

# THE CONVERSATION

## Women overtake men in the media, but not in pay or power

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While young women are rising through Australian media ranks, the old glass ceiling remains. Woman reporter image from [www.shutterstock.com](http://www.shutterstock.com)

Women now outnumber men in the Australian media, but they are typically younger, earn less and have less powerful positions than male colleagues.

A new national survey shows women now make up 55.5% of Australian journalists, a significant increase from 20 years ago, when they represented merely one-third.

Conducted between May 2012 and March this year, the University of the Sunshine Coast's representative survey of 605 journalists around Australia found that just 7.4% of women respondents could be classified as senior managers, including editors-in-chief and managing editors.

This compares with one-in-five (21.6%) men being in a similar position. The split among senior managers we surveyed was 69.9% men and 30.1% women. Amongst the rank-and-file this was reversed: 63.7% were women.

The much-discussed glass ceiling still seems to be a considerable hurdle for women to overcome in terms of reaching those senior positions in the news media. Yet, even when

they reach this level, they are still typically paid much less than the men – an indication that the media is no different to the general workforce.

Our study is the first of its kind in more than 20 years to involve such a large number of journalists, and follows on from the work of John Henningham in the early 1990s. Other issues we covered include people's voting intentions and cultural backgrounds, as detailed in [The Conversation last week](#).

Our survey was conducted by telephone with journalists from around the country working at newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations, online news sites and news agency AAP, as a random sample of the 8000 to 10,000 journalists in Australia today.

## Unequal pay

At each of the editorial levels – rank-and-file, junior managers and senior managers – women have significantly lower salaries than men. Only one-third of them (35.6%) earn more than A\$72,000 a year, compared with around half (53.1%) of male journalists.

This is even more pronounced at the high end of the scale. A mere 1.2% of female journalists reported an income of more than A\$144,000 a year. In contrast, 9.8% of men fell into this category.

Not surprisingly, women are generally less satisfied with their level of pay than men - 35.9% of them are somewhat or very dissatisfied with their pay, compared with 24.1% of men.

While one may argue that the lower income for women is merely the effect of fewer holding senior editorial ranks, the data actually shows that even after controlling for editorial rank, gender is still a significant influence in relation to salary.

This means that even at similar levels of responsibility, women continue to be paid less than men.

## Generational change

Overall, women in the media are significantly younger and less experienced than their male counterparts. While the average journalist is 37 years old, men average almost 41 years of age, compared with women at only just over 34 years. Almost two-thirds of women (60.9%) are aged under 35 years, while only 34.6% of men are.

This is an indication that the strong popularity of journalism degrees among women – women make up around 70% of Australia's journalism students – is leading the sea change in the industry.

It is not yet clear whether this is a generational change that will lead to a stronger representation of women in the senior editorial ranks as well, or whether there will be a drop-off from women from a certain age.

Certainly, women are also less experienced, with an average time in the industry of only just under 12 years, compared to the average male journalist who has been a journalist for 18 years. This fact does play a role in their salaries, as experience is strongly correlated with salaries. However, while experience is a significant influence in salary levels, gender also remains significant when combining the two factors.

That raises the question: why, if men and women have the same job responsibility - for

example the role of a news editor - they are paid differently based on their experience.

So even though women have achieved parity in terms of absolute numbers in the industry, they are still consistently discriminated against in terms of pay as well as their opportunities to move through the ranks towards senior editorial positions. Much remains to be done if true gender equality is to be achieved in journalism.

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*Note: This research has been accepted for publication in the June edition of the Australian Journalism Review. The margin of error for the entire study sample is 4%. Sub-samples of journalists' responses to some questions are likely to have a higher margin error, however, appropriate statistical methods were used in testing for differences between sub-samples to take account of the smaller sample sizes. The overall survey response rate was 89.5%.*



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