

# An Assessment of Female Participation in Mainstream Media in Sri Lanka

July 2011



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இலங்கை பத்திரிகை ஸ்தாபனம்  
Sri Lanka Press Institute

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## INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the rapid assessment that Social Indicator (SI), the survey research unit of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) conducted on behalf of the Sri Lanka Press Institute (SLPI) to understand the female participation in the mainstream print and electronic media in Sri Lanka.

The SLPI designed and commissioned this study as they believed that despite the significant developments in the media industry in the past decades, the status of female journalists in media institutions have not changed in respect to gender equality in line with the developments that the industry has witnessed. Furthermore, the common perception the world-over is that the number of females breaking through the glass ceiling to reach senior positions is rising at a slow pace.

Despite this common perception, the SLPI has observed an increase in the number of female students joining journalism courses conducted by the Sri Lanka College of Journalism (SLCJ), one operational arm of the SLPI. However, due to the lack of professional research studies in the field of journalism, the SLPI is unable to conclude that this increasing trend in the enrollment for courses on journalism is really reflected in the industry. Further, there is no available data to understand the status of females within the industry – the positions they hold, their impact on the industry, their career progress etc. in order to understand the substantive aspects of a female's role in journalism.

In this context, the study endeavors to provide a preliminary understanding of the status of females in the field of journalism in Sri Lanka. Hence this study inquired for information regarding the male/female composition of journalists in mainstream media in Sri Lanka and aims to identify the extent of the participation of female journalists in journalism activities and what factors support or limit their participation.

This study was conducted using a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Whilst the quantitative study was aimed at understanding the distribution of male/female journalists within mainstream media institutions, the qualitative study at selected institutions aimed to capture more detailed information about attitudes, perceptions and experiences of female journalists to understand their status within the media industry. The data collection of the study was conducted from April to mid-July 2011 and approached 32 Newspapers (12 Companies), 34 Radio Stations (16 Companies) and 17 TV Stations (11 Companies). However, despite repeated efforts, the SI research team could not receive information from some media institutions and therefore this study is limited to only 31 Newspapers (12 Companies), 22 Radio Stations (10 Companies) and 7 TV Stations (5 Companies). Nevertheless, as the study has managed to collect data from 60 of the 83 selected institutions and provides a good reflection of the Sri Lankan media, the findings of this study will make a valuable contribution in enhancing the knowledge about the current status of female journalist in Sri Lanka while contributing to the discussions and interventions aimed at encouraging gender equity in Sri Lankan media.

SI-CPA would like to express its sincere gratitude to Mr. Waruna Karunatilake, Ms. Sharmini Boyle, Ms. Fiona Barton and Mr. Namal Perera for their valuable contribution on designing this study. It is important to mention that without the kind assistance extended to us by Mr. Imran Furkan, Ms. Anuradha Herath and Ms. Aanjane Seneviratne at the crucial stage of data collection, this study would not have been a reality. We would also like to thank all the print and electronic media institutions for their participation in the study and their staff members for their assistance in data collection.

## OBJECTIVES

The overarching objective of this study is to understand the status of female journalists in mainstream print and electronic media in Sri Lanka. In order to address the above objective, the study inquired in to the following -

- Understand the distribution of male/female journalists in mainstream print and electronic media in Sri Lanka
- Gather detailed information regarding the ages, designations, experiences etc of the journalists to understand if there are any evident differences between male and female journalists working in mainstream Sri Lankan media
- Understand the perceptions and attitudes of female journalists regarding their participation in the media industry
- Identify what contributes to or limits female participation in the media industry

## METHODOLOGY

The study on the participation of female journalists in mainstream print and electronic media in Sri Lanka was conducted using a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Whilst the quantitative study was conducted in the form of an institutional audit the qualitative study was conducted with selected female journalists at selected print and electronic media institutions through face-to-face in-depth interviews.

### The quantitative study

Prior to commencing data collection of the study, SI-CPA conducted extensive desk research to identify and define the scope of the study in terms of what media institutions will be assessed and what groups of employees will be included in the study. Upon finalising the scope of the study, a total of 32 Newspapers (12 Companies), 34 Radio Stations (16 Companies), 17 TV Stations (11 Companies) were identified by SI-CPA in consultation with the SLPI to participate in the study. (*Refer the section **Scope of the study** for detailed information on respondent selection*) The identified institutions were contacted and requested to participate in an Institutional Audit which was aimed at gathering details regarding their staff who are identified as 'Journalist' by the Editors/News Directors. An audit form requesting basic information - without revealing the employees' identities - regarding the journalists such as gender, age, designation, experience etc was used for data collection.

The researchers of SI-CPA approached the institutions with a reference letter from the CEO of the SLPI that stated the objectives of the study and requested for their assistance in this study. SI-CPA researchers established initial contact with Editors/News Directors using the referral letters and later met with them individually with prior appointments. Many institutions extended their fullest cooperation on data collection, while some institutions declined to participate and others though not declining the request failed to provide the information despite repeated reminders and personal meetings by the researchers.

As a result, the data collection process was rather prolonged and continued from April – mid-July 2011. Despite the extended data collection period, only 31 Newspapers (12 Companies), 22 Radio Stations (10 Companies) and 7 TV Stations (5 Companies) provided the requested data.

## The qualitative study

The SLPI assisted SI-CPA to identify 19 media institutions (the three largest newspapers in Sinhala, Tamil and English media and the five largest TV channels and Radio channels) in order to implement the qualitative study to capture more detailed information about attitudes, perceptions and experiences of female journalists to understand their status within the media industry. The qualitative study was conducted with the use of a protocol through face-to-face interviews with selected female journalists. Prior to conducting the interviews, the researchers involved in the qualitative study data collection were thoroughly briefed about the study, the protocol and on how to conduct the interviews and document the data.

After the Audit was conducted at the institutions, female journalists were selected based on their experience and designations. The selected individuals' profiles were shared with the Editors/News Directors requesting their permission to interview those selected for the qualitative study. As some of the institutions selected to participate in the qualitative study declined to participate or had not participated in the institutional audit as well, only 27 interviews could be conducted during the data collection period out of the 57 in-depth interviews (3 interviews each at the selected 19 institutions) that were to be conducted. The in-depth interviews were conducted during the period of May – mid-July 2011.

The table below provides a brief profile of the institutions that participated in the qualitative study and the number of journalists interviewed at each institution. However, in order to maintain the anonymity of the individuals who participated, this report does not divulge the names of the institutions that participated in the qualitative study.

Media	Medium		
	Sinhala	Tamil	English
<b>Print</b>	1. <b>Weekly Newspaper</b> (only 2 permanent Female journalists at the identified Newspaper)  2. <b>Daily Newspaper</b> (3 female journalists)	1. <b>Daily Newspaper</b> (3 female journalists)  2. <b>Daily Newspaper</b> (3 female journalists)	1. <b>Weekly Newspaper</b> (3 female journalists)  2. <b>Weekly Newspaper</b> (3 female journalists)  3. <b>Daily Newspaper</b> (only 2 permanent Female journalists at the identified Newspaper)
<b>Radio</b>	1. <b>Private Radio Station</b> (3 female journalists)	1. <b>State Radio Station</b> (3 female journalists)	1. <b>Private Radio Station</b> (only 2 permanent Female journalists at the identified Radio station)
<b>Television</b>	--		

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In defining the scope for the study, it was important to primarily identify what groups of employees in the print and electronic media would participate in the study. After much deliberation, the scope of the study was limited to include only *'Journalists'* working in both print and electronic media. It was hoped that by limiting the scope in this manner, the study will present data that is specific to journalism as including other functions such as accounting, sales and promotions, human resources etc that are present in other industries as well, will not present a situation that is unique to the media industry.

Upon finalising that the study will be conducted only with Journalists in the media industry, SLPI and SI-CPA agreed to use the theoretical definition that combines the 1913 Webster Dictionary's definition and that of PCJ **"One whose occupation is to write for any of the public news media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, or internet; also, an editorial or other professional writer for a periodical"** to identify the sample for the study. In order to further manage the process of selecting study participants, it was agreed to use a 'Status based definition' that defines employees based on how they are employed. In this regard, all those who were identified as journalists by the Editors/News Directors in the TV, Radio and Newspaper institutions surveyed, were included in the study.

