

The Tycoon and the Escort: the business of portraying women in newspapers

WOMEN IN JOURNALISM

Eleanor Mills, Katie Hind, Áine Quinn

Researchers:

Megan Baynes

Caitlin Doherty

Jessica Frank-Keyes

Emily Hawkins

Sara Lovejoy

Evie Prichard

Published September 19 2017

womeninjournalism.co.uk

@WIJ_UK

Introduction

The media is the mirror that society holds up to itself. It is through newspapers – whether in print or on screen – that the first draft of history is created and power is held to account.

At Women in Journalism, we believe that democracy can only flourish when the mirror the media holds up to society provides a true reflection; we argue today that because of the lack of diversity in British newspapers the lens we hold up to society is a distorted one. Society sees itself not as it is, but through the prism of a predominantly old, white, male gaze.

This puts half the population at a disadvantage - and, at its worst, can put women off entering public life.

Particularly egregious examples of this distorting lens include “Leg-sit” – how the Daily Mail described the meeting of Theresa May and Nicola Sturgeon, the two most powerful political leaders in the country on March 26, 2017. Or how David Cameron’s decision to appoint more women to his cabinet on July 16, 2014, was treated as an excuse to picture the new female ministers on a ‘Downing Street Catwalk’ where their outfits were critiqued. Both examples reinforce to the public that no matter how powerful a woman is, or how impressive her credentials are for doing a job, it is her appearance that matters more than anything.

This distortion is damaging to the way women feel about themselves and puts many of them off entering public life. In a less obvious way, the terminology around men and women is often indicative of a double standard: the title of our research, *The Tycoon and the Escort*, refers to the descriptions used in the coverage of the murder by a businessman of his lover, for which he received a life sentence in 2016. *The Tycoon and the Escort* exemplifies the kind of loaded language which often reveals the bias of the male media lens where men are millionaires and business tycoons while women - even powerful ones - are judged by a hotness quotient or ‘would-ya?’ yardstick on their arm-candy factor. That is the male lens in action. It could easily have been the *Failing Businessman* and the *Entrepreneur*. As we know in papers, words matter.

It has long been argued that time and increasing numbers of women in the media and public life will fix our long-established ‘women problem’; that as more women reach the top of the profession, the male lens will vanish. But as the campaigners for more women on FTSE 100 boards have discovered, the pace of change is glacial; on current progress it will take 100 years to reach parity between men and women in business. Our new research suggests the same is true of journalism. In November and December 2016 and June and July 2017 we have staged a re-run of research WIJ carried out in 2012 into how many front page stories are being written by women. We wanted to find out if women were getting the chance not just to write about typically female subjects - lifestyle, fashion, culture - but were shaping the “hard news” which we see on coffee tables and garage forecourts across Britain.

We discovered that once again progress is slow or non-existent. True, there are more female bylines on the front pages than there were five years ago, but only by a couple of percentage

points. At three publications the numbers have actually gone backwards. And George Osborne's Evening Standard is one of the worst offenders.

The Daily Mirror had the lowest count of female front page bylines in June-July 2017, with only 10% of stories written by women. This was followed by the Evening Standard and The Sun, both with 15% of front page stories written by women, and the Daily Express with 16%.

Across the print press, the average percentage of front page stories written by women in June-July 2017 was 25%, just 2 percentage points above the average in 2012.

So why are so few women writing those all-important front page stories? Part of the reason is the dearth of women in certain parts of the newsroom. For instance, politics is often the source of the 'splash' (the main story on the front page). But the Guardian is the only newspaper which currently has a female political editor (actually it has two, as they job-share). Therefore if politics is the lead story, in most cases it won't have a female byline.

We wanted to dig more into this bias and find out where the women are in newspapers. So, as a companion piece to repeating our count of female bylines, this year we have also asked the major media companies to disclose for the first time where exactly the women are on their staff. We can see for the first time which organisations have women calling the shots. (The replies from all the papers that responded are included in the appendix at the back of the report). But the quick answer is that only one broadsheet is edited by a woman (the Guardian). Across all papers, the backbench - which decides where stories are placed and how they are presented - is an almost entirely male preserve. The business, politics and sport sections are still overwhelmingly dominated by men.

