

# CHANGE OUR GAME



## Representation of Women in Sports News Coverage

2022–23

**The purpose of this study is to establish a baseline of the current coverage of women's sport, and women in sport, in Victoria, to advocate for improved representation moving forward.**

The Victorian Government and the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation would like to acknowledge Sport New Zealand and its 'Media and Gender' project, the Australian Sports Commission, VicHealth, Women in Media Australia and Women's Leadership Institute Australia in informing this work, as well as the positive engagement of media and sporting organisations in the ongoing conversation of realising an equal future for women in sport.



## Foreword

**Equal representation in sport is key in shaping the way we view the world. It's not just who plays sport, but who we, as a society, celebrate and showcase as leaders, experts and heroes. These perceptions have the power to change limiting gender norms and stereotypes.**

It is for this reason that strong representation of women in sports news coverage - in newspapers and online news sites, radio and television news coverage - is fundamental to advancing gender equality in sport and beyond.

The Victorian Government is committed to levelling the playing field for women and girls in sport, including increasing the profile of women in sport media - a key recommendation in Victoria's Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation.

Through the Victorian Government's *Change Our Game* initiative, women pursuing careers in sports media have long been supported - and this work continues.

Today, this research represents a key step forward in reducing the gap in coverage for women in sports news. It directly supports the media and sporting organisations with independent, transparent data of current performance in this space.

This clear picture provides the platform to move forward on, and to actively aim for better outcomes.

Strong media coverage of women in sport is not only fundamental for the future we're working towards in community sport, and in the professionalisation of women's sport. It is fundamental in how our society sees itself.

**THE HON ROS SPENCE MP**  
Minister for Community Sport



# The visibility gap for women's sport is a key driver of persistent gender inequity

Having strong representation of women and girls in all aspects of sport, including through sports media, is fundamental to driving positive change at both the elite and community sport level. This includes:

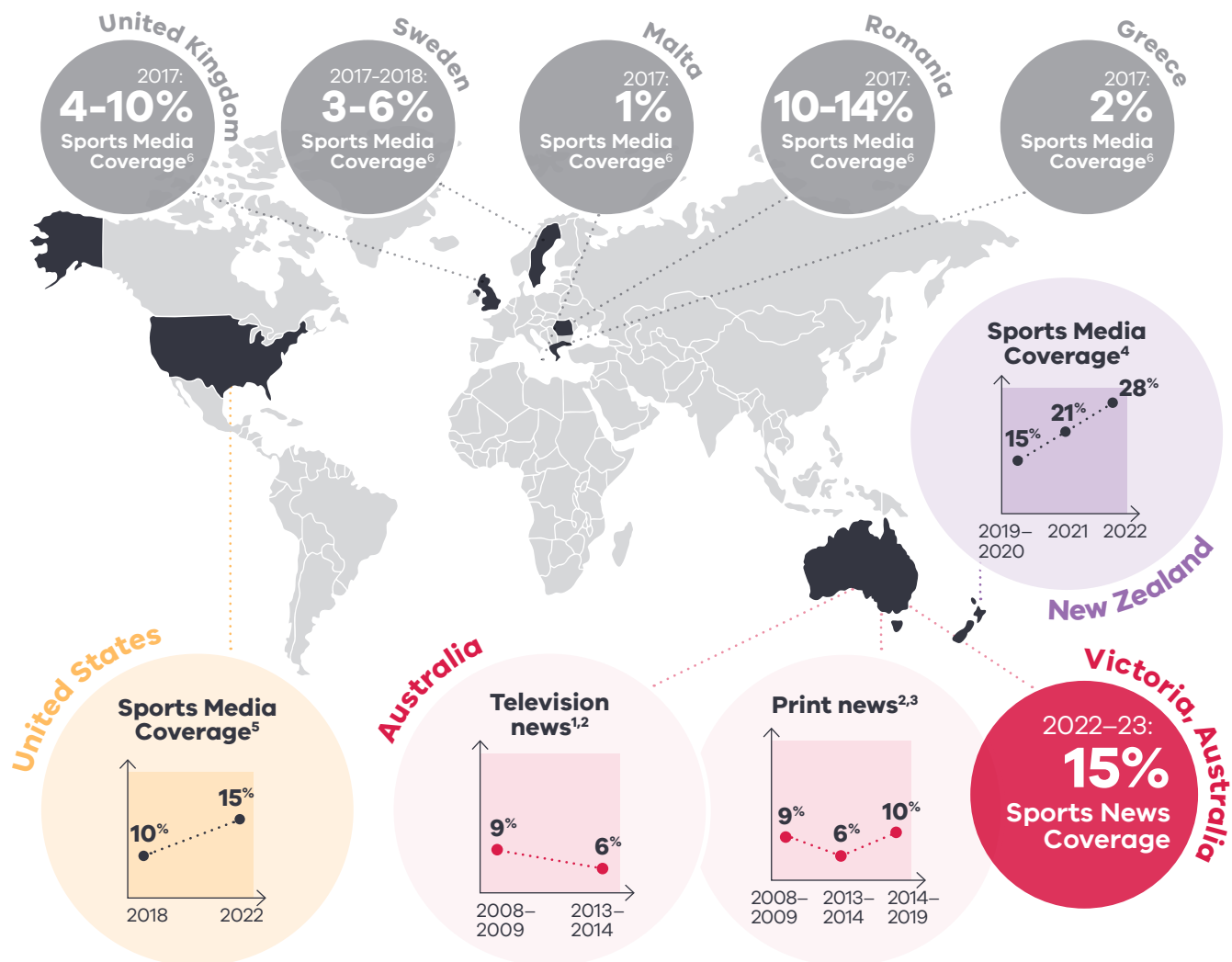
- supporting further growth in the professionalisation of women's elite sport, including fan base growth, effective commercialisation, addressing pay inequality and investment in talent and competition pathways, and
- dismantling the limiting stereotypes, norms and expectations influencing opportunities for women and girls in community sport.

**In Australia and worldwide, the coverage of women's sport in the media has been well below that of men's sport.**

**There has been a rise in media coverage of women's sport in recent years, but a significant gap in media coverage remains.**

**This study shows that in 2022-23, only 15% of sports news coverage in Victoria, Australia, was focused on women's sport.**

## COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S SPORT IN THE MEDIA



# Contents

<b>01. The Research</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>03. Portrayal</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>05. The Path Forward</b>	<b>24</b>
Scope of study	5	3.1. Leading Topics	12	Driving change in media coverage of women's sport	25
<b>02. Balance</b>	<b>6</b>	3.2. Narratives	13	Recommendations for ecosystem change	26
2.1. Coverage of Sports News by Gender	7	3.3. Imagery	14	<b>06. References</b>	<b>27</b>
2.2. Coverage by Month	8	<b>04. The Media</b>	<b>15</b>		
2.3. Coverage by Sport	9	4.1. Bylines	16		
2.4. Coverage by Women's and Men's Sport	10	4.2. Sources	17		
		4.3. Media Organisations – Coverage	18		
		4.4. Media Organisations – Bylines	19		
		4.5. Print Media	20		
		4.6. Online Media	21		
		4.7. Radio News	22		
		4.8. Television News	23		

**The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely.**

**We acknowledge the ongoing leadership role of the Aboriginal community on gender equality and the prevention of violence against women. As First Peoples, Aboriginal Victorians are best placed to determine a culturally appropriate path to gender equality in their communities.**

# 01

## The Research



# Scope of study

## This study analysed sports news coverage available in Victoria, Australia, in 2022-23.

Completed by global media monitoring firm Isentia, this study is based on a representative sample of 200 sports news items per day, in alternating months, with a total sample size of more than 34,600 individual pieces of media.

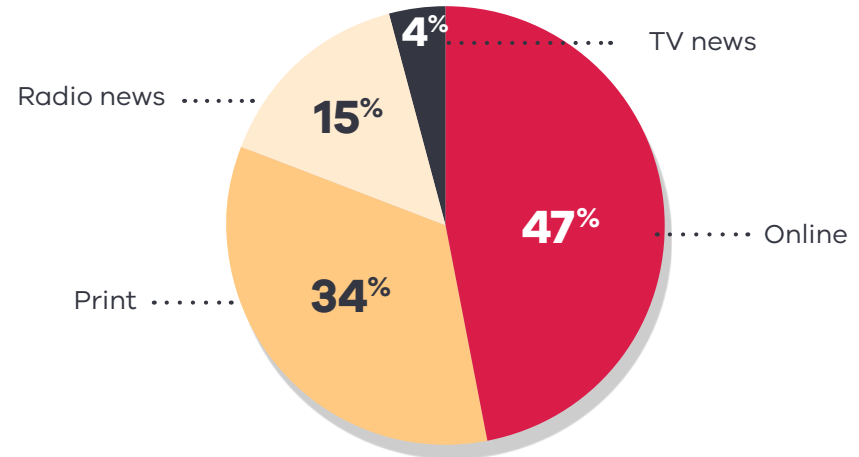
This study involved human analysis of media coverage mentioning sport that was aired or published in Victoria during the project period.

Each mention of gender in an item, whether referring to an individual, a team or a sport, was analysed and coded by a team of human researchers.