The following conditions were also considered along with the status based definition when defining a journalist for the purpose of the study -

- Study included Journalists working in the **News and Current Affairs** sections in the print and electronic media
- The study included journalists employed on a **Permanent/Full Time** basis

The following conditions were considered when identifying what media institutions will be included in the study –

- Print media included only the newspapers that deal with news and current affairs and did not consider specialty publications (Educational, Women's/Men's magazines etc)
- Electronic media included both State Run and Private Radio and TV stations. TV stations that broadcast via Cable TV providers were not included

## ORGANISATIONS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY

Following is a list of the print and electronic media institutions that participated in the institutional audits –

### Newspapers

Company	Medium		
	Sinhala	Tamil	English
Express Newspapers (Cey) Ltd		Virakesari Sunday Virakesari Metro News Weekend Metro News	
Lake House (ANCL)	Dinamina Silumina	Thinakaran Thinakaran Varamanjari	Daily News Sunday Observer
Lanka Fast Publishers (Pvt) Ltd	Lanka		
Leader Publications (Pvt) Ltd	Iru resa		Sunday Leader
Mass Media Syndicate (Pvt) Ltd		Sudar Oli	
Ravaya Publishers Guarantee Ltd	Ravaya		
Rivira Media Corporation (Pvt) Ltd	Sunday Rivira		The Nation
Sumathi Newspapers (Pvt) Ltd	Lakbima Irida Lakbima		Lakbima News
Thinakural Publications (Pvt) Ltd		Thinakural	
Thinamurasu Publication		Thinamurasu	
Upali Newspapers Ltd	Divaina Irida Divaina		The Island Sunday Island
Wijeya Newspapers Ltd	Daily Lankadeepa Irida Lankadeepa		Daily Mirror The Sunday Times Financial Times

## Radio Stations

Company	Medium		
	Sinhala	Tamil	English
Asia Broadcasting Corporation	Hiru FM	Sooriyan FM	Gold FM
Asset Radio Broadcasting	Neth FM		
Colombo Communication Limited	Ran FM Shree FM		E FM
Friend Media Network (Pvt) Ltd	Seth FM		
MGM Networks (Pvt) Ltd	Max Radio		
Rangiri Sri Lanka Media Network	Rangiri FM		
Ru Ras Lanka (Pvt) Ltd	Isura FM		
The Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC)	Sinhala National Service Sinhala Commercial Service Kandurata FM Ruhunu Sevaya Rajarata Sevaya	Thendral	City FM
TNL Radio Network	Rhythm FM		Lite 89.2 FM TNL 101.7 FM
Universal Networks (Pvt) Ltd		Vettri FM	

## Television Channels

Company	Medium		
	Sinhala	Tamil	English
ART Television Broadcasting Company (Pvt.) Ltd			ART TV
MGM Networks Pvt Ltd	Max TV		
Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC)	Rupavahini	Nethra TV/ Channel Eye	NTV
Vanguard Management Services (Pvt) Ltd			ETV
Universal Networks (Pvt) Ltd		Vettri TV	

## LIMITATIONS

SI-CPA is pleased to have assisted the SLPI with the data collection on a research area that has not received wide attention and discussion at present – regarding the participation of female journalists in mainstream print and electronic media in Sri Lanka. Whilst we firmly believe that the findings will be useful in guiding discussions and or any actions regarding female journalists by the SLPI and the media industry, there were certain limitations during data collection that should be highlighted which will undoubtedly contribute to strengthening future data collection processes or any industry interventions.

- Due to difficulties in defining a ‘Journalist’ and a certain ambiguity surrounding the definition, the study relied mostly on the definition of Editors/News Directors at each institution. As a result, some institutions identified certain positions/designations as a ‘journalist’ whilst some institutions didn’t. Therefore, the numbers reflected in the audit data are reflective of the individual Editor/News Directors’ identification and are not uniform across the institutions.
- The scope of the study was designed to minimise issues such as duplication by not including freelance journalists, part-time journalists etc as they could be working for more than one Newspaper or Radio/TV station. However, in instances where the institutions did not provide comprehensive data and provided only the numbers of journalists at their institutions - though briefed thoroughly about information requirements – they could have included numbers that are not reflective of the scope of the study.
- Despite expending approximately four months on data collection and several attempts to gather the data, some institutions did not participate in the study. Participation in the study was lowest by the TV stations and none of the TV stations selected for the qualitative study participated.
- Some of the institutions that participated in the study were hesitant to share certain information as age, educational background etc despite the being assured of employee anonymity and not requesting for any names or other forms of identification. This limited a comprehensive comparison of industry data.
- Some of the media companies that have both Radio and TV stations have a common news team working in the news & current affairs sections and so do some radio companies that operate more than one station. Therefore, the employee data of these companies in some instances are not identifiable by each station.

## INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT FINDINGS

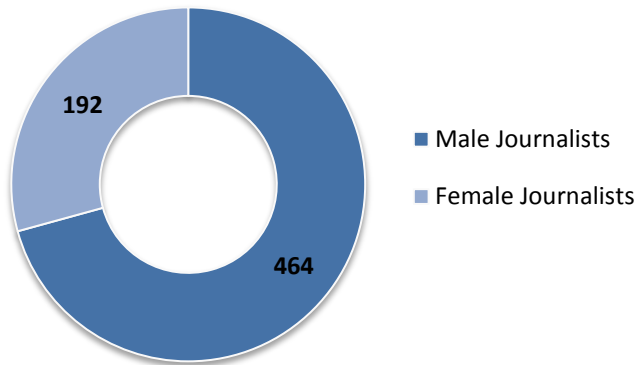
The tables presented in this section intends to share the data that was gathered from the institutional audits at mainstream print and electronic media which were identified as stated in the scope of the study. The data is presented by different media – Newspaper, Radio and Television, and provides details regarding the **total number of employees** (journalists as well as other staff categories such as administrative, finance & technical), the **total number of those identified as Journalists** and the **composition of male/female Journalists of this total**.

However, in the case of the institutions that failed to provide detailed information and instead provided overall information about the journalists, there is no breakdown of the number of journalists by each newspaper/radio station/TV station. For example, in the case of a Newspaper company that has more than one newspaper, details of all the journalists working for all newspapers at the company have been provided and not as a breakdown by each newspaper.

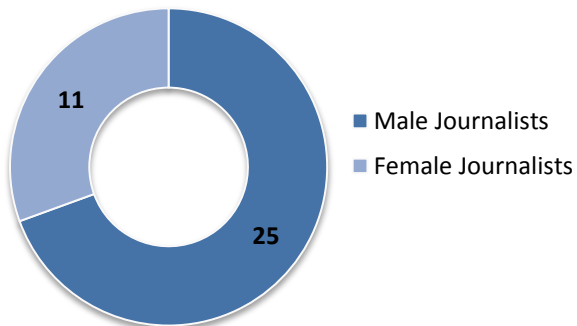
In addition, this section also presents tables that contain further details of journalists such as their age, marital status, education qualifications, department they work for, designation and years of experience at the institution. However, as only some of the institutions that participated in the institutional audits provided the further details, these detailed tables are not presented by institution and instead have been presented by the media – Newspaper, Radio and Television.

