Gender is Part of Every Story

The Global Landscape of Gender and Feminist Journalism

A Report by The Gender Beat
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There is no country in the world in which men and women are equal. This inescapable fact seeps into every aspect of public and private life, yet is often excluded from busy news agendas. Gender inequality and its consequences – including male violence, attacks on reproductive rights, unequal burdens of care work, pay gaps and political under-representation – are shared experiences across the Majority and Minority Worlds.

It is perhaps the universal nature of these phenomena that causes them to be almost entirely overlooked by media organisations. An analysis by Luba Kassova has found that just 0.02% of news coverage globally focuses on inequality between men and women when it comes to “pay, power, safety, authority, confidence, health, and ageism.”

In addition, women’s perspectives are systematically excluded from news coverage, with men comprising up to 70% of expert voices cited in major news markets. The perspectives of women of colour are even more marginalised, because, as Kassova notes, “higher weighting is given to news relevant to white people”.

How is it possible that news concerning 50% of the world’s population exists in such microscopically small proportions? Why, for example, is the fact that more than five women or girls are killed every hour by someone in their own family considered so much less newsworthy than other forms of conflict or violence?

The answers range from a lack of diversity in newsrooms, to the punishing nature of breaking news coverage, unconscious bias and overt discrimination. There are relatively few funders of this type of journalism, and no major international peer support networks of journalists who focus on gender equality in the same way as there are for journalists who cover other beats, such as climate.

Yet all over the world, every day, there are reporters, editors, activists, academics and funders working to tell stories about the experiences of women and gender-diverse people, despite how hard it can be to get those stories onto the front page.

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2. Ibid.
3. UN Women, Five Essential Facts of Know About Femicide, 2022.
This report is about them. It is a preliminary map of this under-studied area of journalism, and contains the results of a survey of just over 100 media workers who focus on gender or feminist topics. It is also a synthesis of some of the latest reports and insights into this field of journalism. This is the first survey we are aware of that aims to capture the lived experiences of people working on gender or feminist journalism.

The study and this report were put together by the members of The Gender Beat, a collective of journalists working to raise the profile of gender and feminist journalism around the world. We embarked on this journey first for ourselves: because we wanted to know who our peers were – making a concerted effort to look beyond Western Europe and the US – and to understand what challenges and solutions, approaches or opportunities we could share.

We hope that the findings below will start serious discussions in the industry about why this vital journalism has been so neglected, and how newsrooms might turn that around.

Reading this report

The report is in four parts. Part one is the introduction you are reading now. In part two, we combine the findings of our survey with an analysis of the published literature on gender and feminist journalism to identify key themes that arise in the lives of people who work on these subjects; part three is an analysis of funding models for gender/feminist journalism, including three case studies of media organisations; part four contains the full qualitative and quantitative findings of the survey.

A note on language: throughout this report, we use “women” in the most expansive way possible, and often use “women and gender-diverse people” to capture the full range of people who suffer the ill effects of gender inequality. We use the term “Majority World” rather than “Global South” or “developing countries” to refer to the parts of the world where the majority of the world’s population lives, and “Minority World” instead of “Global North” or “developed countries”.
Based on the existing literature and the results of our survey, we make the following recommendations.

1. There is strong appetite for high-quality gender/feminist journalism in newsrooms. Journalists with the required skill-sets are already doing groundbreaking work, but need more organisational support to truly thrive.

2. Doing this work can be lonely and isolating. We need to create more communities of solidarity, knowledge exchange and collaboration for those invested in gender/feminist journalism.

3. Gender/feminist journalism must be inclusive and intersectional.

4. We must raise awareness of the value of gender/feminist journalism among male colleagues, and for this field to grow, it is essential to address sexism in newsrooms.

5. Gender/feminist journalism is especially underfunded, even within the context of financial scarcity throughout the wider industry. It requires more sustained funding, and journalists need to be better paid. Media organisations need core funding, not just short-term, project-based support.

6. Editors and founders cannot just think of the reporting aspects of gender journalism. They need to think about financial sustainability from the very beginning.

7. Partnerships can help organisations reach larger audiences, learn from each other and share costs. Individual collaborations between journalists can also expand the scope of gender/feminist journalism.

8. To protect people doing gender/feminist journalism, and to encourage others, we must find better ways to stop physical and online attacks against journalists.
Burnout is widespread among journalists who focus on gender inequality – support for reporters’ and editors’ mental and emotional health is vital.

The pool of editors commissioning stories must become more diverse for reporters to have the opportunity to tell more complex stories, especially from the Majority World. News organisations must increase diversity of voices within their newsrooms and in their stories.

News organisations must equally become more self-reflective about the diversity of voices in their newsrooms and stories.

There is not enough focus on translation, nor the requisite budget for it. Excellent ground reporting is taking place, but when it is not available in the local languages, some stories never reach the most important stakeholders.

Researchers, activists, and non-profits are all allies of gender/feminist journalism. Identifying and linking them with working journalists could bolster the field significantly.

When it comes to gender journalism, we need to create new metrics for measuring impact. Numbers and legislative change are not the only examples of impact worth tracking.

There is a dearth of data when it comes to gender/feminist journalism. More research on the topic is required.
The Gender Beat is a collective of journalists working to raise the profile of gender journalism and the people who make it happen. Our aim is to support a community of journalists and media workers, to share best practice, connect people with training and other resources to facilitate quality gender journalism and to advocate to newsroom leaders and funders for more and better stories about and by women and gender-diverse people.

We want to know why journalism that places the needs of 50% of the world’s population at its centre is still considered niche. And we would like to change that.

The Gender Beat highlights the existing work of journalists who work on gender issues, and advocates for greater, more ambitious coverage of topics that affect women and gender-diverse people. We prioritise journalists working the Majority World. Our definition of women always includes trans, non-binary and gender-expansive people.

In 2022, the Gender Beat launched Noodle, a global Telegram group for people engaging in gender-conscious or feminist reporting. Members of the groups share resources and opportunities, and explore possible avenues of collaboration. We hold regular webinars on different aspects of gender journalism for Noodle members.
Throughout 2023, The Gender Beat is hosting a series of in-person discussions about the status of gender journalism at high-profile industry events such as the International Journalism Festival and the World News Media Congress. We also have provided training for journalists in gender-sensitive reporting.

The founders of The Gender Beat are Ankita Anand (Unbias the News), Eliza Anyangwe (CNN’s As Equals), Megan Clement (Impact newsletter) and Tan Hui Yee (The Straits Times). Our 2023 activities are funded from the As Equals budget.
We cannot serve the needs of members of the gender and feminist journalism ecosystem if we do not understand them. For this reason, The Gender Beat launched a survey to help us map the ecosystem that produces, disseminates, facilitates and funds reporting on gender issues. We wanted to know: is there any such thing as “feminist journalism”? Is it the same as “gender reporting” or journalism by women and gender minorities? Do these types of journalism have an audience or a business model?

In carrying out the survey, we first mapped the community and identified within and beyond it anyone who produces, commissions, teaches, or funds gender/feminist journalism. We then created databases of journalists, editors, community managers/engagement editors, researchers, activists and funders. This exercise placed special focus on people in Majority World countries. We populated these lists with suggestions from the Noodle community on Telegram, online searches, and names of organisations and individuals mentioned in other studies and articles.

We then circulated the survey via a Google Form in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French to people listed in the database. While the survey is still open, we have based this report on the answers we have received so far from 102 respondents in more than forty countries.

For the purposes of the survey, the terms “gender journalism” and “feminist journalism” are used together in the majority of questions, to capture the full diversity of this field. We invited respondents to interpret these terms broadly as journalism that centres the experiences of women and gender-diverse people and highlights the inequalities they face.

All respondents were given the opportunity to remain anonymous in subsequent publications. Those cited by name in the following material did not request anonymity.
Gender and Feminist Journalism

In a 2019 essay for IDEES magazine, Isabel Muntané, a journalist and co-founder of Almena Cooperativa Feminista in Spain, described the promise of feminist journalism as follows:

“Making feminism visible in the media is the start of a committed, sometimes exhausting process that will shake-up patriarchal mentalities and structures above and beyond inequalities between men and women... Feminist journalism opens up our perspective and provides tools for building a way of thinking that enables us to progress towards a society of free people, where people can decide on the future knowing that the media are their allies in this struggle.” 4

But many media workers cannot freely use the term feminist, or may not wish to. This is why, in our survey, we asked respondents whether they personally identify as feminist; whether they identify their work as feminist; and whether they prefer the term “feminist journalism”, ”gender journalism” or something else.

The vast majority of respondents — 94% — said they personally identify as feminist.