Digital

Now that the world is so digital, do newspapers still matter? The answer is a resounding 'yes'. Newspapers still make the weather; their investigations, comment, and spin on the news still set the agenda. Front pages in particular still have a huge influence, as they often set the agenda for TV and radio news bulletins, and on social media. The #TomorrowsPapersToday hashtag, run by BBC staff, has a huge Twitter following - meaning it shapes the conversation online, and feeds back into other commissioning decisions. Therefore, even in a digital age, the contents of the newspaper front pages is still an important benchmark of industry attitudes.

Diversity

Women in Journalism is a professional body for females working in newspapers (and increasingly from other media too). Our primary purpose therefore is to look at what is happening with women. Since we are half the population, any diversity discussion should start there. That does not mean that we are not also aware of the predominantly white, middle class, southern bias which also afflicts newspapers and which Ofcom has rightly criticised. We

applaud those measures. However, we believe there is a particular problem with gender representation, tied to issues such as hiring bias, assumptions of female interests and aptitudes, sexual harassment or unwelcoming newsroom cultures, and the material conditions of women's lives, such as pregnancy, maternity leave and unpaid caring responsibilities. There is also an issue with the gender pay gap, which potentially puts women off working in newspapers, or deters them from returning to work after having children, as financially it isn't worth it. We hope this report provides a starting-point, and perhaps even a model, for looking at wider issues of diversity.

Background

In 2012, Women in Journalism conducted a research project called "Seen But Not Heard: how women make front page news". That study collected data from all of the major national newspapers over a four-week period, taking note of who was writing the stories, which genre of story women were writing, the capacities in which women were named, and the number and types of photographs used.

The study found that overall, 78% of all front page bylines were male, with the now online-only Independent performing the worst with just 9% of female journalists writing front page stories. (This is depressing for anyone who thought the new digital age would remove the male lens).

Five years on, we decided to revisit the research and discovered, disappointingly, that very little has changed. We lay out here the findings of the most comprehensive study into women and journalism to date.

Overall, there has been just a 2 percentage point rise in the average number of female byline counts on the front pages of national newspapers in Britain in the past five years, with just 25% of stories being written by women.

What's more, there is a vast discrepancy in what types of stories women are writing compared with men. There is still an overwhelming difference in the genres that male and female journalists cover. Women are still allocated stories in "softer" areas such as royalty, showbusiness and health, while male reporters are overwhelmingly given the hard news.

This was particularly apparent during our systematic research of newspapers between June 5 and July 22, 2017 which included three big news events – the General Election, the London Bridge terror attack and the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy. The period we analysed was chosen at random, but it gave us the perfect basis to examine the gender divide in covering the big stories.

To try to work out why men dominate front page bylines we also decided to investigate the gender split in the positions of the major executives working in newspapers. These, after all, are the people who make the decisions about who covers the story and how the resulting copy is edited and presented.

On average 66% of senior roles in UK newspapers are held by men. Just three UK national newspapers we analysed have female editors: the Guardian, the Daily Star and The Sun on Sunday.

Only three newspapers have women running their news desks according to our research: Metro, The Times and The Sunday Times.

Just one, the Daily Star, has a woman in charge of their back bench, the place where the biggest decisions are made in tabloids, while Metro has a woman as night editor.

i) Bylines: Method

The researchers counted the number of female and male bylines on each front page.

Where there was more than one story on a front page – something that generally applies more to broadsheets than tabloids – we took all data and have provided a set of results for all stories, and another for just the lead story.

We also analysed the genre of stories written by men and women. We counted all bylines on stories without paying attention to which name came first.

Findings:

i) Daily newspapers

The coverage of the general election, London terror attacks and Grenfell Tower fire tragedy was dominated by men. The Sun's 15% of female bylines were largely courtesy of two royal stories about the Duchess of Cambridge, a story on a new Strictly Come Dancing professional dancer who had previously worked as a Playboy model, a premier league footballer cheating on his wife, and a transgender man having a baby. Could this be linked to the fact that there are often no women in The Sun's news conference?

What about the election? The Sun's election coverage was male dominated, as was the Daily Mirror's.