# Male – Female breakdown of Journalists at Newspapers

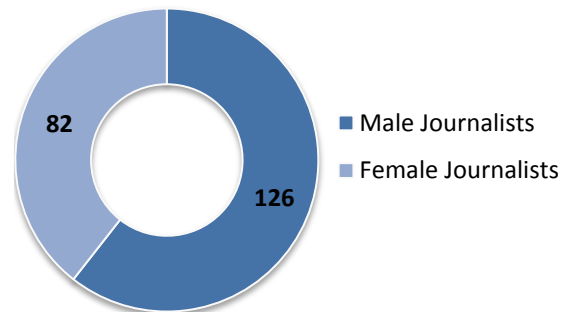
## Journalists in Print Media Institutions



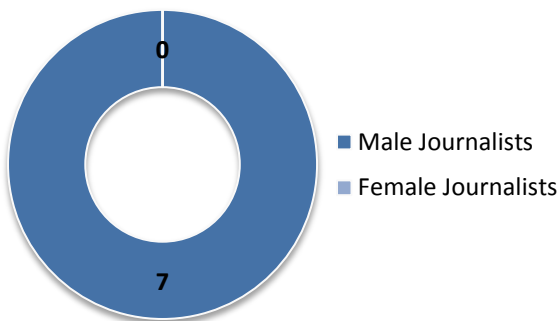
### Express Newspapers (Cey) Ltd



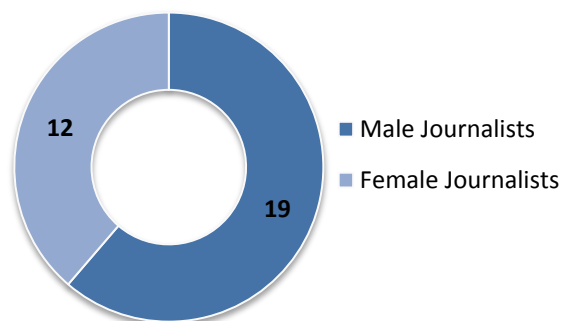
### Lake House (ANCL)



