

# Impact & Accountability Report October 2019

INFORMED  
OPINIONS



GENDER GAP  
TRACKER

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SFU

## Introduction

This report describes the impetus for, and preliminary impact of, the Gender Gap Tracker, an analytics tool that measures – in real time – the gender of those quoted and featured in Canada’s most influential news media.

We are grateful for the funds provided by the federal department of Women and Gender Equality (formerly Status of Women Canada) that permitted us to publicly launch and promote the tool over the course of its first seven months.

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## Representation Matters

The focus of some news stories dictates who must be quoted – the government minister or CEO making the announcement, the person accused of or victimized by a crime...

At the same time, journalists often have discretion over the people they ask to provide context or analysis. Yet those people remain overwhelmingly white and male. This is especially troubling when you consider that the people whose voices are absent are often the ones most affected by the decisions being announced.



**Given the critical role that news media play in a democracy, and what we understand about the benefits of diverse perspectives, this is no longer acceptable.**



# WHO'S BEING QUOTED?

In 7 Canadian Media Outlets during Fall 2015

29%  
WOMEN

71%  
MEN



1,467 NEWS STORIES  
& INTERVIEWS

EXPERTWOMEN.ca INFORMED  
OPINIONS

## Some Historical Research Context

In 2015, Informed Opinions commissioned content analysis research measuring the ratio of male and female experts and sources quoted or featured in a cross-section of seven Canadian media outlets. The data gathering and annotation took three months, the analysis and publication of the report another two. We found that men's perspectives outranked women's by more than two to one.

However, closer examination revealed that public broadcast talk shows performed much better (40% plus) than print media and private broadcasters (all under 30%).

## An Invaluable Research Partnership

We wanted to leverage that discrepancy, shorten the research and reporting time frame, and draw both public and media attention to the persistent and indefensible gender gap.

With the generous sponsorship of Simon Fraser University, we worked with an international research team directed by computational linguist, Dr. Maite Taboada (centre) to develop a sophisticated big data tool that uses machine learning to process and analyze vast amounts of data scraped from seven of Canada's most influential news media's online platforms.



## The Gender Gap Tracker is a genuinely innovative tool.



To our knowledge, no one else is analyzing gendered voices in news coverage on this scale, and making the data publicly available.

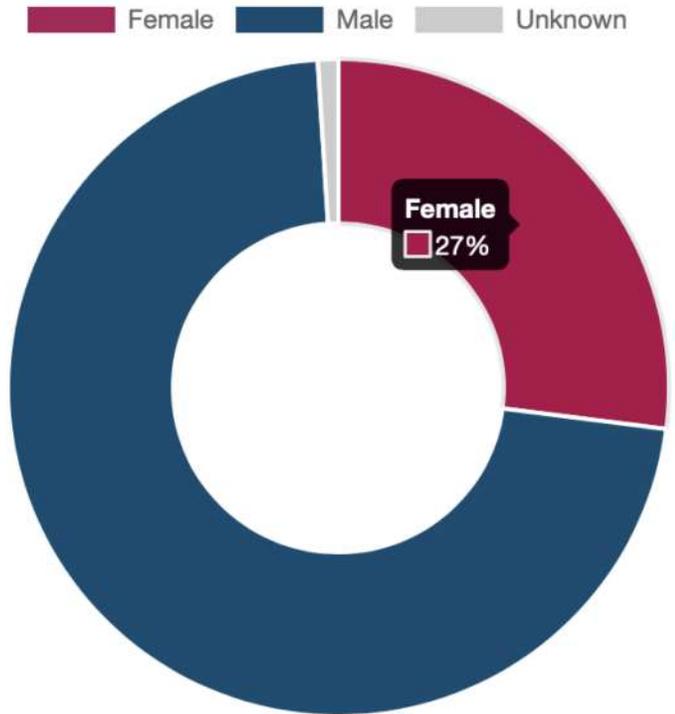
The GGT has already helped to increase attention to the chronic under-representation of women's perspectives in the media, and it has enormous potential to seed behaviour shifts that will lead to systemic change.

## Preliminary Research Results

When we began gathering data in October 2018, the aggregate share of women's voices in the monitored media was 27%. This was lower than the percentage found in our 2015 research because the earlier data was disproportionately weighted to talk shows, vs news.

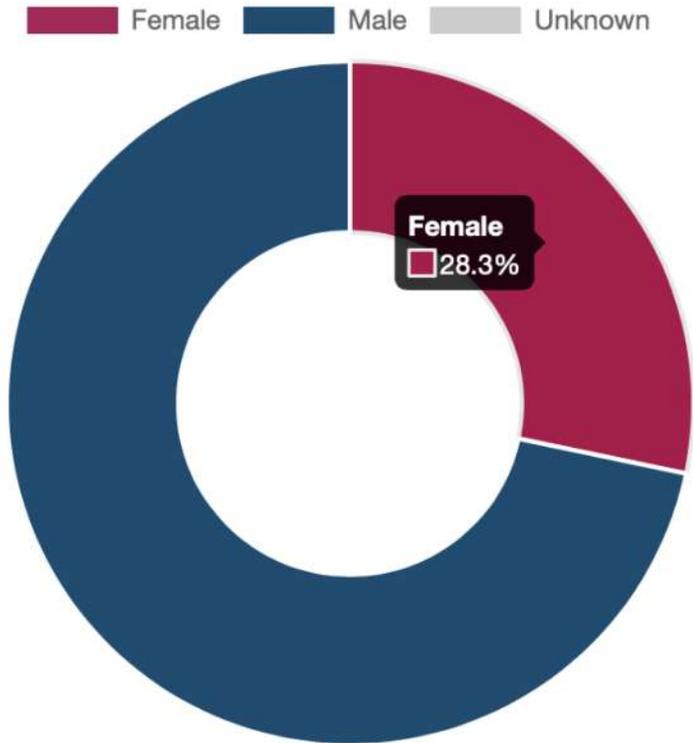
Also, when we launched the GGT, we were initially showing women's voices at 25.3%, but as the researchers have continued to refine the tool, it has become more accurate.