George Osborne's Evening Standard was the second to worst performing newspaper for its number of front page female bylines. Under the former Chancellor's editorship, just 15% of front pages were written by women. We compared this to a two-month period from November 8 -

December 17 2016, when Sarah Sands was at the helm. During this period just 8% of front page bylines were by women, showing that a female editor is no guarantee of a better gender balance on bylines.

There is, however, good news. The Guardian was the best for female bylines, with 43% of front page stories written by women. This is almost double the proportion of female bylines from our 2012 research, which supports the idea that replacing Alan Rusbridger with Katharine Viner has had an impact on women being more visible both on the front page and in the office. Culture change can come from the top, but just having a female editor and not changing other roles or the culture is not enough.

The broadsheets generally fare better than tabloids; largely because there are more stories on the front page, giving women more of a chance. Second to the Guardian was the Telegraph, followed by the Financial Times. The Daily Mail had more female bylines than the Mirror, The Express, Metro, The Sun and The Times. However the broadsheets had much lower female byline counts if we only counted the lead story.

The Daily Mail also had female journalists on the ground at the summer's big news stories – in particular Grenfell Tower.

Health, royal and television stories are still more often covered by women, as exemplified by coverage in the Daily Mail and the Daily Telegraph.

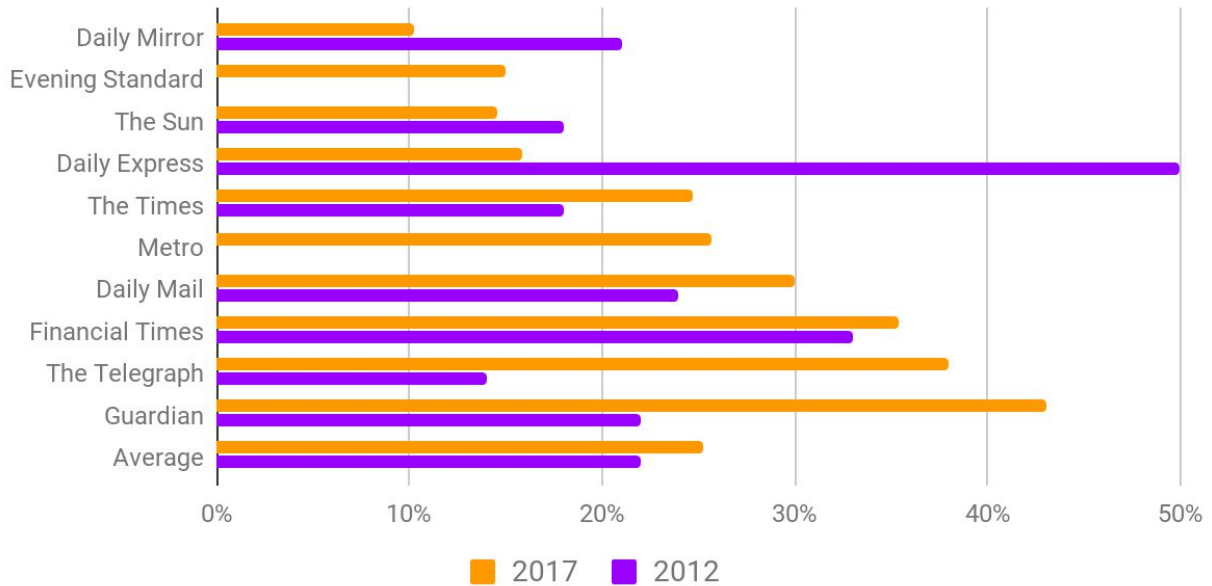
As part of our research, we also looked at who holds senior roles in UK newspapers, and how this might impact who writes front page stories. During the election in June, the lack of women covering the event could be due to the fact that only the Guardian has female political editors.

Most news desks are run by men, with the exception of The Times, Sunday Times and Metro, and news editors assign stories to reporters, which could be linked to the lack of female bylines on the London Bridge terror attack and the Grenfell Tower fire.

How do our findings compare to 2012?

