeted at women, it was more beneficial in terms of subscription growth to produce content that has a low "gender-age specificity" i.e. content that holds appeal across all demographic groups.

What are Amedia's breakthrough learnings?

In our conversation, Jerpåsen shares key editorial insights that the gender investigative initiatives and data mining from the last few years have uncovered.

Increased gender diversity in newsrooms results in higher revenues

The data scientists at Amedia analyzed the diversity of various newsrooms against their financial performance and found that the most gender-balanced newsrooms and those that write most about women deliver the best financial performances. The more balanced the news coverage is, the more gender-balanced the subscriber base becomes.

Female journalists engage female audiences more

Most of the articles which Amedia's publications produce have traditionally been in the politics, business, crime, accidents, and sports genres, which tend significantly towards male sources and are read less by women. The deep dive into the data in 2019 revealed that women are more engaged in health, society, and education stories, which are more likely to be written by women journalists and also contain a higher share of voice for women (at 48%, 47% and 57% respectively).

Women are as interested in news as men... when it is relevant to them

According to Jerpåsen, big stories such as the coronavirus pandemic attract more women to their publications. (*The Missing Perspectives of Women in COVID-19 News* also found that

280. Turban et al., 2019

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women's news consumption increased during the first wave of the pandemic, a finding that was further validated in the 2022 edition of the Reuters Institute *Digital News Report* covering 46 countries and 93,000 respondents[281], which showed that women were more interested in COVID news than men (52% vs. 44%)). Interestingly, during the pandemic, subscription growth was higher among women (10.1%) than among men (8.5%).

> *"This tells us that it is not that women are less interested in news. It's just that in our everyday work we do not write about the things that are of most interest to them."*

Jerpåsen notes also that even after the pandemic had peaked, Amedia's outlets were more successful at holding on to their new female audiences than to their new younger audiences.

Tackling male bias results in new and more audience-relevant stories

The deep dive that Amedia undertook, which linked audience performance with a content analysis of sources, resulted in an increased awareness of the need to

> *"write stories that we traditionally would not write. We found that we needed to go beyond our daily habits to be able to find stories that are not traditionally seen as news stories."*

Equally, it raised awareness of the need to recruit more younger female journalists who bring a fresh perspective to newsrooms commonly dominated by older male journalists.

Clarity of goals and benchmarks drive results

To serve female audiences better, Jerpåsen advises that organizations should establish a benchmark of how they perform with their female audiences; set clear goals for how they wish to engage with them; and understand their needs by talking to female readers (something Jerpåsen wishes Amedia had done

more). Once these elements are in place, it is critical to monitor progress and to

> *"put the issue of serving female audiences on the editorial agenda every day in the newsroom."*

What has Amedia learned to do differently along the way?

Improved monitoring capabilities are key to future progress

Amedia has developed tools to monitor women's engagement with news and their subscriptions. The company has recently introduced audience engagement as a new key performance indicator (KPI), measuring the time a reader spends with the local newspaper online. Once they identify an audience segment that is less engaged, the content development team helps journalists understand the reasons for this lack of engagement. Adding the gender of the sources to this would benefit the analysis greatly, so the appetite for this within the company is growing.

Although the gender analysis of sources was a one-off deep dive, Jerpåsen's hope is that this will become a KPI that is regularly monitored. They are working on it, but are not there yet. Jerpåsen is insistent that it is pivotal to measure what journalists have control over.

> *"You can give any newsroom a number, but journalists need to be able to understand it and act on it. If we measure the gender of the sources that journalists use, they can act on these insights by changing who they speak to."*

The hard vs. soft news trap: interest is not confined to news genres but to news angles

To Jerpåsen's mind, editorial thinking at Amedia has previously fallen into the stereotypical trap of looking for "*soft*" stories about e.g. interior design to attract more women readers. But they quickly realized

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281. Reuters Institute, 2022

that their women readers went elsewhere for these kinds of stories. What they needed to do instead (and successfully did) was find relevant angles for women when covering the "*hard news*" at the core of Amedia's offering. For example, Amedia was very successful at finding a relevant angle to economics stories by focusing on female entrepreneurs which attracted more female readers.

Have champions but spread the responsibility too

While Jerpåsen recognizes the importance of champions who can drive the editorial agenda with regard to female audiences, over time the organization has come to realize that everyone in the newsroom needs to own the effort.

> "*The ability to keep the focus for a really long time is very necessary and maybe you need a few mascots to push everyone in the newsroom along, but it is everyone's responsibility to find those female sources and deliver on the goal.*"

Lean forward to find female sources and don't take no for an answer

If an organization is going to succeed in interviewing more female sources, reflects Jerpåsen, there is no substitute for leaning forward

> "*to go out and look for these sources, rather than just interview the ones that come to us, who are often older men.*"

In her experience, there is frequently an issue with women sources delegating their invitations to male counterparts or bosses. Amedia's approach, which has yielded good results, has been to "*not take no for an answer*" and to convince women to speak by emphasizing to them how uniquely important their perspective is to the story.

What next?

Metadata is key to understanding

Amedia recognizes the importance of tracking articles' metadata to understand the factors that are most or least important in engaging audiences. Improving this metadata to include, for example, information on the gender and age of sources, the use of archive or fresh images, the geographical area focused on, and the length of a story is

> "*a big project that we are working on at the moment.*"

More women editors, please...

Jerpåsen references a recent investigation[282] which uncovered that of the 128 editors at Amedia and fellow Norwegian media group Polaris, only 24% (31) were women. While Jerpåsen acknowledges that many male editors are doing a great job at trying to produce gender-balanced coverage, for her, the most important thing that the industry can do to improve women's visibility in news is to hire more women editors.

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282. Simonsen, 2022

Part 5

Proposed strategic and
operational solutions

Report Navigation

Report parts

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• Background and objectives • Executive summary • Summary of solutions themes • Summary of key findings • Acknowledgements • Introduction • What has happened since 2019	Gender diversity and inclusion gap in news leadership	Women's representation, portrayal and stories in news coverage	News initiatives addressing gender equality	Gender equity business opportunity for newspapers	Proposed strategic and operational solutions

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Mint	Nation Media Group	
Bloomberg	The Fuller Project	
African Women in Media	Guardian	

Bibliography & Appendices

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Appendix 1 and 2

Links to news value chain

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Newsroom and journalist level change	●		●	
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Part 5 at a glance

This last part of the report pulls together all the solutions that have been identified through the research that underpins each part of the report. It makes the case for the importance of **tackling change on three levels — systemic, organizational, and individual** — if equitable journalism is to be produced. It also introduces the concept of intersectional invisibility which permeates news leadership teams across the six researched countries and exposes the need for measuring women's representation in news leadership and in newsrooms by intersecting gender and race/ethnicity. Finally, this part lists solutions grouped around the report's 12 solutions themes.

