

When do women get a voice? Explaining the presence of female news sources in Belgian news broadcasts

For more than a decade now, it has been demonstrated that female news sources receive little attention in television news. Usually women account for no more than 20–25 percent of total time devoted to people speaking in the news. This article assesses when exactly female news sources are depicted in the news, using a dataset of 25,896 news items and 1600 hours of television, covering public broadcasting and commercial television in Belgium (Flanders) for the years 2003–5. The analysis shows that female news sources are strongly stereotyped and limited to traditional ‘female’ topics. The impact of the gender of the reporter was limited. Contrary to expectations, the broadcasting corporation with a long-standing gender diversity policy actually scored worse than its counterpart without such a policy. The article concludes with a discussion of the apparently difficult relation between traditional news standards and the depiction of gender diversity.

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