

# Men and Women in Armenian media

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## *Media monitoring*

“Promoting Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities in Armenia: Women in Local Democracy”

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*Yerevan, 2013*

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This study was conducted by a team of researchers from the Caucasus Institute [www.c-i.am](http://www.c-i.am)

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Yerevan, 2013

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# Introduction

The goal of the study was to assess to what extent and in which ways Armenian media and journalists cover men and women, gender roles and relations.

The timeframe of monitoring was September 15 - November 15, 2012.

## The selection process

The study was focused on television and online media as the types of media from which Armenians get most of their information (television 91%, Internet 37%)<sup>1</sup>. Since the goal of the study was to assess the work of journalists, we only monitored professional news and current affairs (excluding entertainment, advertizing, movies, social media, blogs etc.). In the internet, we analyzed news websites and online versions of printed media, and on television, we analyzed news and talk shows.

The study began with a one week test run during which we monitored various products for 2-3 days each, including 8 online news websites and online versions of 5 printed media, talk shows on 5 TV stations and weekday/weekend news on 3 TV stations. The goal was to identify formats which have content that lends itself to qualitative as well as quantitative analysis. The test run showed that *online news agencies* and *weekday TV news* mostly produce very short news reports, which briefly describe current events but contain little context or analysis and almost zero attitude. We therefore decided against including the news websites and weekday TV news in our sample, and only selected the products in which attitudes were present to various extents (*online versions of printed media, televised talk shows and weekend news on TV*).

The selection criterion for online versions of printed media was readership. We used the [www.circle.am](http://www.circle.am) monthly popularity rating in the 'News and Media' section by unique visits from Armenia as of 15 September 2012. From the rating, we chose the top six online versions of

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<sup>1</sup> A Snapshot Ahead of Armenia's Presidential Elections. Main Findings, pp.8-9. 25 January 2013. European Friends of Armenia, TNS Opinion, IPSC. <http://www.eufoa.org/uploads/POLL20130125EN.pdf>

printed media (five were in Armenian and one was in Russian).<sup>2</sup> The selection criterion for TV stations was national coverage. On all six Armenian TV stations broadcasting country-wide, we monitored all weekend news and all talk shows. There were five talk shows in total, because *Shant* and *Yerkir Media* did not have any talk shows at that time whereas *Armenia TV* had two.

## The sample

The resulting sample contained the entire content of the following media products published/aired on September 15 - November 15, 2012:

- **Online versions of six print media (newspapers)**

- *Aravot* [Արավոտ], [www.aravot.am](http://www.aravot.am)
- *Hraparak* [Հրապարակ], [www.hraparak.am](http://www.hraparak.am)
- *Golos Armenii* [Голос Армении], [www.golosarmenii.am](http://www.golosarmenii.am)
- *Iravunk* [Իրավունք], [www.iravunk.com](http://www.iravunk.com)
- *Haykakan Zhamanak* [Հայկական Ժամանակ], [www.armtimes.com](http://www.armtimes.com)
- *Yerkir* [Երկիր], [www.yerkir.am](http://www.yerkir.am)

- **Weekend news on national TV stations**

- *Public TV* [Հ1], [www.1tv.am](http://www.1tv.am)
- *H2*[Հ2], [www.tv.am](http://www.tv.am)
- *Armenia TV* [Արմենիա], [www.armeniatv.am](http://www.armeniatv.am)
- *Kentron* [Կենտրոն], [www.kentron.tv](http://www.kentron.tv)
- *Shant* [Շանթ], [www.shanttv.com](http://www.shanttv.com)
- *Yerkir Media* [Երկիր Մեդիա], [www.yerkirmedia.am](http://www.yerkirmedia.am)

- **Talk shows on national TV stations**

- *Free Zone* [Ազատ գոտի] on *Public TV*
- *What a Woman Wants* [Ինչ է ուզում կինը] on *H2*
- *Women's Cocktail* [Կանանց կոկտեյլ] on *Armenia TV*

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<sup>2</sup> The current monthly rating of 'News and Media' by unique visits from Armenia can be accessed here: <http://www.circle.am/?cat=%20news&for=month&by=amvisits>

- *Live Journal* [Կենդանի մատյան] on *Armenia TV*
- *Armenian Friday* [Հայկական Որբաթ] on *Kentron*

## The methodology

We used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods were only used for the online newspapers and TV news, and qualitative, for the entire sample (newspapers, TV news and talk shows).

The quantitative methodology relied on the concepts of *actor* and *source*. For each story in a newspaper or on TV news, we input the following information in our database:

- ❖ the number of male and female actors, i.e. of people that the story is about;
- ❖ the number of male and female sources, i.e. of people whose words or opinions are quoted in the story;
- ❖ the number of ‘first-hand sources’, i.e. the number of people that the story is about whose words are also quoted in the story. For example, a story about a traffic accident quotes the opinions of three people only one of whom was actually involved in the accident. It means the story has three sources but only one first-hand source. The goal of this measurement was to see if journalists women’s and men’s opinions differently. The hypothesis was that if men’s opinions were considered more ‘trustworthy’ or ‘important’ than women’s, the percentage of female ‘first-hand sources’ would be lower than that of male ones.
- ❖ the topic of the story: Army, Culture, Crime, Domestic Policy, Economy, Foreign Policy, Incident, International Politics, Religion, Society, and Sport.