I Why change needs to be tackled on three levels: systemic, organizational, and individual

How to tackle the underrepresentation of women and minority ethnic groups in news is one of those divisive topics which seems to leave us at the mercy of the ferocious current in the river of news. We lurch from one riverbank to the other, rarely able to find the mid-stream balance that is equitable journalism. Those on the left bank argue that the inequality of representation and perspectives in news leadership, newsrooms, and news coverage is a systemic problem that affects society and the news industry through osmosis. At one extreme of their viewpoints is the belief that no individual leader or even the industry as a whole can resolve the problem until society has dealt with its dysfunctions e.g. until societal systems, structures, and procedures have been gender- and racially de-biased and social norms have become equally embracing of all genders and races. On the opposite bank are those who defend the view that inequality in news is a direct consequence of there being a bunch of privileged individuals, more specifically men or white men in the global north, who have usurped power for centuries and are projecting their perspectives onto news coverage. Or indeed that modern day inequality is the consequence of women's timidity in society or in journalism; that until they "*fix*" their lack of confidence in leading, or expressing their opinions, or sharing their expertise in an authoritative way, change will stall. The work that AKAS team members have carried out in news in the last twenty years has unearthed that neither of these positions is entirely true or completely false.

The Missing Perspectives of Women in News provided conclusive evidence that across all the studied countries, at the heart of the issue of women's underrepresentation along the whole news value chain reside pro-male social norms, that have crystalized in the form of systems, stereotypes, processes, overt beliefs or covert biases. Importantly, these norms have been embraced by men and women in almost equal measure. To shift these norms, which power behaviors in every industry including

journalism, change needs to happen at three levels (see Figure 60): the societal/systemic, the organizational, and the individual. The shift is required on each of these three levels because the pro-male norms permeate them all. At an individual level the norms are often locked in a form of unconscious human bias, which manifests in men's over-confidence and women's under-confidence. At an organizational level they are locked in the male-dominated news ownership, governance, and executive leadership teams we witness; in the male-dominated newsrooms; male-favoring company processes; stories featuring more men and appealing more to men; and male protagonists who are portrayed as more powerful than women.

The quantitative and qualitative insights that were generated for this report point to a very similar picture of severe underrepresentation for racial and ethnic minorities along the whole news value chain, that particularly affects women of color, and require a similar three-level approach to tackling the problem. The problem has been encapsulated powerfully in the reflection of a female news leader of color from the global north, shared earlier in this report:

> "
>
> *"There's so much inherent, implicit, and explicit bias against people of color in this business, it never ends. As the most senior person of color in our newsroom, I am constantly dealing with issues related to people of color not feeling respected…We're much better than a lot of places, but I've seen that in my career, it's just not being heard."*
>
> "

Add to this the gender dimension and the problem becomes even more pernicious.

To produce more gender- and racially/ethnically-balanced news coverage, which is sustained over time, social norms must be

Figure 60: How change happens: the three levels of change (updated from *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News*)
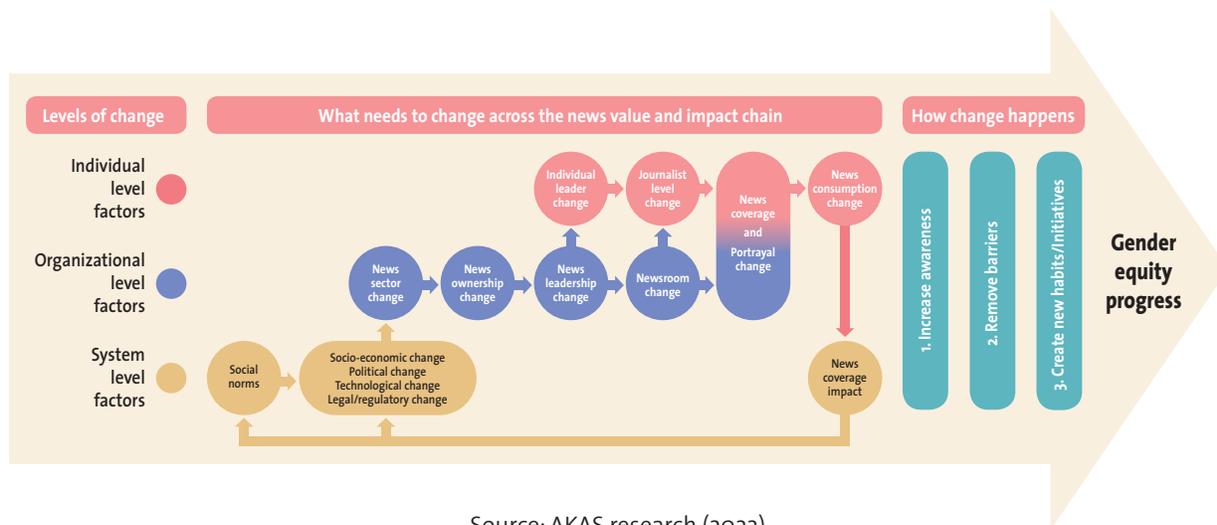
Source: AKAS research (2022)

supportive of gender and racial/ethnic equality. If norms are not supportive of equality, it will be hard to sustain progress, as recent research[283] has shown. A fascinating and deeply under-evidenced relationship which has been highlighted in Figure 60 is that between social norms, the socio-economic and political status quo, and news coverage. The relationship between norms/the status quo and news is interdependent. As we have seen from the evidence presented in this report, the socio-economic and political status quo influences news editing and coverage. However, although it is not the focus of this report, there is much academic (e.g. sociological) and quantitative evidence to show that news coverage also influences socio-economic, political, technological, and/or regulatory change.[284] Research into the impact of women-centered news coverage has demonstrated positive change in the lives of women on the ground in Kenya, as well as change at a macro policy level, as a direct result of news coverage.[285] Figure 60 illustrates that to produce more gender-balanced and transformative news coverage at an organizational level, change must happen at a news management and newsroom level with the composition of leaders and the nature of

processes becoming more gender and racially/ethnically balanced.

Finally, to enable change at systemic and organizational levels, it is important to trigger change at the individual level. This can only be achieved by firstly accepting that we all have biases, which are an intrinsic part of being human, and becoming aware of the strength of our pro-male and pro-white biases. Secondly, instead of aiming to eradicate these biases, which behavioral scientists tell us is very hard if not impossible, we must instead aim to circumvent or interrupt them, thus removing barriers to change. This is best achieved through training that aims to encourage and foster new journalistic behavioral habits. Examples of such behavioral habits include substituting the most senior sources with slightly less senior sources who are more likely to be from a diverse background; using databases of women experts in different fields; conducting portrayal analyses of news outputs; exploring the difference between the realities and perspectives of men and women in news stories; being more inclusive of different perspectives in editorial decisions; or simply counting the sources quoted in one's articles.

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283. Turban et al., 2019
284. This part of the relationship has not been explored in this report.
285. AKAS, 2022

II Why it is critical to measure women's representation by intersecting gender with race

The extraordinarily high levels of marginalization, dismissal, isolation, and even gaslighting of women of color in news leadership and in newsrooms, as well as their under-use in news coverage as contributors or protagonists, have been among the most onerous insights unearthed in this report. What makes the situation of women of color significantly more challenging is the reality that news organizations in the UK, the US, and South Africa do not track the representation of women intersectionally by overlaying the impact of race/ethnicity on their experiences, career progression, and cultural inclusion. The news industry in these countries has also not established or publicly announced a baseline for what the current representation of women of color should be. In published company reports, the diversity narratives are often anchored around either women or people of color. AKAS analyzed the diversity reports of 45 news organizations across the UK (19), the US (23), and South Africa (3) and found that only one organization had reported gender and ethnicity intersectionally. Furthermore, in the UK, only 37% of the news organizations had reported ethnicity at all vs. 100% in the US.[286] This leaves women of color falling through the cracks of organizational awareness. They remain invisible.