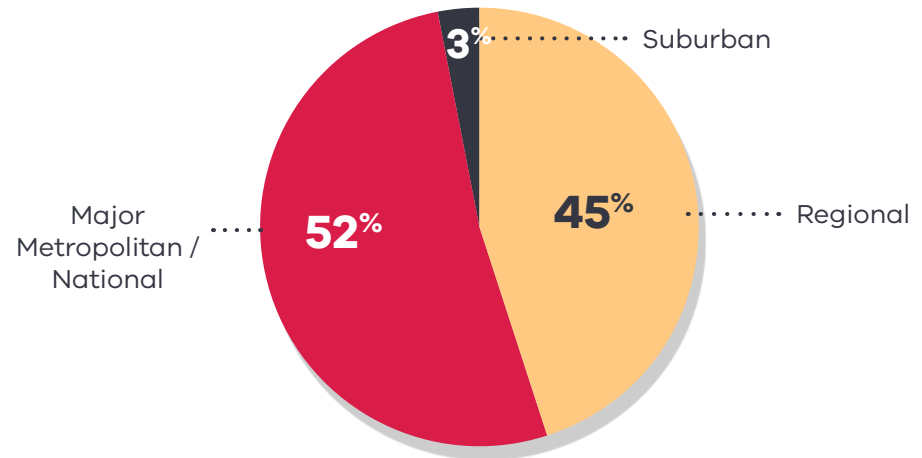
The analysis of gender also extended to all sources present in coverage as well as the journalist or presenter.

The sample excluded the live broadcast of sport, social media coverage, owned publications of sporting organisations, subscription TV news, and coverage relating to the racing of horses and other animals.

### MEDIA TYPE – SHARE OF COVERAGE



### MEDIA TYPE – SHARE OF LOCATION



# 02

## Balance

This section outlines the overall presence of women in sports coverage. Balance is the main measure used throughout the report, which is the percentage of all sports news stories that are focused on women's sport.



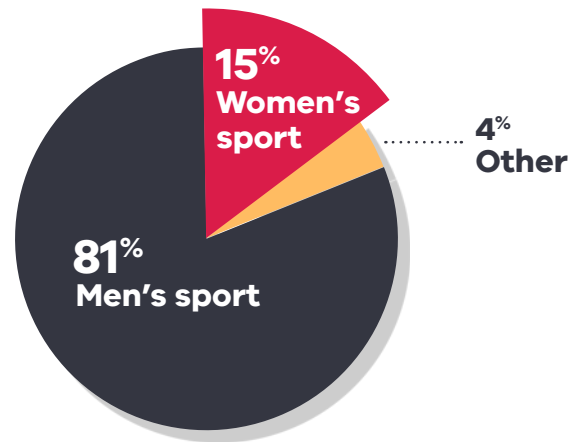


# 2.1. Coverage of Sports News by Gender

## Coverage of women in sports media remained a minority in 2022-23.

The study found that only 15% of all sports news stories were focussed on women’s sport, compared to 81% focused on men’s sport.

This represented 5.4 pieces of media on men’s sport for every 1 piece of media on women’s sport.

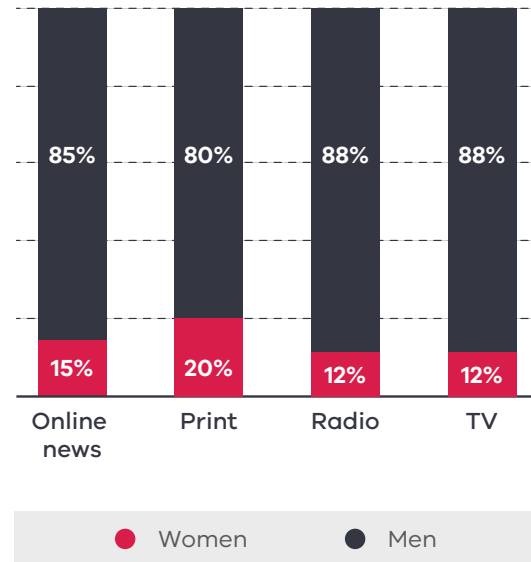


*Other includes No Gender (2%; for example a sport-wide focus), Multiple Genders (2%; for example AFL and AFLW are mentioned), Transgender (<0.1%; if mentioned or self-identified) and Non-Binary (<0.1%; if mentioned or self-identified)*

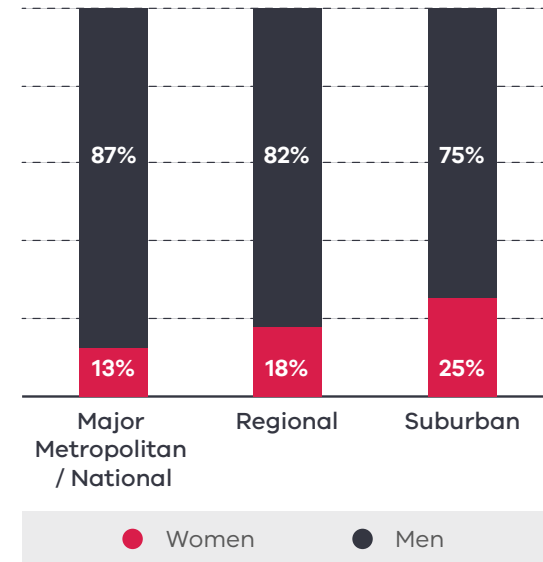
## Underrepresentation of women’s sport was present across media type and location.

The percentage of sports news stories focussed on women’s sport varied across media type and the geographical coverage of media.

### COMPARISON BY MEDIA TYPE



### COMPARISON BY COVERAGE LOCATION



*Data for 'Other', including No Gender or Multiple Genders, is excluded from this data  
The share of voice for media type is online news (47%), print (34%), radio (15%) and TV (4%)  
The share of voice for media by location is major metropolitan/national (52%), regional (45%) and suburban (3%).*

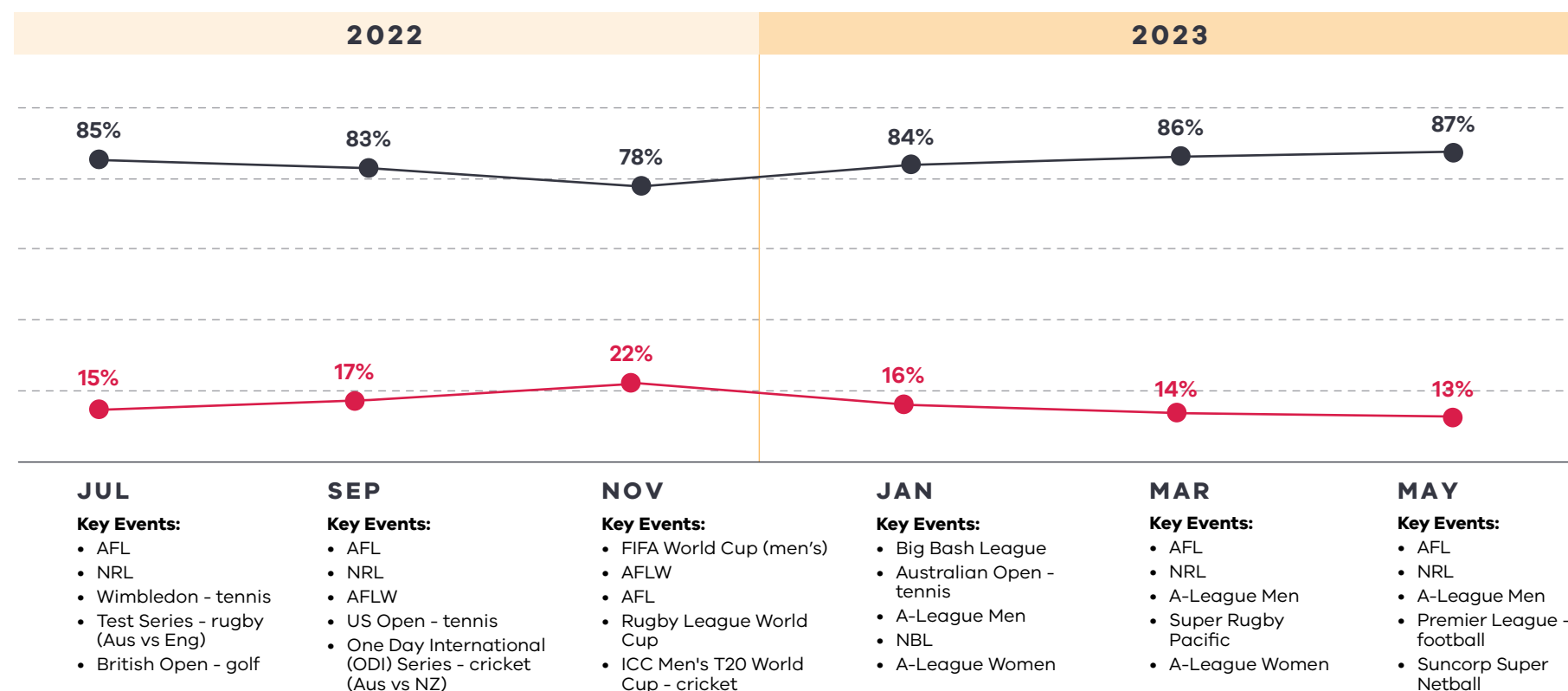
## 2.2. Coverage by Month

Media coverage of sport is influenced, but not solely determined by, the coverage of seasonal sporting events, competitions and leagues.