The qualitative methodology relied on the concept of a *gender attitude*, i.e. an attitude to men’s and women’s roles, relations and characteristics (e.g. ‘men are dominant’, ‘women need to focus on family values’, ‘women are creative’ etc.). Whenever a gender attitude was expressed, the quote containing it was added into the database, alongside the gender and (when known) the professional occupation of the person who expressed the attitude.

An important methodological issue is that, since men are the majority of senior politicians, businesspeople and top professionals *in real life*, it is hard to assess to which extent

the prevalence of male actors *in the media* is dictated by the external reality and to which, by the attitude of journalists. Only some disaggregation is possible; in this study, we made an adjustment for President Serzh Sargsyan, who was frequently mentioned in newspapers and TV news. Sargsyan was a source in about 3% of all stories and a actor in about 6%; prior to analysis, these figures were subtracted from the overall figures for male actors and sources.

## Online newspapers

This section presents the results for online versions of six newspapers. Most of the data analyzed in this section are quantitative, as there was very little qualitative data in the newspapers (19 for all 13 000 articles in the sample). *Figure 1* below shows the data on actors, sources and ‘first-hand sources’ in newspapers. The percentages of male and female first-hand sources were calculated as a ratio to the number of male and female actors, respectively, so as to assess **how often** the male and female actors of the articles were **quoted** by the journalists.

*Figure 1. Online versions of newspapers. Actors, sources and first-hand sources by gender and newspaper*

	Num. of Articles	Actors (%)		Sources (%)		First-hand sources	
		Male	Fem	Male	Fem	Male	Fem
<i>Aravot</i>	4881	87.9	12.1	80.4	19.6	19.0	26.6
<i>Hraparak</i>	2819	89.2	10.8	84.7	15.3	12.8	16.8
<i>Golos Armenii</i>	1530	87.9	12.1	86.0	14.0	13.0	16.5
<i>Yerkir</i>	1583	86.6	13.4	80.9	19.1	20.5	26.0
<i>Haykakan Zhamanak</i>	1665	89.4	10.6	84.6	15.4	7.6	10.4
<i>Iravunk</i>	526	87.2	12.8	83.7	16.3	11.3	15.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	13004	<b>88.17</b>	<b>11.83</b>	<b>82.68</b>	<b>17.32</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>19.2</b>

The figures show that in the newspaper sample, just **11.83% of all actors** and **17.32% of all sources are women**. Since women are more often quoted as a source (17.32%) than mentioned as an actor (11.83%), this means that newspapers more often quote the **opinion of women about events** than they report **events involving women**. Moreover, the percentage of **female first-hand sources is higher** than that of male first-hand sources (19.2% for

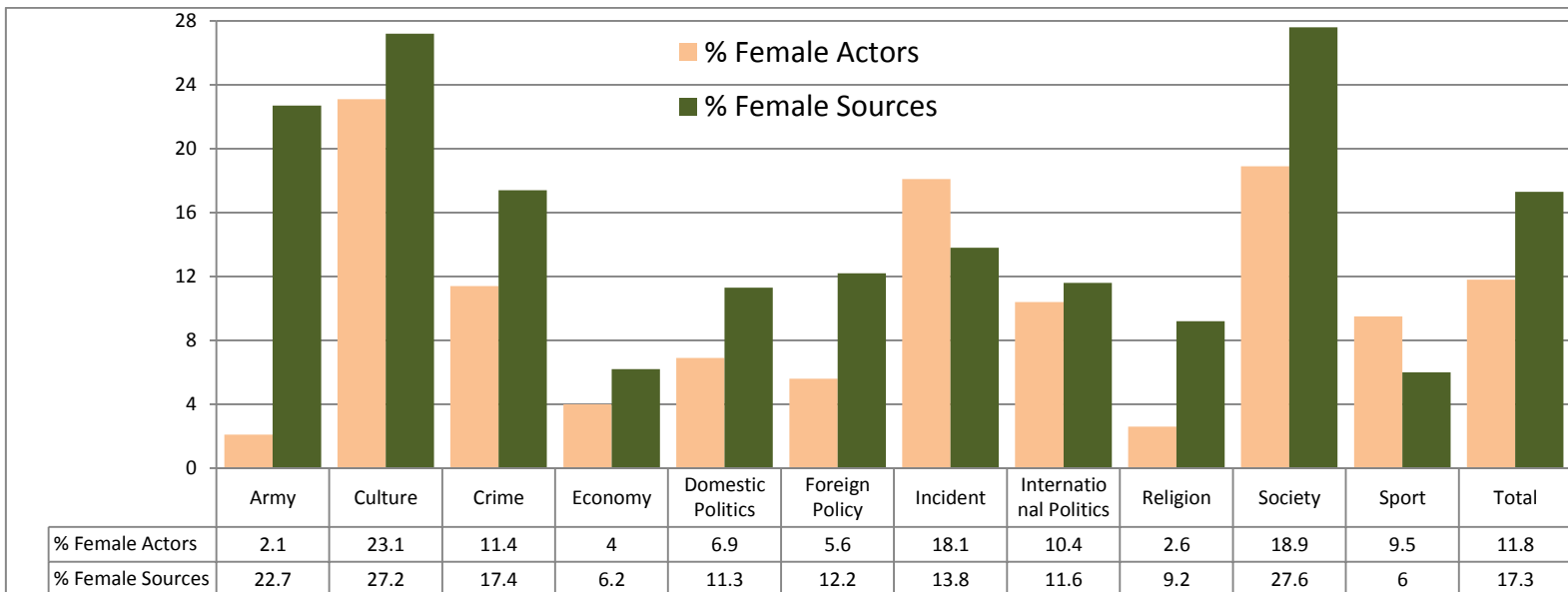


women, 14.1% for men). This means that if an actor is a woman, the **chances are higher that her opinion will be quoted** in the article than if the actor is a man.