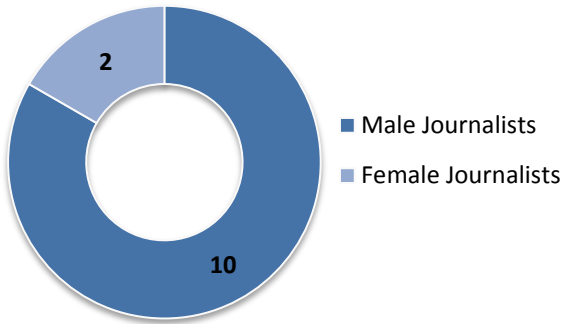
### Lanka Fast Publishers (Pvt) Ltd



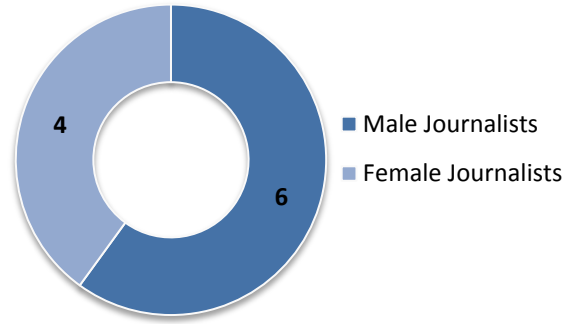
### Leader Publications (Pvt) Ltd



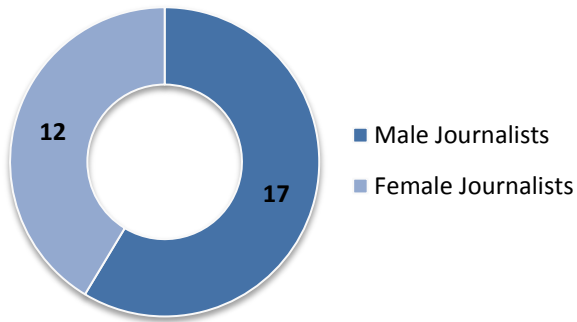
**Mass Media Syndicate (Pvt) Ltd**



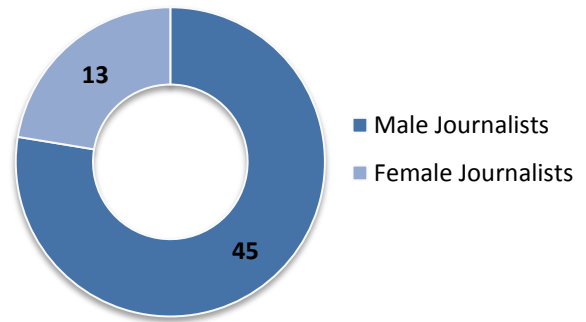
**Ravaya Publishers Guarantee Ltd**



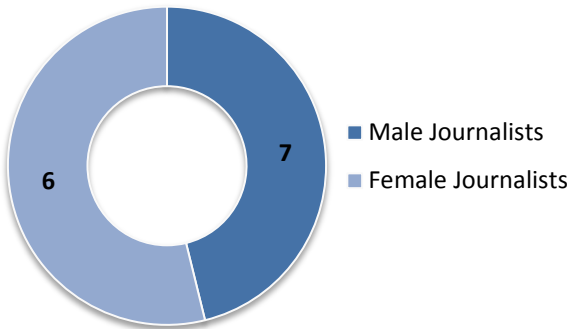
**Rivira Media Corporation (Pvt) Ltd**



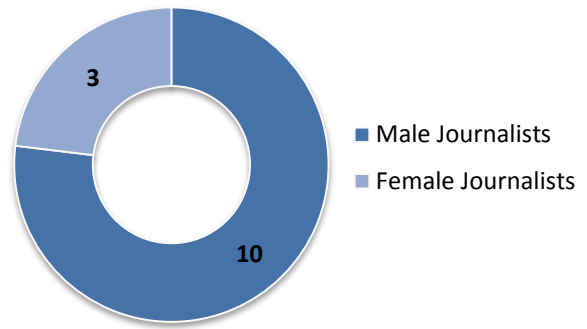
**Sumathi Newspapers (Pvt) Ltd**



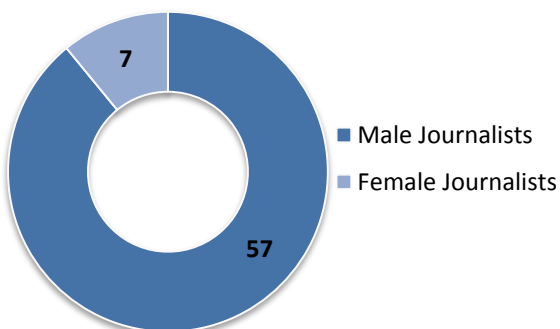
**Thinakural Publications (Pvt) Ltd**



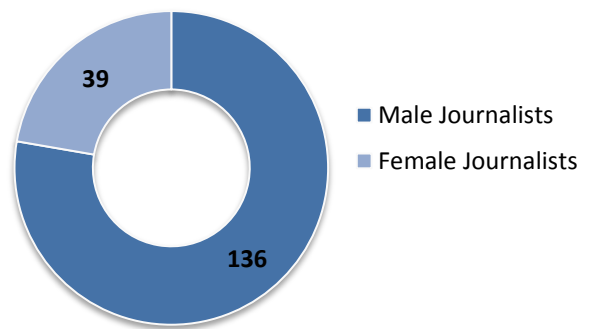
**Thinamurasu Publication**



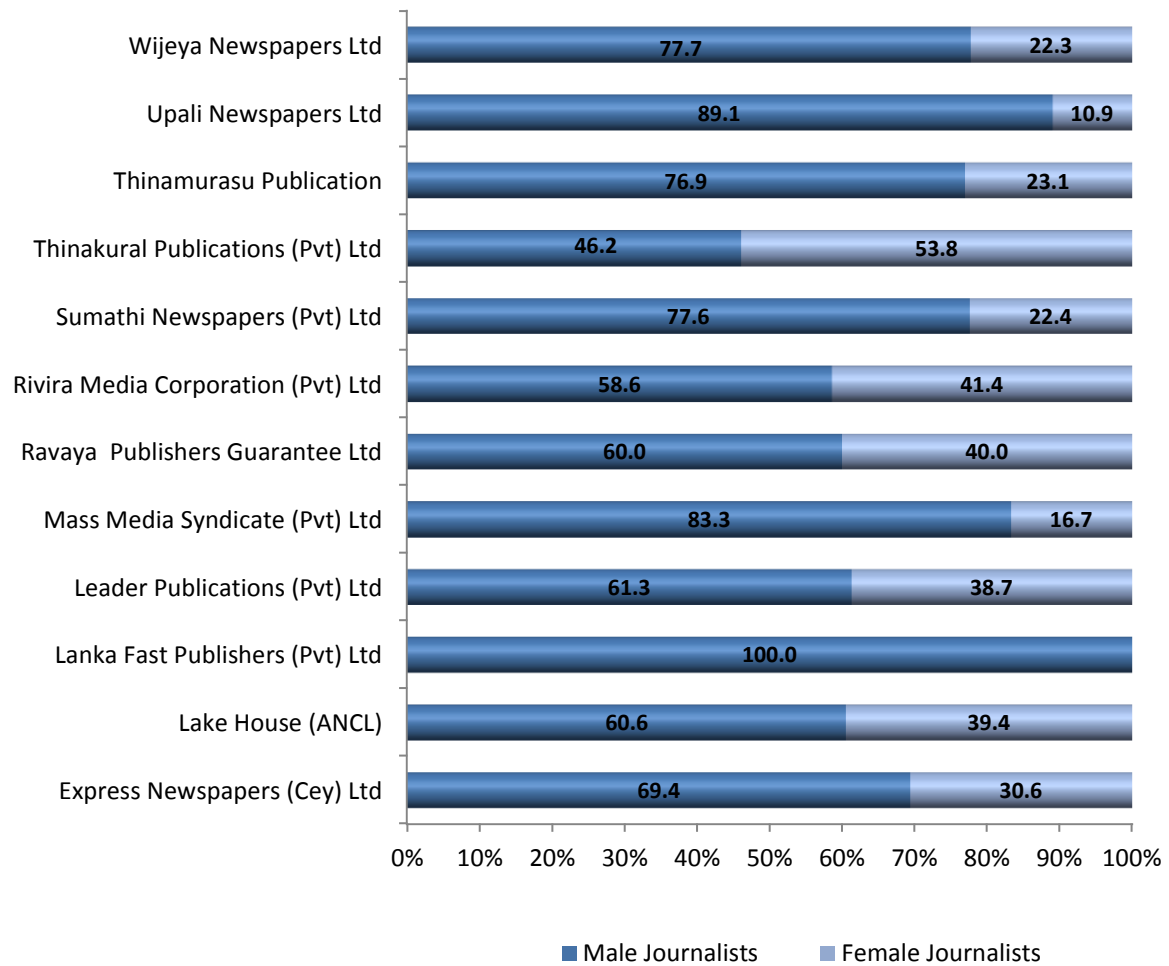
**Upali Newspapers Ltd**



**Wijeya Newspapers Ltd**



## Male – Female percentage of Journalists at Newspapers



\* We would like our readers to be cautious about the above percentages as they have been drawn from small samples in some instances. However, we are providing percentages for the purpose of comparison as requested by the SLPI.

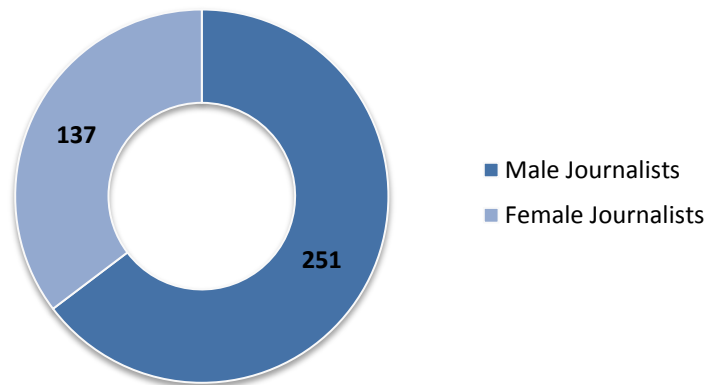
## Detailed breakdown of staff at Newspapers

Company	Newspaper	Total employees	Total Journalists	Male Journalists	Female Journalists
1. Express Newspapers (Cey) Ltd	1. Virakesari	324	36	25	11
	2. Metro News				
	3. Sunday Virakesari				
	4. Weekend Metro News				
<b>Total</b>		<b>324</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>11</b>
2. Lake House (ANCL)	5. Dinamina	642	74	38	36
	6. Silumina		39	22	17
	7. Daily News		47	30	17
	8. Sunday Observer		28	20	8
	9. Thinakaran		15	13	2
	10. Thinakaran Varamanjari		5	3	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>642</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>82</b>
3. Lanka Fast Publishers (Pvt) Ltd	11. Lanka	30	7	7	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>
4. Leader Publications (Pvt) Ltd	12. Iru resa	125	11	10	1
	13. Sunday Leader		20	9	11
<b>Total</b>		<b>125</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12</b>
5. Mass Media Syndicate (Pvt) Ltd	14. Sudar Oli	25	12	10	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
6. Ravaya Publishers Guarantee Ltd	15. Ravaya	30	10	6	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
7. Rivira Media Corporation (Pvt) Ltd	16. Sunday Rivira	145	21	15	6
	17. The Nation		18	12	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>145</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>

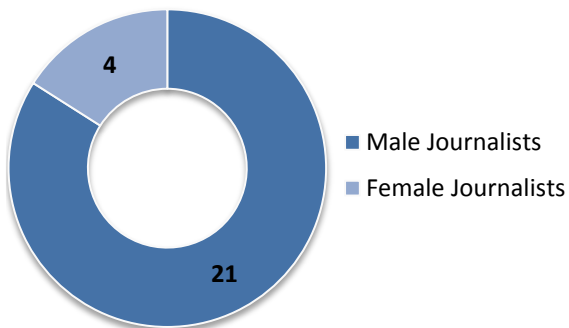
8. Sumathi Newspapers (Pvt) Ltd	18. Lakbima	303	39	31	8
	19. Irida Lakbima		10	9	1
	20. Lakbima News		9	5	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>303</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>13</b>
9. Thinakural Publications (Pvt) Ltd	21. Thinakural	156	13	6	7
	<b>Total</b>		<b>156</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>
10. Thinamurasu Publication	22. Thinamurasu	43	13	10	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
11. Upali Newspapers Ltd	23. Divaina	525	38	34	4
	24. Irida Divaina		9	8	1
	25. The Island		17	15	2
	26. Sunday Island				
<b>Total</b>		<b>525</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>7</b>
12. Wijeya Newspapers Ltd	27. Daily Lankadeepa	1215	65	59	6
	28. Irida Lankadeepa		19	15	4
	29. Daily Mirror		70	54	16
	30. The Sunday Times		21	8	13
	31. Financial Times			Journalists of Daily Mirror & Sunday Times work here	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1215</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Total number of Journalists in Print Media Institutions</b>			<b>656</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>192</b>