How do journalists identify?

Nuria Teson, a journalist from Egypt, explained why she embraces the label:

"I have had to face inequality and fight to be respected and trusted while working harder than almost any man around me since I can remember. When I arrived at a news desk for the first time, I wasn’t fully aware of the different treatment that I would have to face, or the patronising attitudes that I should try to overcome. That made me reflect on how these biases were imposed not only over me and my work or my way of being, just for being a woman, but these patronising attitudes, biased behaviours and discriminations were being replicated in almost any layer of our society, particularly in the way we approached the information that we, as journalists, convey to our societies... We were perpetuating societal biases and contributing to them. I was a feminist not even knowing what I was, because at that time I hadn’t gotten the chance to get in touch with or be part of the movement, but I soon realised I wanted to do my part ... Feminism is not a way of thinking but a way of being in the world in equity and freedom, and the fight to achieve it everywhere for everyone, and that’s why I identify as feminist.”

The overwhelming support for the feminist label at a personal level does not always translate to the professional. There are media workers who may identify as feminist themselves but still prefer to give the name “gender journalism” to their work. When given a choice between the two terms, 46% of respondents preferred the term “gender journalism”, while 30% preferred “feminist journalism”.

Juliet Makwama, a reporter with Millennium Radio in Zambia, chose gender journalism because:

“Gender is a more friendly term and will help reduce the negativity that people attach to feminism, especially in African culture. There are people who have a wrong attitude when it comes to feminism because they have misunderstood it.”

An editor respondent from Southeast Asia also said they avoided the term as a strategic decision:

“I feel that the term ‘feminist’ has been tarnished over the years. We can reclaim it, but I feel it’ll be more effective and efficient to draw more/others to our cause by just opting to use another term altogether.”

Others preferred not to use the term “feminist journalism” due to a lack of intersectionality within feminism itself. One reporter said she did not associate with the term “because Indian feminism is essentially exclusive to upper caste women and I am a lower caste woman. I subscribe to womanism instead.”

Some respondents embraced the feminist label for their journalism despite concerns about the connotations of the word. Another reporter in Southeast Asia expressed their preference for the term “feminist journalism” in the following terms:

“’Gender reporting’ could feel limiting - it can be interpreted to mean that you are a journalist who mostly or only writes about gender issues, but I think that the work involves more than that. It involves being sensitive to the gender implications of other stories you are writing, even when it’s not directly related to a gender issue, and whose voices are being represented, how your newsroom is structured, how your staff interact with each other, how your staff treat their gender diverse sources, etc. And while the term ‘feminist’ can be looked down upon - many people (mostly men) have used it in a derogatory way or joke around about it - that is not a reason not to use it. I think, on the other hand, it is a reason to use it and be proud of it.”
Media activist Ángela Rodríguez, from Italy, made a clear distinction between the two:

"Regarding gender journalism, I consider that we have learned since 2020, when the debate about gender and race was at its peak, that the term gender cannot strictly be defined, especially by the binary code: male-female . . . Therefore when reporting about gender we should be as neutral as possible, with the exception of the individual who tells us how they like to be named. Feminist journalism is, from my point of view, completely different. Unlike gender journalism, that is more related to a writing style that includes everybody in the society no matter their race or gender. Feminist journalism is closely linked to the arduous century-long fight that women are part of society and must be part of the political, financial, social and media narrative."

An editor noted:

"I think it’s important to have both in the sense that everyone can be feminist, but not everyone is queer. With gender journalism, you can include the latter too."

Another editor in the Middle East and North Africa region defined gender journalism and feminist separately:

"For me, gender journalism means reporting men’s, women’s, non-binary and gender-diverse people’s stories fairly, challenging gender stereotypes and highlighting gender inequalities. I believe that good journalism should be gender journalism as it reflects the diversity of our societies - in an ideal world, we shouldn’t have to call it "gender" journalism. Feminist journalism, for me, centres the reporting around women and people who identify as women, and women’s rights. It also challenges gender stereotypes and highlights gender inequalities."

There are also those who apply a feminist or gender-sensitive lens to their work but have never classified it as such. One respondent from Eastern Europe said:

"I have never really thought about how I identify my reporting. All I want to do is highlight the challenges faced by the women around me. Maybe I’ll start thinking of my reporting as feminist from now on."

**Defining gender/feminist journalism**

Stories about women and gender-diverse people do not automatically constitute gender-sensitive or feminist reporting. As many of our respondents noted, some stories that cover gender issues can actually reinforce harmful stereotypes.
So what should gender or feminist journalism look like? The Conseils de Journalistes in France defines it as a way of seeing:

“Gender-sensitive journalism is all about striking a balance; gender equality in the handling of news means putting on "gender glasses" as it were, and ensuring that when delivering news or producing a programme, both men and women have an equal opportunity to speak.”

Responding to our survey, a funding regrantor in Western Europe emphasised the need for gender considerations throughout every stage of the production process:

“Gender Journalism is journalism that centres gender reporting in all its forms (binary and non-binary) and in all its stages (journalism commission, production, sourcing, publishing, distribution and impact reporting).”

Sensitivity is another essential part of doing gender or feminist journalism. In an article for the Center for Journalism Ethics, academic Lindsay Palmer shared the experience of Venezuelan photojournalist Adriana Fernández, who was sent to report on the accidental killing of an 18-year-old woman by the military. Palmer writes that Fernandez:

“thought about how she could relate to these people—what social, cultural, and national experiences did they share . . . In other words, she tried to see the incident from the family’s perspective, rather than from the perspective of a detached journalist trying to narrativize their pain for a foreign audience. Eventually, the family granted Fernández permission to shadow them as they attended the funeral.”

Good gender reporting also means having sources who are not always straight, cis men. The Global Media Monitoring Project has found that just one in every four subjects and sources in news stories are women.

While inclusion of diverse sources is a positive trend going beyond gender journalism, at times it can carry its own challenges.

Emma Pearson, editor at The Local France, shared this experience:

“I find it’s harder to get female experts to agree to interviews (on any kind of stories) but that when you do get someone, they are inevitably better”

6. ‘Funding regrantors’ are defined as people who redistribute funds from external organisations through grants, scholarships, fellowships or awards.
7. Lindsay Palmer, Why We Need "Feminist" Human Rights Journalism, Center for Journalism Ethics, 2018.
The need for gender/feminist journalism

Regardless of preferences regarding terminology, we wanted to know whether the people involved in producing and supporting gender/feminist journalism felt the industry was adequately covering topics relating to gender. Previous studies confirm that these topics are often overlooked. A 2022 report by the French media development organisation CFI focusing on Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Niger and the Democratic Republic of Congo noted that in the latter country, the media was not addressing the issue of sexual violence in conflict zones:

“They claimed that such events were merely ‘collateral damage’. Female journalists seized on the subject to let the world know that the conflict ‘targeted women’s bodies’, via systematic atrocities to destroy not only their bodies but the very fabric of society. They were among the first to report on the use of rape as a weapon in war and impunity for the perpetrators.”

In our survey, there was widespread agreement that the current state of gender journalism was not up to the mark: 88% of respondents felt that the media covered gender issues either “mostly poorly” or “not at all well”.

Ángela Rodríguez articulated it this way:

“The mainstream media does not pass the exam. They have tried for the past years but reading articles, reports and watching some of their social media videos or TV broadcasts, it’s quite shameful to see how they cover feminism, femicides and how they despise the fact that women defend their rights to be equal. What they do is “feminist washing”. It does not come as a surprise because we still can see who are the board members, and who hold the C-level positions: men and prominently, white [men]. That’s the reason why so many people, including myself as a journalist, search for independent media that properly cover the news, or at least, they try by hiring women, POC, and members from the LGTBIQA+ community.”

Dina Abougahzala, an editor at Egab in Egypt, sees male dominance in newsroom management as part of the problem:

"Most key positions in newsrooms are occupied by men and unfortunately I have seen first hand how male editors tend to downplay gender stories. So, unless this changes in mainstream media, gender coverage will remain poor. Honestly, I also believe that gender is part of every story and until we reach that stage where we don’t have to add a label to journalism about gender then we are still far away from our goal.”

One respondent felt the media doesn’t pay enough attention to casual sexism:

“Gender related news appear only as extremes. Such topics either celebrate the subjects or portray them as victims. But it is in the mundane and everyday life that discrimination based on sexes and genders takes place, which is covered very poorly in any media form.”

A respondent in Eastern Europe said:

“There's certainly been a shift towards more feminist topics in media coverage in recent years, especially in the aftermath of the Harvey Weinstein scandal, but we still have a long way to go. One of my issues with English-language publications is their western-centric outlook and narrative, though I do understand that's just the nature of the beast and these outlets cater to a specific audience.”