The proportion of coverage focused on women peaked in November 2022, when key women's leagues were underway in a window where less men's sport was also played.

### GENDER SPLIT OF COVERAGE BY MONTH

● Women ● Men



Data for 'Other', including No Gender or Multiple Genders, is excluded from this data

Key events listed are the top five events in order of share of voice of media coverage for the month

AFL is Australian Football League, AFLW is Australian Football League Women's, NBL is National Basketball League, NRL is National Rugby League

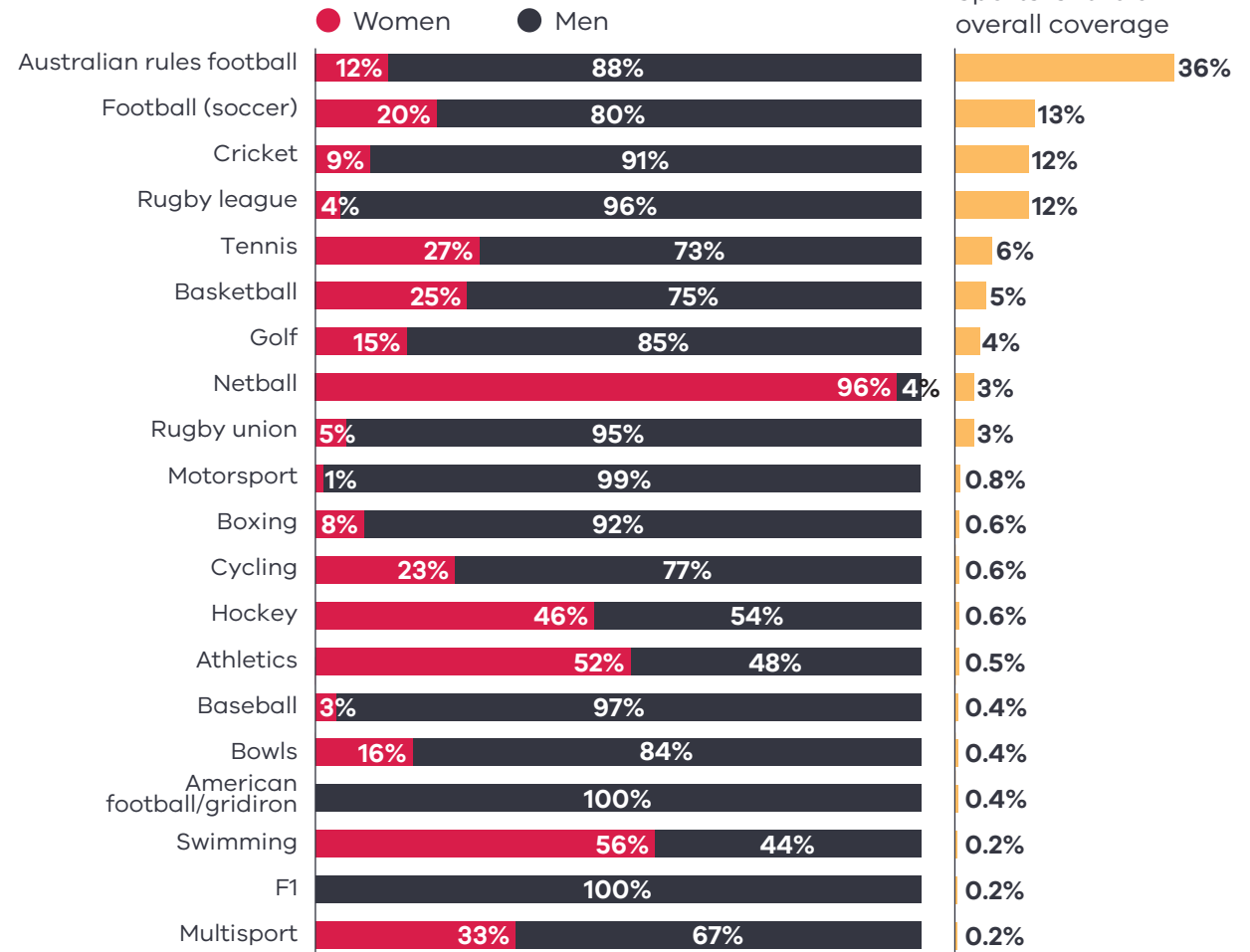
## 2.3. Coverage by Sport

Out of the top 20 sports by coverage, only 4 sports had at least gender balanced (>40%) coverage.

The top 5 sports account for 78% of overall sports news coverage. Women's coverage represented on average 14% of coverage across these sports.

The top 20 sports accounted for 96% of overall sports news coverage, with team sports representing 84% of the coverage and individual sports 12%.

GENDER SPLIT OF COVERAGE OF TOP 20 SPORTS



Data for 'Other', including No Gender or Multiple Genders, is excluded from this data

## 2.4. Coverage by Women's and Men's Sport

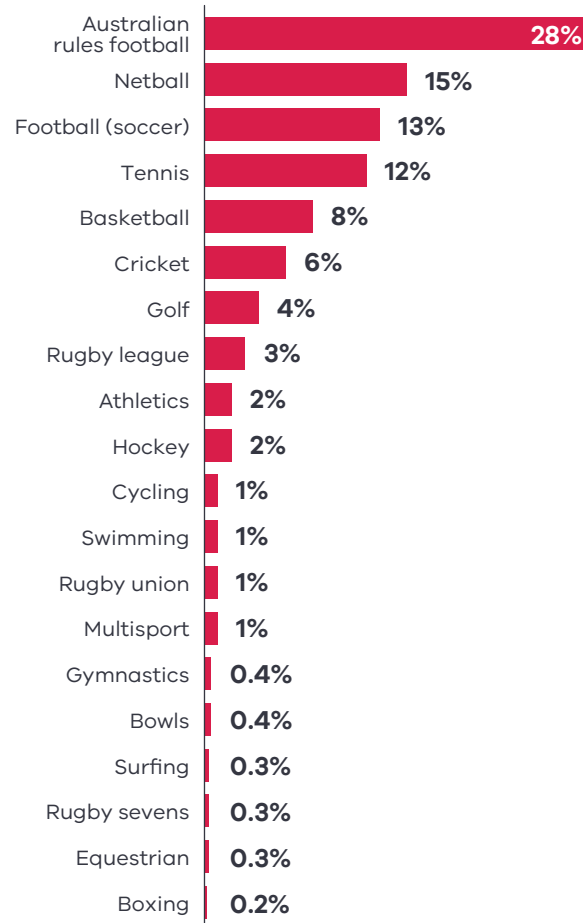
**Team sports received the highest share of voice for coverage across women's and men's sport.**

This page shows the share of voice for major sports by coverage in women's sport and coverage in men's sport.

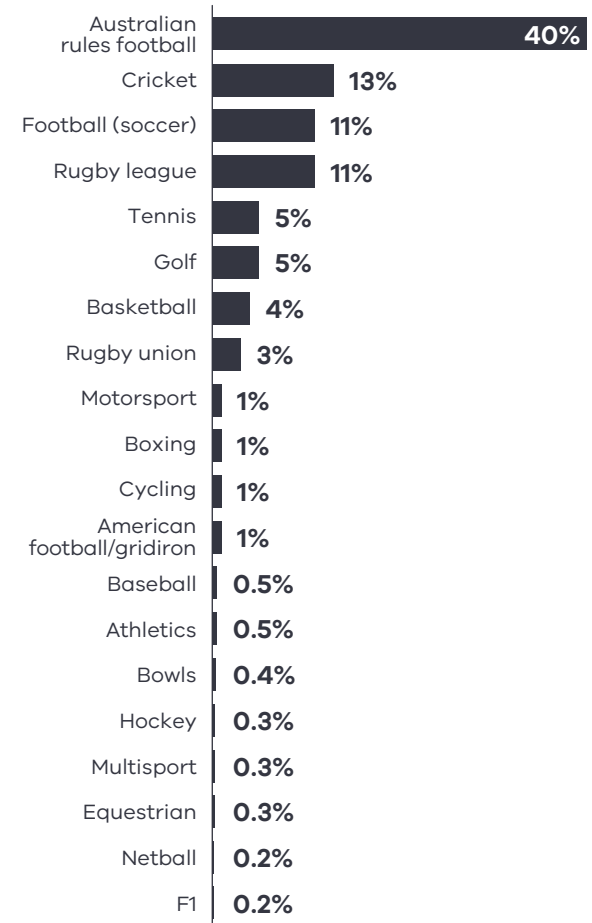
Australian rules football demonstrated its strong presence in the coverage of both women's and men's sport in Victoria.

Tennis and golf were the 2 individual sports within the top 10 for women's and men's sport coverage.

**WOMEN'S SPORTS SHARE OF VOICE**



**MEN'S SPORTS SHARE OF VOICE**



# 03

## Portrayal

This section analyses the differences in how women and men are reported through topics, language and images.

It focuses on three areas:

- The topic or focus of a story
- The main narratives coming through in sports news reporting
- The nature of images used

In each area, portrayal of women and men athletes is compared.



