



CSW 69 Beijing +30 Shadow Report

Women and the Media

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The Beijing Platform for Action details the challenges to women as they engage with the media. It acknowledges that advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes, and behavior, especially of children and young adults. It calls on women to be empowered by enhancing their skills, knowledge, and access to information technology in order to strengthen their ability to combat negative portrayals of women internationally and to challenge instances of abuse of the power of an increasingly important industry. The Platform recognizes that regulatory mechanisms for the media need to be strengthened and approaches developed to eliminate gender-biased programming. Women must be involved in media industry decision-making in order to participate fully in its growth and impact.¹

The Beijing Platform established **two strategic objectives** to further women's equality in the media:

- J.1. Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication.*
- J.2. Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.*

After 30 years, the media landscape has changed dramatically. With increased integration of technology and social media usage worldwide, there are many more areas of concern from the perspective of gender equality.

Women remain under-represented in news media whether as editors, hosts, or experts.

- While women have made gains, the top news editor positions in the US remain dominated by men, with 43% women in 2024.²
- In 2021, men hosted 79% of the top podcasts even though 50% of podcasts listeners were women.³
- Women comprised only 5% of experts in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) mentioned and a third of persons quoted in 146,867 articles about COVID-19 that were published by 15 leading news organizations worldwide, including CNBC, CNN, Fox, *The New York Times*, and *USA Today*.⁴

In TV and film productions, fewer than 30% of leaders and creators are women.

- In 2022, women comprised 26% of directors, producers, writers, executive producers, editors, and cinematographers working on original US films released by streaming services.⁵
- In 2023-24, the percentage of women working as creators on original television series appearing on broadcast networks and streaming services declined for the second year in a row (23% of creators, down from 26% in 2022-23, and 30% in 2021-22).⁶
- Behind the scenes, women accounted for just 16% of directors working on the 250 highest-grossing domestic releases, in 2024.⁷

Female characters in TV, film, and streaming services are more likely to be stereotyped, objectified, and portrayed in sexually revealing clothing.

- Decades of media research suggest that movies often have problematic themes, reinforcing identity-based stereotypes and offering incomplete pictures of marginalized groups. Women represent 38% of all characters on screen,⁸ and nonbinary characters are just 0.1%.⁹
- 1 in 4 films fail to pass the "Bechdel test:" 1) having at least two named female characters 2) who talk to each other, and 3) their conversation must be about something other than a man.¹⁰
- Female characters are more likely to be objectified, to be wearing sexually revealing clothing, and less likely to have an occupation than male characters.¹¹
- Women continue to play supporting roles (65% of female roles). When they play lead characters, white women dominate (65% vs. 36% women of color), and they are relegated to low budget films (\$20–50 million).¹²
- Ageism for female actors remains an issue. In 2024, 35% of female characters were in their 30s, 16% in their 40s. In stark contrast, the percentage of male characters increased as they aged from their 30s (25%) to their 40s (31%). Just 26% of female characters were 40 and older, whereas 55% of males were 40+. Only 5% of female characters were 60 and older, compared to 9% of male characters.¹³

Men and women experience online media environments differently, with more female social media users and fewer female media workers.

- Women make up the majority of social media users in the US, which is the third biggest internet population worldwide (after China and India).¹⁴ As of 2024, roughly 94% of men and 96% of women in the United States were using the internet.¹⁵
- Women remain under-represented in the online media workforce. At Twitter, in 2021, women accounted for 43.7% and men for 55.1% of the global workforce. Of Google's U.S. workforce, 32% were female, according to its 2021 diversity report.¹⁶
- Women view having a mobile internet connection anywhere is crucial. However, they are less likely to consider it safe compared to men.¹⁷ Women prefer platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, and TikTok, and men prefer to use AI apps, such as ChatGPT, in their daily lives.

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence¹⁸ is on the rise, with women experiencing more severe forms of harassment than men.

- While men are more likely than women to experience harassment online (43% vs. 38%), women face more severe forms. Men are called offensive names (35%) and women are sexually harassed online (16% vs. 5%) or stalked (13% vs. 9%).¹⁹
- Women with disabilities, Black and Indigenous women and other women of color, migrant women, and LGBTIQ+ people all face higher risks of digital violence.²⁰
- A UNESCO study found that worldwide, women in political and public life, including human rights defenders, activists, journalists, and women lawmakers, face increased rates of violence both online and offline.²¹

Recommendations for Better Gender Data

Data on women in media is crucial because it exposes the existing gender imbalance in media representation, allowing for targeted efforts to promote equality, challenge stereotypes, and ensure that women's voices and perspectives are adequately heard and considered in public discourse; essentially, it provides a clear picture of where progress is needed to achieve a more balanced media landscape.

¹ UN Fourth World Conference on Women 1995. *Beijing Platform for Action*.

² *Women and Leadership in the News Media: Evidence from 12 Markets*. Reuters.

³ *The Status of Women in the Media Report 2021*. Women's Media Center.

⁴ *The Status of Women in the Media Report 2021*. Women's Media Center.

⁵ Lauzen, M.M. 2022. *Streaming Women: Representation and Employment in Original U.S. Films Released by Streaming Services in 2022*. Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University.

⁶ Lauzen, M.M. 2024. *Boxed In: Women On Screen and Behind the Scenes on Broadcast and Streaming Television in 2023-24*. Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University.

⁷ Lauzen, M.M. 2025. *The Celluloid Ceiling: Employment of Behind-the-Scenes Women on Top Grossing U.S. Films in 2024*. Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University.

⁸ *GDI Film Study 2024: Women Take the Lead in \$20-\$50M Film*. Gena Davis Media Institute.

⁹ Lauzen 2024. *Boxed In: Women On Screen and Behind the Scenes on Broadcast and Streaming Television in 2023-24*.

¹⁰ *GDI Film Study 2024: Women Take the Lead in \$20-\$50M Film*. Gena Davis Media Institute.

¹¹ *GDI Film Study 2024: Women Take the Lead in \$20-\$50M Film*. Gena Davis Media Institute.

¹² *GDI Film Study 2024: Women Take the Lead in \$20-\$50M Film*. Gena Davis Media Institute.

¹³ Lauzen, MM. 2025. *It's a Man's (Celluloid) World: Portrayals of Female Characters in the Top Grossing U.S. Films of 2024*. Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University.

¹⁴ *Countries with the Largest Digital Populations in the World as of February 2025*. Statista.

¹⁵ *Adult Internet Usage Penetration in the United States from 2000 to 2023, by Gender*. Statista.

¹⁶ *The Status of Women in the Media Report 2021*. Women's Media Center.

¹⁷ Posetti, J. 2020. *Online Violence Against Women Journalists: A Global Snapshot of Incidence and Impacts*. UNESCO.

¹⁸ UN Women. 2023. *Expert Group Meeting Report: Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women: Towards a Common Definition*.

¹⁹ Vogels, E. 2021. *The State of Online Harassment*. The Pew Research Center.

²⁰ UN Women. 2023. *Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women: Taking Stock of Evidence and Data Collection*.

²¹ Posetti, J. 2020. *Online Violence Against Women Journalists: A Global Snapshot of Incidence and Impacts*. UNESCO.