The sexism in society is present in newsrooms as well. A survey respondent from Afghanistan recounted being ridiculed by onlookers when she went to interview women, and also being laughed at by her male editor for doing gender journalism, not to mention the indictment she faced from “the religious men of society”.

The use of derogatory terms in the media was another problem highlighted by a respondent in Southeast Asia:

"I think many reporters are too busy to ... understand the nuance of gender issues and how to write it sensitively, so they avoid it. There are also certain terms ... that are seen as derogatory but are still being used because they are part of the newspaper lexicon …”

As a community manager from Europe said in our survey: “There clearly is a lack of diversity in global media and also a lack of reflection on one's own position. And so, the patriarchy continues without being too conscious of it.”

The level of audience engagement with respect to gender journalism is also related to diversity in the organisation. As reporter Charlotte Ricca wrote in an article for Digital Context Next:

"The word ‘engagement’ is constantly used in media circles, but you can’t engage with your audience without representing the diversity of their communities.” 10

Workplace challenges

A Free Press Limited report from 2021 with inputs from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Egypt, Malaysia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan and Venezuela listed four kinds of workplace discrimination faced by women in journalism:

1. Undermining of competence by male colleagues
2. Not being allowed to cover “hard news” topics
3. Wage inequalities
4. Career development; no women in leadership positions

The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism published a report on women and leadership in the news media. Looking at 12 news markets, they found that only 22% of top editors are women, despite women making up 40% of reporters.

There is also inequality across beats. A survey of around 12,000 US-based journalists in 2022 by the Pew Research Center found:

"Men account for 83% of the surveyed journalists who indicated that they cover sports, far higher than the 15% who are women. Men also account for majorities of those who cover political news (60%) and news about science and technology (58%)."

The challenge does not end with individuals and organisations doing more gender stories. Physical and online attacks on women and gender-diverse journalists are a growing concern, especially when tech companies do not do enough to combat the violence against women taking place on their platforms.

A 2022 UN report found that their interviewees across 15 countries had no real hope of grievance redressal from these companies when they were harassed online.

A report from the Zamenhof Institute, a think tank in Poland,\(^{15}\) found 59% women reporters had experienced sexual harassment, and two-thirds of them had to face it from someone who “was the boss or someone in a superior position in the job hierarchy”. In Greece, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network found that most women journalists found it difficult to report harassment when it occurred.\(^{16}\)

Harassment catches up with women even when they are in exile: Chinese journalists working in Germany have faced bomb threats, deepfakes, hacking attempts and false impersonation online, according to a report from Radio Free Asia.\(^{17}\)

Our respondents who are audience developers shared that the kinds of gender stories favoured by readers/viewers/listeners are those to do with women’s health and reproductive rights, domestic violence, and social justice. The work of these engagement editors finds more support in organisations where gender reporting is “part of the identity and mission”. Despite this in-house support, “hate on social media” makes it harder to engage with the audience.

**Burnout**

It is well known that burnout is common among journalists, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, our finding that 43% of media workers had experienced burnout while working on gender or feminist journalism projects raises significant concerns about the psychological toll of this work.

One of our respondents described her experience as follows:

“Burnout has been a very real, persistent presence in my life as a freelance reporter, but like many others, I had internalised the idea that it’s our duty to ignore it and keep hustling anyway. The burnout I’ve experienced lately has been more general, but I did experience burnout specific to my gender reporting after an intense month-long reporting trip … I had spent the months prior reporting a 9-page magazine piece on child trafficking … (constantly speaking to female survivors), and then … I spent days listening to female refugees and survivors of conflict. I was on my own on those trips and I remember waking up to nightmares all the time.”

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I was fatigued, low, and couldn’t work for 2-3 months after that but did not know what I was experiencing. I was diagnosed with clinical depression soon after, which wasn’t entirely a result of my gender reporting of course, but it definitely had to do, in parts, with the very isolating career path I had chosen for myself.”

One of the most discouraging reasons for this burnout, as described by a respondent from Mexico, is getting harassed by sources:

“A factor in burnout I experienced last year was definitely gendered - getting sexually harassed while reporting (including by men I was supposed to be/needed to be reporting on) happens constantly and it gets harder to handle sometimes; much younger male colleagues doing much better than me (getting commissioned more, paid more, etc.) due to the preference for white male correspondents with an ‘objective’ approach ... At my lowest points of burnout, I have thought to myself it is not worth continuing ... because nobody wants to listen to women’s voices, they want to hear about the biggest stories of our time from young white US or British men and there’s no point trying to do this as a woman over 40.”

For Mythili Sampathkumar in the US, burnout happened when “covering the Trump campaigns and presidency as a daily news reporter ... Practically every story was about the results of an under-checked patriarchy and the toxicity of non-intersectional feminism.”

A respondent from Austria and another from India talked of “personal attachment” or “triggers” when it came to reporting on issues they had also encountered in their personal lives.

Based in Senegal, journalist Khadidiatou Cissé explained the reasons for her burnout:

“Some reports are a bit too relatable or others are so distant that the ‘solution’ to some issues seems almost inexistent.”

Dealing with male bias

A common vexation was having to explain to both colleagues and readers that feminist reporting does not involve “male bashing” or a “secret agenda”.

Munkhchimeg Davaasharav is an editor with the Media Council of Mongolia. She found that while "mostly women are keen to practice gender journalism, involving men is challenging.”

18. Media Council of Mongolia
It is a similar story for Dorcas Muga-Odumbe, a Kenya-based gender editor for the Nation Media Group. When asked in an interview about her biggest challenge, she said it is:

“Getting men on board ... getting men to understand that it [gender journalism] is not a war between men and women ... that women’s stories deserve a prime space in the newspaper, if not on the cover.”

Absence of support and solidarity from one’s own teammates/leadership can be a demoralising factor, as happened with a Nepali journalist:

“In private, senior editors and people with clout will praise our work. But on social media most of them rarely show that kind of support since our work is considered too "bold" and questioning the very structures they benefit from and we are critical about.”

Another gender editor explained the difficulty of getting their team to adopt a gender equal approach:

“My job is to review the gender approach in all journalistic production. Part of it is to explain and even convince reporters to make adjustments to make journalism more ethical. Sometimes the editors or coordinators don’t take this well and it becomes a constant struggle.”

Samuel Matsikure works in Zimbabwe with GALZ, an association of LGBTI people in Zimbabwe. His non-profit supports gender journalism. The cause for his frustration is that:

“Patriarchy is embedded in many of our societies and at times we are not conscious of this when it comes to allocation of resources, the language we use and the positions we hold, which can create inequalities. Society in Zimbabwe remains male dominated, and there are no exceptions in the media when it comes to reporting and who owns narratives of women, trans communities and LGBTI people.”

Mariana Fagundes Ausani is a researcher in France. The obstacle she met was people considering gender journalism “nothing more than political and ideological activism, which, for someone who researches journalism from a sociological perspective, is discouraging, since I start from the understanding that there is no way to do journalism without ideological inclinations - the problem is that what is considered neutral is masculine.”

19. The Nation Media Group
20. GALZ
Intersectionality and multiple discrimination

The challenges experienced by gender or feminist media workers are often compounded by discrimination due to race, sexuality, disability and class.

Despite her organisation employing a large number of women, one worker in Western Europe said they could do with “accommodating more women of colour.”

An editor, also based in Europe, said:

“It's just hard and exhausting and lonely to be pushing for work to be done differently, to inhabit a body that is minoritised, to have levied against you all of the stereotypes of being a black woman in leadership, to have predominantly had no support from white women in media orgs, and to carry on yourself the burden of doing work that is important and urgent and for which you see that few others are doing so you must continue.”

Another editor in South-east Asia cited the challenge of “writing LGBTQI+ stories in a country that doesn't acknowledge it.”

Caste and religious hierarchies in newsrooms further constrict the space allotted to gender journalism. Hindi journalist-editor Manisha Pandey summarised her experience of such workplaces in India:

“The social and cultural environment of the Hindi belt is male dominated, patriarchal, and biased [against] women . . . Hindi newsrooms are mostly led by privileged caste Hindu men. They have little tolerance for diversity and it reflects even in the newsroom’s environment and journalistic work. Throughout my journalism career, I have been rarely supported by my bosses for my feminist views and the kind of stories and reports I wanted to write, until I reached a senior position and had some power to do what I truly believed in.”