Percentage of front page female bylines in daily newspapers

Source: WIJ research June 5-July 23 2017, April 16-May 13 2012



On average, there are more female bylines in 2017 than there were in 2012, though the increase is small. Five years ago our research found on average 22% of front page stories were written by women, while the figure for our study of June-July 2017 is 25%. Average figures for 2017 include Metro and the Evening Standard, which we did not look at in 2012.

The proportion of front page stories written by women has increased in five of the publications we looked at, with the Guardian being the most improved, from 22% to 43%. As was mentioned earlier in the report, this could be due to Katharine Viner replacing Alan Rusbridger or the Political Editor post being held by two women as opposed to a man back in 2012.

The Daily Telegraph has increased from 14% to 38%, more than doubling the number of female bylines on its front pages, while the Financial Times has gone up from 33% to 35%. The Times has also increased, interestingly with a female News Editor at the helm, and a female Deputy Editor, from 18% to 25%. The Daily Mail went up from 24% to 30%.

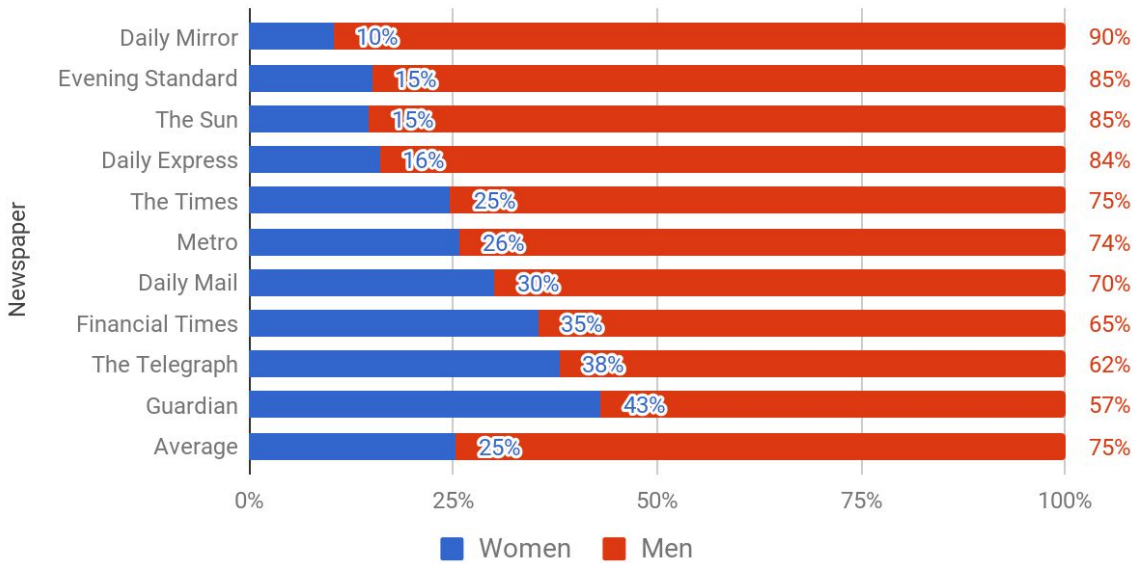
The Daily Mirror female front page byline count has fallen to 10% since 2012, while The Sun dropped from 18% to 15%.

The Daily Star was not included in the 2012 study, neither was the Evening Standard, the second to worst. The Metro was omitted too, though in our most recent study, it performed slightly above average, with 26% of its bylines being written by women. The newspaper, though edited by a man, has one of the strongest presence of women in its executive team. Women make up the posts of Deputy Editor, Night Editor, News Editor and Features Editor.

In 2012, the Daily Express was the best performing publication, with their byline count being exactly 50:50. Our 2017 research found that 16% of the newspaper’s front page stories were written by women.