# Male – Female breakdown of Journalists at Radio Stations

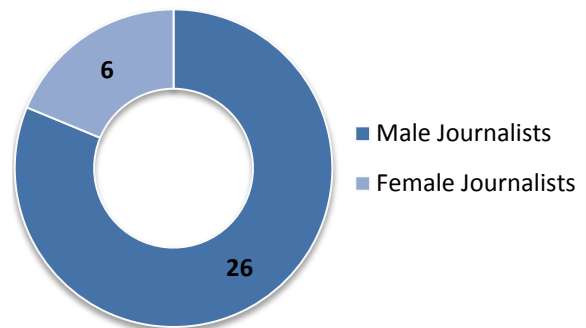
### Journalists in Radio Institutions



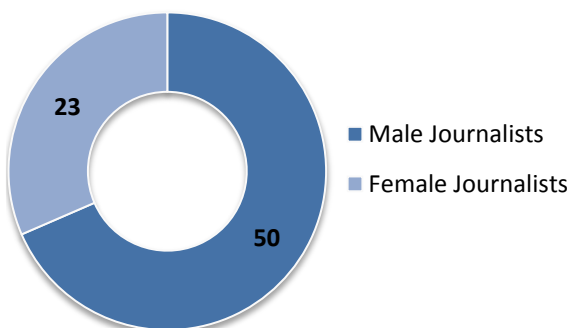
### Asia Broadcasting Corporation



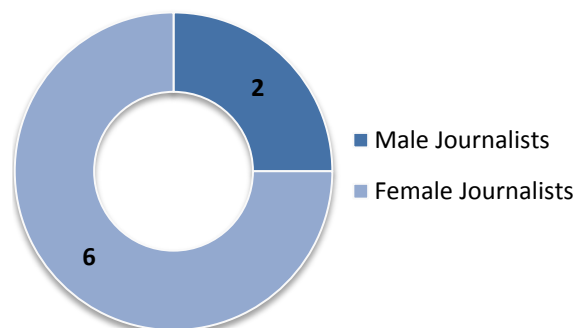
### Asset Radio Broadcasting



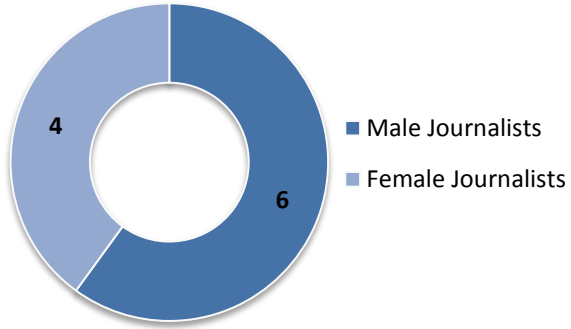
### Colombo Communication Limited



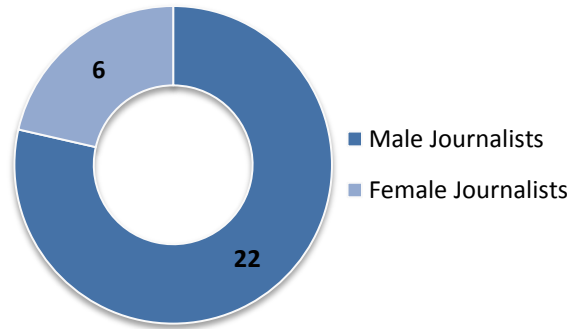
### Friend Media Network (Pvt) Ltd



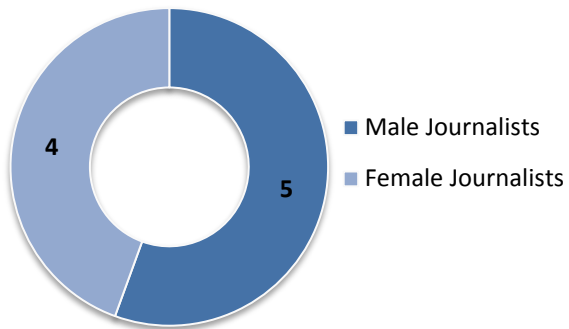
**MGM Networks (Pvt) Ltd**



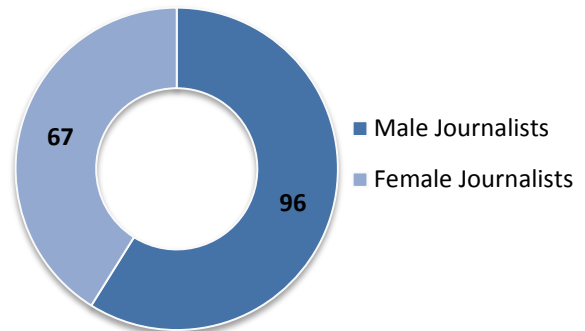
**Rangiri Sri Lanka Media Network**



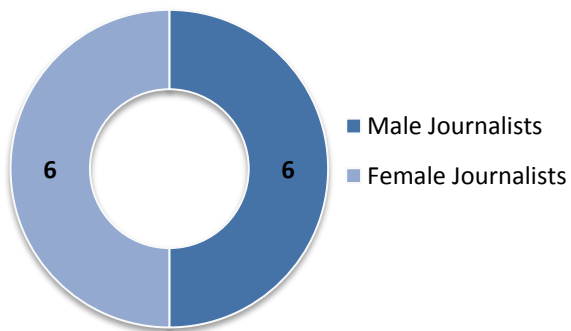
**Ru Ras Lanka (Pvt) Ltd**



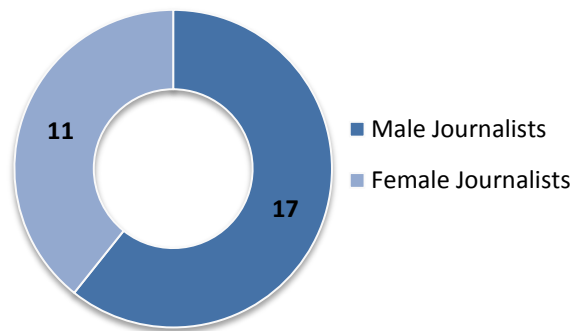
**The Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC)**



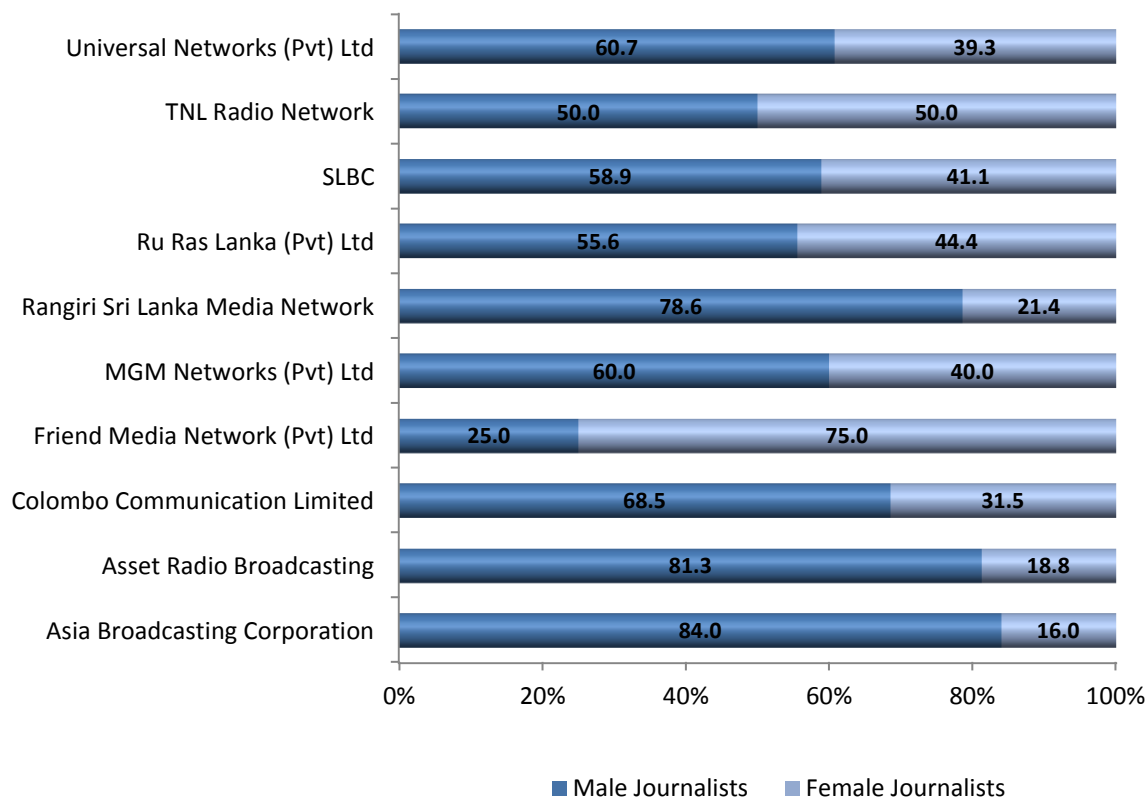
**TNL Radio Network**



**Universal Networks (Pvt) Ltd**



## Male – Female percentage of Journalists at Radio Stations



\* We would like our readers to be cautious about the above percentages as they have been drawn from small samples in some instances. However, we are providing percentages for the purpose of comparison as requested by the SLPI.