An Indian freelance reporter said their challenge came from their location:

“When it comes to reporting from under-developed/developing countries, there are certain types of stories that are more likely to be accepted than others. The acceptance also often depends on the topic of interest in the West (like abortion at a certain time, or tech and climate change now). Often, editors don’t see how something happening here will resonate with readers in the West if it doesn’t meet these certain criteria. This makes it harder to do important, underreported stories for global publications.”
Other challenges

Many reporters had to deal with low rates of pay when doing gender or feminist journalism.

An Indian journalist said:

"Freelancing is competitive and a limited number of publications are interested in commissioning gender stories. They are usually small, have less money and no field reporting budgets. That means all the expenses come out of my pocket. I am underpaid and overworked. No organisation pays therapy bills for gender reporters."

Joyline "Jo" Maenzanise is a writer in Zimbabwe who pointed to a tricky situation they faced regarding monetary compensation to sources:

"I have reported articles on the queer community. I have encountered situations where potential sources (other queer people) are hesitant to share experiences especially if there is no compensation. This is valid especially since there are people (activists working at queer organisations, etc) who are essentially making money by using queer people’s experiences to appeal for funds (from which they get paid). Somehow, this has also made me think twice about reporting on LGBTQIA+ experiences especially since I won’t be in a position to compensate all the people I’d plan to interview for my story."

From South Korea, another reporter described challenges in protecting sources:

"Mostly it’s about the ethical questions around how much I can expose them [the sources] in the story, and how well I can portray their lives to the wider public without causing unnecessary backlash or online harassment."

Additional concerns expressed by reporters and editors were finding places to publish, a lack of interest from editors, a dismissal of feminism and a refusal to see things from a gender lens, ensuring the work reaches beyond feminist circles, finding sources missed by the mainstream media, inadequate marketing skills, lack of editing, newsrooms being managed by men who think gender stories are only for women, and a dearth of people to exchange ideas with.

Freelance journalist Annie Zulu from Zambia also said that “the issue of censorship” is a restriction.
Funding was an issue among facilitators. Global Press CEO Cristi Hegranes, based in the US, mentioned “lack of funding” as an obstacle to facilitating gender journalism. This, of course, is a problem common to others in the ecosystem as well (discussed in further detail in the chapter on business models).

One researcher said it was hard “finding data, sources and approaches that generate attention and interest”.

Dr Nimmagadda Bhargav is a researcher in India who has grappled with the task of finding enough relevant data on the subject:

“Data is the villain. Despite the tall talk of datafication and knowledge society, in a country like India, getting data on gender issues continues to be an obstacle for research enquiries.”

Another issue for researchers is “finding like-minded scholars for collaboration”, said Beatrice Mbogoh from Kenya.
Benefits of gender/feminist journalism

Producing gender or feminist journalism in a context where such work is not widely supported or well remunerated is clearly a challenge for many. But our findings showed that it can also be richly rewarding.

There are clear societal benefits from producing gender-sensitive reporting. This joint statement by a consortium of international media groups sums them up as follows:

“We strongly believe in the transformative role media can play in achieving gender equality in societies. By creating gender-sensitive and gender-transformative content and breaking gender stereotypes. By challenging traditional social and cultural norms and attitudes regarding gender perceptions both in content and in the media houses. By showing women in leadership roles and as experts on a diversity of topics on a daily basis, not as an exception.”

Meanwhile, Sarah Bove from the global development organisation TechnoServe argues:

“The media has the ability to shape attitudes and create a supportive environment for women’s economic empowerment. At the same time, players in the media sector, such as media channels, advertisers, and research companies benefit from reaching and engaging wider audiences for their programs, advertisements, and data analysis services.”

Motivation and rewards

We invited respondents to the survey to share their motivations for doing gender/feminist journalism as well the benefits that come with this work. Many felt a moral or ethical imperative to devote their time to gender inequality. One reporter in the MENA region said:

“Because it is a matter of equity, we are part of a society that keeps women’s voices lowered and consistently ignores it. It is a moral obligation to counter those trends.”

Meanwhile, an NGO worker in Western Europe argued that gender/feminist journalism was an improved form of reporting:

“Gender journalism is actually higher quality journalism as it favours diversity, the common good and is clearly positioned in respect and defence of human rights. It is very much one practice that fulfils the potential/contribution of journalism for driving us towards more inclusive and democratic societies.”

People working across the gender/feminist journalism ecosystem reported a wide range of benefits associated with the field. Again, there was a strong ethical component. One reporter in sub-Saharan Africa, argued that gender/feminist journalism helped contribute to a better world:

"The benefits are that it creates an environment where people will be respected for what they have to offer and not by their gender."

Most encouragingly, the vast majority of respondents said they wanted to spend more time working on gender/feminist projects. Those who wanted to spend the same amount of time on this work already spent 75-100% of their time on gender/feminist journalism. This points to significant untapped resources and burgeoning enthusiasm to produce more journalism focusing on gender inequality, should newsrooms decide to invest more in this beat.

There is also a strong business case for investing in gender/feminist journalism. Poor coverage of issues that affect women and gender-diverse people, which creates a gap in the market for women as news consumers.

In her 2022 report, Luba Kassova found that reducing the gender consumption gap by 1% would generate $11 billion for media outlets over the next five years and $38 billion over the next ten.²⁴

Independent gender journalism has been around for a long time. It was back in 1903 that Japan saw its first magazine that concentrated on women as its audience. Katei-no-Tomo “tried to encourage women through the publication, which was non-political, to develop their own identities and act as equals within their households”. But not all promising beginnings manage to sustain themselves for as long as well-funded legacy media.

The closure of feminist publications like 25-year-old Bitch Media in the US or the folding of UK-based gal-dem after eight years of publication are clear indicators that even the best and the most celebrated work can come to a halt, often due to business concerns. Gender journalism often begins as a passion project but, to keep it running and relevant, no organisation can escape questions of financial stability. Business sustainability challenges are of course common across the media landscape in 2023, but the overall lack of meaningful coverage of gender and feminist issues in mainstream outlets and the particular paucity of sustained funding in this area combine to make the challenges ever more acute.

At present, philanthropic funding is a major source of finances for gender journalism. In some cases, entire publications leverage philanthropic funds to focus solely on gender issues. In others, there are separate gender desks or specific projects and fellowships supporting gender stories within existing organisations. Many projects rely on individual donations and subscriptions as added sources of income.

Based in the US but global in its coverage, The Fuller Project was founded in 2015. It is “dedicated to groundbreaking reporting that catalyses positive change for women”. The publication is funded by philanthropies and family foundations, while being open to individual donors and “commissions from partner outlets”.

28. The Fuller Project
OpenDemocracy maintains a separate platform, openDemocracy 50.50, for its gender coverage. It has its headquarters in London and teams across four continents, 53% of whom are women. OpenDemocracy is published by a company, which is owned by a non-profit. The organisation works with a fiscal sponsor in the US, which acts as an "umbrella organisation for a project and accepts and administers funds on its behalf". In 2022, 79.5% of their income came through grants, and 19.6% of it was donated by individuals. The rest came through partnerships and other sources.  

Muy Waso is a “feminist digital magazine of culture and entertainment in Bolivia”. The founders sustained the website with their own personal capital in the first two years. Their current revenue sources are a mix of memberships, consultancies, advertising and grants. Their Muy Waso Lab provides consulting services that brought in 60% of their income in the year 2022. Grants and fellowships contributed 33%, and the audience pitched in 7%.

The all-women team of Unbias the News, “an anti-racist, feminist and inclusive publication”, is a non-profit funded by philanthropy, project specific grants, donations, and training/consultancies. It is based in Germany but has a global team of editors.

Brazil’s Ponte Jornalismo, established in 2014, considers gender as one of its main themes, along with race, culture, and state violence. It started as a voluntary journalism project. Now it relies on reader support and donations from private foundations for core funding and specific projects, and sale of its content and services. Its main institutional supporter is Open Society Foundations. The main content buyers are Yahoo News.

With its two co-founders based in Asia and Europe, Nadja is a self-funded start-up committed to publishing “stories of women who are defying conventions, crushing stereotypes and leading in their fields”. It is a digital content creator with a few guest writers a year.

With funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, in 2021 CNN hired a team to build out its reporting on global gender inequality.

29. openDemocracy 50.50; Our Supporters
30. Muy Waso, About Us
31. Unbias the News, Editorial Manifesto; Funding & Transparency
32. Ponte Jornalismo, Who We Are; Who Funds
33. Velocidad, Ponte Jornalismo (Brazil): How to Professionalize Your News Team
34. Nadja, Our story
As Equals covers no breaking news, instead it is dedicated to in-depth, investigative or explanatory human-interest stories that reveal or explain the causes of gender equality and also reports efforts to address inequality. Its global team reports mainly on the Global South, with a specific interest on the Least Developed Countries.