These results may be explained by the fact that women are **easier to reach**. There are few women in the first echelons of government, business and politics (the most frequent actors of news who are the most difficult to reach for comments). Women are much more present in the second echelons of government, in civil society, research bodies, education, PR and media (the most common sources of news who are the easiest for a journalist to reach). We can also conclude that there is **no prejudice against women’s opinions**.

The proportion of female actors and sources varies depending on the thematic category. *Figure 2* below shows that in some areas, men’s opinions dominate more (**Sport, Economy and Religion have under 10% of female sources**), and in others, women’s opinions are quoted more often (**Culture and Society have over 27% of female sources**). It is noteworthy that **Economy**, alongside Army and Religion, **has the lowest figures for female actors (under 5%)**, reflecting the disturbingly low involvement of women in business and economic activity, almost on a par with exclusively male professions such as the military and the clergy.

**Figure 2. Females Actors and Sources Per Topic**



Although we expected that women would be represented in International Politics more frequently than in Domestic Politics (given that in the West, there are more women in leading roles than in Armenia), the difference is small for actors (8.9% female actors in International Politics and 6.9% in Domestic Politics) and tiny for sources (11.7% and 11.3% respectively); the reason may be that Armenian newspapers only publish the most important international news, and most political leaders in the world are still men.

The results for **the Army** were contrary to our original hypothesis. Based on previous studies, we expected that in articles about the army, there would be very few female actors and just as few female sources. In fact, the number of female actors in this topic was indeed the smallest amongst all topics (2.1%) but the number of female sources was relatively high, 22.7%, only next to Society and Culture. To understand this phenomenon better, we also counted the number female first-hand sources in this topic (i.e. how many of the female actors in articles about the Army were also sources) and obtained the number 0. This means that the female sources in articles about the army weren't women involved in the events, but some 'other' women. We re-read the articles and found out that the female sources of the articles were women involved in the current campaign for prevention of hazing in the army. This is an illustration of the increase of women's involvement in a field being adequately reflected in media coverage.

*Figure 3* below categorizes all articles in the sample based on the gender of actors and sources. These figures highlight the disparity between the coverage of men and women. We can see that **59.1% of the articles had only male actors**, and **43.3% had only male sources**. Again, the disparity for actors is stronger.

***Figure 3. Articles by gender of actor and source<sup>3</sup>***

Articles without individual actors	26.7%
<b>Articles with only female actors</b>	<b>3.8%</b>
Articles with both male and female actors	10.4%
<b>Articles with only male actors</b>	<b>59.1%</b>

<sup>3</sup> 26.7% of all 13 000 articles in the newspaper sample had no individual actor and 43.3% had no individual source. In most of these articles, the actor or source was a news medium, an organization or a public body.

<i>Total</i>	100%
Articles without individual sources	43.7%
<b>Articles with only female sources</b>	<b>7.8%</b>
Articles with both male and female sources	5.2%
<b>Articles with only male sources</b>	<b>43.3%</b>
<i>Total</i>	100%

The 19 newspaper articles that contained gender attitudes were subjected to content-analysis which revealed two trends. First, in some of these articles, **reporters propagated gender stereotypes**. Some journalists stereotyped women: “*Women want to be loved, they always await surprises. Women love with their ears.*” (Aravot.am, “Միտք խոստովանության տարբերակներ. Ներկայացնում են աղջիկները”, [Types of Love Confessions. Presented by Girls], 17.10.2012, <http://www.aravot.am/2012/10/17/121012/>). We also found stereotypes expressed by a journalist concerning men’s attitude to women,. “*The fact that men fancy beautiful and well groomed women is beyond doubt...*”, (Aravot.am, “Կանանց բնավորության ո՞ր գծերն են գրավում տղամարդկանց, [Which Traits of Women’s Character Attract Men?], 09.11.2012 <http://www.aravot.am/2012/11/09/128745/>).

Second, journalists sometimes made **sweeping negative generalizations** about gender roles in Armenian society, which create a distorted self-image of the society. *In Armenian families the issue of girl’s virginity is a psychological trauma for mothers-in-law... That is very unpleasant... The problem of virginity does not exist in European countries any more... It is only in the Caucasus that a girl must remain a virgin before marriage.* (Aravot, Հայաստանում 50 տարեկան կույսեր կան, [There are 50 Year Old Virgins in Armenia], 12.10.2012, <http://www.aravot.am/2012/10/12/119521/>). In reality, the ‘problem of virginity’ exists in many countries across the world, not just in Armenia, and does not exist in all Armenian families or social strata.