Academic research[287] in the US has introduced the concept of intersectional invisibility, which provides a framework for understanding how women of color, such as Black women, experience unique adverse realities when their race interlocks with their gender. This research focuses on how women of color, in particular Black women, fall out of societal focus, by not being significantly differentiated from Black men on the one hand, and not being associated strongly enough with women in general on the other.

The challenge associated with the lack of measurement of the realities of women of color goes far back in history. In the 1930s in the US, Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and Asian respondents were left out of the notion of a *nationally representative sample*.[288] Since then, market research has treated whiteness as the default in American consumer culture. In contrast, *'intersectionally-equitable'* research actively centers on notions of different power categories such as race, class, gender, and sexuality. According to the author of the quoted article, despite its value, this intersectionally-equitable approach continues to be overlooked in most market research companies and their outputs.

286. Due to the low number of news organizations which had published diversity reports in South Africa, this analysis would not be reliable or meaningful
287. Coles and Pasek, 2020
288. Pico, 2022

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While conducting the audit of 168 initiatives that directly or indirectly aim to reduce gender inequality in news across the globe, AKAS found only one organization which was tracking data intersectionally by gender and race. In 2022, the BBC launched a new digital 50:50 tracker, developed in partnership with Stanford University, aiming to digitalize the counting of sources by gender, ethnicity, and disability. However, its current version does not allow for intersectional analysis. In the interview with Joannides, which preceded the launch of the tracker, she emphasized a data protection barrier that the organization faces when it comes to reporting intersectionally.

"So that [intersectional reporting] is something that we've been talking about doing but, because of data protection, it's been quite tricky, because every team will have their own data that they submit, and the more intersectional you go, the lower the numbers of the contributors in each subgroup. So whereas before, we can say, 'Right, out of 12 contributors in a programme, you might have maybe one or two Black people, maybe one or two Asian people, and then you will, hopefully, have a few disabled contributors as well', and then, already, that level of anonymity is being lost with that level of numbers. So then if we were to go intersectional, that would be difficult. So that's not something that we're doing at the moment."

To avoid data protection considerations becoming a barrier to women of color, news organizations should consider reporting intersectional data at aggregate level

Aggregate level reporting would allow trends to be detected while still protecting the privacy of specific individuals. Unless news organizations start to systematically measure gender representation intersectionally, women of color will remain unseen and their situation is unlikely to improve considerably or in a sustainable way. We cannot change what we do not measure, particularly when the biases surrounding change are so deep and prevalent. Measuring proportions, tracking portrayal, and highlighting challenges as well as opportunities at a systemic, organizational, and individual level represents the only sustainable path to progress.

## III Full list of proposed solutions

This section summarizes all the solutions which emerged in the process of writing this report. The vast majority of them have been generated either by the 41 senior news editors who were interviewed for this project or in the process of analyzing multiple quantitative and qualitative sources, and conducting extensive news coverage analyses and a statistical forecast. The solutions are grouped around the 12 themes that emerged from the report and delve into how news organizations can improve their representation and inclusion of women of all colors in news leadership and in the highest-profile news beats. They also focus on how to improve women's visibility and portrayal in news coverage, as well as what organizations will need to do to generate incremental revenue through attracting new female audiences. **The recommendations build on, rather than duplicate, those generated in** *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* **and** *The Missing Perspectives of Women in COVID-19 News*. Very occasionally, we have repeated some fundamental recommendations in this report, guided by their centrality to success. The recommendations are centered around insights gained about women in India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the UK, and the US, and women of color in the latter three countries. As such, the recommendations have not zoned in on any other socio-demographic characteristics such as class, sexuality, age, level of affluence, or education.

Solutions theme 1: Consolidate effort at an industry level to enhance progress

At an industry level

Raise awareness	Remove barriers	Create new habits
Raise awareness of the existing gap in sector-wide collaborative initiatives that aim to improve women's position in news. Launch a **cross-industry gender (and where relevant ethnicity) diversity tracker** as a vehicle for the industry to hold itself to account and facilitate much-needed knowledge sharing. **Raise awareness of the limited global understanding of female news audiences** that results from the existing male bias in news consumption.	**Consolidate effort at an industry level to enhance progress.** Non-profits and associations working to improve women's position in news should collaborate more and compete less. Set up a body that unifies all working in this area under the umbrella of the gender equity cause.	

Solutions theme 2: Conduct a comprehensive gender diversity audit across all elements of the news operation

How to carry out a comprehensive gender diversity audit across all elements of the news operation

Raise awareness	Remove barriers	Create new habits
Undertake a gender gaps audit across the whole news value chain Raise awareness within your organization of the deficit in news initiatives aimed at improving women's inclusion in decision-making and their sense of belonging within the news culture.		

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Solutions theme 3: Make the gender diversity strategy explicit

How to make the gender diversity strategy explicit

Raise awareness	Remove barriers	Create new habits
Be intentional about change at all levels within your news organization. Measure representation continuously to build an understanding of how underrepresented women are along the whole value chain in your organization (proportion of women in newsrooms, news leadership, newsgathering, news outputs, and news consumption). **Be explicit and intentional about your endorsement of gender and racial/ethnic diversity** in the organization's strategy, mission, and values.	**Communicate and discuss the gender/diversity strategy and goals.** Link the gender/diversity strategy to the overall news strategy and potential revenue opportunities.	Develop workshops to work through priority solutions themes.

Solutions theme 4: Improve the representation of all women in news leadership

How to improve representation of all women in news leadership

Raise awareness	Remove barriers	Create new habits

Raise awareness that male-favoring norms, underpinning inequity in news, have not gone away either in the global south or the global north. For example, research found that the belief that men make better leaders than women goes deeper in the UK and US than previously thought.

Challenge the persistent soft vs. hard news gender stereotyping and the long-standing gender segregation of editorial roles that results from it, which is keeping women out of editorial roles in high-profile beats such as politics, economics, and foreign affairs.

Develop and put in place **equitable policies which will attract and retain more women of all colors**. As outlined in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News*, focus on policies in seven areas to counteract gender inequity in your news organization:
- overall gender equality including equal pay
- parental leave and childcare assistance
- flexible working
- recruitment
- return to work after a career break
- sexual harassment
- career development and training.

You can even have a policy against manels. This has proved successful.

Introduce a **policy of transparency on pay gap reporting**, which is seen as critical among news leaders globally.

Set up **representation targets for women** in your newsroom, in news leadership, and across high-profile news beats (i.e., politics, economics/business, foreign affairs).

Ensure that representation targets for women in the news organization/leadership are supported by the **social norms in the country**. (Perhaps parity is too much of a stretch for some countries and could therefore be an off-putting target).

Develop **talent retention programs**. Launch initiatives that support the promotion of middle managers e.g., launch senior editor career-enhancing workshops.

Hold your organization accountable in the same way you hold protagonist organizations in your news coverage accountable.