Funding gender/feminist journalism

Despite the funding challenges, there are clearly benefits from investing in gender coverage. An article on the Media Development Investment Fund’s website argues:

“A women-focused approach in areas such as content strategy, audience engagement, revenue management and product design can pay dividends for media business development. Our aim is not to justify media initiatives that are geared towards women on the basis of financial benefits, but rather to strengthen the message that putting women in focus is important for building stronger and better news organisations.”

To understand more about the funding dynamics of the gender/feminist journalism ecosystem, we targeted funders and funding regranters with specific questions about their work. Four funders filled out our mapping survey.

All funders were strongly supportive of gender and feminist journalism. One regrantor in East Africa had this to say on the subject:

“Funding feminist journalism makes good business sense. Other advantages of funding feminism journalism include providing a platform for women and other marginalized groups to express themselves; addressing systemic issues of gender inequality, misogyny, and discrimination in society; raising awareness on gender-related issues frequently overlooked in mainstream media; and holding those in authority accountable. Women and other marginalized groups constitute a sizable underserved audience. It is reckless for media outlets to continue to ignore them, especially as they struggle to find viable business models to stay afloat. Funding feminist journalism can encourage media innovation and creativity by introducing new perspectives and approaches to reaching this underserved audience.”

35. As Equals, Landing page; FAQs
They also explained the hurdles facing the financing of such journalism: some funders have preconceived ideas as to what interventions are impactful and expect quick return on investment or impact measures, which are difficult to achieve within the short lifespan of a grant.

A funding regranter in Europe said “we need more reporting of these stories” and feminist reporting is important for “the unveiling of serious human rights violations”. But they said it was difficult to mobilise funds for this work as there was “not too much interest from donors”.

Another funding regranter, in Southeast Asia, who supports “individual journalists who report on gender issues”, also mentioned a lack of funding.

Funders are often focused on specific themes/topics and compel organisations to fit their project into these narrow parameters to qualify for grants. Funding gender or feminist journalism within such initiatives is tough because “people do not seem to see it as a priority; sometimes including sub-grantees”, one funder told us.

These funding opportunities are not always classified as gender journalism grants. A regranter working in Europe articulated it this way:

“*We fund journalism and do so with clear strategies to prioritise gender equality even if not naming our grants as specifically for gender or feminism journalism. We focus on gender in our grant implementation because the imbalances will not reflect the full demographic of audiences our sub-grantees are to serve.*”

Within grants, editorial and marketing costs are often not accounted for. Many do not cover staff reporters’ or freelancers’ fees and only allow for expenses.

Funding can be restrictive in the sense that it might not allow for other sources of revenue during the grant’s term period. But when external funding dries up it is not possible to immediately raise revenue through other means.

Editors also mentioned that at times funding commitments are rolled back citing “budgetary reasons”, or are not made till there is a complementary “buy in” from a larger organisation.

Then there is the challenge of establishing the impact of gender journalism. Not all gender stories lead to court judgments or new policies.
But many of them open up conversations about taboo subjects, provide potentially life-saving information (stories on sexual and reproductive health, for example), create awareness and disseminate vocabulary focused on respecting the dignity of all genders. All this is essential for the physical and mental health of a society and its individual members. Yet limiting metrics like numbers or immediate material change ignore such impact. In the absence of broader metrics, it becomes tougher to convince funders about the urgent need for feminist reporting.
Case Studies

BehanBox (India)

Based in India, BehanBox’s aim is “bringing the voices of women and gender diverse persons to the centre of public discourse”. Its launch coincided with the 2020 pandemic. That is why its founder, Bhanupriya Rao, said she saw no point in trying to “cobble together an investment” through external sources. It would have taken time to reach out to funders and explain what gender journalism is, and so BehanBox started out as a website created out of personal savings.

In the beginning, there was no one on staff. (There are three people on the payroll now, with plans to expand.) The reporting too was done pro bono, with the understanding that if the project generated any money it would be proportionately divided amongst those involved.

When their self-supported investigation into the challenges faced by India’s health workers began to receive a lot of attention, another online publication, Article 14, contacted BehanBox. Together they successfully applied to Thakur Foundation for a grant. BehanBox also partnered with the publication queerbeat, which had received a Pulitzer Grant, though BehanBox was a minor financial contributor.

They have since gone on to take on research projects. “Whatever margins we made out of these projects went on to fund our journalism,” said Rao. They also received a grant from Google News Equity Fund for doing work around historically underrepresented communities.

The organisation has not yet received any core funding.

In India, recent government regulations have made it harder for investors to put money into non-profits or independent media. BehanBox is now looking into reader-funded (membership/subscription) models of sustainability.

As Rao put it: “When I started out, I thought everyone else must pay. Readers should have free stuff to have access to information. Now I want to also tell the readers, ‘Look, what you are getting is a lot of hard work. So much goes behind bringing you this piece of information. So how can you help us keep this going?’”

37. BehanBox
38. BehanBox, Women Health Workers Series
39. Article 14
40. Queerbeat
Rao remembered talking to funders earlier and hearing things like, “Oh, there is no business in it.” But now people have started acknowledging women’s readership and the revenue that comes from it. “There has been a little progress, I would say.”

Being a small organisation gave BehanBox the flexibility to try out different things to find out the best use of their resources. In the first year, all their journalists were freelancers. Now they would like to hire some reporters but, in the founder’s words, “it’s purely a matter of availability of resources”.

The Nation (Kenya)

The Nation Media Group has a gender desk, headed by editor Dorcas Muga-Odumbe. The desk was created in 2019 “to serve the needs of more female readers and subscribers”. It has four reporters, two sub-editors, a social media editor, and an impact editor.

The Gates Foundation initially funded a health desk at The Nation. The desk performed well and one of the things to come out at the end of its three years’ review was that many readers were looking for gender stories. That is when Nation submitted a funding proposal to the same foundation, which was accepted. The initial funding was for three years, which was renewed in 2022 for another three years.

Muga-Odumbe said: “[The Nation] introduced a paywall sometime back. It did not perform very well but it is because we didn’t strategise well. We have recently restructured and there are plans to reintroduce the paywall.” The gender stories won’t be behind the paywall, however, because they are separately funded.

Every Friday, the gender desk puts out a print publication called The Voice, with pull-outs for occasions such as International Women’s Day. “Interestingly we have advertisers coming on board who advertise within the pull-outs. That becomes a money stream for the Nation,” Muga-Odumbe said. This way, the gender desk adds to the larger media group’s revenue.

On the importance of gender journalism, Muga-Odumbe stated: “As it is, media houses are struggling. The advertisers do not have money so they are not advertising much. Women make up 51% of the population. If you leave this 51% out … and if they don’t read about themselves, they will not buy the paper.”

Gloria Media and the Impact newsletter (France)

Gloria Media is an independent media company and publisher of feminist newsletters. The company currently publishes three newsletters: Les Glorieuses, Les Petites Glo and Impact. As a whole, Gloria Media has 250,000 subscribers across all its newsletter brands.

Gloria Media has two employees: its founder, Rebecca Amsellem, who writes the Les Glorieuses newsletter and Megan Clement, the editor of the Impact newsletter (and co-author of this report). Megan works with a team of freelance contributors, writers and social media experts, as well as a specialist feminist translator, to ensure the newsletter maintains an inclusive tone in both English and French.

Gloria Media follows a hybrid business model – with funds for Impact and Les Petites Glo coming from international non-profit organisations and income for Les Glorieuses coming from commercial sponsorships. Sponsorship has no influence on the content of newsletters. The Impact newsletter is funded in its entirety by a grant from the New Venture Fund.

As a small team, it can be challenging to dedicate the time and resources required to leverage more funds. But the size of the organisation also allows the team to be flexible in pursuing collaborations with other media organisations who may have complementary skills.

42. Gloria Media: Les Glorieuses; Les Petites Glo; Impact
These are the full results of our survey of people who work on gender/feminist journalism. The short survey sought to understand the needs of the various members of the gender journalism ecosystem. The survey was conducted through Google Forms in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French. The opening page also invited people to make contact if they chose to answer in a language other than English.

Who responded?

In total, 104 people responded to the survey. Two respondents were removed because of incomplete or false data, for example a bogus email address.

The youngest respondent was 20 and the oldest 67. The average age was 37. Ninety-one (89%) respondents identified as women; seven identified as men and four identified as non-binary/genderqueer/gender-fluid/gender-diverse. Twenty respondents identified as members of the LGBTQIA+ community; 75 did not self-identify as LGBTQIA+ community members and five respondents preferred not to say.