### Aggregate ratio of male and female sources



**1 October 2018 – 4 February 2019**

## Aggregate ratio of male and female sources



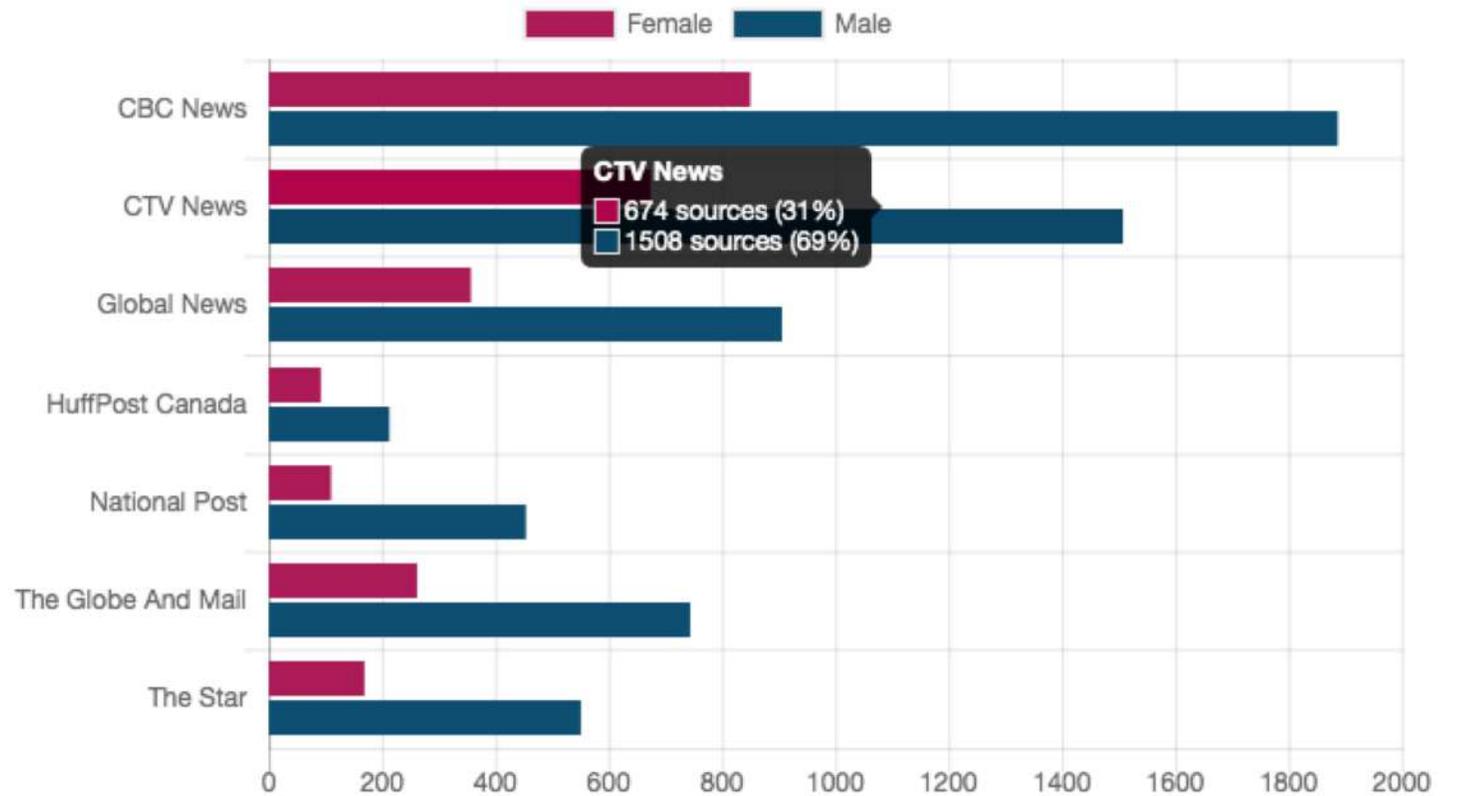
1 – 31 August 2019

In just eight months since the Gender Gap Tracker's launch, women's share of the quoted voices has **increased by 1.3% to 28.3%.\***

This is a small but significant gain. For context, a 1993 study of Canadian newspapers found women's voices at 22%, so the 27% starting point in February 2019 represented only a 5-point increase in a quarter of a century.