# 3.1. Leading Topics

**There was an overrepresentation of results and performance in the coverage of women’s sport, with women’s sport also less likely to receive deeper coverage and analysis.**

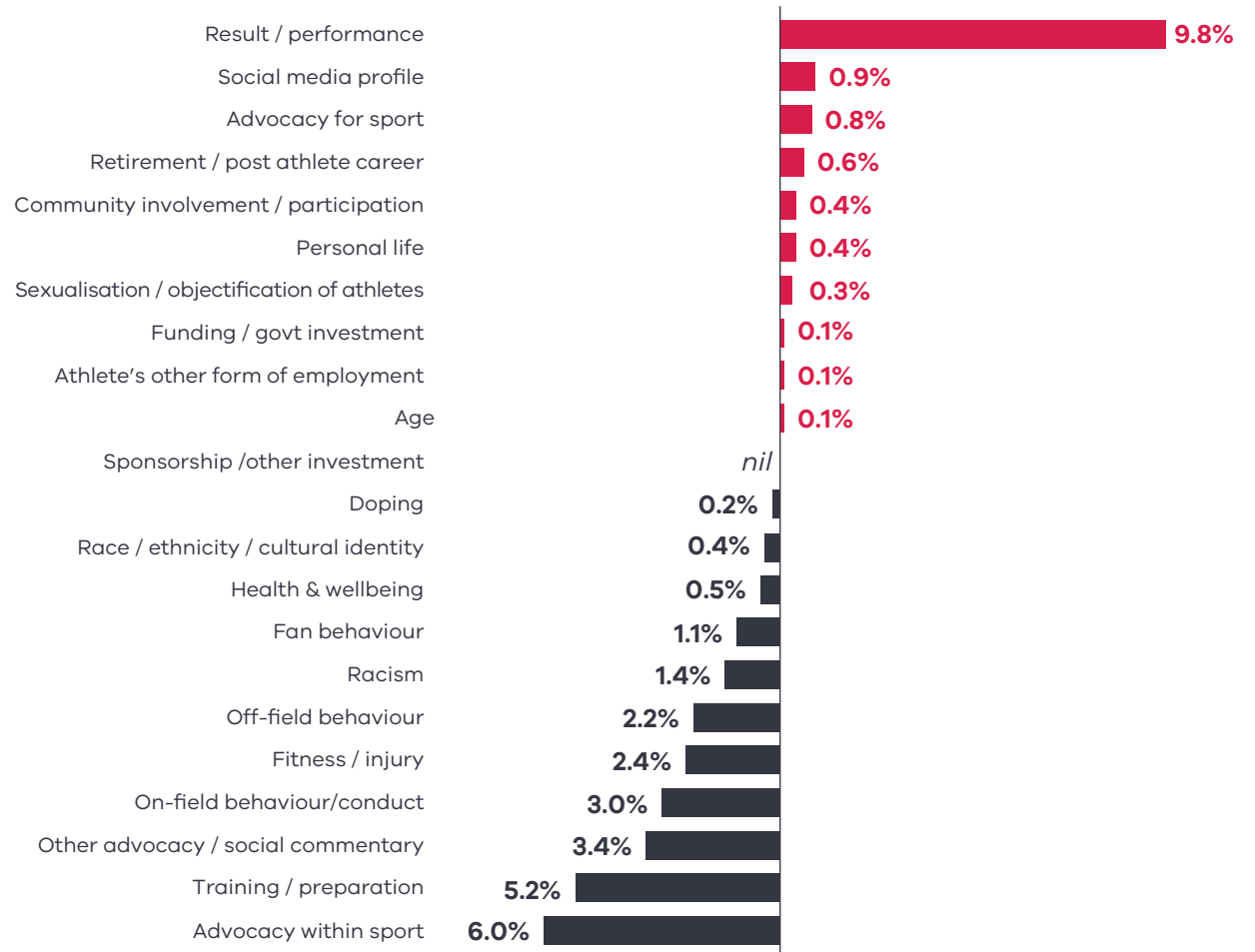
This chart shows the relative difference in the leading topics mentioned in reference to women’s sport and men’s sport, for both athletes and teams.

This reflects a lack of depth of coverage compared to men’s sport coverage. For example, women’s coverage was more likely to be limited to news of scores and results, whereas men’s sport was provided with deeper analysis regarding training, team structures and personalities.

Men athletes were more likely to be given space for advocacy including advocacy around injury recovery standards and pay disparity.

**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LEADING TOPICS OF COVERAGE**

● Women ● Men



# 3.2. Narratives

**Women were more likely to be described with traits as quiet achiever and hard worker, as well as punching above their weight.**

This chart shows the relative difference in the leading narratives mentioned in reference to women’s sport and men’s sport (both athletes and teams).

These 3 traits reflect the media’s focus on women’s sports, where effort and integrity have been historically emphasised over performance.

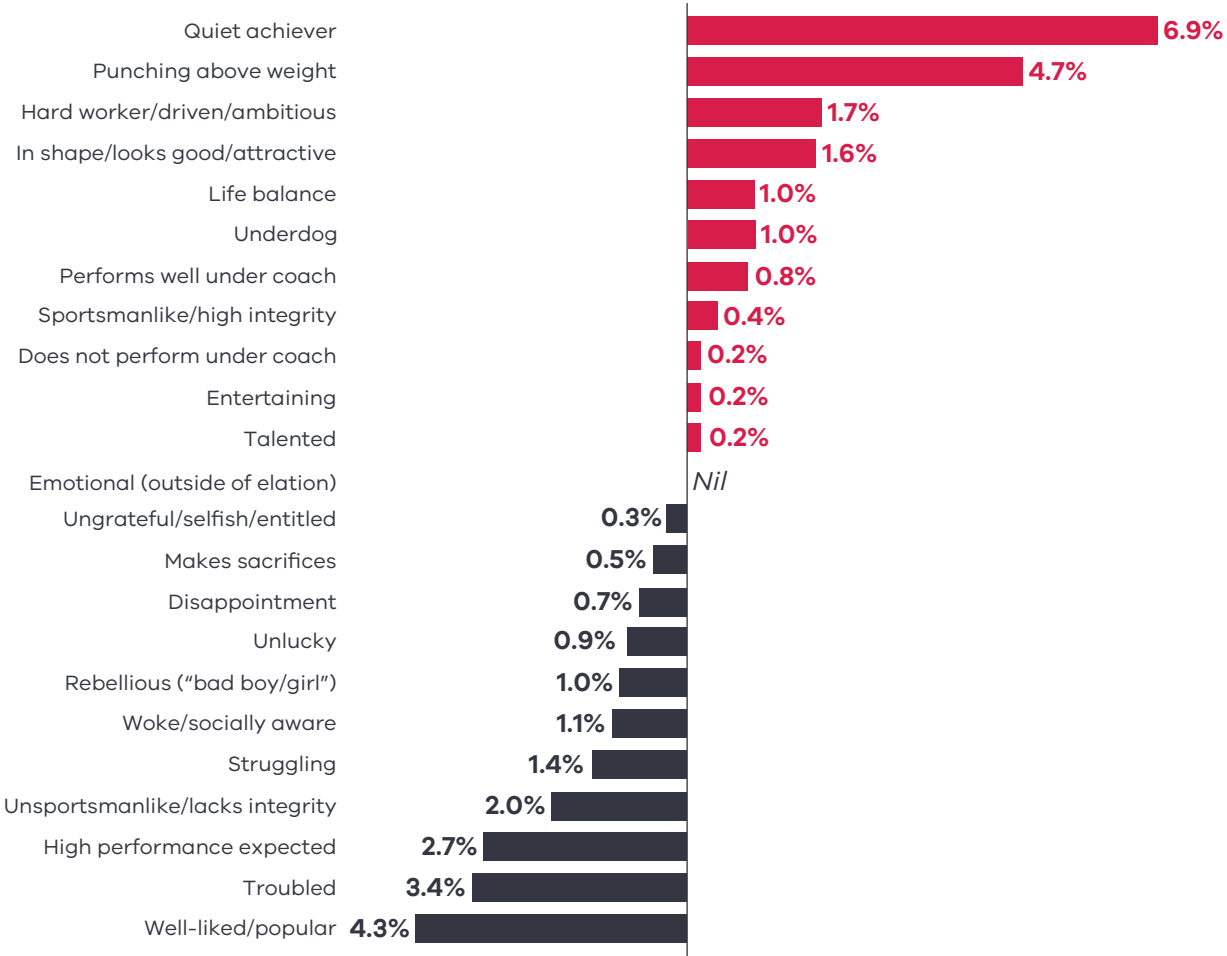
Women were less likely to be positioned as ‘well-liked’ than men, despite men being more often portrayed as ‘troubled’ or ‘unsportsmanlike’.

The professionalisation across a range of women’s sports is likely to result in increased performance expectations over time.



Portrayal

**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LEADING NARRATIVES OF COVERAGE** ● Women ● Men



# 3.3. Imagery

Women were more likely to be depicted in images in sports news, suggesting efforts to familiarise new audiences with women’s sport and athletes.

Results shows that women were more likely to be depicted in images showing action.

The greater use of imagery in women’s sport reporting is potentially linked to the greater proportion of results/performance coverage.

There was no evidence of sexualised images used not driven by athletes themselves.