Ensure that all **initiatives are endorsed both by the senior leadership** and at **grassroots level.**

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Solutions theme 5: Improve specifically the representation of women of color in news leadership

How to improve representation of women of color in news leadership

Raise awareness	Remove barriers	Create new habits
Think of **diversity intersectionally**. Measure representation of women intersectionally to understand the role of race when overlaid onto gender.	Review **recruitment and retention processes to accommodate diverse talent** e.g., audit how you recruit, develop, and promote at all levels within the organization, to ensure fairness and foster diversity and inclusive decision-making.	Establish **targets for women of color in newsrooms and news leadership** in line with their proportion in the working population.
Raise awareness of the fact that **women of color are completely locked out of most senior editorial decision-making roles** in the highest-profile beats in the UK, severely marginalized in the US, and underrepresented in South Africa.		Measure the **diversity and inclusion baseline in your organization** (e.g., the proportion of women of color), and track progress. Consider quotas temporarily if you find that women of color are completely locked out of your news leadership and across editorial roles in key news beats.

Solutions theme 6: Improve the inclusion of all women in decision-making in news leadership

How to improve inclusion of all women in decision-making in news leadership

Raise awareness

Sensitize the news leadership in your organization through **gender and racial sensitivity training**, including a focus on unconscious bias.

Raise awareness of the fact that having a **more diverse team does not automatically translate into inclusive decision-making**.

Be aware that **changing culture takes time and requires tenacity and multiple perspectives**. Celebrate every little shift.

Remove barriers

Consciously tone down the competitive "*win-lose*" journalistic values inside the newsroom to **create a more empathetic/caring culture**.

Champion and share responsibility for change, regardless of your gender or skin color.

If you are from **the majority group** in your news leadership/ newsroom, **lean forward. Be proactive, not reactive**. Champion the career progression of women of all colors.

Interrupt bias by securing individual training across all levels of the organizational structure. Training should target changing behavior rather than eliminating unconscious biases/stereotypes.

Create new habits

Launch **mentorship and bursary programs**, media and confidence-building training, and initiatives that aim to increase a sense of belonging for women of all colors.

Allyship is key. Encourage/ launch support groups for women, with men, and beyond the newsroom e.g.

- external industry support groups
- internal cross-departmental support groups
- in-department groups
- individual leaders supporting women
- peer supporting groups

Roll out **employee engagement surveys** to measure employees' and leaders' perceived inclusion and sense of cultural belonging.

Consider making cultural expectations of inclusive behaviors (tracked through employee surveys) **part of the formal assessment of leaders and journalists**.

Launch initiatives that **support individual women's psychological and physical safety and wellbeing.**

Solutions theme 7: Improve specifically the inclusion of women of color in decision-making in news leadership

How to improve specifically inclusion of women of color in decision-making in news leadership

Raise awareness	Remove barriers	Create new habits
Raise awareness of the five key gender and racial biases at play in organizations: • prove-it-again bias • tightrope bias • tug-of-war bias • racial stereotyping • maternal wall bias **Beware of knee-jerk reactions to external trigger events** which lead to superficial, unsustainable, and therefore cost-ineffective solutions. Accept fear and guilt as part of the journey towards change. **Educate yourself about the challenging position of minority groups** in the newsroom or news leadership. Don't expect your colleagues/staff from these groups to educate you.	**Challenge the misconception that racial diversity translates into inclusion in decision-making.** There can be a hierarchy of power within leadership based on the leader's gender and skin color. **If you are a woman/person of color, take on DEI initiatives for a finite period** (if at all). Work in a "*relay*" manner to avoid burnout or do not take on DEI initiatives if this is too emotionally taxing. If you are a leader in a news organization **considering a DEI initiative, bring in external experts** to run it, rather than allocating it to ethnically diverse journalists/leaders who have rich lived experiences, but busy jobs, and no formalized expertise in diversity and inclusion. **Do not expect women or ethnic minority groups to lead and resolve their own underrepresentation** or exclusion. Offer to support. Take initiative.	**Interrupt bias by implementing small, systemic, incremental, measurable changes to work processes**, aiming to change systems and processes rather than how people adapt to them. **Measure and track the success of DEI initiatives**. Establish baselines before the initiatives start. **Set up informal check-ins/ mentoring sessions** with people who are not direct reports. Develop a **reverse mentoring program** on a voluntary basis.

Solutions theme 8: Improve representation and inclusion of women in newsrooms

(See "*Gender diversity in the workplace*" in the "*Gender Parity in News Checklist*" in *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* report, p. 166)

How to improve representation and inclusion of women in newsrooms

Raise awareness	Remove barriers	Create new habits
Track progress in attracting, retaining, and developing women journalists.	Tackle gender blindness through a comprehensive gender sensitivity training program for men and women at all organizational levels (governance structure, senior leadership and journalists) by • increasing awareness of existing social norms that represent an obstacle • encouraging journalists to see themselves as change agents for the advancement of gender parity in news	Put in place a comprehensive suite of policies addressing gender equality. Ensure that its implementation is the responsibility of a nominated senior leader. Policies should cover: • gender equality including equal pay • parental leave & childcare assistance (proven high impact) • flexible working (proven high impact) • addressing gender bias in recruitment • return to work after career break • sexual harassment • career development and training

Solutions theme 9: Improve the representation of all women in news coverage

How to improve women of all colors' representation in news coverage

Raise awareness	Remove barriers	Create new habits

Raise awareness of existing gender and racial biases in representation and storytelling, as well as in **portrayal**. Portrayal is a blind spot in the news industry.

As an editor or journalist, take time periodically to **assess your own use of contributors and protagonists in storytelling/ within your beat**. Examine your storytelling for biases from three perspectives:

- representation
- story angles
- portrayal of women

Focus on **circumventing the following biases in journalism** which slow down positive change:

- status quo bias
- male bias leading to gender blindness
- short-term outlook
- reductive journalism (oversimplifying stories)
- organizations' unwillingness to report on themselves

Measure impact of your women-centric journalism to improve understanding of the role of journalism in triggering societal change and thus in securing more funding.

As a news organization, **make your newsroom more accessible to women sources and experts through offering independently run outreach training by external organizations**.

Give **more advance notice of interviews to women experts** to maximize the chance of them participating.

Ensure that initiatives you launch that aim to improve women's presence in news are sustainable. To be sustainable, they need to be designed with the end user (i.e., busy journalists) in mind, which means the methodology needs to be simple. For best results, initiatives need to be championed from the top, embraced at grassroots level and, ideally, be voluntary in nature.

Celebrate the small steps forward. Expecting a rapid and sweeping step change is unrealistic.

To **achieve more gender and racial diversity among your contributors**, don't always target the most senior expert or protagonist. Less senior experts are more likely to be women and as likely to understand the work. Use databases of women expert contributors.

In **business stories, use more protagonists from smaller and medium-sized companies**. These are more likely to be women than those in top 500 companies.

Solutions theme 10: Improve the storytelling about women of all colors

How to improve storytelling about women of all colors in news coverage

Raise awareness

Raise awareness among your news editorial leadership of the fact that 99% of online news coverage globally does not contain a gender lens.

Be aware that because of the missing gender lens, **the news fails to cover sufficiently, or indeed misses out altogether, the various gender gaps** in:

- pay
- power
- safety
- authority
- confidence
- health
- ageism

Raise awareness of the ageism gap as it is under the radar of almost all interviewed news leaders. It is a problem amplified for women that exacerbates gender inequality in news throughout the value chain.

Increase awareness of the fact that the gender gaps widen when race/ethnicity is overlaid onto gender. This tough reality is rarely reflected in news coverage.