*\* Canada's federal election appears to have undercut that gain slightly in September, which we suspect is partly due to four of five major parties being lead by men.*

## Ratio of male and female sources by news outlet

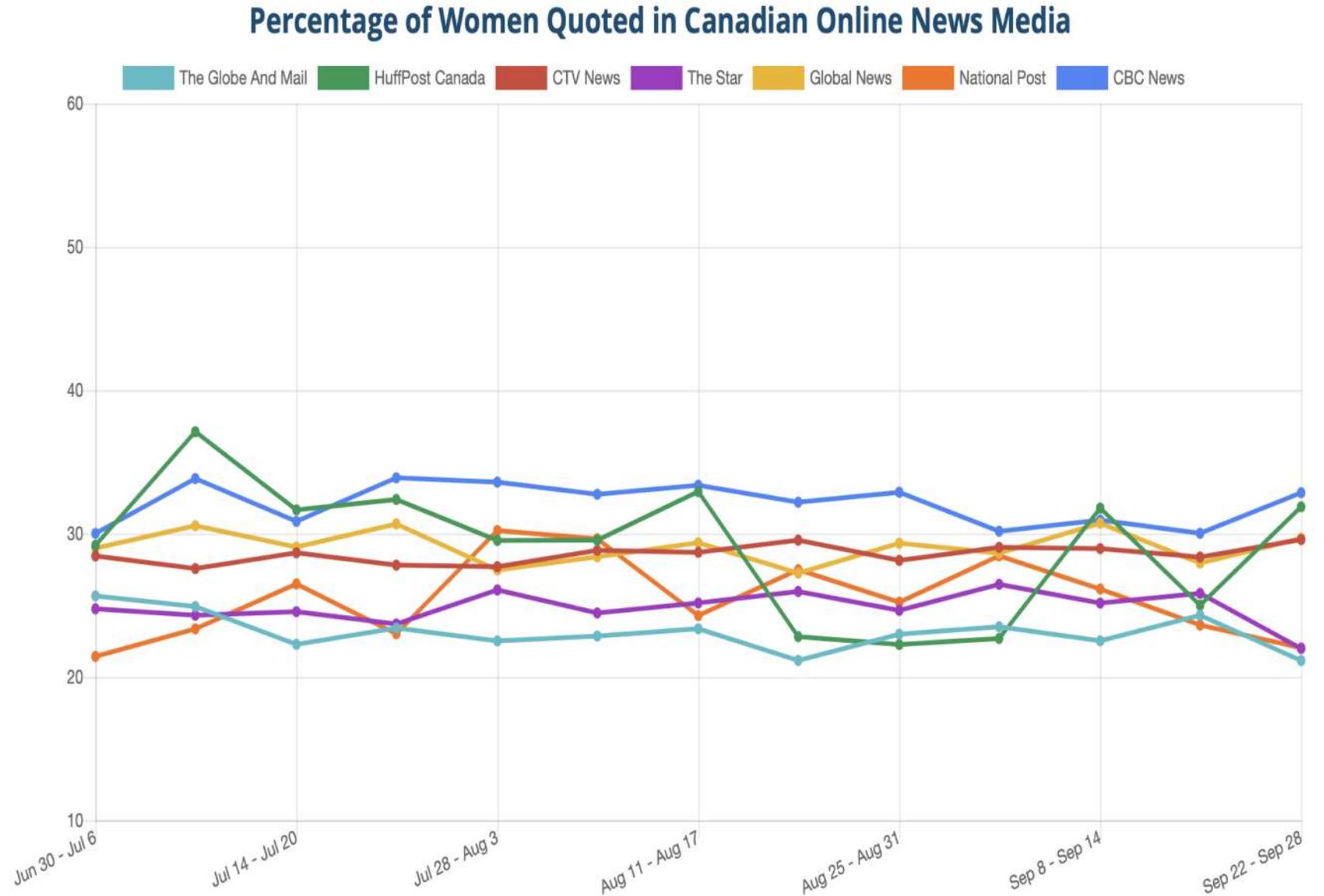


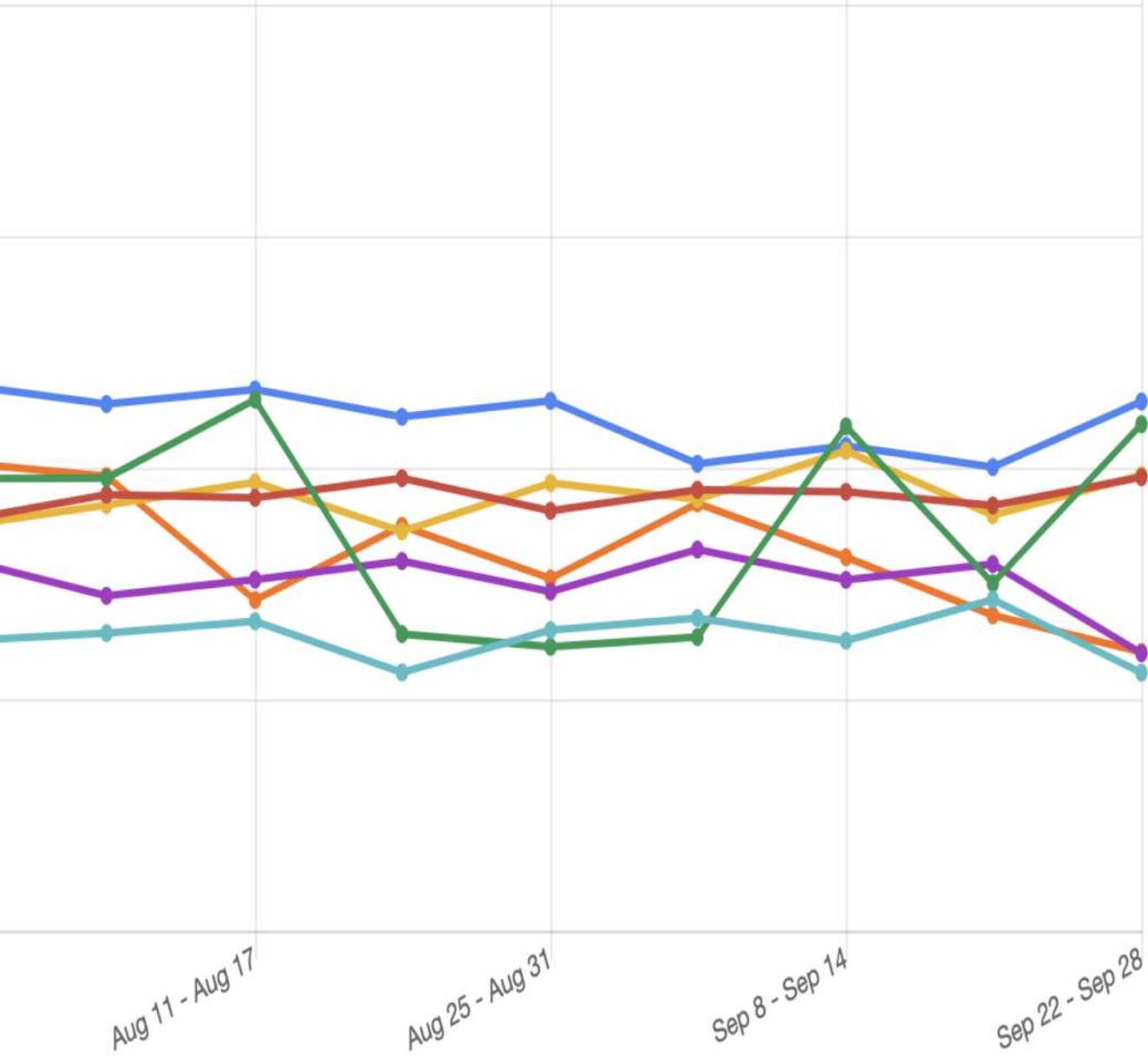
In addition to the circle graph displayed on previous pages, the GGT site also features two comparative graphs which allow citizens and journalists themselves to measure their newsroom's performance against their media competitors. The bar graph shows men and women sources quoted by each outlet both numerically and as a percentage of the total.

*Visitors to the site can select the period of time to measure and hover their cursors over the graphs to see details.*

In August, we added a comparative line graph to the site.

This makes it easier for all visitors to assess an individual news outlet's representation of women's voices against their competitors, and to notice trends over time.





With additional resources, we will be able to tease out the trends made clear by the visualized data.