## Detailed breakdown of staff at Radio Stations

Company	Radio station	Total employees	Total Journalists	Male Journalists	Female Journalists
1. Asia Broadcasting Corporation	1. Hiru FM	-	15	12	3
	2. Sooriyan FM		6	6	-
	3. Gold FM		4	3	1
<b>Total</b>		-	<b>25</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>4</b>
2. Asset Radio Broadcasting	4. Neth FM	-	32	26	6
<b>Total</b>		-	<b>32</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>6</b>

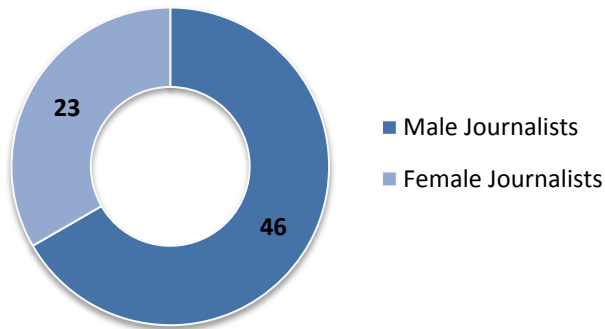
3. Colombo Communication Limited	5. Shree FM	-	35	21	14
	6. Ran FM		22	16	6
	7. E FM		16	13	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>23</b>
4. Friend Media Network (Pvt) Ltd	8. Seth FM	16	8	2	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>
5. MGM Networks (Pvt) Ltd	9. Max Radio *	65	10	6	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>65</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
6. Rangiri Sri Lanka Media Network	10. Rangiri FM	33	28	22	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>33</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>6</b>
7. Ru Ras Lanka (Pvt) Ltd	11. Isura FM	-	9	5	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
8. The Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC)	12. Sinhala National Service	-	163	96	67
	13. Sinhala Commercial Service				
	14. Kandurata FM				
	15. Ruhunu Sevaya				
	16. Rajarata Sevaya				
	17. Thendral				
18. City FM					
<b>Total</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>67</b>
9. TNL Radio Network	19. Lite 89.2 FM	104	4	2	2
	20. TNL 101.7 FM		8	4	4
	21. Rhythm FM				
<b>Total</b>		<b>104</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>
10. Universal Networks (Pvt) Ltd	22. Vettri FM **	50	28	17	11
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Total number of Journalists at Radio Stations</b>			<b>388</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>137</b>

\* Common team of Journalists for Max Radio and TV

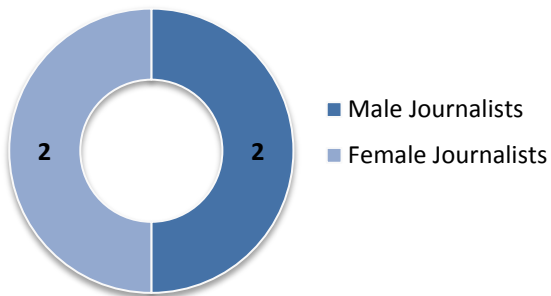
\*\* Includes 3 Male and 1 Female Journalist that is common to Vettri FM and TV

## Male – Female breakdown of Journalists at Television Stations

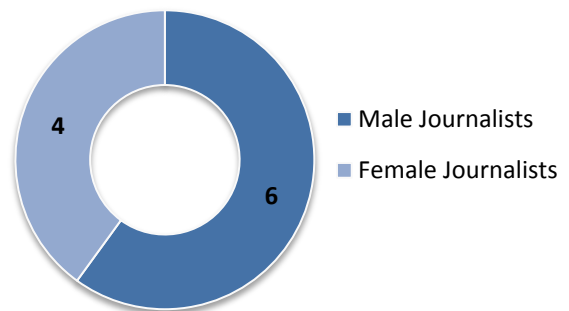
Journalists at Television Stations



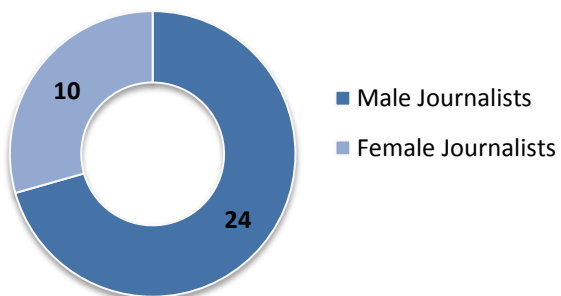
ART Television Broadcasting Company (Pvt) Ltd



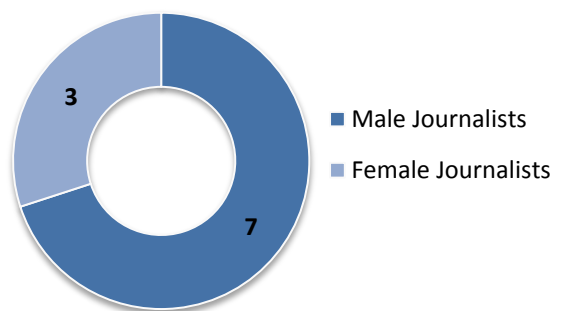
MGM Networks Pvt Ltd



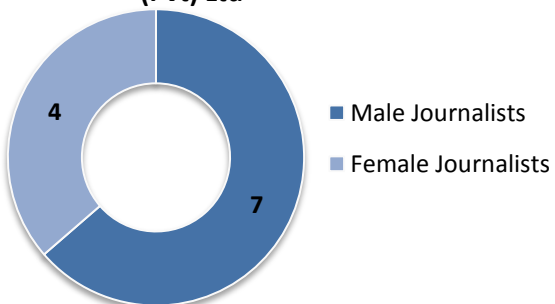
Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC)



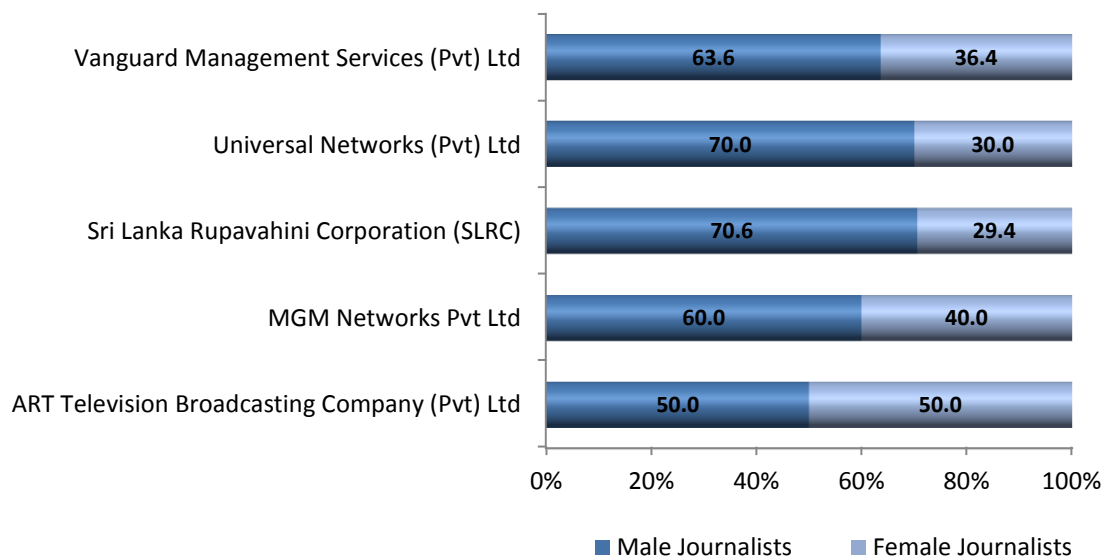
Universal Networks (Pvt) Ltd



Vanguard Management Services (Pvt) Ltd



## Male – Female percentage of Journalists at Television Stations



\* We would like our readers to be cautious about the above percentages as they have been drawn from small samples in some instances. However, we are providing percentages for the purpose of comparison as requested by the SLPI.

