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## **Sexism still rife in Aussie newsrooms**

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## Sexism still rife in Aussie newsrooms

A new study, the first of its kind in 16 years, which surveyed 577 female journalists across all media platforms in Australia has found that there is still widespread gender discrimination in newsrooms.

The report is built on earlier findings from the Media, Entertainment, and Arts Alliance (MEAA) and the International Federation of Journalist (IFJ), which revealed significant issues around equal opportunity in promotion, job segregation, sexual harassment, and childcare.

Following the release of the report in 1996, a total of seven recommendations were made to the industry union to 'acknowledge the special problems faced by women journalists' but none were implemented.

According to the *Daily Life*, Louise North, senior lecturer in journalism at Monash University and the author of the new nationwide study, found that the mainstream news media in Australia are still dominated by men at almost every level today.

North wrote that 'women journalists are typically located en masse in low-paid, low-status positions, struggling to attain real influence in editorial decision making roles across all media platforms.'

The problem is most pronounced at the top. As in August 2012, not one woman was entrusted with the editing role in a daily edition across the nation's 21 metropolitan newspapers. Only three women currently edit a weekend paper.

What's more, half of the 577 female journalists surveyed had never been promoted, even though the majority of respondents have been in their current roles for anything from 4-20 years.

North found that female reporters are less likely to be allocated the kinds of stories that make it to page one.

According to the report, more than half of the survey respondents, 57.3 percent, agreed that the more coveted news areas – such as politics and sports – tend to be assigned to male reporters, with female journalists being pigeon holed in what's traditionally seen as lady rounds like "women's issues, fashion, health, the arts and education."

And since most promotions are decided on a subjective basis by editors, with little to no "formal performance review", it's easy to see why (male) reporters with 'meatier rounds' are more likely to rise through the ranks.

The most staggering finding in North's survey, however, is the rising problem of sexual harassment in Australian newsrooms.

In fact, more Australian female journalists have experienced sexual harassment compared to 16 years ago, with 57.3 percent of all respondents having been experienced "objectionable remarks or behaviour" from a male colleague or manager in a senior

position.

An overwhelming 87.2 percent of the women affected chose not to report the incidents – citing “fear of victimisation” or that “there are no benefits in doing so”.

Depressingly, the survey also indicated that “majority of respondents believe sexual harassment is an accepted part of their organisation’s culture and [is] tolerated in the workplace” – and these are smart women who make a living from being vocal, the report added. (ANI)

Tid-Bits

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