

Study reveals why men receive much more media coverage than women

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For years social scientists have grappled with the question of why men receive far more media coverage than women, and now a new study reveals the answer.

"The persistent gap in media coverage is produced by a mix of two ingredients," said Eran Shor, an associate professor in the Department of Sociology at McGill University and the lead author of the study, which found that 82 percent—nearly five out of every six names referenced in the media—are men's. "The ingredients are the media's preoccupation with leaders at the expense of everyone else and the well-known 'glass ceiling' that continues to block off working women's access to leadership positions."

According to Shor, he and his co-authors discovered that among "obscure individuals"—people who make the news only once or twice—there was near parity in terms of male and female mentions.

"However, the media focuses nearly exclusively on individuals at the top of occupational and social hierarchies, who are mostly men: CEOs, congressmen, movie directors, and the like," Shor said. "And because these famous individuals account for most of the name occurrences in the news, the overall coverage difference between women and men has remained extremely wide."

Titled, "A Paper Ceiling: Explaining the Persistent Underrepresentation of Women in Printed News," the study, which appears in the October

issue of the *American Sociological Review*, relies on data from more than 2,000 U.S. newspapers, magazines, and [online news sources](#) from 1983-2009.

Contrary to speculation by earlier researchers, Shor and his co-authors showed that women's coverage was not higher in news produced by liberal media organizations. "This is a surprising finding because there is some literature suggesting that liberal news outlets may cover women's issues more than conservative ones," Shor said. "They do not. There is also quite a lot of literature that suggests having women as editors in chief or managing editors or more [women](#) on editorial boards would make a difference but, once again, that is not the case."

The researchers also found that men's domination in media coverage was not restricted to sports. "The large majority of those people mentioned in [news](#), business, and even entertainment articles are men," Shor said. "The entertainment coverage may be especially surprising because people tend to believe that female celebrities are just as, if not more, famous and draw at least equal amounts of attention as their male counterparts."

But, according to Shor, the great majority of directors, producers, comedians, and other prominent people in the entertainment industry are men, and most high-revenue movies still have more main male characters than female characters.

"As long as men continue to monopolize the highest levels of occupational and [social hierarchies](#), we are not likely to see a major shift in [media coverage](#)," Shor said. "The resulting dominance of men as subjects of public and dinner-table conversation may reinforce and normalize in the minds of audiences the notion that power and newsworthiness are something [men](#) have and, apparently, deserve."

Provided by American Sociological Association

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