Remove barriers

Editors' lived experiences inform their decisions about what to cover in the news. Therefore, to cover more perspectives, **bring in more editors with different perspectives**. Hire editors with lived experiences from underrepresented groups to mitigate the risk of homogenous storytelling.

Look for gender angles that do not alienate men. All stories have story angles relevant to men and angles relevant to women. The best ones appeal to both.

Use more micro angles, including human stories, in storytelling. Combine these with global angles highlighting the universality of women's problems across the globe.

Create new habits

Increase news coverage that aims to shed light on the existing gaps between women and men, which are deepened among people of color. These are the gaps in pay, power, safety, authority, confidence, health, and ageism.

Prioritize covering the pay gap in news more extensively, as this is easy to evidence quantitatively across many industries and is of relatively higher importance to news leaders globally. Also prioritize covering the power gap between men and women, which is recognized by many news editors interviewed for this project and can be evidenced across many areas of society (e.g., business and politics).

Apply **an intersectional lens when covering the existing gender gaps**.

Appoint newsroom inclusion champions to drive the broadening of storytelling perspectives from grassroots level.

Consider rolling out **weekly editorial meetings involving different diversity groups** to identify new story angles.

Introduce inclusive storytelling/**360 degree editing** which encompasses the perspectives of different communities and audience groups in terms of how a particular story affects them.

Launch **Gender or Race Desks** if the newsroom culture is open to it.

Introduce **newsletters/publication sections/newspaper pull-outs focusing on stories relevant to women** and targeting women audiences as these have proven successful in attracting new audiences.

Solutions themes 11: Improve the portrayal of all women in news coverage

How to improve women's portrayal in news coverage

Raise awareness	Remove barriers	Create new habits
Become **aware of existing biases/stereotypes related to how women and people of color are typically viewed by society**. Put in place behavioral tips for journalists for how to circumvent them in coverage. Recognize that the **portrayal of women and people of color in the news is an industry blind spot**.	**Watch out for stereotypes in your news coverage,** such as: • women being seen as less competent once they have children • women being seen primarily as victims or in care-giving roles • men being judged more on potential, and women more on performance • being authoritative and ambitious being seen as a positive for men, but not for women • Asian minorities in the UK/US being seen as a match for technical work but not for leadership • Black professionals being seen as more aggressive than other groups • Black women being seen more as angry where other groups are seen as assertive **Focus on expertise, rather than on identity when interviewing female contributors**. Ask questions about their area of expertise rather than related to their experiences of their gender or race. **Ask more open-ended (rather than closed) questions which draw more out of female sources**. Protect the sources: ensure their safety before the scoop to encourage women to speak out.	**Conduct cost-effective deep dives to understand how news contributors/protagonists are portrayed**. Count the proportion of women/men who are portrayed as: • power brokers • victims • perpetrators • sexual objects • sources of knowledge • primary care givers • family members **In addition, record the gender of the contributors broken down by news categories** (e.g., experts, vox pops, case studies, sources, etc.) to monitor whether you/your team reinforce stereotypes in your coverage of men being in charge/more authoritative and women being less authoritative, sidekicks, or victims. To counteract these stereotypes **use more empowered female contributors and protagonists**. Actively seek to break the stereotypes associated with Asian and Black minority groups. **Audit the gender and race of people in photo images** used in your news output to redress any likely imbalance.

Solutions theme 12: Reframe the case for change to include the business opportunity of targeting women audiences

How to size the business opportunity and strategic actions required to successfully increase revenues from women audiences

Raise awareness	Remove barriers	Create new habits

According to the interviewed news editors, by fulfilling their duty to give equitable voice to women/minority groups and being relevant to all audiences, news organizations will increase their revenues and improve their volatile business models. **Use these narrative frames to make the case for change**.

Make your news leadership team aware that reaching new women audiences means incremental revenue. According to AKAS' forecast, if the addressable gender consumption gap is closed by one percentage point each year over the next decade as a result of news organizations taking targeted strategic, editorial, creative, and tracking actions across the whole news value chain, then global revenues in the newspaper industry would increase by a cumulative $11bn by 2027 and $38 billion by 2032.

Understand what progress has been made and how audiences are reacting to the actions. This is key to keeping initiatives on track.

Assess the gender component of all stories.

Shift a percentage of stories to a wider range of women-friendly genres.

Research and **develop women-friendly news products and formats.**

Increase your **presence on platforms where women are**.

Track engagement and consumption by women.

Track impacts (on finance, brand, individuals, influencers, and decision-makers).

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Case studies

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	Bloomberg	The Fuller Project			
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APPENDIX 1: Contributors

Luba Kassova (www.lubakassova.com) is the main author of this report and its forerunners, *The Missing Perspectives of Women in News* and *The Missing Perspectives of Women in COVID-19 News*. A director and co-founder of successful international audience strategy consultancy AKAS (www.akas.london), in 2019 Luba redirected her energies to focus more on non-fiction writing. Her evidence-based storytelling, which balances insights gained from rigorous data analysis with a recognition of the human aspect in stories and a compassionate response to them, swiftly garnered attention and awards. To date, Luba's reports and articles have been published or quoted in more than 400 news outlets across 75 countries worldwide. Throughout a prior 20-year career that spanned media, telecommunications and nonprofit organizations, Luba's work revealed her perennial interest in analyzing differences in various audiences internationally, including key gender differences in their media and news consumption. She has also previously provided consultancy for news providers on developing their audience strategies. Luba holds an MA in Sociology from Sofia University, Bulgaria and an MA in Contemporary European Studies from Sussex University in the UK. She has also completed Behavioral Science modules at Warwick University and the London School of Economics (LSE).

Richard Addy is the report's primary lead for the design and analysis of quantitative research and author of the business case for gender equity section. A director and co-founder of AKAS, Richard has nearly 30 years' experience as a strategist and has advised CEOs, organizational leaders, and previously government ministers in his role as a government economist. Prior to setting up AKAS, Richard was the chief adviser on strategic and audience issues to the BBC's Deputy Director General who was responsible for BBC News locally, nationally and internationally. He is a board member of theguardian.org and a board advisor and co-chair of the Race Equity Committee at Mind, the UK's leading mental health charity. Richard has a BSc in Economics from Warwick University and an MSc in Economics from Birkbeck College, University of London.

Judy Nagle has provided proofreading and copy editing services for the report. With a focus on clarity, concision, and correctness, while still retaining an author's distinctive voice, Judy has built up extensive experience of language editing on a wide range of subjects since becoming a freelance proofreader in 2015. Her client base includes academics at universities in Italy, Switzerland, and Spain as well as UK commercial clients. Judy holds an MA in Modern Languages

from Cambridge University and a Diploma in Strategic Management from Birkbeck College, University of London.

Peter Todorov has made a significant contribution to the sourcing and analysis of the freely available secondary research referenced in the report as well as the mining of multiple databases used in it. In his 20-year career, Peter has held various analytical positions in telecommunications, consulting, and other sectors in the US, UK, and Bulgaria. Peter holds an MBA from George Washington University and a Master's degree in Finance from London Business School.

Hannan Rais is the project's research and operational assistant. She has been particularly instrumental in developing the literature review database and the secondary research database for the project. Hannan is an experienced and established virtual assistant and researcher who has worked extensively in the broadcast media industry. At BBC News, where she worked for 10 years, Hannan was the Personal Assistant to two BBC News board members whose remits covered strategy, finance, production, and change. Hannan holds a BA in History from Queen Mary University of London.