The range of countries in which the respondents worked was vast – from Armenia to Zimbabwe. In total, responses were collected from more than 40 different countries. The most common countries recorded were: France with eleven responses, India with nine responses, Germany with six, Thailand (five) and Kenya and Portugal (four each).

Professional roles

We asked respondents what their primary role was. Half (51) were reporters and just over a quarter (26) were editors, four were audience developers/community managers. In addition, ten were academic researchers; seven were NGO workers or activists; two were journalism funders and two funding re-granters. These categories are analysed together as “facilitators” of gender/feminist journalism.
Defining gender/feminist journalism

We asked respondents how they defined themselves and their journalism work.

Do you identify as feminist?

The vast majority of respondents (94%) identified as feminist; only six respondents did not. The reasons for identifying as feminist were varied but shared a belief in rights and equality – these words were mentioned in almost every response.

“As I think feminism is about creating a world with equality as its main value”

“A matter of rights”

“I believe in the equality (rights) and empowerment of women and other gender minorities.”

“It is one of the many ways to create peace and justice.”

“I’m a feminist because feminism, as a philosophical approach and perspective, guides me in understand[ing] humans, non-humans, and things in a better way. It directs me in understanding the capillaries of domination that usually go unnoticed or taken for granted. More importantly, being a feminist helps me in questioning ‘common-sense’.”

Other responses highlighted feminism as a personal issue:

“I come from a family that is basically a matriarchy. Since my grandmother’s time, our families were run by women because of the premature death of husbands or absent fathers/husbands.”

“Living in [a] country steeped in patriarchy, it is difficult not [to] be one.”

While the working conditions that many of the respondents faced also was a factor in their feminism:

“Women are so consistently sidelined and overlooked and underpaid and marginalised that being a feminist seems to be the only way to start fixing this crap.”
“When I arrived at a news desk for the first time, I wasn’t fully aware of the different treatment that I would have to face, or the patronising attitudes that I should try to overcome.”

“I believe that women or those who identify so deserve an equal access to opportunities just as their male counterparts. My society for one is patriarchal and being a journalist I take it upon myself to use my position to amplify the voices of women.”

For the six respondents who did not identify as feminist, reasons included that their country did not offer a supportive and inclusive environment for feminism:

“In my country … most people do not really accept those words, they feel women want to be dominated.”

Or that their belief was in balance:

**What do you consider gender/feminist journalism to be?**

There is no widely accepted definition of "gender journalism" or "feminist journalism". We wanted to know how respondents conceptualised their work, so we asked them what gender/feminist journalism meant to them. Respondents were given the option to define one or both terms.

For many respondents, the definition was relatively straightforward:

“Journalism that highlights issues affecting women.”

“Journalism writing/reporting about feminism/gender/LGBT+ issues.”

For others, it involved broader perspectives:

"I see gender journalism as a broad field that unpacks systemic biases. Since gender plays such a fundamental (and often hidden) part in social conditioning, the kind of best practices unearthed through gender journalism can logically apply to other aspects like race and class.”

"I believe that feminist journalism should cover and publish data and narratives that give us all tools and information with an intersectional perspective, which will be crucial to face up to diverse oppressions and violence, but also to understand our position about patriarchy and be conscious of our own privileges.”
“Journalism that focuses on patriarchy and gendered problems, but also how systemic gender oppression comes up in everyday life in ways that are usually not obvious to the general public.”

Among editors in particular, there were a number of lengthy, detailed responses to this question, highlighting commonalities and distinctions of gender and feminist journalism:

“I believe in equality of the sexes but am not a particularly strong or vocal advocate of it.”

Or that their belief was in balance:

“It is a type of journalism that respects the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion and represent ethically women and other historically vulnerable populations like LGTBIQ+ community, disable people, ‘racialized’ people, etc. I believe gender journalism is a way of making journalism richer because it includes the voices of people who are normally silenced.”

“I wish we didn’t have a separate term for it, because it should not be a separate issue, but I would define it as journalism that focuses on, and advocates for, gender equality, in all spheres of society and industry.”

What percentage of your work do you estimate is dedicated to gender journalism/feminist journalism?

We asked respondents whether they currently worked on gender/feminist journalism, and if they did, how much of their time they spent on it: 0-25%; 25-50%; 50-75%; or 75-100%.

Three-quarters of respondents currently worked on gender/feminist journalism, including 82% of reporters and 72% of editors.

99%

Number of respondents who wanted to spend the same amount or more time on gender/feminist journalism.
Reporters had a fairly even split across the time categories, with considerably more than half spending at least 50% of their time on this reporting. For editors, the pattern was different with the same percentage (34%) spending more than 75% and less than 25% of their time on gender/feminist reporting.

Two-thirds of respondents wanted to spend more time on gender/feminist journalism – the other third were happy if the proportion of time remained the same. Only one respondent, a reporter, wished to spend less time.

For editors, there was a fifty/fifty split between wanting more time or staying the same, while three-quarters of facilitators wished to increase the amount of time spent on gender/feminist journalism. The majority of respondents who did not wish for change were already spending 75-100% of their time working on gender/feminist journalism.

Would you like the percentage of time spent on gender/feminist journalism to be more or less, or stay the same?

- More: 64.1%
- Stay the same: 34.8%
- Less: 1.1%

Why do you do it?

Given the lack of prominence this type of reporting is often given by newsrooms, we wanted to know what motivated people to produce or support gender/feminist journalism.
The most common themes that emerged from these responses were in fact that gender/women’s issues are ignored or under-reported:

“Because so very few others are!”

“Because it has been ignored for too long. This lack of diversity in knowledge and perspective we end up missing out on adversely impacts all of us.”

“I figured that no news can portray a true depiction of the rot in the society if half of the population is ignored and their voices muffled. Both genders must be represented, including those of minorities.”

Once again, issues of equality provided motivation:

“More often than not women are treated like second-class citizens, no matter where they live. One tiny way of changing the status quo for future generations is to report on their lived experiences.”

“It is about development. It is because both men and women play an equal role in the development process and people's ability to participate positively should not be based on gender.”

Another motivation was to counter the dominance of men’s perspectives in the industry:

“As I said, so that in a sector dominated by male viewpoints and the male gaze, the other half of the population gets to have an equal say.”

“Because the media ... frequently portrays women as unequal in their reporting, they classify women as second-class citizens, capturing their bodies and clothing and portraying them as weak individuals rather than the accomplishments that they have achieved. It’s happening because the newsroom is dominated by male and female journalists who don’t have a gender perspective.”

“Journalism, at least in the US, is a white, cishet male dominated field and the reporting and academic research on the field is reflective of that. But, this is not reflective of the truth about communities or policies, regardless of beat. I came to journalism as a second career because I feel it is a public service and so I, as a woman of colour and immigrant, feel like I'm providing the best kind of service I can to a marginalised portion of the public.”
Do you identify your journalism as feminist?

As well as asking whether they personally identified as feminist, we also asked reporters, editors and audience developers whether they considered their work itself to be feminist. Among reporters, 80% said they identified their journalism as feminist in contrast to two-thirds of editors. All four audience developers identified their work as feminist.

For those who responded that their reporting was feminist, the reasons were consistent. For many, it was that they themselves were feminist and so that guided their approach:

“Because I identify myself as a feminist.”

“My reporting is informed by feminist perspectives.”

For others, it was about giving voice to women:

“Because it’s about giving voice in the media to those who are put on the margins, oppressed and neglected and trying to represent the real issues with the patriarchal society and of course tell the stories of different women and their views.”

“Because I’m trying to report and quote marginalised/unheard voices and contexts in the system.”

Respondents were reflective of the obligations of their reportage:

“I think so? Because I am very conscious of how I present the facts (trying to ensure I don’t strip away agency from the women/girls I am writing about), and also my choices in terms of the perspectives my pieces highlight (I actively seek out female experts as sources unless I am on a super tight deadline and it’s impossible).”

“Supporting feminist inclinations, the way I see it, should be more pluralistic, and isn’t simply saying that women and other genders deserve everything while men shouldn’t. We do need men to be our allies and so, their support matters as well. In that regard, I would ensure that my reportage is gender sensitive and relays a story, a situation with facts whilst promoting the importance of supporting these rights.”
Among the minority who did not regard their reporting as feminist, it was a matter of degree:

"I haven’t done as much as I would like to as of now but I do try to make an effort to recognise these differences."

"My work on gender focus and feminism is less than the majority of other topics I covered. I will try to find more to do with it."