**For example**, why during the last week of September did the representation of women's voices in print media (*The Globe*, *The Star* and *The National Post*) plummet to around 21%, while HuffPost and the three broadcasters all featured 30% or more?

# PROMOTION

Minister for the Status of Women Maryam Monsef and Simon Fraser University's VP Research, Joy Johnson, joined us for a conversation about the critical difference women's voices make at the launch of the Gender Gap Tracker in Ottawa on February 4<sup>th</sup>.

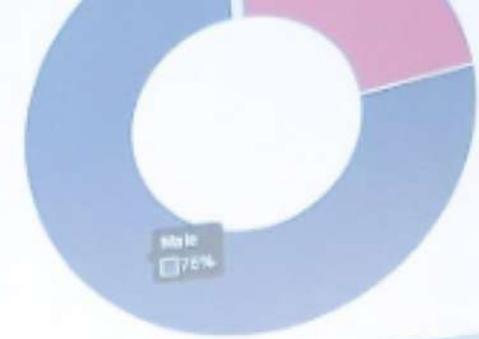




We also introduced the GGT in Toronto to an audience of 300 business people at a 30% Club event on International Women's Day.

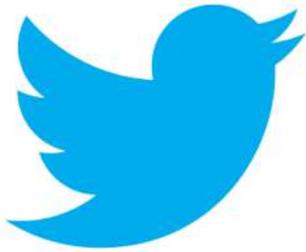


mtaboada@sfu.ca  
<http://www.sfu.ca/discourse-lab.html>  
<https://github.com/sfu-discourse-lab>



The diverse team of scientists who created and continue to refine the GGT spoke about their work at a research event in Vancouver in March.





We made strategic investments in raising awareness on social media.



**Pinned Tweet**  
**Informed Opinions** @InformedOps · Feb 13  
 When #journalists track the gender of their sources, they quote more women. The #GenderGapTracker lets them know how they're doing. Try it at [gendergaptracker.informedopinions.org](http://gendergaptracker.informedopinions.org) #genderequity #cdnmedia

Tracking the male-to-female ratio of sources consulted for a story is “a vaccine against self-delusion.”