Bylines for all front page stories - daily newspapers

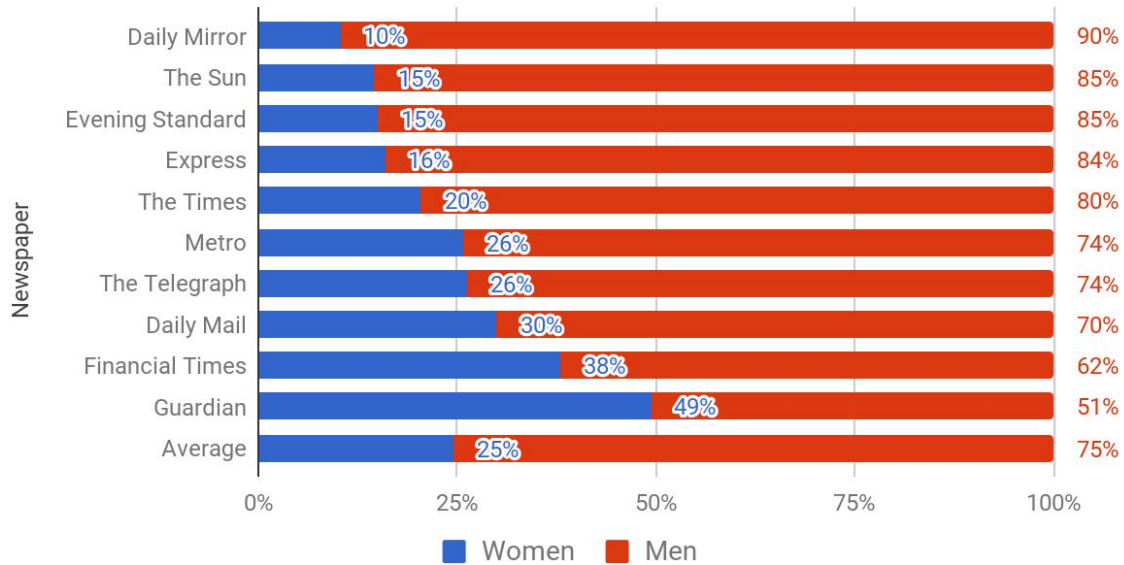
Percentage of front page bylines by gender, June 5-July 23 2017. Source: WIJ research



Broadsheets have an advantage in that they tend to have several stories on a front page and more journalists working on each story, so the sample is larger. To take this into account we analysed separately the gender balance for the lead front page stories, excluding smaller front page stories often found on front pages on broadsheets. We found similar results but with a higher proportion of front page women bylines for the Guardian, a much lower percentage for the Daily Telegraph and a slightly lower proportion for The Times.

Bylines for lead front page stories - daily newspapers

Percentage of front page bylines by gender, June 5-July 23 2017. Source: WIJ research



Sunday newspapers

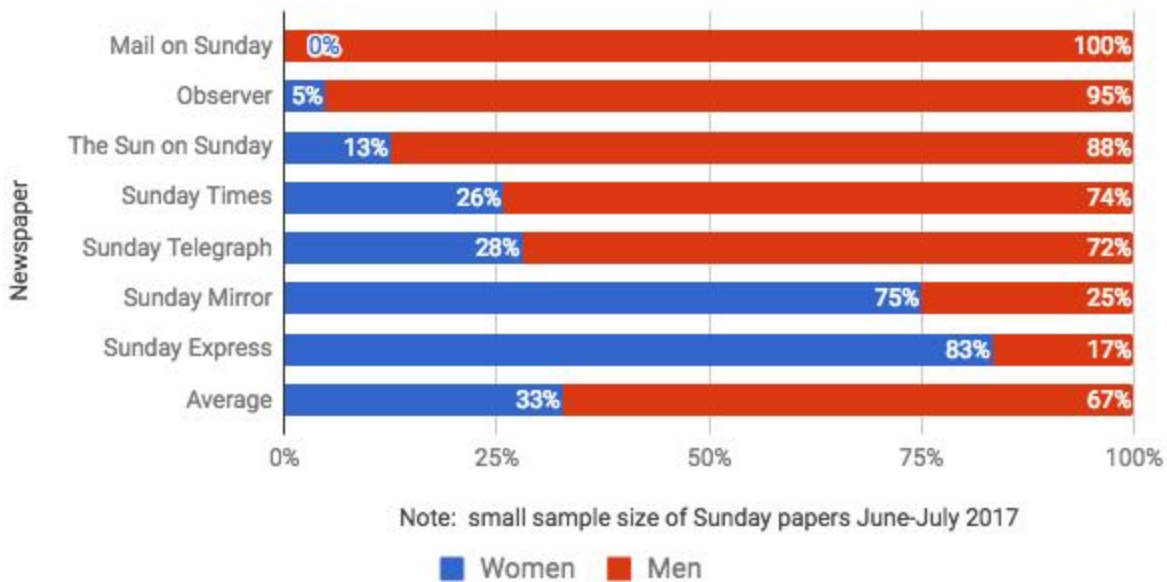
In 2012 the researchers decided against byline data from Sunday newspapers due to the small sample size.