**Figure 4. Infographics. Women in Armenian newspaper coverage**

# women in armenian newspaper coverage



women are more often quoted on societal and culture issues and less on politics, economy and sport

women appear sources more frequently than actors

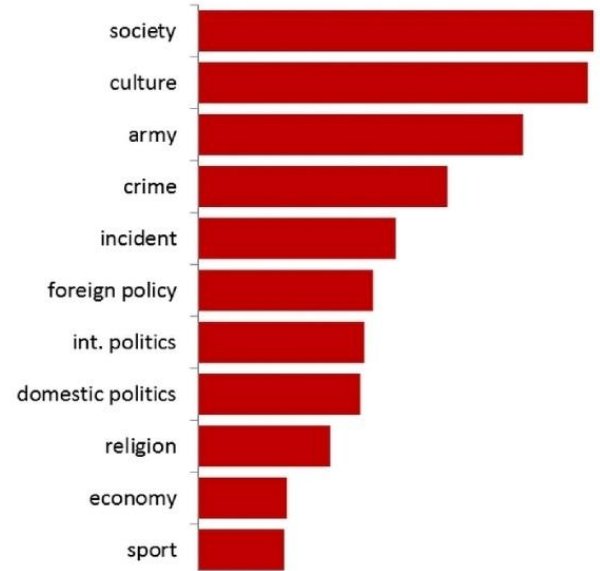


one in 9 actors in the newspapers is a woman



one in 6 sources in the newspapers is a woman

	Women, % of all actors	Women, % of all sources
❖ <i>Aravot</i>	12.1	19.6
❖ <i>Hraparak</i>	10.8	15.3
❖ <i>Golos Armenii</i>	12.1	14.0
❖ <i>Yerkir</i>	13.4	19.1
❖ <i>Haykakan Zhamanak</i>	10.6	15.4
❖ <i>Iravunk</i>	12.8	16.3
❖ Total	11.8	17.3



## Note:

Actors - people that the story is about  
Sources - people whose words or opinions are quoted in the story

## Weekend TV news

Just as with newspaper articles, weekend news on TV contained very few gender attitudes which could be subjected to qualitative analysis (just 11 in 627 news reports). The analysis of TV news is thus also primarily based on quantitative data. When processing data for TV news, we observed a correlation between some of the gender indicators and the TV stations' popularity ratings (according to the GFK audience research company<sup>4</sup>). We therefore broke up the six stations into two groups by popularity: three 'top stations' (*H1, Armenia and Shant*) and three 'other stations' (*Yerkir, H2 and Kentron*). The difference in audience sizes for these stations is sometimes almost tenfold. During the week of the test run, 3-9 September, 2012, the three top stations put together were watched by 16.4% of the countrywide prime-time audience, while the other three put together were watched by only 1.7%<sup>5</sup>.

**Figure 5. Weekend TV News. Actors, sources and first-hand sources by gender and station.**

	Num. of Reports	Actors			Sources			% of first-hand sources	
		Male	Fem	% Fem	Male	Fem	% Fem	Male	Fem
<b>Epikentron (Kentron TV)</b>	142	209	51	19.6	246	71	22.4	36	37
<b>Arajin Lratvakan (H1)</b>	75	149	46	23.6	229	79	26.5	48	57
<b>Horizon (Shant)</b>	38	86	34	28.3	191	111	36.8	58	79
<b>Zham (Armenia TV)</b>	67	131	51	28.0	173	92	34.7	37	65
<b>Lraber (H2)</b>	195	316	45	12.5	216	43	16.6	20	42

<sup>4</sup> Television stations watched by the largest number of city dwellers in Armenia aged 4 and over [Հայաստանի 4 և ավելի բարձր տարիքի քաղաքային բնակչության շրջանում առավելագույնը դիտված հեռուստատեսություններ]. 3-9.09.2012. GFK audience research company, Yerevan.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<b>Yerkri shabat (Yerkir media)</b>	110	199	51	<b>20.4</b>	201	79	<b>28.2</b>	35	69
<b>TOTAL</b>	627	1090	278	<b>20.3</b>	1266	475	<b>27.3</b>	35	57
<b>Top 3 stations (H1, Shant, Armenia)</b>	180	351	122	<b>25.8</b>	603	282	<b>31.9</b>	48	70
<b>Other 3 stations (Yerkir, H2, Kentron)</b>	447	724	147	<b>16.9</b>	663	193	<b>22.5</b>	29	50

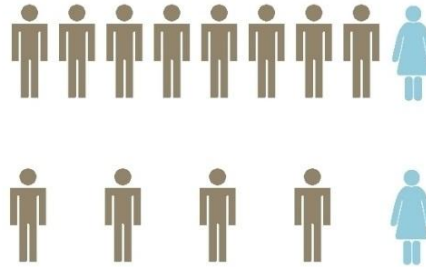
Figure 4 above shows several important trends. First, **the presence of women in weekend TV news is significantly higher than in newspapers**. 20.4% of actors in the TV news sample were women, compared to 11.83% in newspapers. The same trend is manifest for sources: there were 28.2% of female sources in TV news, compared to 17.32% in newspapers. Second, **TV news use a lot more first-hand sources** than newspapers. The figure for women is especially impressive: 57% of all female actors in the news were also sources, compared to just 19.2% of female actors in newspapers.

Third, the **involvement of women varies across TV stations and positively correlates with their popularity**. On the top stations, 25.8% of the actors and 31.9% of the sources were women. On the other three stations, women accounted for only 16.9% of the actors and 22.5% of the sources.