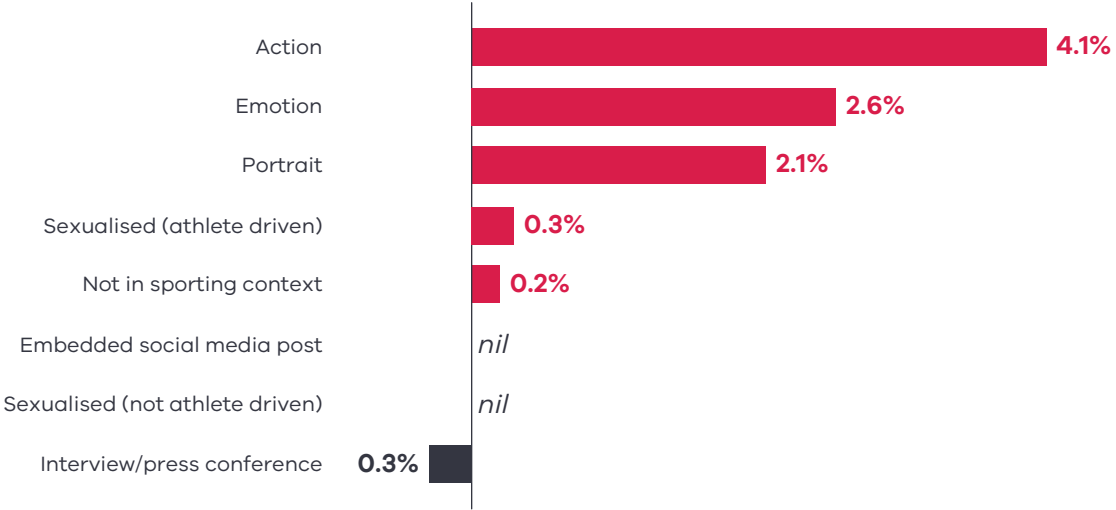
## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN IMAGERY



Women were **4%** overall more likely to be depicted in images.

## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN IMAGE TYPES

● Women ● Men





# 04

## The Media

This section looks at the gender balance and bylines to establish whether there was any reliance on specific types of sources in reporting on each gender, and to examine the balance of the coverage in terms of the featured subjects.

This section also examines sources that were quoted in a media story, to establish whether there was any reliance on specific types of sources.

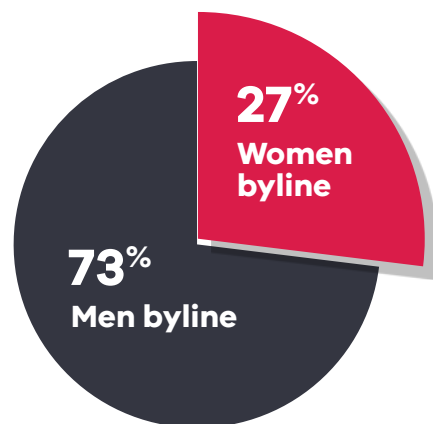


## 4.1. Bylines

The study revealed the underrepresentation of women's opportunities as journalists or presenters of sports news.

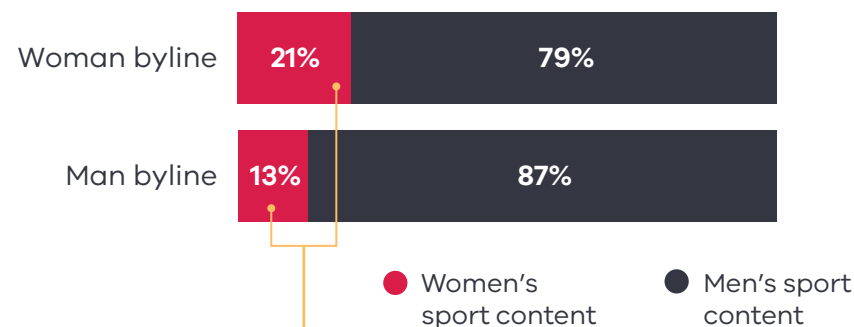
Women journalists or presenters had an average 4.8 news stories on men's sport for every 1 news story on women's sport. In comparison, men had an average of 7.7 news stories on men's sport to every 1 news story on women's sport.

### BYLINE GENDER BREAKDOWN



Data for 'Other', including No Gender or Multiple Genders, is excluded from this data  
Byline includes the author of print or online articles, as well as reporter, newsreader or presenter of broadcast programs. A byline is not attributed for all media items, with this data only reflecting items with a named byline.

### BYLINE GENDER BREAKDOWN BY MEN'S AND WOMEN'S SPORTS CONTENT



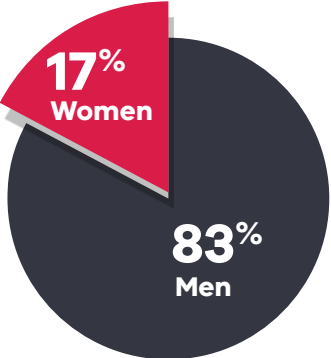
Women journalists were **62% more likely** than men journalists to report on women's sport.

# 4.2. Sources

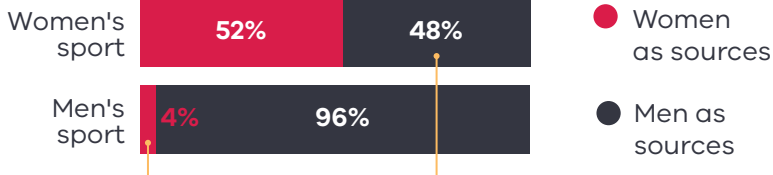
**Overall, women were significantly less likely to be a source of comment on sport in the media than men.**

Media comments on women’s sport and athletes were more likely to come from other athletes, whereas coaches and representatives from sporting bodies were more likely to comment on men’s sport and athletes.

**OVERALL SOURCES GENDER BALANCE**

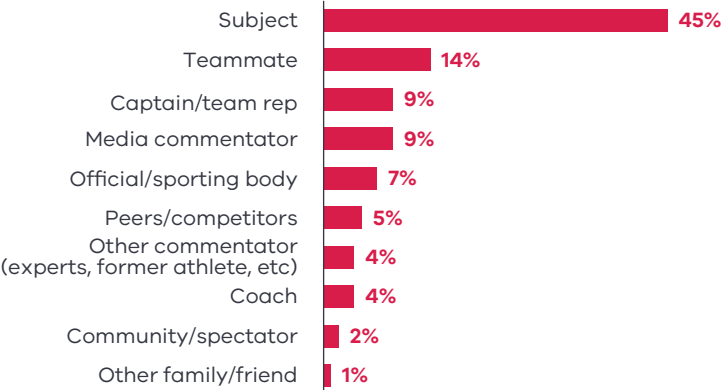


**SOURCES OF CONTENT ON SPORT (EXCLUDING ATHLETES AS SOURCES)**

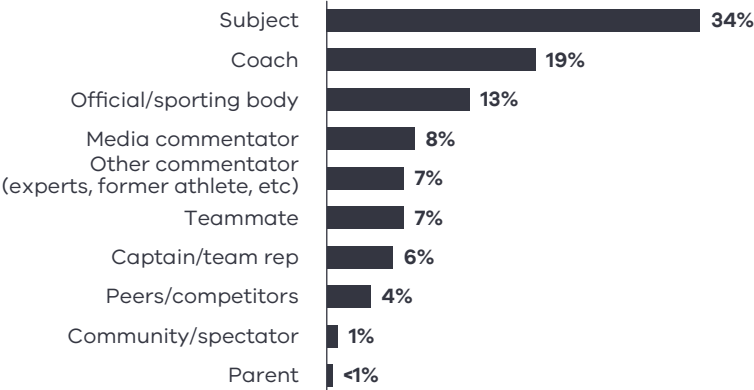


**Men were found to be 12 times more likely to comment on women’s sport, than women commenting on men’s sport (excluding comments by athletes)**