Emma Wilson is the project's qualitative research assistant. She has been focused on transcription, research, and providing administrative support to key stakeholders. Emma has been an executive virtual assistant for seven years, supporting clients across a range of industries. During a 12-year career at the BBC, Emma worked in various administration and production roles, latterly supporting the Journalism Board and

News Group Board as Business Manager, with responsibility for coordination of the strategic management, administrative, and decision-making processes. Emma holds a BA in Sociology from the University of Nottingham.

Kelo Kubu is a senior TEDx Ambassador for Sub-Saharan Africa and holds the position of curator for TEDxJohannesburg. She is a TED Fellow, TED Speaker, and a 2018 Skoll World Forum Fellow. Kelo was co-host of TEDGlobal 2017 and undertook a residency at TED in New York in 2018, developing an Ag-Tech accelerator that focused on women farmers in Southern Africa. She is a founding member of the Mandela Poster Project, a global design initiative, and was a trustee of Orange Corners, a Dutch-inspired incubator. Kelo holds a degree and a postgraduate Diploma in Finance and Business Administration, both from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. She is an alumnus of Singularity University, the Silicon Valley-based institution that focuses on exponential technologies.

Ithateng Mokgoro is a multi-disciplinary communications professional. He has been co-curator of various TEDx events since 2010, including TEDxJohannesburg. In this role, he has worked with innovators across disciplines, from all over the world, curating discussions on technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, politics, leadership, art, agriculture, climate, health, food, and women. Having started his career as an art director in advertising in 1997, Ithateng went on to work in various creative roles at different communications firms. He is a founding member of the Mandela Poster Project, a global design initiative. He initially trained to become an architect at the University of KwaZulu-Natal before switching to advertising prior to completing his studies.

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Anuja Mehta has worked extensively with news organizations across the world in her time at Google. As the Global Strategy & Operations Lead for News from 2017-2020 and a founding team member of the Google News Initiative (GNI), Anuja helped define the overarching vision of the GNI, launched global programs to support the digital transformation of news companies, and supported with product strategy for key decisions, including the end of the First Click Free policy. Prior to Google, Anuja was a management consultant at Bain NY. Her professional experience also spans startups (including her own) and the development sector. Anuja obtained an MBA from Columbia Business School and holds a Bachelor's degree in Mass Media.

Sheena Bhalla has been leading digital transformation for newsrooms across people, processes, and products in Asia-Pacific. She has worked with partner newsrooms on programs that span the full spectrum of newsroom operations and strategy, from diversity, equity, and inclusion to analytics and data. She has designed and executed APAC-wide newsroom programs like Subscription Labs, Design Accelerators and Data Labs, helping newsrooms develop ideas for news products that serve the needs of both their audiences and internal constituencies. Sheena's professional background also includes experience in brand strategy, programmatic ad technology, mobile app productization and sales, and media production – in both corporate and non-profit settings. Sheena worked extensively in media and advertising, with rich geographical experience across different Asian markets including India, Japan, Australia, and now Singapore.

Joseph Warungu is a media and communication consultant and trainer with over 30 years of experience in international journalism. He was head of the BBC African News and Current Affairs Department and is a former Knight International Journalism Fellow who is widely travelled in Africa, working as a journalist, trainer, and moderator of media public debates. He is Managing Director of AfricaonAir, a training and content production company in Nairobi that specializes in media management training and building the capacity of media to tell in-depth and compelling stories on development issues such as health, education, business, and technology. Joseph led the African Story Challenge, a continent-wide competition to inspire and support African media to tell more and better stories on development issues. Joseph also runs Top Story, a national mentorship program for young journalists in Kenya, which takes the form of a popular reality TV show.

Mhairi Guild is an experienced freelance researcher specializing in the voluntary and social purpose sectors. Mhairi's skills encompass qualitative research, survey design, and data analysis. She previously led on research, monitoring, and evaluation at the national youth arts education charity Into Film, and worked with voluntary sector research agency nfpResearch for many years on quantitative tracking programs and bespoke client projects. Over the years Mhairi has worked with clients including ACEVO, Age UK, Alzheimer's UK, Care International, Macmillan, Parentkind, Qured, RSPB, Time's UP UK, and Water Aid. She holds an MA in History from the University of Glasgow and an MPhil and DPhil in International Relations from the University of Oxford.

APPENDIX 2: Methodology

Quantitative research methodology

This section covers in detail the methodology and background of the three quantitative analyses used by AKAS to produce this report:

1. AKAS. (2022a). Market intelligence investigation — gender and racial diversity in key editorial beats
2. AKAS (2022b). Women and leadership content trends analysis
3. AKAS (2022c). News initiatives review

1. AKAS. (2022a). Market intelligence investigation — gender and racial diversity in key editorial beats

An initial aim of this investigation was to assess at least 400 editorial roles in India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the UK, and the US.

Phase 1

Phase 1 of the investigation explored the gender diversity of editorial leadership roles in key beats highlighted in the *Missing Perspectives* reports:

- Politics
- Business/economics
- Health

For each country, we collated information on the roles in these beats using the Prowly database, in addition to carrying out manual searches using Google's search engine and accessing LinkedIn profiles. For each role, we identified the news media provider, the title of the role, and the name of the journalist, and ascertained that this individual was in post on a given date. Once this data had been collected, an assessment of the gender of the journalist was made using a combination of the journalist's image and any pronoun descriptions.

In the first phase, we identified 412 editorial roles. However, significantly fewer were located in the global south (37 in India, 18 in Kenya, 37 in Nigeria and 24 in South Africa) compared to the global north (142 in the UK, and 154 in the US).

In addition, Phase 1 did not touch on the important intersectionality issues in relation to race.

Phase 2

Phase 2 focused on finding more senior editorial roles in the global south countries and exploring intersectionality dimensions by:

- Using on-the-ground expertise to boost the number of the most senior roles in the global south countries, given the low number of roles found in Phase 1
- Using on-the-ground expertise to challenge some of the Phase 1 findings
- Collecting data across the six countries for the equivalent of editor-in-chief roles to provide a consistent measure
- Exploring racial diversity by using primary research, secondary research, and on-the-ground expertise in South Africa, the UK, and the US

Consultants were hired in the global south countries (India, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa) to improve the Phase 1 findings through new or enhanced information. Specifically, the consultants carried out the following activities:

- Confirmed the Phase 1 findings in relation to the editors in politics, business/economics, and health beats, and provided evidence that the person was in post in January 2022
- Where Phase I investigations revealed no clear editor role in politics, business/economics or health beats at a news provider, they investigated and identified the most senior editorial person working on those beats and provided evidence that the person was in post in January 2022
- For each news provider assessed in Phase 1, they found and recorded the details of the most senior journalist in the organization, typically called the editor or editor-In-chief
- Where prominent news providers were missing from the Phase 1 assessment, they identified the editors or most senior journalists in politics, business/economics, and health beats as well as the overall editor or editor-in-chief for that news provider

Additionally, for South Africa, where possible they also recorded the race of the person in post. South Africa was also the only country where the CEO/publisher role was also analyzed.