Broken up by topics, the data show that while the percentages of women are higher on TV than in newspaper articles, the trends are the same. **The highest percentages of female actors are found in Culture and Society and the lowest, in Army and Sport**. In reports about the army, there were no female actors and just two female sources. In contrast, in the same two months, newspaper articles about the army used 27 female sources. The possible reason is the **greater plurality of newspaper coverage compared to television**: TV reports about the army only covered the official events in this sphere and did not touch upon the women-led public campaign against hazing.

**Figure 6. Infographics. Women as actors in the news**

# women as actors in the news

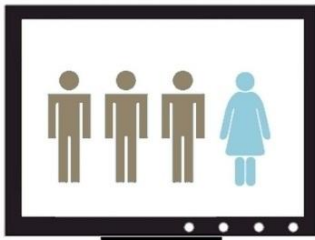


one in 9 actors in the newspapers is a woman



one in 5 actors in weekend tv news reports is a woman

## most popular tv stations cover women more



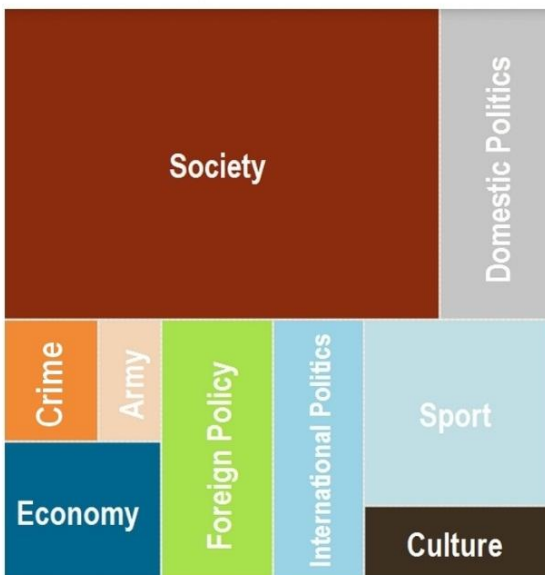
women account for 26% of actors in weekend news on top 3 tv stations

and 17% on the other 3 tv stations

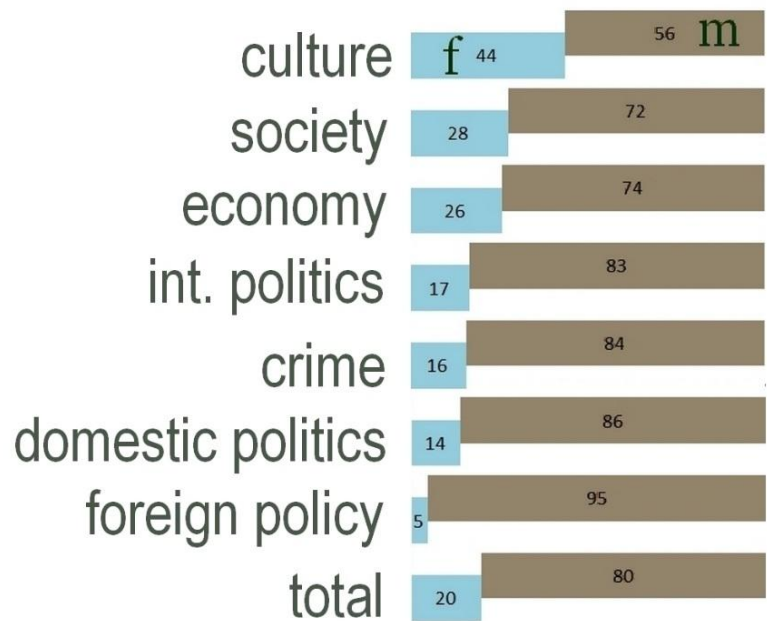


## coverage depends on topic

most covered topics on sunday tv news



actors by gender (%) and topic on national tv



## Talk shows

Of all types of media product in the sample, talk shows were the richest in gender attitudes and were therefore our main source of qualitative data. Notably, two of the five talk shows broadcast on national stations at the time of monitoring were ‘women’s shows’ (*Women’s Cocktail* and *What a Woman Wants*). The other three – *Free Zone*, *Live Journal* and *Armenian Friday* – were ‘gender-neutral’ shows.

The only quantitative data on talk shows that we collected concerned the gender of the guests. *Figure 5* below shows that in the three ‘gender-neutral’ shows, **42% of the guests were women** - a rather balanced figure compared to the 20.3% of female actors in TV news and 11.83% in the newspapers. Meanwhile, in the two ‘women’s shows’, women constituted 87% of the guests. Women were thus discussing ‘women’s issues’ chiefly between themselves.

**Figure 7. Talk shows guests by gender, table**

		Num. of Issues	Guests		
			Male	Fem	% Fem
Ազատ գոտի [ <i>Free Zone</i> ]	H1	43	159	154	49.2
Հայկական Որբաթ [ <i>Armenian Friday</i> ]	Kentron	8	22	10	31.3
Կանանց կոկտեյլ [ <i>Women's Cocktail</i> ]	Armenia	26	18	105	78.9
Ինչ է ուզում կինը [ <i>What a Woman Wants</i> ]	H2	30	10	88	89.8
Կենդանի մատյան [ <i>Live Journal</i> ]	Armenia	34	125	59	32.1
... Total		141	334	416	55.5
Women’s talk shows		56	28	193	87.3
Other talk shows		85	306	223	42.2

As to the social and professional composition of the guests, we observed the same guests appearing in the same talk show or in different talk shows on different stations on a



wide variety of topics (including disability, crime, beauty, romance, smoking, plastic surgery, media, education, public morale and copyright laws). Over two months, we noticed 45-50 people who appeared in the talk shows on a weekly/monthly basis. Most of them come from media and show business (singers, directors, actors, journalists) or are introduced as 'experts', chiefly in social sciences (psychologists, sexologists, sociologists, political scientists). This is a very narrow section of the society which cannot but restrict the thematic scope and outreach of the shows.