**SOURCES QUOTED IN WOMEN’S SPORT COVERAGE**



**SOURCES QUOTED IN MEN’S SPORT COVERAGE**



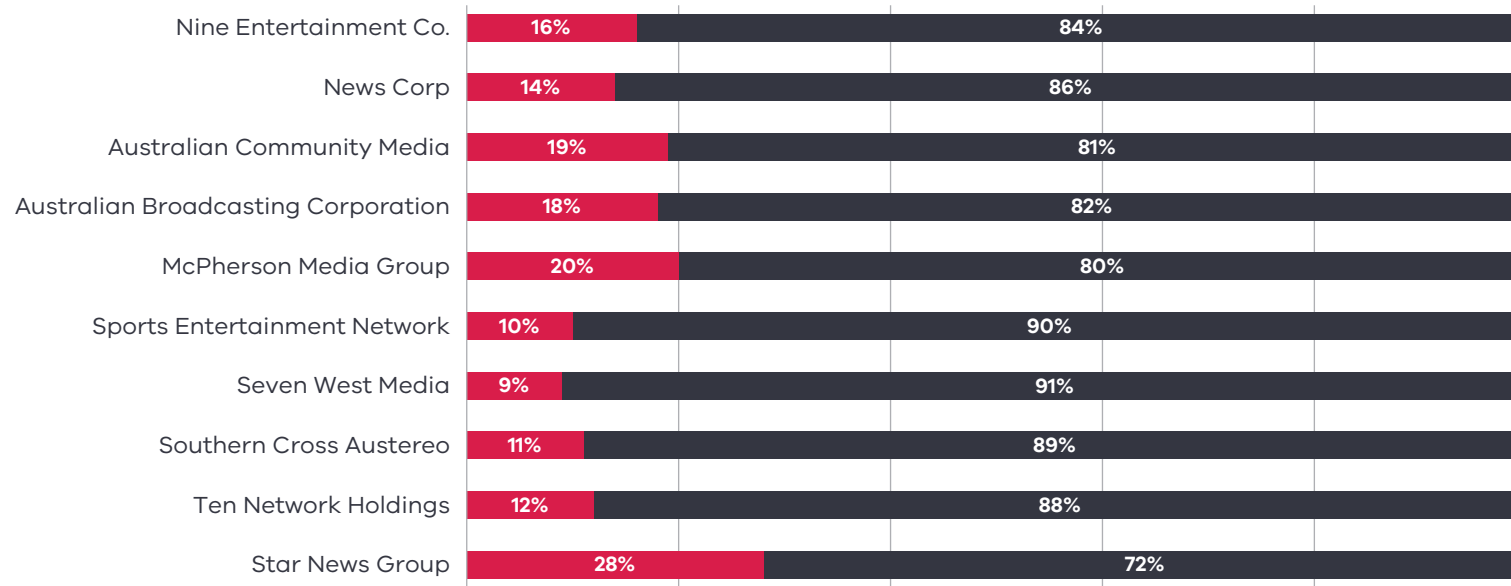
*Data for 'Other', including No Gender or Multiple Genders, is excluded from this data  
Sources are those quoted directly or indirectly in a media item, including official sources (athletes, coaches, officials, administrators) and unofficial sources (for example, fans).*

## 4.3. Media Organisations – Coverage

The study found that the underrepresentation of coverage of women’s sport was across the online, print, radio and television news landscape.

TOP 10 MEDIA ORGANISATIONS – SPORT NEWS COVERAGE BY GENDER

● Women ● Men

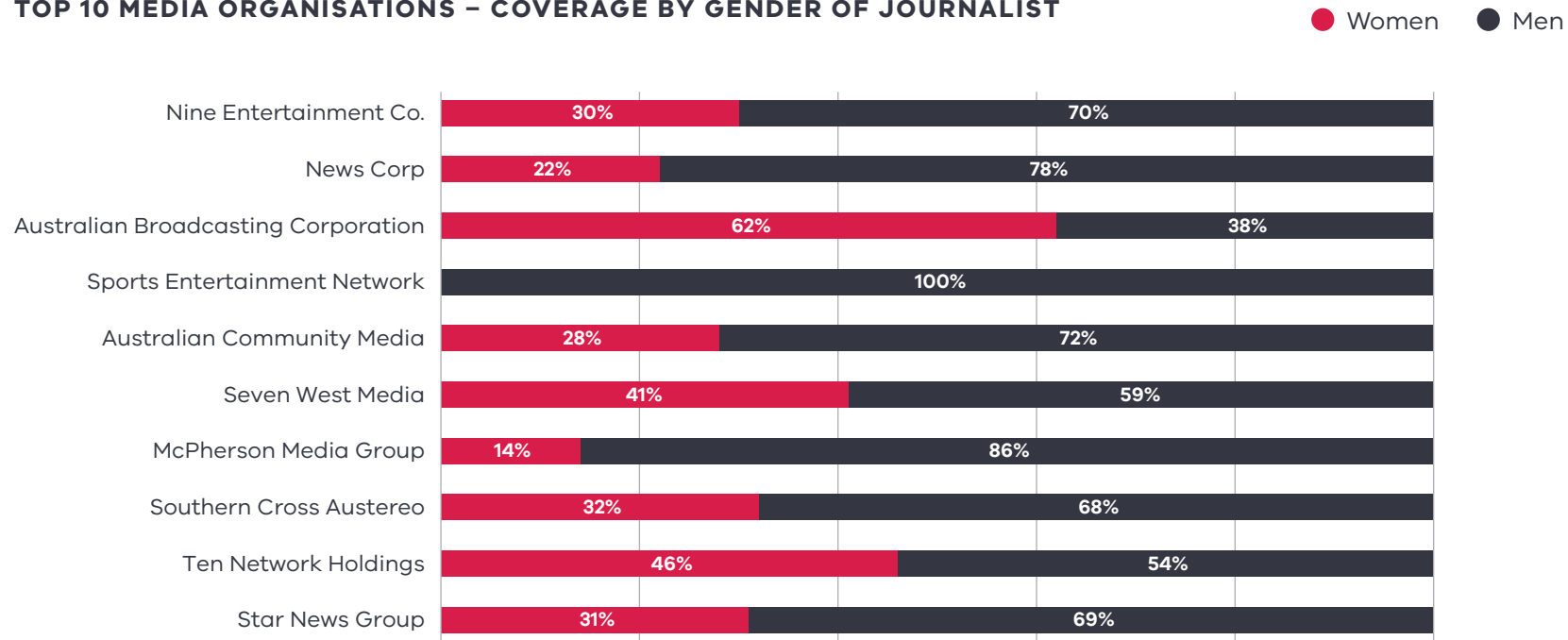


Data for 'Other', including No Gender or Multiple Genders, is excluded from this data.  
Top 10 media networks/owners based on volume of analysed coverage.

## 4.4. Media Organisations – Bylines

The study found that the women representation as journalists or presenters of sports news varied across the news landscape.

TOP 10 MEDIA ORGANISATIONS – COVERAGE BY GENDER OF JOURNALIST

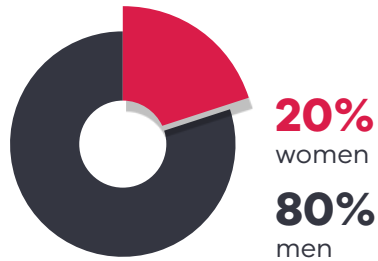


Data for 'Other', including No Gender or Multiple Genders, is excluded from this data.  
 Bylines includes the author of print or online articles, as well as reporter, newsreader or presenter of broadcast programs. A byline is not attributed for all media items, with this data only reflecting items with a named byline.  
 Top 10 media networks/owners based on volume of analysed coverage.

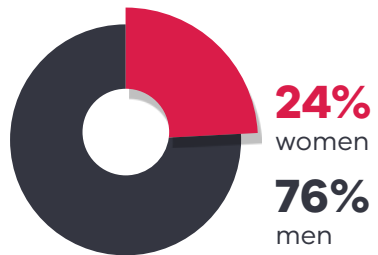
# 4.5. Print Media

These charts show the overall gender coverage, by month and by the top 10 media outlets ranked by volume, for print sports news.

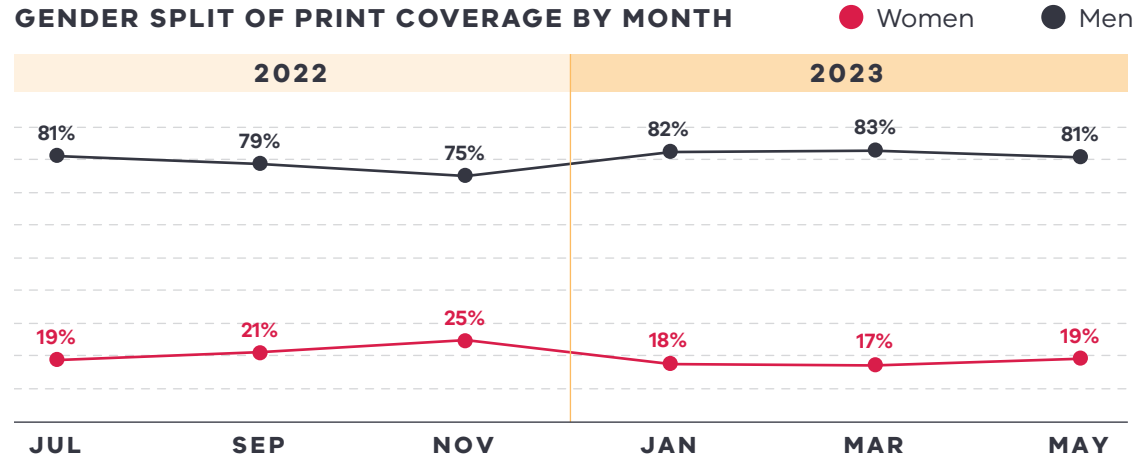
## GENDER COVERAGE BREAKDOWN IN PRINT MEDIA



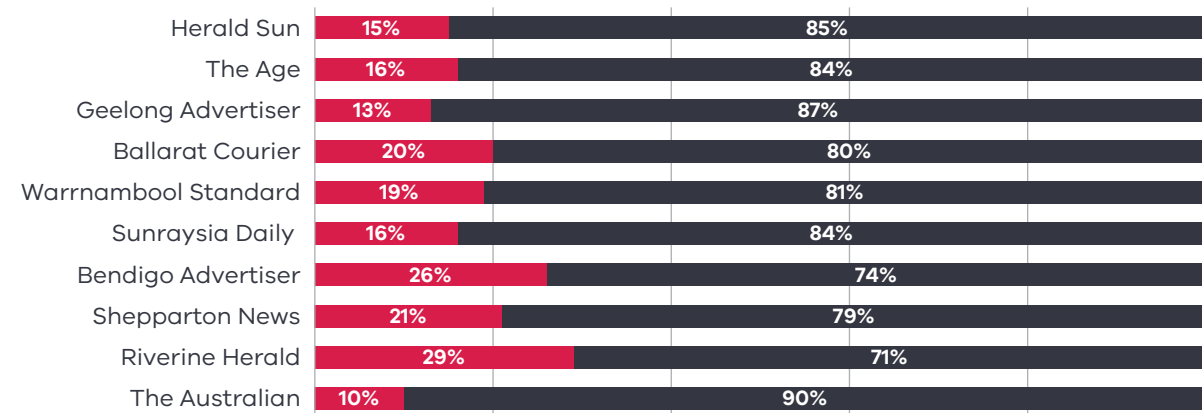
## GENDER BYLINE BREAKDOWN IN PRINT MEDIA



## GENDER SPLIT OF PRINT COVERAGE BY MONTH



## PRINT – TOP 10 MEDIA OUTLETS



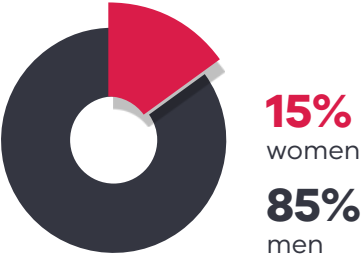
Data for 'Other', including No Gender or Multiple Genders, is excluded from this data.  
The share of voice for print media is 34%.



