

Bad news for women in media

October 9 2012

Gender bias and sexual harassment against female journalists are still systemic problems in Australian newsrooms, according to new research.

In the largest-ever survey of female journalists in the Australian news media, Monash University researcher Dr Louise North from the School of Applied Media and Social Sciences investigated various [working conditions](#) previously known to confront [women](#) to gauge the extent of perceived gender discrimination. It builds on a 1996 survey by the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance and the International Federation of Journalists.

Dr North surveyed 577 female journalists working across all media platforms in metropolitan, regional, rural and suburban news media organisations.

"Unfortunately it appears little has changed in the 16 years since the previous survey," Dr North said.

"The 1996 survey found there was significant [gender discrimination](#) in Australian newsrooms, and that sexual harassment, in particular, was a systemic problem. The results of the current survey shows the same challenges are still evident for female journalists."

The study asked about working conditions, job [segregation](#), recruitment, promotion and sexual harassment.

The most staggering finding of the survey is that 57.3 per cent of female

journalists experience some form of sexual harassment, up from 51.6 per cent in the 1996 survey. This is more than twice the rate found in the general workforce.

"The vast majority of those who experienced sexual harassment indicated it had occurred in the past five years," Dr North said.

"This overwhelmingly indicates that [sexual harassment](#) is an ongoing, systemic problem that remains part of the work culture in media organisations in Australia today."

The survey also found that 67 per cent of respondents thought men and women were not equally represented in senior/decision-making levels in the newsrooms, affirming previous research that indicates that few women reach decision-making positions in the news media.

"Gender inequity in top editorial positions was most evident in metropolitan newspapers," Dr North said.

"For example, if we were to walk into the [newsrooms](#) of the 21 major metropolitan newspapers in this country would find that not one woman was entrusted with the editing role of a daily edition, although three women currently edit a Saturday or Sunday-only edition.

The [survey](#) suggests that the best place for women to get ahead was in regional and rural radio where men and women are more likely to be equally represented in decision-making roles."

On a positive note, more women are securing reporting roles in hard news rounds like politics.

Provided by Monash University

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