### Perceptions about women and men expressed in talk shows

Using qualitative analysis, we have grouped up the most common gender-related perceptions that were reflected in what the hosts and the guests **said** during the five talk shows in our sample. These perceptions concern contemporary Armenian men, women and the relations existing between them. Below these perceptions are listed, with quotations, and then summarized.

***Women are intelligent, capable and moral. Woman is the greatest creation of nature.*** (Ազատ գոտի, [Free Zone], Սիրո խոստովանություն, [Love Confession], H1, 16.10.2012). This quote from one of the talk show's guest serves best to describe the overall opinion of women that we observed during monitoring. Many actors stated the fact that Armenian women are capable. *Women can do anything if they decide to* (Ինչ է ուզում կինը, [What a Woman Wants], Օտար լեզուներ, [Foreign Languages], H2, 27.09.2012). Many pointed out that Armenian women have strong moral character. *A woman will become a mother... therefore she can never cheat* (Ազատ գոտի, [Free Zone], Կանանց դավաճանություն, [Women's Cheating], H1, 24.10.2012). Not once did a speaker or host comment on the intelligence or capability of men. The equality of women with men was not taken for granted but rather, emphasized.

***Women play the crucial role in the family.*** Many views were expressed to the effect that a woman plays the crucial role in family life. Women are what keeps together the family and the society. *The woman creates the model of the family* (Ինչ է ուզում կինը, [What a

Woman Wants], Ամուսնության սկզբնական շրջանի բարդություններ, [Difficulties at the First Stages of Marriage], H2, 02.10.2012).

**Women can succeed outside the family.** While family was regularly mentioned as crucial for any Armenian woman, many authors also stated that a woman can do a lot more than be just a housewife. She can be a businesswoman, or have a career in a variety of spheres from politics to science. *Armenian women can work in every field; I am convinced of this* (Ինչ է ուզում կինը, [What a Woman Wants], Երևան, [Yerevan], H2, 10.11.2012). According to many guests of the talk shows, this is where the main contradiction lies between the abilities and desires of women and the demands and expectations of the society.

**Women are oppressed and restrained by traditions.** *In a traditional Armenian family a girl does not have the right to work, and even if she has it, it only applies to spheres accepted by the society.* (Ազատ գոտի, [Free Zone], Ազատ բարքեր, [Free Morals], H1, 19.10.2012). *According to the tradition an Armenian woman must stay at home, in the kitchen, she must raise kids and prepare delicious meals...* To support the argument, the hostess of the show quotes statistics from an unknown source, *“55% of men want their wives to be stay-at-home mothers, 93% of Armenian population think that the career is important for men and only 7% consider it to be of importance for women”*, (Կանանց Կոկտեյլ [Women’s Cocktail], Բիզնես թե խոհանոց, հնարավոր է համատեղել, [Business or Kitchen. Is It Possible to Combine?], Armenia TV, 21.09.2012). Many speakers also say that women would have been very successful in any field of their choice if it were not for social restrains. E.g., a speaker quotes statistics from an unnamed source: *Sociologists claim that unmarried women advance in their careers twice as much as married ones.* (Կանանց Կոկտեյլ [Women’s Cocktail], Կինը և կարիերան, [Woman and Carrier], Armenia TV, 22.10.2012).

**A woman’s professional success poses risks to the traditional family structure.** According to some speakers, an average Armenian woman, despite all her abilities, should preferably stay at home and use her potential to raise the future generation. Of those who believe it is normal for a woman to work, some still insist there are boundaries that she must not cross. They say a woman cannot show too much dedication to her work or be too successful. *I think it is not normal when a woman leaves a 40-day-old newborn and goes back to*

*work... When a woman becomes successful she enters wider circles, consequently, the number of men who show interest in her grows... this should make any normal husband worried.* (Կանանց Կոկտեյլ, [Women's Cocktail], Կինը և կարիերան, [Woman and Career], Armenia TV, 22.10.2012). The success and financial independence of a woman can lead to undesired consequences. *If we provide a woman with good and well-paid job, give her a car, etc., she'll cheat more than a man.* (Ազատ գոտի, [Free Zone], Կանանց դավաճանություն, [Women's Cheating], H1, 24.10.2012).