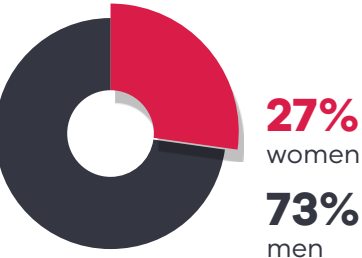
# 4.6. Online Media

These charts show the overall gender coverage, by month and by the top 10 media outlets ranked by volume, for online sports news.

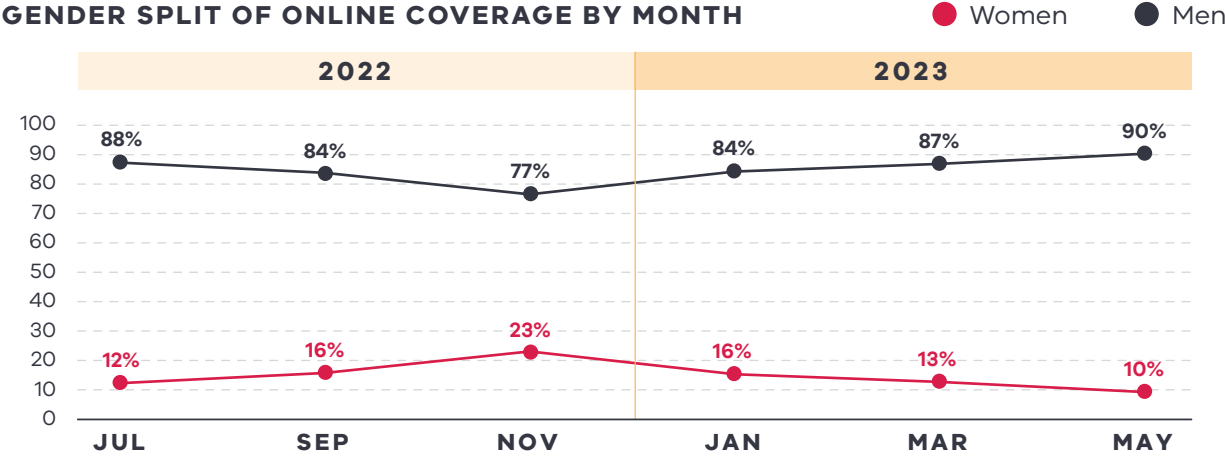
### GENDER COVERAGE BREAKDOWN IN ONLINE MEDIA



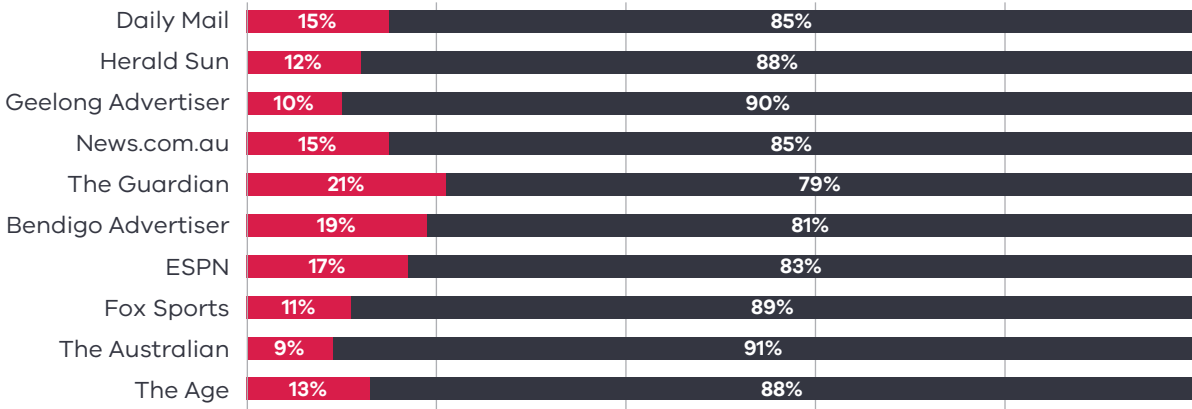
### GENDER BYLINE BREAKDOWN IN ONLINE MEDIA



### GENDER SPLIT OF ONLINE COVERAGE BY MONTH



### ONLINE - TOP 10 MEDIA OUTLETS



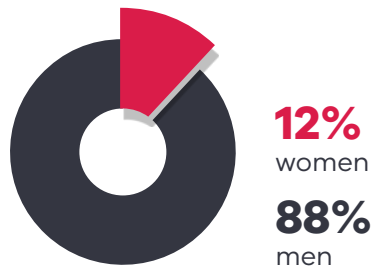
Data for 'Other', including No Gender or Multiple Genders, is excluded from this data. The share of voice for online media is 47%.



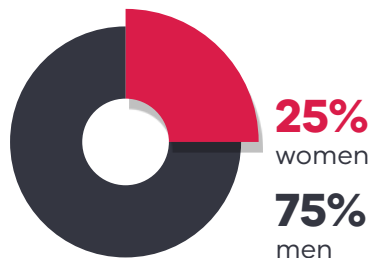
## 4.7. Radio News

These charts show the overall gender coverage, by month and by the top 10 media outlets ranked by volume, for radio sports news.

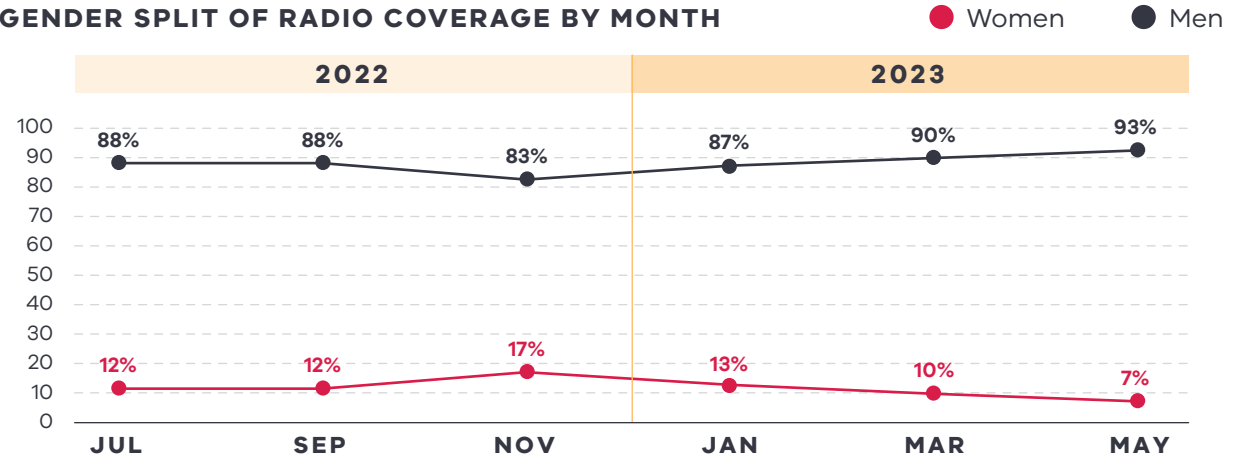
### GENDER COVERAGE BREAKDOWN IN RADIO NEWS



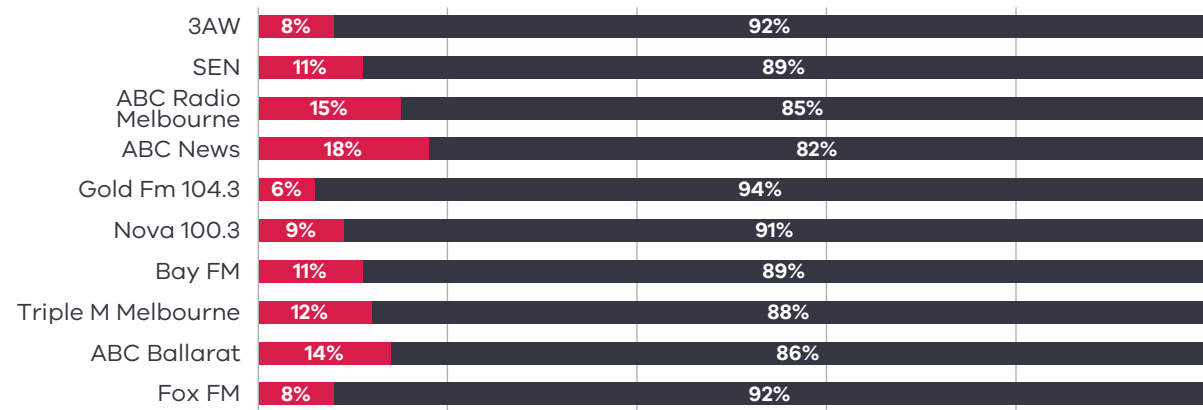
### GENDER BYLINE BREAKDOWN IN RADIO NEWS



### GENDER SPLIT OF RADIO COVERAGE BY MONTH



### RADIO - TOP 10 MEDIA OUTLETS



Data for 'Other', including No Gender or Multiple Genders, is excluded from this data.  
The share of voice for radio news is 15%.