A small number made no distinction in their reporting:

"It’s just reporting"

"Not really relevant to the subject."

Do you prefer the term "gender journalism", "feminist journalism" or something else?

Overall, 46% of respondents preferred the term “gender journalism”, while 31% preferred “feminist journalism”. The others were fine with both, or preferred another term.

Under half of reporters (42%) preferred the term “gender journalism”; one third preferred feminist journalism and the remainder were split between both (13%) and other terms (11%).
When asked to explain their choice, many reporters thought that gender was a more inclusive term than feminist and carried fewer negative connotations. Those who preferred the term “feminist journalism” indicated a broader perspective:

“Feminism has a political goal, gender journalism seems like a vague term to me. Men also have a gender yet stories about men would almost never be seen as a gender issue.”

For editors, the split was more even, with 44% preferring “gender journalism” and 40% preferring “feminist journalism”. Their reasons for their preferences were varied, but included a recognition of possible negative reactions to the terms:

“Feminism has a political goal, gender journalism seems like a vague term to me. Men also have a gender yet stories about men would almost never be seen as a gender issue.”

“I like both terms, but I picked ‘gender journalism’ because it may help encompass all those around the world who still feel the term “feminist” is too militant for them despite believing in everything that feminism stands for. I’ve noticed that the way the term is interpreted can vary greatly depending on where in the world someone lives.”

“I’m happy with either, but I feel gender journalism is more inclusive.”
“Even I, a feminist raised by a feminist, am no longer really sure what the term means anymore. Not all women are feminists - some are constrained by the ideologies and religions of their upbringing and environment. So the term feminist can be seen as divisive, while gender feels more inclusive - despite the divisions here, too, where some women feel that others cannot lay claim to the descriptor. Also, feminist points to an ideology, whereas gender refers to a grouping.”

Half of facilitators preferred the term “gender journalism”, with the rest split between feminist journalism and other terms.

**Kinds of reporting**

Understanding that the terms “gender journalism” and “feminist journalism” can encompass many different types of reporting, we asked respondents to choose between three examples that might fit these categories:

- Reporting about women, non-binary and gender diverse people
- Reporting by women, non-binary and gender diverse people
- Reporting about systems of patriarchy

A complex pattern emerged. Reporting about women clearly sits as ‘somewhat important’ for most of the respondents; and reporting by women is seen as more important than reporting about systems of patriarchy. However, patriarchy is also regarded as least important by a large number. (Note this is forced choice, respondents could not tick all aspects as equally important).

**Would you like the percentage of time spent on gender/feminist journalism to be more or less, or stay the same?**

![Bar chart showing the number of respondents for each category of reporting.](chart.png)
Adequacy of media coverage

Respondents were asked to assess how well the media as a whole covered gender/feminist topics. More than two-thirds (70%) considered the coverage to be mostly poor, 19% said not well at all, 12 people said mostly well, and none said very well.

How well do you think the media as a whole covers gender/feminist topics?

One of the reasons given for these damning assessments included the compartmentalisation or marginalisation of gender coverage:

“Mainstream media uses gender-based stories as filler stories.”

“Gender related news appear only as extremes. Such topics either celebrate the subjects or portray them as victims. But it is in the mundane and everyday life that discrimination based on sexes and genders takes place, which is covered very poorly in any media form.”

“Across the world women are still widely relegated to lifestyle and ‘women’s beats.’”

The dominance of men in mainstream media was again a factor:

“Media fraternity is still male dominated and they control the news, media and narratives that come out.”
One respondent supported their negative evaluation with evidence from personal experience and published data:

“As a woman and consumer of news, I wish more stories would cover topics that concern female issues and women’s rights. As a journalist, I know that historically the contributions of women in the media have been unreported, underrated, or ignored. Feminist opinions and analysis/expertise in broadcast, film and print media is frequently absent. Data indicates that mainstream international media perform poorly concerning the inclusion of women as subjects and sources. Women were only 13% of subjects and sources in the television newscast monitored and 21% in the digital news stories and tweets (GEM Index) from main media outlets across the world. Furthermore, only 24% of expert voices in the news are women (GGMP). There is also the issue of lack of women’s leadership in the media, which is partly responsible for their lack of representation.”
The Working Environment

We were curious about how people had pursued a career in gender/feminist journalism and the level of workplace support they received in doing so.

Most respondents (59%) had been working in the field for five to fifteen years. Eleven percent had been working between fifteen and twenty years; 14% for more than twenty years, and 15% for less than five years. Reporters, on average, had been working for less time than editors. More than half of reporters had been working on gender/feminist journalism for fewer than ten years; in comparison, 62% of editors had been working in the field for longer than ten years.

Overall, 62% of respondents were on staff, while 38% were freelance. More than half the reporters (61%) worked primarily as freelancers; 37% were on staff, and others were a mixture of freelance and staffers. By contrast, 92% of editors were on staff. The majority of facilitators were on staff.

The range of outlets for the freelancers was huge. Many respondents reported between seven and ten different outlets for their work. Online journalism accounted for 92% of the primary kind of journalism, followed by magazines, radio and television, with a small number divided between social media, podcasting and print media.

Levels of support

We asked respondents whether they were supported by their editors or managers to do gender/feminist journalism.

Of the reporters who answered this question, 40% said they were always supported by their manager, a further 51% said they were sometimes supported, and only two said they were rarely or never supported.

91%

Percentage of respondents who were sometimes or always supported by managers to do gender journalism.
The level of support often depended on the situation or context:

“I believe that the support I have from the editors I work with is, thankfully, great and when compared to other native languages, I’m confident with the support they give me for English articles and content.”

“Depends on the editor - e.g. if they’re a woman at a feminist publication, yes; if they’re a man who doesn’t think a gender perspective is important, no.”

Reasons for this support were explained by the make-up of the management team:

“Our newsrooms give reporters the freedom to cover the stories they want to cover, as long as it is related to politics, social issues, human rights, etc., so gender issues always fit into these categories. If someone is not supportive, and their reason for it is sexist, I will call them out for being sexist.”

“Too often the newsrooms are still managed by men that identify those topics like being ‘for women’ (or a certain audience).”

“Because the editor of the media was a man, he sometimes laughed at the publication of gender reports. He was also a religious man.”

“My newsroom and podcast team always support and assist my pitching.”

**Time and budget**

Good journalism relies on having the adequate time and money to devote to an investigation or project. We asked respondents if they had sufficient budget and sufficient time to carry out their work in the field of gender journalism.

Only 8% of respondents had sufficient budget for their gender/feminist journalism work, while 30% had none. Most people (63%) had some of the financial resources they needed. Only two reporters had sufficient budget.
The breakdown for available time was strikingly similar, suggesting a strong relationship between having enough money to pursue this journalism and having the required time.

**Do you have sufficient budget to do the kind of gender/feminist reporting projects you wish to do?**

- I have all the resources I need: 8.3%
- I have some of the resources I need: 62.5%
- I have none of the resources I need: 29.2%

**Do you have sufficient time to do the kind of gender/feminist reporting projects you wish to do?**

- I have no time: 9.1%
- I have enough time: 29.3%
- I have some of the time I need: 61.6%
Language challenges

We asked respondents about whether they encountered any language challenges in doing gender journalism/feminist journalism. Of the reporters, 39% reported some language challenges. The proportion was similar for editors: 36% experienced language challenges.

The reported challenges were often about terminology, as well as lack of fluency in a particular language.

“We have ingrained a lot of biased language that is difficult to detect and I still struggle to be inclusive because sometimes I only notice it afterwards. Certain people are also reluctant to hear a more inclusive language or feel that it sounds redundant.”

“The lack of understanding and definition by the audiences and readers of the feminist language and words that we use in our stories.”

“Language around gender is evolving and it can be hard to get it ‘right’ for the story, the topic and the audience.”

“We are now in the process of finalising our style guide on the issue of non-binary individuals so we can use ‘they’/ ‘them’. That has caused some discussion as you can imagine.”

“Reporting based on highlighting the challenges that indigenous communities face is mostly affected by language barriers.”

Does your newsroom embody gender-equal values?

We asked respondents who were on staff about how gender issues manifested within their workplaces. In total, 43% of people responded “yes” when asked whether their workplaces embodied feminist/gender equal values, and 46% said “somewhat”. Only 11% felt their workplace did not embody these values at all.

Respondents were invited to explain their rating.