***Men are egocentric and are abusing their dominant status. Men are egoists in their essence!*** – (Ազատ գոտի, [Free Zone], Վիրտուալ դավաճանություն, [Virtual Cheating], H1, 01.10.2012). ***Men do what they want!*** (Կանանց Կոկտեյլ [Women's Cocktail], Ինչպես փոխել տղամարդուն, [How to Change a Man], Armenia TV, 18.09.2012). This view was expressed by men as well as women in the talk shows. In the shows, Armenian men were often accused of defending and propagating the standards and values that keep the society on a whole from developing. In this context, women are seen as victims; the relationship between men and women is seen as vertical, with men dominating. Men do not treat women like equals. They do not take into account women's wishes, needs or opinions. Many actors in the talk shows expressed the view that many men believe their gender identity *per se* gives them the right to dictate their wishes to women. *It seems that when a man starts a family, he acquires some right of ownership which he uses to deny a woman the right to do what she wants or needs...* (Ազատ գոտի, [Free Zone], Սպիտակ ձիով սուպերը, [Knight in Shining Armor], H1 04.10.2012) Notably, most actors considered this perceived attitude to be negative, outdated and unconstructive. Only once did one speaker say that men were 'natural leaders' and women must play a secondary role. *Men embody the role of a "director", we (women) are the workforce that transforms his plans into reality...We do it well, but it is the man who is the leader.* (Ինչ է ուզում կինը, [What a Woman Wants], Կնոջ և տղամարդու համագործակցությունը, [Cooperation between Men and Women], H2, 05.10.2012). It's interesting that this opinion was expressed by a woman while in the talk shows we watched, men never expressed this point of view. We can hypothesize that this view is not accepted as the norm, and it is considered right to criticize the oppression of women and domination of men. Another uncommon point of view (expressed only once) was that male egoism and domination is the

fault of women who rebel against tradition. *The Armenian man today suffers a lot because he is no longer being praised. I remember the times when my mother used to get up when a man entered the house...* (Ազատ գոտի, [Free Zone], Ազատ բարքեր, [Free Morals], H1, 19.10.2012).

***Men are unsuccessful and are compensating for their social failure by oppressing women.*** Some guests of the talk shows said that the main reason for men's oppressive and dominant behavior was the 'inability of men to satisfy their own needs' and the general lack of self-realization. *"Today men have a lot of complexes"* (Ազատ գոտի, [Free Zone], Սիրո խոստովանություն, [Love Confession], H1 16.10.2012). It was often stated that, driven by these complexes, modern Armenian men deny their girlfriends and wives basic freedoms and the right to make decisions, since this is the only way to keep them from leaving. *"Men say, for example, that they do not like it when a woman does something unless a man asks her to"* (Ինչ է ուզում կինը, [What a Woman Wants], Ինչն է զայրացնում տղամարդուն, [What Makes Men Angry], H2, 24.10.2012).

Put together, the perceptions we observed reflect a profound crisis of gender relations. We observe a recurrent **positive image of the contemporary Armenian woman**. This idealized woman is fully successful in fulfilling her traditional duties (looking after her husband, raising children and keeping house) but can also be a professional success unless kept back by social restraints. Male and female participants of the talk shows claim that an average contemporary Armenian woman is close to the ideal type. Some of the speakers do not even draw any difference between the 'contemporary Armenian woman' and the 'ideal woman'.

Meanwhile, the recurrent **image of the contemporary Armenian man is negative**. The 'average Armenian man' is egotistic, neurotic and tyrannical. He oppresses women and discriminates against them in every sphere of life, often to compensate for his failure as a provider for the family and member of society.

The imminent **need for change in the sphere of gender relations** is recognized by many; at the same time, there is apprehension that changes may undermine the structure of the family and the traditional value system. Women are pictured as the drivers for change,

whereas men are shown to be resisting it because it endangers their place at the top of the hierarchy.

### The images of women created by women's shows

During monitoring, we observed that the two 'women's' talk shows: *'Women's cocktail'* and *'What a woman wants'* were creating, rather than combating, stereotypical images of women. This observation was based, first, on the shows' visual images, as illustrated by the still from one of them:



*A still from Women's Cocktail on Armenia TV illustrating the gender images propagated by the show. The three female hosts are young, handsome, well-groomed and wearing evening dress. The male guest is older and casually dressed.*

The second was the shows' choice of topic. To quantify our observation, we tabulated data on the topics of each issue of the two shows. For additional depth, we registered two parameters: the *primary topic* of the show, i.e. the main topic of discussion announced by the host, and, when present, a *secondary topic*, different from the primary topic but also actively discussed during the show. For example, a show about autumn depression gradually flowed into a discussion of healthy lifestyles; a show about friendship vs. romance between men and

women led to a debate about gender psychology. Less than half of the 61 shows had a secondary topic. We grouped up the topics into thematic categories and found that most of them corresponded to the stereotypical perception of a woman focused on personal and domestic issues (emotional life, outwardly appearance, the family and the home). We called those categories ‘stereotypical’, and found that we were left with just two ‘other’, or non-stereotypical categories: ‘career, business and success’ and a mixed category including a little of everything: Yerevan and its environment, schooling, learning foreign languages, and so on.

Figure 6 below shows that **over 80% of the shows’ primary topics were stereotypical**. Notably, secondary topics were even more often stereotypical (25 out of 27), which means that **discussions naturally wandered off towards stereotypical topics** regardless of the original topic. Just 5 in 61 shows had women’s careers, business and success as their primary topics, and in another 2 shows, those topics came up as secondary. As to other non-stereotypical topics, they never came up as secondary at all.