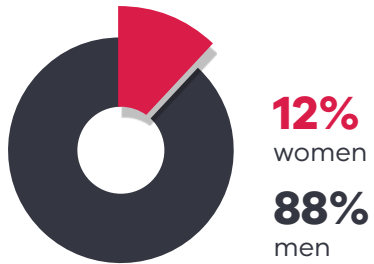




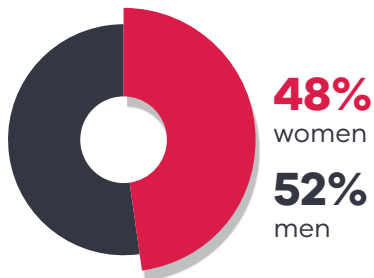
## 4.8. Television News

These charts show the overall gender coverage, by month and by the top 10 media outlets ranked by volume, for television sports news.

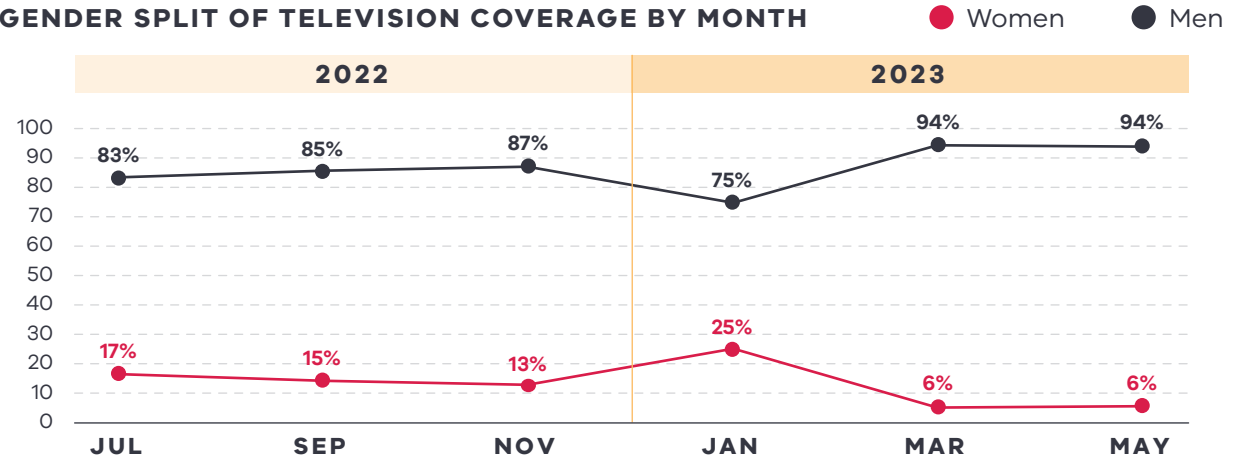
### GENDER COVERAGE BREAKDOWN IN TELEVISION NEWS



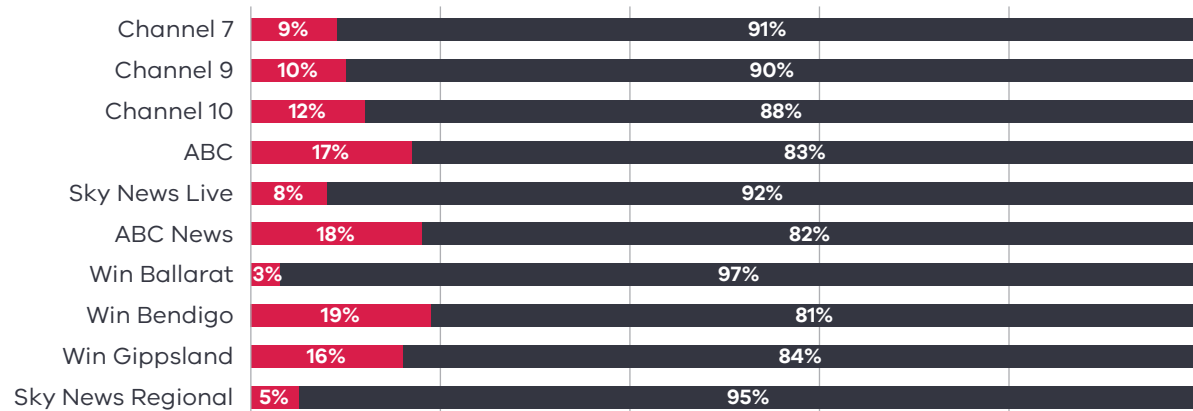
### GENDER BYLINE BREAKDOWN IN TELEVISION NEWS



### GENDER SPLIT OF TELEVISION COVERAGE BY MONTH



### TELEVISION – TOP 10 MEDIA OUTLETS



Data for 'Other', including No Gender or Multiple Genders, is excluded from this data  
The share of voice for television news is 4%.

# 05

## The Path Forward



# Driving change in media coverage of women's sport

There are a range of opportunities to drive positive change in the media coverage of women's sport.

## MEDIA



Media outlets have a key role in sharing the stories, driving conversations and providing up to date information on women's competitions, teams and athletes, as well as driving the narrative around gender equality in sport.

For media companies, the opportunity to develop a strategic approach to improve the coverage of women's sport, along with a supportive culture and workplace for both women and men journalists to drive content and stories on women's sport, represents the fundamental requirement for change.

Journalists, editors and presenters, who are at the heart of the stories and bringing sports news to the community, have an opportunity to consciously drive the content and coverage on women's sport, including consciously engaging women as sources for quotes and comment.

Critically, the onus for progress cannot be dropped on the shoulders of women journalists, who are already significantly more likely to cover women's sport.

## SPORT



Sporting organisations play a key role in supporting coverage of women in their sport, from driving the stories that build the profile of individual athletes and teams, to facilitating access, to amplifying the voices of women in the conversations of their sport.

The personalities within sport can shape the stories and narratives around women's sport coverage. Women's sport is more than results and performance, with the preparation and journeys of athletes and teams through competitions and seasons providing a richer, deeper understanding by the audience. Women athletes have stories beyond overcoming gender-based adversity – they are elite athletes, delivering performances among the best in the world.

Expanding from the athlete's perspective, supporting women to be involved in the conversation of sport as a source will assist in driving the diversity of perspectives from women in sport, whether that be athletes, coaches or executives, which can shape a broader conversation in sports media.

# Recommendations for ecosystem change

**Achieving a gender balanced media landscape requires ecosystem change across media and sport.**

The Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, informed by conversations with media and sporting organisations, recommends opportunities to influence positive change in the coverage of women in sports news.

	ROLE OF MEDIA		ROLE OF SPORT	
	Media Organisation	Individuals of influence*	Sporting Organisations	Individuals of influence#
STRATEGIC	Have a 'Women in Sport' strategy, with measurable targets.	Set a minimum target for women's sport coverage in personal performance plans.	Prioritise media organisations with measurable targets in place, and amplify earned content with fans and grassroots participants to grow engagement.	Identify your opportunity to change the volume and depth of coverage for women in sport.
CULTURE	Assess if your organisation has any disincentives that favour men's sport (e.g. placement of news stories, performance measures).	Consider and address your own potential bias towards men's sports coverage.	Dismantle internal barriers to greater coverage of your women's teams or athletes (e.g. responsiveness to media requests).	Challenge the status quo by adding your voice to calls for progress. Don't allow women to be hidden behind a 'default' of men's sport.
WORKFORCE	Consider the recruitment and retention practices influencing the gender balance of your employees.	Consider how you are enabling a workplace and industry network and culture inclusive of women in sports media.	Support the gender balance of who is reporting on your women's and men's teams and athletes.	Directly support women in sports media (e.g. granting interviews to journalists, supporting content on stories).
SOURCES	Prioritise increasing women as sources for men's and women's sport.	Consciously engage gender-balanced sources for quotes and comment.	Provide access to gender-balanced representatives for interviews, quotes and other media opportunities.	Support women – athletes, coaches/high performance experts, executives – to add their voice to the conversation of sport.

\* Includes editors, journalists, producers, content directors, presenters

# Includes executives, athletes, high performance staff, advocates

# 06

## References

1. Australian Sports Commission (2010), Towards a Level Playing Field: Sport and gender in Australian media, Australian Sports Commission, Australia.
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