- Ed Yong  
Science reporter, The Atlantic



INFORMED OPINIONS

SFU Research

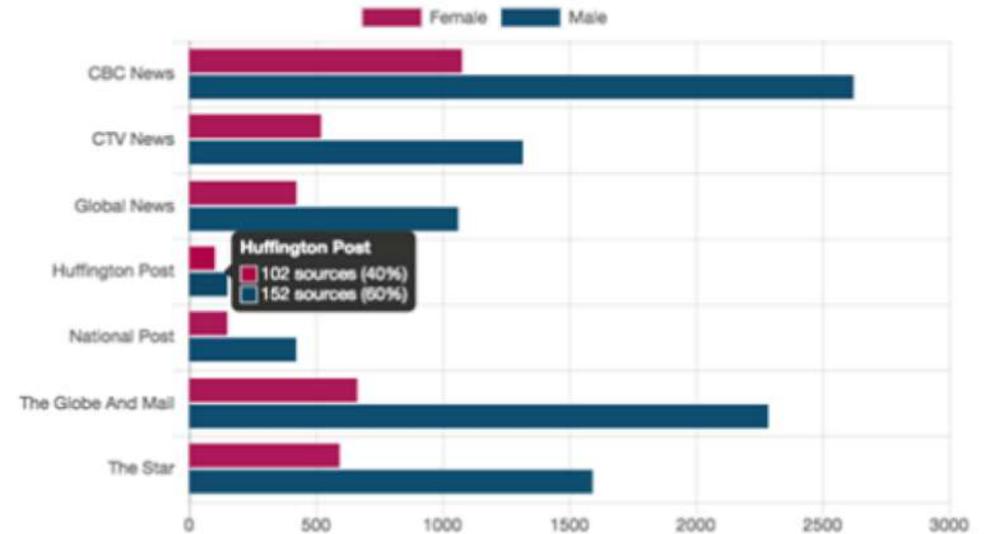
🗨️ 28 ❤️ 52 📌

**Informed Opinions**  
 April 4 at 11:12 AM · 🌐

Kudos to HuffPost Canada, leading the pack on the Gender Gap Tracker with 40% female sources quoted for the past week. That's 13 points above the aggregate of 27%, and a full 18% ahead of the worst performer.

Check them all out at [gendergaptracker.informedopinions.org](http://gendergaptracker.informedopinions.org) and click on the media logos at the bottom to let them know tracking the gender of their sources matters to you. SFU Research

**Ratio of male and female sources by news outlet**



<https://gendergaptracker.informedopinions.org/>

**Informed Opinions**

Charity Organization

[Learn More](#)

**3,975**  
People Reached

**348**  
Engagements

[Boost Again](#)

Our earned media efforts generated a reach of more than 21 million.



**Researchers are tracking the media's gender gap | University Affairs**  
New tool seeks to draw attention to the imbalance in sources used by major news outlets.  
[universityaffairs.ca](http://universityaffairs.ca)



**Online tool gives media outlets incentive to achieve gender parity | T...**  
Quoting more female sources likely to help engage audiences  
[thestar.com](http://thestar.com)



**Tracking the gender gap in Canadian media**  
The Gender Gap Tracker uses computational linguistics techniques to analyze how women are mentioned and quoted in Canadian media.  
[theconversation.com](http://theconversation.com)

[Researchers are tracking the media's gender gap](#)  
article

[Online tool gives media outlets incentive to achieve gender parity](#)  
op ed by Shari Graydon

[Tracking the gender gap in Canadian media](#)  
op ed by Maite Taboada and Fatemeh Torabi Asr



We've shared hundreds of print postcards with news consumers at conferences and researchers, advocates, STEM professionals, credit union executives, entrepreneurs, lawyers, corporate directors, and journalists across the country.



## SOLUTION

INFORMED  
OPINIONS



**GENDER GAP**  
**TRACKER**

Powered by **SFU**

The Gender Gap Tracker aims to celebrate news media that more equitably reflect women's voices, and motivate others to do better. Visit...

[gendergaptracker.informedopinions.org](http://gendergaptracker.informedopinions.org)

and tag the media you rely on to remind them that THEY CAN:

- **Easily achieve parity** - "I've raised my sources from 25% women to 50%. Anybody can do this."  
- Ed Yong, Science reporter, *The Atlantic*
- **Enhance their reporting** - "Diversity of sources is a hallmark of quality journalism."  
- Kathy English, Public Editor, *Toronto Star*
- **Increase audience engagement** - Radio Canada's *La sphère* grew its audience after featuring more women.

## IMPACT on PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Gender Gap Tracker has received 6,052 visitors to date, and the news outlets featured have been encouraged to track the gender of their sources by 517 visitors. Although a common assumption in media circles has been that one complaint reflects 100 others who haven't taken the time to weigh in, this superficial penetration is in no way commensurate with the transformational capacity of the tool.



## IMPACT on JOURNALISM PRACTICE

We know from conversations with journalists and visits to news rooms that the Gender Gap Tracker is already seeding behaviour change. More editors, reporters and producers are:

1. Monitoring the gender (and other identity criteria) of their sources;
2. Using our database to identify and recruit new experts;
3. Developing other organizational strategies to broaden the diversity of those they interview and feature;
4. Soliciting our advice.