**Figure 8. The topics of ‘women’s talk shows’**

Topic	primary	secondary	total
Stereotypical ‘women’s topics’			
Appearance, beauty, dieting	13	8	21
Behavior, emotions, psychology	9	4	13
Men, relationships and romance	6	6	12
Childcare, housekeeping	7	3	10
Marriage, wedding	6	2	8
Shopping, clothing	6	1	7
Food, cooking	1	1	2
Other topics			
Career, business and success	5	2	7
Education, society, language, environment etc.	8	0	8
Stereotypical topics	48	25	73
Other topics	13	2	15

Total	61	27	88
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Overall, the two women’s shows propagate a stereotypical image of women’s roles, qualities and concerns. *‘Women’s cocktail’* focused more on women’s emotionality (love, romance and marriage, relationships in the family, psychology and behavior), whereas *‘What a woman wants’* gave more priority to physical appearance (beauty, cosmetics, shopping, clothes, etc).

As a result, **the visual images and the selection of topics by women’s shows in many ways contradict the statements about women and their roles in society made in those same shows** as well as in the gender-neutral shows. Whereas talk show guests and hosts speak about women’s ability to succeed at work as well as in the family, women’s intelligence and integrity, the topic selection and general style of the women’s talk shows portray women as shallow and vain, focused on appearances, seeing marriage and romance as their main goals in life, and generally unconcerned with the world outside the family and personal life.

## Limitations of the study

As with any type of research, there are limitations on how the products of this study can be used to describe reality. These limitations stem from the sample and the methodology.

### Limitations stemming from the sample

Objects of study included professional news and current affairs produced in Armenia. We did not study *foreign media* consumed in Armenia, such as Russian, European or U.S. websites and TV stations. Although foreign media have comparatively small audiences in Armenia, they still have an impact on some people, and may convey a different image of men and women than the media in our sample.

The results of the study do not apply to *social media, blogs or citizen journalism*. These rapidly growing realms often display trends which differ from mainstream media.

We did not study *entertainment or advertizing*, two media industries which heavily rely on gender images and gender stereotypes to attract audiences. The messages and images conveyed to the public by these industries may differ strongly from the results of this study, and the audiences of some entertainment products, such as TV series, are the highest for any media product in Armenia.

Although products in our sample reach larger audiences in Armenia than other products of the same type, our results cannot be used to describe *professional Armenian news media in general*. One can expect there to be more variety in approaches and techniques across Armenian media than we found in our sample.

The *size of the sample* puts limitations on the validity of quantitative data presented in this report. Validity is highest for newspaper articles, which were 13 004 in total, a large enough sample for the percentage values to be less dependent on random factors and more, on general trends. The overall number of TV news reports in the sample was just 627, which means that a random factor (such as particular individuals or a specific issue being in the limelight) can have affected the gender of actors and sources in enough reports to change the resulting percentages, with just 7 reports accounting for over 1% of the total.



## Limitations stemming from the methodology

Media researchers face the challenge of distinguishing between the *external factors*, i.e. events, people and environments covered by the media that are beyond a journalists' control, and *professional factors*, i.e. the choices, techniques and approaches of the media and journalists. As long as only men serve in the military or the clergy, avoiding gender bias in covering the army and the church requires a lot more effort on the part of journalists than when covering education in which most junior- and mid-level employees are women.

As a result, the *quantitative* data obtained in this study reflects a combination of the two factors, and therefore varies depending on specific topic and the extent of a journalist's control over the choice of actors. We thus found the lowest percentage of female actors in newspaper reports, which follow external events, and the highest, in TV talk shows where it's up to the journalist whom to invite.

*Qualitative* data obtained by content-analysis is always subjective to some extent. First, it depends on the perceptions of the researchers who monitor the media content and select the objects of content-analysis, in our case, the gender attitudes. Second, it depends on the approach of the researchers who conduct the content-analysis, summarizing and categorizing the selected objects. Since the team of this study came from the Caucasus Institute, they used a methodology of content-analysis elaborated, tested and refined in several studies done by the Caucasus Institute in collaboration with UNDP Armenia and/or international experts in the field. As any other content-analysis methodology, it does not allow to fully avoid subjectivity.

# Recommendations to the media and journalists

Based on the results of this study, we propose the following recommendations to members of the media profession:

## How to avoid gender stereotypes:

- Do not make unfounded generalizations. Think before saying ‘women do this’ and ‘men are like that.’ Explain your grounds for the generalization, such as personal experience, awareness of statistics, research, etc. When a guest or interviewee makes a generalization, ask them what they are founding it on;
- Learn to access, understand and use reliable gender statistics. Set a standard for never quoting statistics unless you know who obtained the data and what it means. Name your source when quoting gender statistics, and when guests or interviewees do it, ask for the source.
- Do not select topics based on the gender of the interviewee or guest. Avoid stereotypical ‘women’s topics.’ Do not assume women are only interested in cosmetics, romance and housekeeping. If a discussion wanders off in a stereotypical direction, bring it back to the original topic.
- Avoid stereotypical images of women. Glamour and fashion have their place in show business. Female journalists should come across as respected professionals, not sexual objects.

## **How to make coverage more gender-balanced:**

- select reporting angles so as to include more women; if there are none amongst decision-makers in a sphere, look for activists, beneficiaries and members of the general public;
- when asking people's opinion for a story, or inviting participants to a discussion or show, look for people of both genders from all walks of life. Use the 'expert format' only when necessary; the rest of the time, diversify actors.
- many news stories do not have an individual source: they come from government agencies, organizations and news media. Very often there is a woman behind the story, such as a reporter or a PR person. Mention her whenever possible.