We have included Sunday data as many readers only buy Sunday papers and not other editions - though bearing in mind the limitations of the data.

Our latest research looked at papers over two months rather than one month, but the sample size was still relatively small as there were only 7 Sunday newspapers during this time. The number of front page stories written by women on Sunday papers was noticeably different to their sister weekly titles, but this could be due to the small sample.

Bylines for all front page stories - Sunday newspapers

Percentage of front page bylines by gender, June 5 -July 23 2017. Source: WIJ research



Who are the decision makers?

Our 2012 study did not analyse the gender balance in senior roles in newspapers.

This time we also decided to look at the gender balance of senior roles on national newspapers. We looked at the following 17 positions:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Editor | |
| Deputy Editor | US Editor |
| Head of Backbench | Showbiz Editor |
| Chief Sub Editor | TV Editor |
| News Editor | Sports Editor |
| Features Editor | Picture Editor |
| Political Editor | Fashion Editor |
| Business Editor | Managing Editor |
| Foreign Editor | Comment Editor |

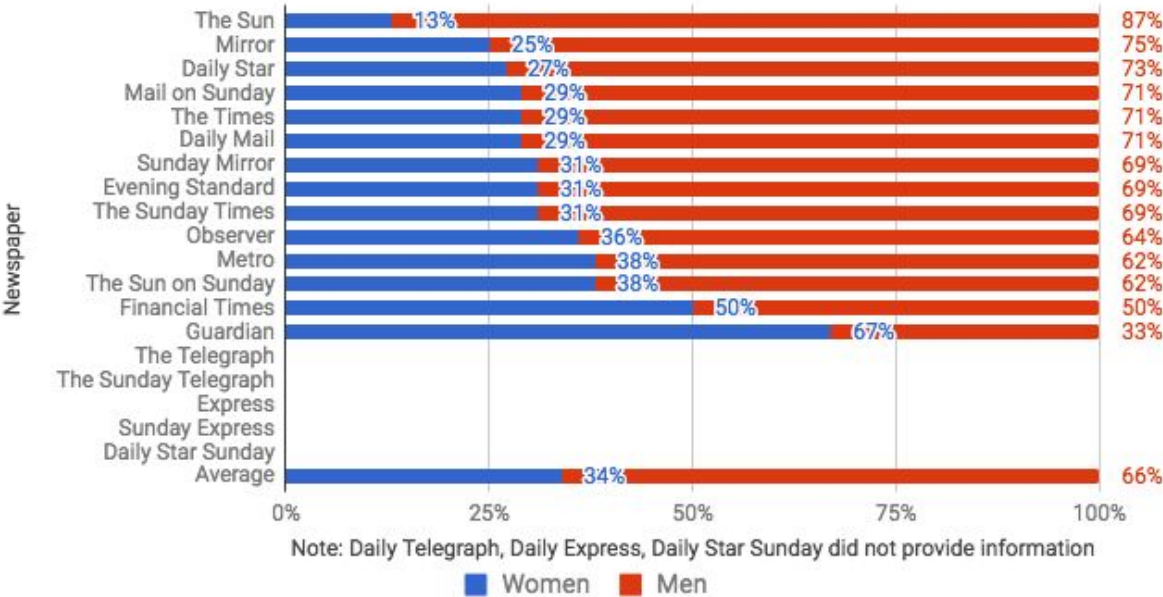
We chose a combination of roles that would allow us to get an idea of the most senior positions in tabloids and broadsheets. Some of the roles did not apply to all newspapers - for example broadsheet newspapers did not generally have a showbiz editors and tabloids generally did not have comment editors, so we omitted the role if there was nothing similar. If roles were missing in a certain newspaper but there was a similar roles with a slightly different name, we included this where appropriate.