## Detailed breakdown of staff at Television Stations

Company	Channel	Total employees	Total Journalists	Male Journalists	Female Journalists
1. ART Television Broadcasting Company (Pvt.) Ltd	1. ART TV	45	4	2	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>45</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
2. MGM Networks Pvt Ltd	2. Max TV *	65	10	6	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>65</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
3. Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC)	3. Rupavahini	756	22	16	6
	4. Nethra TV / Channel Eye		7	5	2
	5. NTV		5	3	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>756</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>

\* Common team of Journalists for Max Radio and TV

4. Universal Networks (Pvt) Ltd	6. Vettri TV **	50	10	7	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>
5. Vanguard Management Services (Pvt) Ltd	7. ETV	-	11	7	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total number of Journalists at Television Stations</b>			<b>69</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>23</b>

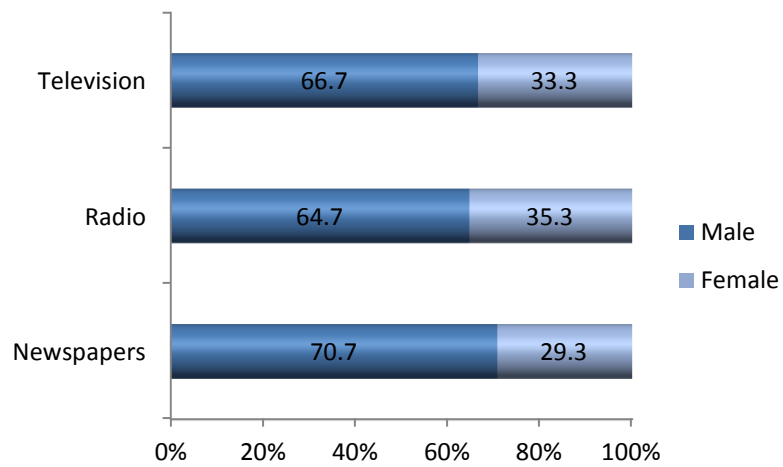
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\*\* Includes 3 Male and 1 Female Journalist that is common to Vettri FM and TV

## Additional data from institutional audits

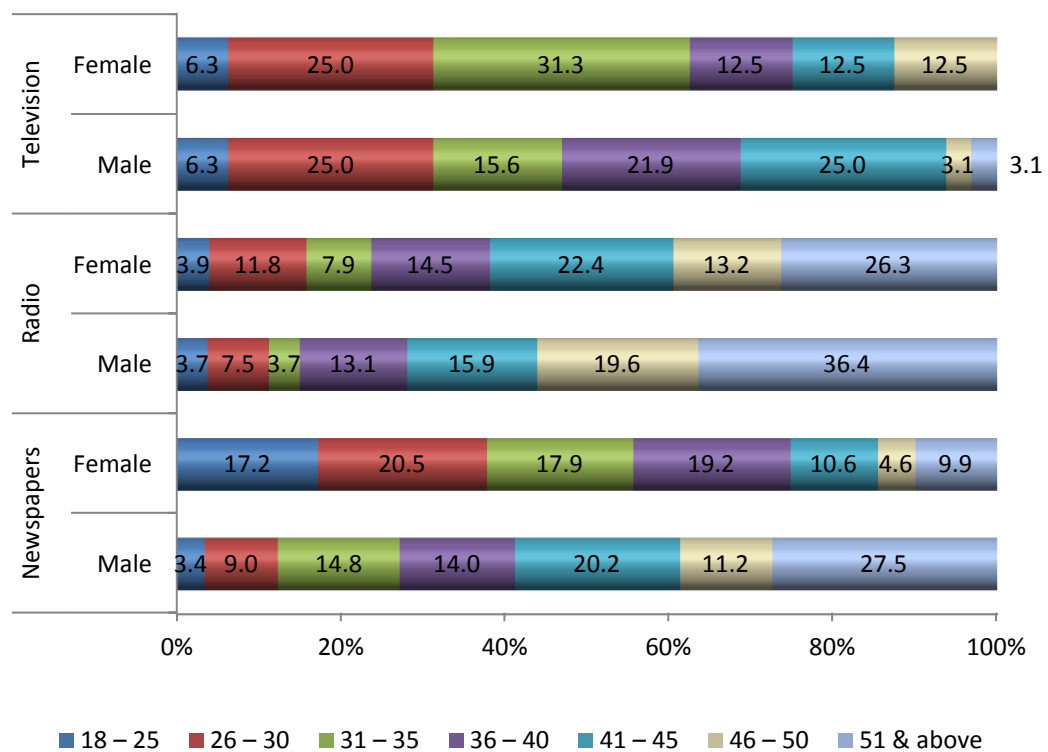
### Gender breakdown of journalists - by Media

Gender	Newspapers	Radio	Television
Male	464	251	46
Female	192	137	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>69</b>



## Age breakdown of journalists - by Media

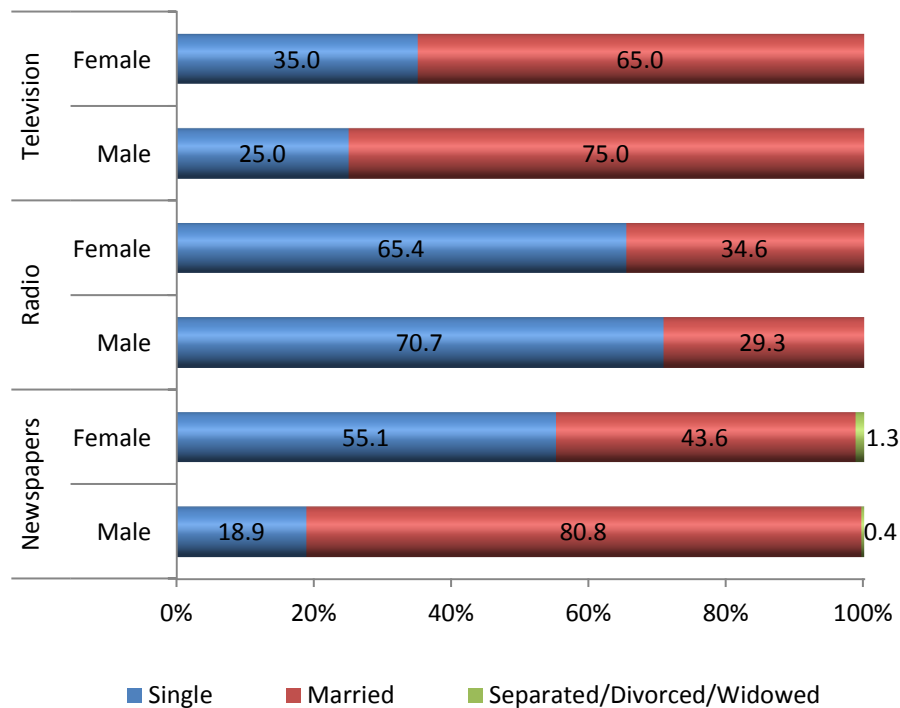
Age	Newspapers		Radio		Television	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
18 – 25	12	26	4	3	2	1
26 – 30	32	31	8	9	8	4
31 – 35	53	27	4	6	5	5
36 – 40	50	29	14	11	7	2
41 – 45	72	16	17	17	8	2
46 – 50	40	7	21	10	1	2
51 & above	98	15	39	20	1	-
No data	107	41	144	61	14	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>23</b>



\* Respondents who did not provide information regarding their age are not included in the above graph

