

Study shows journalism burnout affecting women more than men

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The field of journalism has changed greatly over the last decade, and those changes are taking a particularly hard toll on women working in newsrooms, new research from a University of Kansas professor shows. Female journalists are experiencing more job burnout and more intend to leave the field or are uncertain about their futures than their male counterparts, the study shows.

Scott Reinardy, professor of journalism, surveyed more than 1,600 [journalists](#), including more than 500 women, about their levels of [burnout](#), job satisfaction, organizational support, role overload and intentions to leave their job. Women reported [higher levels](#) of role overload and intentions to leave the field.

"Journalism, as a profession, hasn't really grown in terms of gender as we'd hoped. So what you're getting is a less diverse newsroom. It's not going in a positive direction," Reinardy said.

The study was a replication of a similar effort he made in 2009. Comparison of numbers from the two studies shows the trend of women experiencing burnout and intending to leave the field is increasing. In the 2009 study, 62 percent of women said they either intended to leave journalism or were uncertain about their future. The current study showed that number at 67 percent. The number was 55 percent for men in the new study.

Reinardy will present the research at the International Communications

Association conference in May.

Reinardy examined the numbers through gender socialization theory, which claims that society puts certain expectations on people based on their gender from a very young age. Where women are more often expected to provide the majority of family care and raise children, men are expected to be the breadwinners and put work obligations before family. That was supported by the findings showing that women experience significantly higher rates of role overload or feel that they are unable to complete their assigned duties in the work time allowed.

Women also reported higher levels of exhaustion than their male colleagues, and while there was no significant difference between the two in terms of cynicism, both men and women were in what is considered the high range of cynicism as related to burnout. Just among women, those who stated they intended to leave the field had significantly higher rates of exhaustion, cynicism and significantly lower levels of professional efficacy, or feeling like their organization supported them.

"Collectively, this group of women are classic burnout cases," Reinardy said. "They had higher rates of exhaustion and cynicism and felt less support from their organization. The only resolution is often to change jobs or leave the field altogether."

While the amount of burnout among all journalists can certainly be viewed as a negative sign, the disparity between the genders is particularly troubling for several reasons. With fewer women in newsrooms, fewer will rise to management positions, which will likely have substantial effects on decisions made regarding newsroom employees. A traditionally male-dominated field, women started making gains in newsrooms about the time of the women's movement and civil rights movements, which led to more "lifestyles" and "features" sections

and eventually more equality in all news disciplines. Fewer women remaining in newsrooms will likely erode those gains and lead to questions if all topics will receive equal coverage, Reinardy said.

"Diversity of voices is incredibly important in a newsroom," he said.

The gender gap also shows up in academia, as fewer women are entering news and information programs in journalism schools and more are opting for strategic communications tracks, he added. However, the situation is not completely negative as there are still many young journalists who are excited about the profession and optimistic about their roles. Reinardy said, in his research with journalists, many young professionals have said they embrace the new role of journalists and the changing face of the profession. Those who understand the new model and expectations of a journalist often reported the highest [job satisfaction](#). The numbers can also provide a teaching opportunity in preparing future journalists to prepare for new roles and be aware of ways to combat stress among reporters, he said.

For the time being, though, role overload, indecisiveness of management, expectations of new roles such as social media and multiples forms of content have led to high rates of burnout, especially among [women](#).

"It's become far more difficult and complex to be a journalist," Reinardy said. "And unfortunately there are a lot of people in newsrooms right now looking for other jobs."

Provided by University of Kansas

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