We established these positions through our contacts at the publications where possible, and then asked editors to confirm that our list was accurate by email. For the Telegraph, the Express and the Star on Sunday, data is missing because we were unable to compile lists from public information and the editors did not give us the information upon request.

We have included summaries of newspapers’ responses to our emails in the appendix at the end of this report. The information about these positions is correct as of September 19 2017.

Senior roles in UK national newspapers by gender

Source: WIJ research based on analysis of key positions in print newspapers. September 2017.



Portrayal of women in newspapers

The second part of our research was to analyse how women are portrayed on the front pages of newspapers. Due to the nature of the stories covered, very few experts were mentioned within the stories, so we decided not to make comparisons to our 2012 research.

We did, however, note the women who featured the most, and have observed some common themes of how women are depicted, of which there are some examples below.

Theresa May

If Theresa May were not the Prime Minister, and we had a man instead, the number of women featured on front pages would drop significantly. May was by far the woman who featured on the

front pages the most, which given the study covered the general election, the London terror attack and the Grenfell Tower disaster, perhaps is no surprise.

There was, however, a difference in how she was pictured, with the Daily Mirror and the Guardian regularly using very unflattering photographs of her, and the Daily Mail using very flattering shots of her, possibly due to their political leanings. Though the infamous 'Leg-sit' front page was not published during our research periods, it is still clear that in 2017, the Prime Minister is still being judged on her appearance - which is somewhat of a disappointment.

Theresa May also featured in written stories more than any other woman, unsurprisingly given her role as Prime Minister. She is though, often mentioned alongside male colleagues and members of the cabinet. There was little coverage of her with her husband, Phillip May.

In short, there is little evidence to suggest that any mistreatment of Theresa May is due to her being a woman rather than her not fitting the political agendas of some publications. The Sun, which backed her before the election, quickly turned on her after her woeful performance at the polls, with their front page headlined, 'Mayhem.' However, once again, there is no evidence to suggest this is due to her gender.

"Bikini brigade"

Not all women are treated so fairly. The Sun and the Daily Star were most guilty of putting gratuitous photographs of semi-naked women on their front pages. During the time covered by the study, The Sun had three such front pages, two from the reality TV show, Love Island, and another anonymous woman to exemplify a sex story splash.

To illustrate a story about some Oxford University students having a 'strip party', The Sun used pictures of the female participant, who was wearing stockings, a bra and a collar around her neck, but did not show pictures of the male student involved. This was the case for two days running.

The Sunday Mirror, on July 9 2017, provided its readers with some insight into the Battle of Mosul. The piece was, as we were told on the front page, brought to us 'from our man on the front line', which was exemplified by its male reporter in his hard hat. Next to it was a story about actress Liz Hurley meeting a snake which was accompanied by a picture of her wearing raunchy underwear. The double standard is alive and well.

Women in sport

There is some positive news, though, particularly when it comes to women in sport. Our research period included the Wimbledon tennis championships. British tennis star Johanna Konta was portrayed respectfully in the media. In contrast to its treatment of models, The Sun

treated Konta exactly the same as they did her fellow male star, Andy Murray. One headline read: 'Kont stop me now!' The next day was the encouraging 'Give us hope Johanna.'

The Daily Mail were just as positive, using Ms Konta as their main example of the four British tennis players who were through to the third round of the competition. As her success continued, so did their support of the star, with the headlines 'History Girl' and 'As Murray crashes out and hints he may take a break from tennis, now do us proud, Jo.' The Times were equally kind to Konta, putting her on the front page two days running.

Conclusion

In 2017 it is depressing that women are still so under-represented on the crucial front pages of our national newspapers - and that the pace of change is so slow. There are promising signs with the appointment of Katharine Viner at the Guardian being a particularly shining example, as well as the increase in the numbers of female news editors, and even a female Sports Editor on the Mail on Sunday.

However, this is still not enough - the double standard is alive and kicking. Women are still judged on their appearance, or most likely to appear as victims or arm candy. WIJ wants to see more stories about women with agency: doing things in their own right, as more and more women reach powerful positions in our society, they deserve a media culture which gives them a fair crack of the whip and doesn't judge them by outdated, male metrics.

