

Pew Research Journalism Project

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THE GENDER GAP

Newspapers

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Not only were newspapers more than twice as likely as cable news to cite even one female source, they were also more likely than other media to cite two or more.

The study examined all news stories found on page A1, the front page of the metro section and the front page of the sports section for 16 different newspapers across four circulation size categories—6,589 stories in all. **(1)**

Overall, 41% of print stories contained at least one female source, and 19% reached the higher threshold of citing two or more. One such story ran in the Philadelphia Inquirer on August 10, 2004. The A1 piece about remarks Mrs. Laura Bush made about stem-cell research quoted both Mrs. Bush and Mary Rachel Faris, a hematologist at Abington Memorial Hospital in Pennsylvania.

Nevertheless, print stories were still half as likely to contain a female source as a male source (88% cited at least one male source). Even the stem-cell story in the Inquirer cited four male sources.

The type of newspaper story also made a difference. Wire service stories were less likely to cite females than were reports written by the newspaper's own staff members. Staff-written stories were about twice as likely as wire service stories to contain a female source (47% versus 25%). Stories that were a combination of staff and wire copy fell in between (37%).

It is not simply that wire stories use fewer sources. The same kind of gap did *not* occur with male sources. Here staff written pieces and wire copy were roughly equal. A full 91% of staff written stories cited at least one male as did 87% of wire copy and 89% stories that combined staff and wire material.

| | Gender of Sources in Newspaper Stories, Staff Versus Wire Copy | | | | | |
|------|--|------|--------|------|--------|------|
| | Staff | | Wire | | Combo | |
| | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male |
| None | 53% | 9% | 75% | 13% | 63% | 11% |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 or more | 47 | 91 | 25 | 87 | 37 | 89 |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|

Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

The size or circulation of a newspaper also seemed to make a difference. Bigger papers included more female voices (46% of stories in the largest papers versus 43% in midsize and 33% in the smallest). Smaller papers also tended to carry more wire service reports than did large papers, perhaps accounting for some of the disparity.

Another difference emerged in the various sections examined: Page A1, the metro section-front and the sports section-front.

The front of the metro section was the most inclusive of women—citing them in more than half of its coverage, 57% of all stories. Page A1 was slightly behind at 50%. But on the front-page of the sports section, a mere 14% of stories included a female voice. This was the mirror image of male sources, who were cited in 86% of stories and not cited in 14%. Even in the era of Title IX and the push for women's sports, the sports section-front stands out for its lack of female voices.

(A separate study by Terry Adams and C.A. Tuggle suggests similar disparities may exist on cable sports programs. Their 2002 study found that women were the subjects of less than 5% of coverage on ESPN's SportsCenter. (2))

(1) Please see the Methodology section at the end of the report for the full list of papers.

(2) Terry Adams and C.A. Tuggle, "ESPN's SportsCenter and Coverage of Women's Athletics: 'It's a Boy's Club,'" *Mass Communications & Society*, 7 (Spring 2004), pp237-248.