“We are an all-women team. When accepting pitches, we’re mindful of diversity. We actively look for stories and journalists from gender queer communities.”
"My colleagues are somewhat supportive of me covering gender issues, but sometimes they think that there are other things I should cover first before covering gender-related stories because they don’t think these need to be covered urgently. They also don’t understand the need for gender balance when interviewing sources, selecting people (non-staff) for training workshops or internships, or why the fact that we don't hire enough women and LGBTQIA+ people in our newsroom is a problem."

"We are all feminists and fully supportive and empathetic towards each other and our needs, and there is a safe feeling of not being judged for your opinion."

"A very basic recognition to have female representation in newsroom leadership."

"Our program has certainly made all of our colleagues more aware. A sign of our success is when younger male colleagues approach us with story ideas. But like any workplace, there is still much to do."

"Gender parity is something that has been attained by the organisation as the number of male and female employees is the same."

For editors, the work environment was perceived to be largely supportive, with only one reporting that their newsroom did not embody feminist or gender equal values.

The reasons for feeling that the newsroom was partly or wholly supportive focused often on the values of the newsroom and/or the gender split:

"I work with people who share the same values as myself. We might have different opinions and views, but we all advocate for a fair and positive representation of women in the media."

"I’m part of an all-women team which has a very clear, consistent pro-women framework on reporting."

"Progressive culture, diverse team, representation is part of our DNA."

"I think my newsroom is generally conscious of and respectful towards women, not undermining or being deliberately or accidentally misogynistic, etc. Women in the newsroom get equal opportunity to speak and be heard and be sent out on a range of assignments."
Two-thirds of facilitators felt that their workplaces at least somewhat embodied gender-equal or feminist values. One explained:

“It does embody feminist or gender equal-values to a certain degree. We have a written policy on this and are an equal-opportunity employer. Inclusion and diversity are transversal principles at the core of what we do … and these are taken into account in the way we develop programmes, organise training & events, etc. However, at the leadership level, women could be better represented.”

Who are the audiences for your journalism and how do you reach them?

All journalism requires an audience, but little is known about the audiences for gender/feminist journalism. We asked reporters, editors and audience developers about who they try to reach with their journalism.

For some, the audiences for gender/feminist journalism were the same as for any other type of reporting.

“General audience.”

“My newsroom has a global audience, though my current team focuses on Africa specifically.”

“Worldwide”

“Everyone!”

“Laypeople across the state, as my organisation is my country’s flagship newspaper.”

“A wide range of both less educated and more academic/intellectual folks, as well as audiences in the South-east Asia region.”
Others considered their audience as niche:

“*Our audiences are people who care about gender and politics. Many of our readers are activists or workers on gender equality projects. Our audience is majority women.*”

“*People who are into science, films, subcultures.*”

“*Gen Z, passionate about social issues.*”

Some provided statistics:

“*Our audience is 18-40; 60% identify as women/ gender diverse and 40% male academics and non-academic audiences.*”

“*Our audience is global but mostly from the US (49%) & Europe (33%). 88% are women, and the average age is 25-55 years old.*”

Audiences were reached mainly through newsletters, websites and social media.
Challenges and Benefits

High-quality reporting on any subject is always challenging, but reporting on gender inequality carries its own difficulties. We asked respondents about the major challenges they faced:

“Regular funding for journalism.”

“Lack of finances, lack of knowledge of feminism from people, harassment.”

“Finding media outlets that embrace gender-based stories and that pay fairly.”

“Like I mentioned earlier, there needs to be more funding, support, and openness to underreported stories on gender from developing countries. Many publications don’t provide travel funds and it’s exhausting and also impossible to always secure external grants/funding to support the reporting. It also means that gender stories from certain easily accessible regions end up receiving more coverage and/or local voices from the ground don’t find a place in the coverage. Additionally, we need to have more conversations about the mental toll of reporting from the ground on these stories, and if possible, there should be more support to deal with the toll (like therapy funding for global journalists).”

The challenges that editors reported experiencing were a perceived lack of legitimacy for such stories and a paucity of expertise:

“Lack of funds. Having to constantly explain why feminist journalism is necessary, and that there is no ‘secret agenda’ behind my stories.”

“Online harassment and sometimes lack of interest [on the part] of decision-making people.”

“Finding journalists who are building expertise in gender as an area of investigative, data or political journalism and not development reporting.”

“The lack of resources, mostly. Have to apply for reporting fellowships to be able to do it.”

“Writing LGBTQI+ stories in a country that doesn’t acknowledge it.”
“Once bitten, twice shy. If the top editors have expressed reservations or significant lack of interest in covering certain issues, I'm unlikely to want to put everything on the line by insisting on covering or going big on those topics. The most/best I can do within my loci of control is to try to ensure fair representation in reporting.”

“1. The idea of gender/feminist journalism being more than just women’s issues among a large section of reporters is our biggest challenge. We have faced challenges in the stories we expect and the stories we get from reporters. We need to train more reporters on applying this feminist lens and reflect intersectionality in reportage [rather] than just using the word liberally. 2. There needs to be more funding for this kind of journalism.”

“Trying to get female scholars/academics in various disciplines to cover such topics!”

“The smaller number of women who can be sought out as experts, reporters, etc. We need more women everywhere.”

**Have you experienced burnout?**

Burnout is common among media workers, so respondents were asked specifically about their experience with the phenomenon over and above other workplace challenges. In total, 43\% of respondents had experienced burnout.

**Have you experienced burnout doing gender/feminist journalism?**

![Pie chart showing burnout percentages](chart.png)
The burnout rate was highest among reporters: over half (54%) said they had experienced it. Those who had experienced burnout reported that the stories they were covering over and over again affected them deeply.

To make matters worse, reporters sometimes felt that the stories were not valued by those around them:

"It's very personal and frustrating and shows how little has changed. It takes a toll emotionally. And then men keep trying to talk instead of or over women. Women aren't free to share their stories as they'd like."

"My story on sexual violence on women in bonded labour affected me deeply and triggered my own memories of similar."

"The interviewees often have traumatic experiences and it often transfers to me. I get drained mentally."

"Because of the nature of my reporting, I experience burnout at least once a year."

This contrasts with the experience of editors, 36% of whom reported having experienced burnout. Six respondents offered explanations for their responses: funding was an issue, as was a lack of support and a heavy workload. A similar proportion – one-third – of facilitators had suffered burnout.

All four audience developers had experienced burnout.

54%
Percentage of reporters who had experienced burnout.

What are the benefits?

Despite the challenges of championing gender/feminist journalism, respondents nonetheless cited many positive aspects when asked about the benefits of this work.

There was a strong sense of purpose and a role in changing society:

"It promotes gender equality."
"The benefits are that it creates an environment where people will be respected for what they have to offer and not by their gender."

"Provides a fresh perspective, a chance to educate the public and help challenge gender stereotypes to name a few."

"Educating and empowering readers."

"It makes my personal life meaningful and, hopefully, the world a better place."

"Like many others, I, too, believe that the ultimate benefit or impact of journalism should be to bring about policy reform and change for the communities that we write about. In all honesty, though, the results of our work are not always this tangibly visible. Over the years, and especially in these politically fraught times, I’ve learnt that my role is to document injustices, marginalisation, and contradictions so that my stories serve as historical records for the future and ensure local voices aren’t forgotten. I see that as the benefit of doing gender reporting."

"Where do I begin? This has been the most rewarding part of a long career in journalism. It is certainly a passion project and I feel incredibly blessed to cover such stories. I know I am part of a very small group of people doing this globally, which makes it even more important. I love the counter-intuitive nature of our show, of making the unfamiliar, familiar, of how we challenge our audiences to rethink the way they view gender and in getting people to understand that everybody stands to benefit from equality."

Editors in particular were largely positive about the benefits of doing such work:

“A better world. This is a cliche and yet so very true."

“We can change the way the media has historically represented women and other vulnerable populations.”

“Not sure, to be honest. Other than a sense of satisfaction and feeling like you’ve contributed to a bigger cause for future betterment."

“Helping people recognize these issues so we can start writing the wrongs. Fixing the gender pay gap. Thinking about women’s health. Demanding change. Investing in women’s business. etc. The stories get written, it opens eyes, the change starts happening... ”
Among facilitators, there was a commitment to creating change in society:

“Journalism as a public service will be able to fulfil its mandate to shed light on the full truth of systems and power, how deeply embedded patriarchal values are and the toll it has taken on people of colour, women, and others.”

“I feel I am playing a role in fighting patriarchal ideologies and stereotypes.”

“If it hurts, it means that we are doing something right. We are changing society together with the mindset of many, especially young generations that are more aware than ever of their rights and their future.”

One short response from a reporter seemed to encapsulate the driving force behind telling stories about the lives and experiences of women and gender-diverse people:

“The untold is told.”
Credits

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