Different approaches were used for Phase 2 by the three sets of consultants in the global south countries, as set out below:

India: The Indian investigative team was led by **Anuja Mehta** and **Sheena Bhalla**. The 60 Indian news outlets in this study include daily newspapers, television news channels, and digital news publications to reflect how news consumption is evolving. These outlets represent a mix of both national and regional news organizations, to provide a holistic view of gender representation across widely circulated news providers in the country.

The outlets were selected by consulting readership numbers in the Indian Readership Survey Q4 2019 data, the Audit Bureau of

Circulations 2019 data (the latest data available as data was not published in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic), and the Reuters Institute's India Digital News Report 2021. This enabled the selection of outlets to cover the most-read English nationals and high-profile digital publications as well as a broad geographical spread of regional dailies.

The team that focused on analyzing South Africa and Nigeria was led by **Kelo Kubu** and **Ithateng Mokgoro**.

South Africa: The team started by looking at the total media landscape, both in terms of ownership and media brands. The data was obtained from South Africa's Department of Government Communications, the Broadcast Research Council of South Africa, and the Audit Bureau of Circulation South Africa. The team used circulation, audience numbers, and representation in various provinces in the country to narrow the list down to 70 media houses. The data obtained was categorized into TV, radio, and print. It included the name of the media house, the format, coverage, and contact details.

To verify the data, the team conducted online desk research, purchased physical newspapers, watched the TV stations in question, and listened to some of the radio stations. The team used a media list database from The Media List, a service company that updates media contact lists monthly, to confirm and verify the titles and names of senior journalists from various media houses. In cases where there were discrepancies, email requests were sent to the various media houses for clarification and on a few occasions telephone contact was made.

The team noticed that due to COVID regulations and lockdowns, there had been a high turnover of staff in the past two years. In trying to make telephone contact, the team was inhibited by the fact that COVID regulations meant that most journalists worked from home and hence telephone calls to the offices were not answered. To verify the editors, the team contacted the South African National Editors Forum. However, they declined

to participate in the research, citing privacy laws.

In addition to The Media List's database, the team used LinkedIn, Prowly, Twitter, and Muck Rack to validate the positions of the reporters identified.

Nigeria: In Nigeria, the team used primary data from the Reuters Institute's Digital News Report, which was provided by AKAS, to establish a baseline for the top 70 media houses. The team followed the same verification method as in South Africa. The primary validation method was mainly online, supplemented by email and telephone conversations with the various media houses for confirmation.

Limitations in the research were that there were some syndicated media houses where it was not possible to make contact with the owners and those managing the platforms. The research for both countries was conducted during January and February 2022.

Kenya: The **AfricaonAir team** that conducted the research comprised six journalists, a supervisor, and a manager to verify the data. The work followed four steps:

1. Desk research - The team conducted desk research, using AKAS' Kenya market gender analysis of editors in political, business/economics, and health beats as a base. This was to confirm the target media, obtain initial names for the roles in question, and ensure a balanced representation of media in Kenya. Other sources of initial data included media mailing lists.
2. Data collection - The team then verified the names and contacts of those occupying the roles in question, via both telephone and in-person meetings. The data collected was sent to the supervisor for review and confirmation. Each researcher handled approximately ten media houses.
4. Verification - Once the supervisor had confirmed the data was accurate, he alerted the manager who verified each item of data for accuracy and currency. This involved making random calls to the newsrooms

concerned to confirm the data. In some instances, the manager also contacted senior people in the media organizations to double check the facts. Part of this exercise involved ensuring that all titles used for the editorial leaders were current and accurate, as these change periodically.

5. Analysis and report – Having verified the information, the manager produced a report or update that was sent to AKAS.

During phase 2, the local news outlets in the UK and US were removed from the analysis because we assessed that they were not a representative sample of the local news market. Therefore, at the end of phase 2, the number of relevant roles analyzed increased from 412 in phase 1 to 1,093. The breakdown of the number of roles analyzed per country was as follows: 210 in India, 68 in Kenya, 239 in Nigeria, 282 in South Africa, 167 in the UK, and 127 in the US.

Phase 3

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and the resulting increased coverage in international news, AKAS added another area to be assessed for gender representation: that of international or foreign affairs editors. Given the short time available, this assessment was restricted to the UK and the US.

This phase was challenging because it was difficult to pin down the specific role title as there was a wide range of titles covering the space. Below is a selection of the relevant positions analyzed in the UK and the US:

*   Foreign Editor
*   Foreign News Editor
*   Foreign Affairs & Defense Editor
*   Foreign Policy
*   Global Editor
*   Global News Editor
*   World Editor
*   World Affairs Editor
*   World News Editor
*   International Editor
*   International News Editor
*   International Affairs Editor

- International Managing Editor
- International Diplomatic Editor
- Diplomatic Editor
- International Security
- World and National Security Editor
- World Coverage Chief
- [Region/Country] Editor
- [Region/Country] Affairs Editor

In addition, in phase 3 all the roles analyzed in the UK and US were updated so that the information was accurate as of June 2022. The roles analyzed in India, South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria were accurate as of February 2022.

At the end of this phase, 26 foreign editor-related roles were found in the US and 47 in the UK. This brought the final number of roles analyzed to 1166, broken down by country as follows: 210 in India, 68 in Kenya, 239 in Nigeria, 282 in South Africa, 214 in the UK and 153 in the US.

The most limiting element of this methodology was that it was based predominantly on a visual assessment of each journalist's gender and race/ethnicity. To verify the categorizations, AKAS searched for how journalists publicly described themselves, the pronouns they used, or articles that provided insights into their race/ethnicity. The benefit of this approach is that it enabled the AKAS team and partners to assess a large number of editorial roles. However, a more accurate methodology would have been to enable each journalist to self-identify their gender and ethnicity. This, however, would not have been possible in the time available across the six countries and would have significantly reduced the sample sizes.

2. AKAS (2022b). Women and leadership content trends analysis

To understand trends in covering women and leadership AKAS used:

1. The GDELT Project global database of online news
2. A Google Scholar search of academic articles
3. An Ahrefs keyword search analysis of terms

published online
4. A Google Books Ngram Viewer search of books since 1800
5. A Google Trends analysis of terms searched for on Google's search engine since 2004

The following provides more detail on each of these analyses:

1. AKAS used the GDELT Project global online news archive to search all English and non-English online news stories between January 2017 and May 2022 to count the number of times key terms relating to women and leadership occurred. The analysis was carried out at a global level and at a country level for the six countries being assessed (India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the UK, and the US). The GDELT database now covers over 900 million stories globally in 65 languages. AKAS assessed the impact of key dates and events e.g., International Women's days, national women's days, the COVID-19 pandemic period, the Generation Equality Forum, and the #MeToo movement. The search terms used included *"Women in leadership", "Females in leadership", "Women leaders", "Woman leader"* or *"Woman leaders"* or *"Female leaders"; "Gender"* and *"Newsroom", "Leadership"; "Gender"* and *"Newsroom"* and *"Leadership"*; and *"Feminist Leadership"*. These were all compared to mentions of other key news terms e.g., climate change, crime, education, economy/business, and COVID-19.
2. Google Scholar was used to assess how frequently the term *"Feminist leadership"* and the words *"Gender"* and *"Leadership"* appeared in academic articles between 1980 and 2021.
3. The Ahrefs keyword analysis identified the number of webpages that contained the term *"Feminist leadership"* vs the number of webpages that contained the term *"Leadership"* between January 2016 and March 2022.
4. Google Books Ngram Viewer was used to assess how frequently the terms *"Feminist leadership", "Feminist"* and *"Leadership"* appeared in tracked books between 1800 and 2019.
5. A Google Trends analysis was used to

establish the prevalence of searches for gender equality-related issues consisting of the following terms: *"Gender equality"* or *"Gender inequality"* or *"Gender bias"* or *"Gender balance"* or *"Gender gap"* or *"Gender equity"* or *"Feminism"* or *"Feminist"* or *"Women's rights"* or *"Women's issues"* or *"Women's concerns"* or *"Sexist"* or *"Sexism"*, between January 2017 and May 2022.