**Media  
Roundtables  
Fall 2015**

75 senior  
online, print  
& broadcast  
journalists

Toronto  
Vancouver  
Ottawa  
Montreal

**JUNE 2019**

**An engaged group of Toronto Star reporters attended presentations on the GGT and our experts database at the paper's newsroom. The Star has launched a significant internal project to increase women's voices in its news coverage.**



**August 2019:**  
Second visit to HuffPost. Team members hard at work and...



...posing for a post-GGT meeting pic



**September 2019:**  
Enthusiastic producers (many already using database), reporters, anchors and news director at Global TV Vancouver

PUBLIC EDITOR

## Let's hear from more diverse voices



SYLVIA STEAD >

PUBLISHED MARCH 29, 2019

7 COMMENTS



A global media group, United for News, recently reported this discouraging statistic: that women make up only 24 per cent of the persons heard, read about or seen in the world's news media and only 19 per cent of the experts cited.

Last month, Globe and Mail editor-in-chief David Walmsley committed The Globe and Mail to be the United for News initiative's Canadian partner. The plan is to study and test different ways to increase and amplify the voices of women and produce a paper of best practices for newsrooms around the world. The Globe is testing an algorithm to track the gender balance of sources in stories and front-page photography.

So what's the starting point? I went through five weeks of newspaper coverage counting the number of photographs, bylines and sources or subjects across the sections. The results are better than the United for News survey, but nowhere near equity.

## GGT INCENTIVIZES ENGAGEMENT

We've had ongoing conversations with several journalists at *The Globe and Mail*, and two months after we notified Canadian media of our launch of the Gender Gap Tracker, public editor Sylvia Stead wrote about the paper's planned initiatives to increase and amplify women's voices, and to test its own tracking algorithm in collaboration with United for News, an international effort to build trust in media.

# JOURNALISTS' USE OF DATABASE EXPERTS INCREASES BY 250%

From September 2018 to September 2019, journalists' use of our database, and the number of news platforms featuring our experts, both rose by 250%.

Canada's most influential news media -- including CBC, Global TV, *The Globe and Mail*, CTV and *The Toronto Star* -- drew on the sources we profile multiple times.

Search for...



## Abigail Ortiz

Psychiatrist | The Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre and Mood Disorders Center of Ottawa, UOHS

Dr. Ortiz's research focuses on understanding mood regulation using mathematics



## Ada Barlatt

Founder and Consultant | Operations Ally

Promoting life balance through improved technology guidelines and policies; helping agencies fix their frustrations with internal and client communication. Ada Barlatt, is your cheerful OperationsAlly! She is a fun loving ...



## Adele Reinhartz

Professor, Classics and Religious Studies | University of Ottawa

History and literature of early Christianity, Early Judaism, Use of Bible in film



## Adelle Blackett

Full Professor. Canada Research Chair in Transnational Labour Law and Development | McGill University

Labour Law, Law and Development, Transnational Labour Law, Regulation of Domestic Work, Trade Regulation, Law of International Organizations, Legal History, and Critical Race Theory.



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• 1h

**#cdnmedia**: experts in affordability & economic insecurity, climate change & energy, Indigenous issues, immigration & human rights, & leadership communication are available for **#media** requests for the leaders' debate. Check out <https://t.co/xBPgr2fkVq> **#cdnpoli** **#elxn43**

1 Twitter



Informed Opinions @InformedOps

• 1h

What needs to be done to reduce the **#pay** equity gap between men and women in Canada? **@cdnwomenfdn** CEO **@PauletteSenior1** sits down with **@globalnews** to talk about it. For **#HerInformedOps**, contact Senior @ <https://t.co/2DpVyzKxEh> <https://t.co/juqnbGEFCZ>

Twitter



Informed Opinions @InformedOps

• 2h

What might be in store for **#animals** in **#elxn43**? British

## OUR MEDIA OUTREACH CONTINUES:

We send weekly emails to our list of journalist subscribers alerting them to qualified experts available to comment on current and emerging news stories, from G7 summit, cryptocurrency and trade policy to affordable housing, food security and climate change. And everytime an expert in the database is quoted, we share her comments on social media.



...making it easier for you to find qualified diverse female sources

Looking for qualified experts? Our online database of pre-vetted sources who are committed to responding to media queries in a timely manner are available for comment and interview.

Use the buttons or links to contact them directly through their online profiles:



**Nipa Banerjee**

<https://informedopinions.org/view-expert-profile/?expert-id=31735>

Senior fellow and adjunct professor, School of International Development and Global Studies, University of Ottawa  
Food security, international development, foreign aid, economic development

Contact  
Nipa



**Steffi Hamann**

<https://informedopinions.org/view-expert-profile/?expert-id=38195>

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Guelph  
Food security, global inequality, political economy, international development

Contact  
Steffi



**Elaine Power**

<https://informedopinions.org/view-expert-profile/?expert-id=853>

Associate Professor, Queen's University  
Food insecurity, poverty and food, income and food, hunger in Canada, food banks

Contact  
Elaine



**Natalie Riediger**

<https://informedopinions.org/view-expert-profile/?expert-id=37105>

Assistant Professor, Department of Food and Human Nutritional Sciences, University of Manitoba  
Food and nutrition policy, food security

Contact  
Natalie



**Tammara Soma**

<https://informedopinions.org/view-expert-profile/?expert-id=27950>

Assistant Professor, Simon Fraser University and Research Director, Food Systems Lab  
Food security, food policy, food waste

Contact  
Tammara



**Valerie Tarasuk**

<https://informedopinions.org/view-expert-profile/?expert-id=34781>

Professor, University of Toronto  
Food Insecurity, food banks, food policy

Contact  
Valerie

We've compiled a [list of federal election key issues and pre-vetted diverse sources](#) available to comment on them. Bookmark our [2019 Federal Election webpage](#) and check back regularly as we update it through the campaign.