The reason we are drawing attention to the woman deficit is because newspapers are lagging behind broadcast media in particular. In 2015 a House of Lords report into Women and Broadcasting, which pointed up the lack of presenters and female experts, had a measurable effect: it is now deemed unacceptable to have an all-male panel, for example, on Question Time.

In newspapers the gender bias is more hidden - particularly when it comes to the dearth of women in the parliamentary lobby, in business coverage and on hard news stories, and where decisions are made - which is why we decided to shine a light on the problem.

Journalism is the first draft of history - it is unacceptable in the 21st century that the big stories are still overwhelmingly written by men, that journalism is still delivered through the male lens. We hope that by airing this often hidden issue and committing to continue to monitor progress, that will change.

Methodology

We collected data from the front pages of all the major national newspapers.

The daily newspapers we looked at were The Sun, Daily Mirror, Daily Star, Metro, Daily Express, Daily Mail, The Times, Daily Telegraph, Guardian, Financial Times and Evening Standard. We did not analyse i paper as it does not have bylines on its front page. We did not focus on the data from the Daily Star in this report as it rarely has bylines on the front page and we did not think the sample was large enough to draw a fair conclusion. We also analysed the Sunday versions of these newspapers.

Analysts were allocated three or four newspapers each to collect data from. Each analyst was given a selection of tabloid and broadsheet titles. We then collected the byline and senior role data in spreadsheets which can be viewed on our website.

We made assumptions on gender based on journalists' names in order to make sure that we could complete the research using publicly available information.

In order to draw evidence as to the decision makers on newspapers, we used our own sources and connections within the industry to complete the list of executive jobs. We then sent our lists to the managing editors of each publication for them to check we were correct or make amendments.

We attempted to look at how women are portrayed on front pages too. In 2012 "experts" were analysed, however, as explained above, very few were used. Instead, we examined how our Prime Minister, Theresa May, was treated by newspapers, the decision by some publications to use "raunchy" pictures of women, and we contrasted that with how sportswomen are portrayed.

Appendix

Responses by email from newspapers to our editor lists, should we have received them:

Daily Mail

The Daily Mail said the list of senior roles "looks OK as far as it goes" but that we might have included senior women including their Assistant Editor (Femail), Women's Editor, Weekend Editor, Features Chief Sub, Literary Editor, Letters Editor and Good Health Editor.

Evening Standard

The Evening Standard said they did not have a showbiz editor or head of TV, but sent a list of extra roles filled by women including City Hall and Education Editor, Features Picture Editor and Deputy Features Editor. George Osborne said he was working hard to improve the gender balance "There's already a much bigger female contribution to our comment pages since I arrived - with more to come". Osborne announced on Twitter on 18 September that Sarah

Collins had been hired as Brussels correspondent.

Guardian

The Guardian said that the list we compiled “doesn't really reflect the way that we are organised as a digital news organisation” as it our list was very print-focused and doesn't include senior roles such as Head of Digital, Head of Audience, Head of Multimedia, Head of Membership. They said that for a print-focused approach, our list was “broadly right”.

Mail on Sunday

The Mail on Sunday said our list was broadly correct although “some of the job titles are not quite as you describe them.” They also said we might have mentioned their Diary Editor and Magazine Editor.

Metro

Metro said they did not have many of the posts in our list like Managing Editor, TV Editor, Business Editor and Comment Editor. They sent us a list of women in senior positions including Technology Editor and Supplements Editor.

Daily and Sunday Mirror

The Daily Mirror said that they were aware of the issue and that the figures may be “slightly skewed” in that two of their reporters had been on maternity leave and generally they had far fewer reporters on the daily than previously. “We also have a good gender balance in digital. Also we are now consciously thinking about this as an issue and this month we've had the first meeting of a new group of senior women within Trinity Mirror and are working with HR and managers to try to address this issue.”

The Times and The Sunday Times

The Times and The Sunday Times sent us a more detailed list including senior roles in their Scottish and Irish editions, and their Arts, Legal and Communications directors.

The Sun and the Sun on Sunday

The Sun sent us some extra roles not in our list held by women including Royal Correspondent, Sun Savers Editor, Travel Editor and Digital Managing Editor.