It should be noted that these analyses rely on keywords and terms that appear in the relevant text. This is a relatively crude methodology as this approach does not analyze in what context these keywords and terms appear. Hence by using this methodology we cannot state definitively that an article is about the subject alluded to by the keyword or term. Only a manual check would achieve this. However, the changes over time in the prevalence of these keywords in such a large database provides a powerful indicator of whether the issues are growing or declining in significance.

3. AKAS (2022c). News initiatives review

The news initiatives review searched for initiatives in news organizations worldwide that aimed to redress the gender imbalance in leadership in terms of both diversity and inclusion. The review looked for news initiatives that aimed to increase:

• Women's representation in leadership
• Women's inclusion in decision-making
• Women's inclusion as protagonists in news stories
• Women's inclusion as story sources
• Women's inclusion as experts
• Audience performance among women

AKAS used a range of sources to find the news exemplars, including:

• Case studies from WAN-IFRA's *Amplifying women's voices – A Gender Balance Guide for Media*
• Case studies from the *Missing Perspectives* workshops run by Emma Goodman, commissioned by the Global Media Monitoring Project

• Case studies from the 2020 Global Media Monitoring Project report
• Examples from the American Society of News Editors' diversity survey where women's newsroom representation was 50%+
• Information taken from interviews conducted by Luba Kassova as part of the project
• Google searches
• References picked up in the course of carrying out this report

As at September 2022, the database contained 168 initiatives from 118 organizations with a global coverage and specific regional coverage in North America, Europe, Asia (including Australia), and Africa.

This news initiatives review will not have captured all the initiatives that have been developed globally. The initiatives list is, for example, weak on initiatives from Latin America and those not available in English. It is hoped that, as the news initiatives database is a live document, these limitations will be corrected over time.

Qualitative research methodology

To understand why the problems with women's underrepresentation, cultural exclusion, and biased portrayal in news persist, AKAS decided to conduct in-depth interviews with the most senior decision-makers in news organizations across the six countries of interest in the study. During the research, we reached out to news editors and experts within and outside the six key countries, who had worked on or were leading trailblazing initiatives aimed at improving women's visibility in news. Luba Kassova interviewed a total of 41 editors and thought leaders, 25 of whom were interviewed anonymously. The table below outlines the job titles that the interviewed decision-makers held at the time of the interview.

Job titles of the 25 news leaders who were interviewed anonymously for the report

Editor-in-Chief/Managing Editor	7
Senior Executive/Executive editor	3
Economics/Business Editor/Executive Editor	5
News Editor/News Director/Senior Vice President/Vice President of News	6
Political Editor	2
Health Editor	2

Names and titles of the remaining interviewees who contributed to the report[289]

Canada: Maite Taboada, professor of linguistics at Simon Fraser University, the Gender Gap Tracker lead, and university lead on the AIJO project 2020[290]

India: Kavita Devi, Editor-in-Chief, Khabar Lahariya; Sruthijith KK, Editor-in-Chief, Mint

Kenya: Sarah Macharia, long-standing report editor of the Global Media Monitoring Report; Dorcas Muga, Gender Editor, Nation Media Group

Norway: Eivor Jerpåsen, Director of Content Development, Amedia; Svein Tore Bergestuen, former journalist and co-author of *A Guide to the Professional Interview*

Pan-Africa: Dr Yemisi Akinbobola, co-founder of African Women in Media

Sweden: Agnes Stenbom, Head of IN/LAB (Schibsted) in Sweden and project manager for the AIJO project 2020

UK: Tracy McVeigh, Global Development Editor, The Guardian; Lara Joannides, Creative Diversity Lead at BBC News and 50:50, BBC; Jane Barrett,

Global Editor, Media News Strategy at Reuters, and Reuters lead for the AIJO project 2020; Mary Ann Sieghart, a prominent UK journalist (originally a high-profile business and then political journalist at The Financial Times, The Economist, The Times and The Independent)

US: Laura Zelenko, a senior executive editor and founder of New Voices, Bloomberg; Xanthe Scharff, CEO, The Fuller Project; Elizabeth MacAulay, Manager, Communications, The New York Times (via email)

In addition, AKAS collaborated with Igor Pipkin, Chief Data Scientist at Amedia, who generously provided AKAS with access to Amedia's latest data from 2022 on the gender-related performance of Norwegian local news outlets at key points in the news value chain.

News organizations

When selecting the interviewees for the report, AKAS applied a range of criteria including the audience reach of their news organization, its influence (measured by links to the news organization's website), and/or whether the organization had made strides in the field of gender inclusive journalism. In total, the interviewed senior leaders represented 30 organizations across the eight countries listed below. Most of the news organizations were spread across the six countries of interest. Two from Norway and Sweden were included in the 30, due to innovative initiatives focusing on gender balance in coverage that they were part of/had launched.

News organizations from countries of focus in the study:
India: TVC Communications, Hindustan Times, CNBC TV18, Mint, Khabar Lahariya

Kenya: Nation Media Group, Radio Africa Group

Nigeria: The Punch, Vanguard, Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism

South Africa: Sunday Times, Business Times,

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289. Ordered in alphabetical order by country
290 AIJO is an industry-wide platform for collaboration around AI, involving eight major news organizations across the world

News 24, The Conversation

Pan-African: African Women in Media

UK: BBC, The Financial Times, The Telegraph, The Guardian, Reuters News Agency

US: NPR; Bloomberg, The Associated Press, KQED, NBC News, The New York Times, The Fuller Project

News organizations from other countries:
Norway: Amedia
Sweden: Schibsted

Description of 41 interviewees by gender, location, and race

In selecting the interviewees, AKAS took pains to ensure a balance in terms of race, representation from the global north and south, and country. We took the conscious decision to give more weight to women decision-makers in news, while securing enough men within the sample to be able to draw comparisons between the perspectives of the two genders.

	Total Interviews
Women	29
Men	12
Global north	22
Global south	19
White	20
People of color (Black, Asian, Hispanic, Mixed race)	21
Total countries (6 countries of focus plus Canada, Norway, and Sweden)	9

AKAS explored five areas in the interviews

1. Women's representation and inclusion in news leadership
2. Organizational culture
3. News coverage and portrayal of women
4. Ideas about successful interventions aimed at closing the gender gap in news
5. Ideas about what would make this report impactful

Interview length

We requested 30 minutes with each leader. The average interview length proved to be 34 minutes (see table below). However, the longer time spent in conversation with the interviewees was a result of women news leaders spending 23% longer than the standard requested time and than their male peers. This behavioral difference between women and men indicates women's higher engagement in the topic, fuelled by their personal experiences.

Average interview length (mins)	Average length: men (mins)	Average length: women (mins)	% difference between women and men
34	30	37	23%