Search hundreds of academic, non-profit and private sector experts now through [Informed Opinions' expert women database](#)

**We'll be visiting CTV's national newsroom in Toronto in November...**



**National Post Day-Oner Rob Roberts appointed new editor-in-chief: 'I'm a Postie to my bones'**

*'I think it's amazing that we're able to bring someone back who's an original member of the National Post family,' says Andrew MacLeod, CEO of Postmedia*



**... and contacting the new editor-in-chief of *The National Post* requesting an opportunity to present to his newsroom after the federal election.**

Following our meeting with Rob Russo, CBC Ottawa bureau chief, earlier this year, we also met with recently appointed CBC Executive Vice President, Barb Williams.



## CBC appoints Barbara Williams executive vice-president of English services



Williams was previously Corus Entertainment's VP, COO

CBC News · Posted: Feb 06, 2019 2:46 PM ET | Last Updated: February 6



Barbara Williams has been appointed CBC's new vice-president of English services in charge of English-language TV, radio and digital services.

**Both reiterated CBC's commitment to measuring and increasing diversity.**

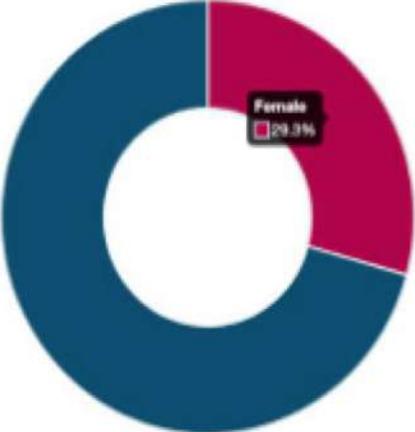
We made the best of the small promotional budget provided for in the grant from SWC, and continue to post updates of notable performance increases to draw public attention to the Gender Gap Tracker and incentivize continued improvements.

 **Informed Opinions** @InformedOps · Jun 11

Yesterday's #GenderGapTracker aggregate was 29.3% - an increase from 26% average. Pleased that @CBCNews @CTVNews @globalnews & @HuffPostCanada were all 30% or over for female sources. Encourage them to keep it up. Go to [gendergaptracker.informedopinions.org](http://gendergaptracker.informedopinions.org) & click on media logos to send email

Aggregate ratio of male and female sources

30% or over



Gender	Percentage
Female	29.3%
Male	(Not specified)
Unknown	(Not specified)

Female 29.3%

  7  14 

We continue to grow our experts database, which now features 1,100 English-speaking women. More than 100 of them are being quoted by media each month.

## Featured Experts

Below are some outstanding expert women we've hand picked.  
Looking for more? [Search all experts.](#)



Andrea Auger  
First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada



Donna Thomson  
Independent



Ann Rosenfield  
Charitably Speaking



Nobina Robinson  
Polytechnics Canada



Annette Henry  
University of British Columbia



Nadia Naffi  
Concordia University

[Q Search Experts](#)

Are you a journalist?

Receive updates on women of interest.

[Sign Up for the Mailing List](#)

Are you an expert?

Start sharing your informed opinion.

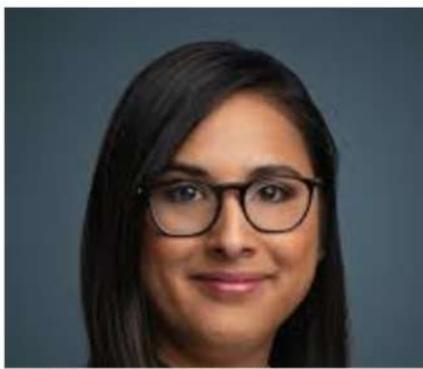
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Alejandra Zaga Mendez  
Université du Québec en Outaouais



Kharoll-Ann Souffrant  
Université McGill



Sophie Gagnon  
Juripop



Widia Larivière



Nadine St-Louis  
Productions Feux Sacrés



Marilou Tanguay  
Université du Québec à Montréal



Camille Robert  
Université du Québec à Montréal



Laurie Rousseau-Nepton  
University of Hawaii in Hilo



Amanda Kingsley Malo  
PoliticsNOW

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**[Ajoutez votre nom à la liste de diffusion](#)**

**Vous êtes une experte?**

Faites connaître votre point de vue

**[Inscrivez-vous dès maintenant à notre répertoire d'expertes](#)**

**Contactez-nous**

[info@femmesexpertes.ca](mailto:info@femmesexpertes.ca)

819.209.4878

In May we launched the French database, *FemmesExpertes.ca*. It now features *plus de 500 expertes disponibles en français*.

We also continue to train hundreds of women each year to amplify their voices through media. Here are participants from just a few of the 40+ workshops we delivered in the past 12 months.



PREVNet bullying prevention Researchers, Toronto



Action Canada sexual health advocates, Ottawa



Indigenous women advocates, entrepreneurs, Vancouver



Migration scholars, Montreal

## **HOWEVER, more communication is essential:**

Despite our success, in a crowded information environment, we've barely scratched the surface.

## **PHASE II Much more communication is necessary to:**

- Drive traffic to the Gender Gap Tracker
- Explain the consequences to public discourse of the status quo
- Provide insight into the public policy implications of gender equity in the news media
- Motivate citizens to expect and advocate for improvements
- Incentivize journalists to track their progress and do better

## **PHASE II – Additional funding is also needed to:**

### **Feature French Language News Outlets**

We are working to adapt the GGT's computational linguistics and machine learning into French so we can monitor Canada's five most influential francophone news media. This is more complicated than anticipated due to an absence of open source French software tools, and because of the gendered nature of the language itself. We are currently dependent on volunteer labour, and so this is proceeding much more slowly than we had hoped.

### **Make Clear Who Writes the Stories**

The ability to distinguish between newsroom-written and -produced stories and wire copy that is generated by external news services will both give us a better sense of how Canadian journalists are doing, and increase the credibility of the tracker among Canadian newsrooms. Breaking down authors and creators by gender will offer additional insight into what difference the storyteller makes.

## **PHASE II – Additional funding is also needed to:**

### **Issue and promote attention to quarterly reports highlighting:**

- Current aggregate ratio of women's voices relative to original baseline
- Statistical trends from one quarter to the next since project launch
- Number of Informed Opinions' experts quoted by monitored media
- Comparison of English and French language media, once the latter is added
- Best performers, both over the quarter and in terms of highest ratio reached
- Relevant insights from deeper analysis

**For example...**

## Conduct more in-depth data analysis exploring:

- **Research on tone and authority in quotes** - *Are there differences between how men and women share their analyses?*
- **Personal context** - *Are women still defined more frequently in terms of their appearance and/or relationships to men?*
- **Titles and experts** - *How are experts referred to? Are they clearly identified as experts?*
- **Topic areas** - *Which areas of the news feature the highest and lowest numbers of female experts? (e.g. business, sports, health, entertainment)*
- **Authors** - *Do female journalists quote more women than male journalists? What relationships, if any, exist between authors and quotes?*

## BLOG - Shari Graydon, Informed Opinions - Democracy Needs Women; Snowplowing Policy Proves it

📅 September 16, 2019



By Shari Graydon of *Informed Opinions*

### Can snowplowing be sexist?

Even if you live in Ottawa, a city that removes snow from its downtown core with military precision, you’ve probably never asked yourself that. Until I read Caroline Criado Perez’s *Invisible Women – Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*, it had never occurred to me to pose the question either.

But it matters that the answer is yes. And this is just one of a thousand reasons that our democracy needs to elect sufficient numbers of women to erase our chronic under-representation in the halls of power.

When you grow up in a world dominated by male decision-makers, the default assumption is that’s the way it is. And many of the stories we tell ourselves – “men are bigger risk takers”, “men have more confidence”, “it’s easier for men to raise money” – reinforce our willingness to accept that status quo.



The capacity to do deeper analysis will point us to new strategies and partnerships. For example, discovering that fully 60% of the most frequently quoted sources were elected officials inspired us to collaborate with Equal Voice and the makers of the *No Second Chances* podcast.

## **Distinguish Between Types of Sources**

A woman quoted because of her professional expertise is perceived much differently, and has greater potential impact as a role model, than a woman quoted because she has been the victim of or witness to a crime. An additional layer of computational analysis will permit us to differentiate between these.

## **Assess and facilitate researcher requests to access the GGT data**

As we pro-actively promote researchers' access to the data we're collecting, we will need to respond to more requests, clarifying the nature and scope of their own studies, as well as their dissemination intentions. Actually doing the technical work to make the data available to scholars will require additional work by the scientists at SFU, and their time needs to be compensated.

## IN-KIND SUPPORT ALREADY SECURED

In June, we met with SFU and secured the university's commitment to:

- Continue to provide computing infrastructure support in the form of servers and cluster access **value of \$10,000/year**
  - Allocate a third of the time of a Big Data Lab computer scientist involved in the development of the GGT to oversee its security and stability **value of \$40,000/year**
  - Hire a student to continue implementing updates **value of \$10,000/year**
- Informed Opinions uses funds generated through our social enterprise programming to engage journalists and the public. **value of \$25,000/year**

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT BEING SOUGHT

- To build on the investments made to date and provide the additional computational linguistic analyses described on the previous pages, we are seeking to hire a post doctorate fellow with relevant research skills. Multi-year funding will increase our ability to secure a candidate with the necessary expertise **\$75,000/year x 3 years**
- To continue raising awareness of and driving traffic to the Gender Gap Tracker, we also need to invest in strategic communications **\$100,000 over 3 years**

# INFORMED OPINIONS

*...is amplifying women's voices  
for a more democratic Canada  
with the valued support of:*



**Status of Women  
Canada**

**Condition féminine  
Canada**

**OSLER Teck**

# INFORMED ♀PINIONS

For more information, contact Shari Graydon  
[shari@informedopinions.org](mailto:shari@informedopinions.org)

613-882-6810