## Marital status of journalists - by Media

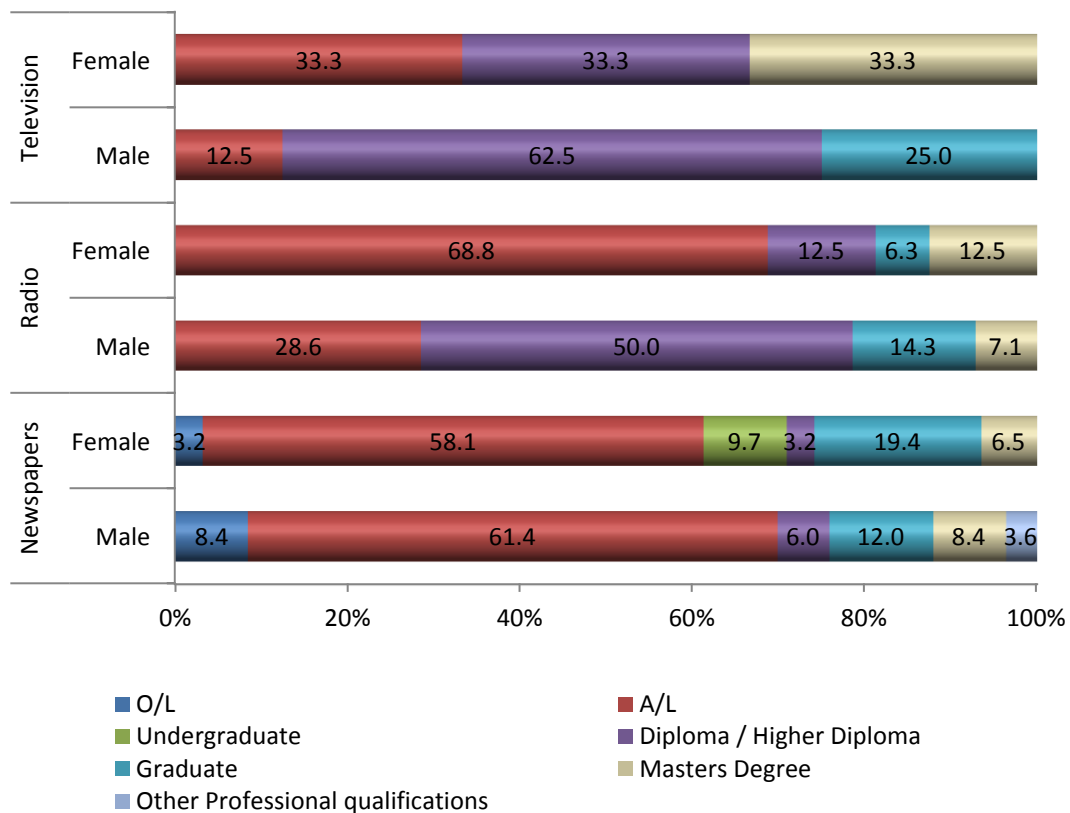
Marital status	Newspapers		Radio		Television	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Single	50	43	29	17	8	7
Married	214	34	12	9	24	13
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	1	1	-	-	-	-
No data	199	114	210	111	14	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>23</b>



\* Respondents who did not provide information regarding their marital status are not included in the above graph

## Education breakdown of journalists - by Media

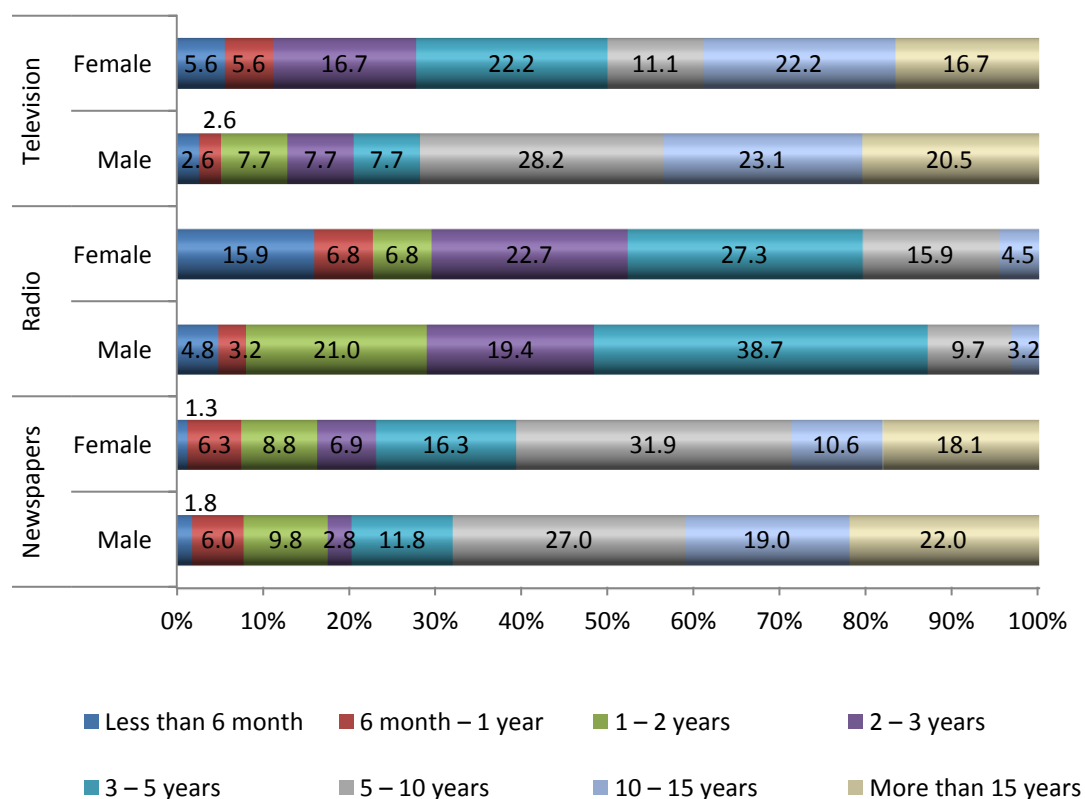
Education	Newspapers		Radio		Television	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
O/L	7	1	-	-	-	-
A/L	51	18	4	11	1	2
Undergraduate	0	3	-	-	-	-
Diploma / Higher Diploma	5	1	7	2	5	2
Graduate	10	6	2	1	2	-
Masters Degree	7	2	1	2	-	2
Other Professional qualifications	3	-	-	-	-	-
No data	381	161	237	121	38	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>23</b>



\* Respondents who did not provide information regarding their education are not included in the above graph

## Experience breakdown of journalists - by Media

Experience	Newspapers		Radio		Television	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Less than 6 month	7	2	3	7	1	1
6 month – 1 year	24	10	2	3	1	1
1 – 2 years	39	14	13	3	3	-
2 – 3 years	11	11	12	10	3	3
3 – 5 years	47	26	24	12	3	4
5 – 10 years	108	51	6	7	11	2
10 – 15 years	76	17	2	2	9	4
More than 15 years	88	29	-	-	8	3
No data	64	32	189	93	7	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>23</b>



\* Respondents who did not provide information regarding their experience are not included in the above graph

## Department breakdown of journalists - by Media

Department	Newspapers		Radio		Television	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Editorial	151	45	-	-	-	-
News (Radio/TV News, Newsroom, News Department, News & Current affairs)	-	-	46	15	23	10
Programming	-	-	23	19	-	-
Production	-	-	7	5	-	1
TV	-	-	-	-	4	2
Radio	-	-	14	10	-	-
Radio/ TV	-	-	4	2	4	2
No Data	313	147	157	86	15	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>23</b>

## Designation breakdown of journalists - by Media

Designation	Newspapers		Radio		Television	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Editor/ Deputy Editor	57	21	-	-	-	-
Desk head (News Editor/Business Editor/ Features Editor/Foreign news Editor/ Pictures Editor/ Design and Graphics Editor/ Sports Editor)	60	12	-	-	-	-
Sub Editor/ Deputy sub editor	54	15	-	-	-	-
Assistance desk head	34	9	-	-	-	-
Senior journalist	5	5	-	-	-	-
Journalist	181	123	-	-	-	-
Photographer	17	0	-	-	-	-
Artist/ Cartoonist	8		-	-	-	-
Graphic designer	14	1	-	-	-	-
Proofreader	12	1	-	-	-	-
Other (Translator/ Layout consultant)	7		-	-	-	-
News Editor / News Manager / Head of News / Director News / Senior News Editor / Senior News Director	-	-	31	10	-	-
Program Manager / Head of Programme / Programme Director / Show Manager / Senior Programme Executive	-	-	13	6	-	-
Journalist / Reporter/ Announcer/ Presenter	-	-	68	42	-	-
News Assistant	-	-	1	14	-	-
Producer	-	-	15	9	-	-
Manager / Assistant Manager	-	-	2	2	-	-
Director / Assistant Director	-	-	13	3	-	-
Compile / Organise / Control	-	-	35	33	-	-

Translator / Writer	-	-	4	4	-	-
Other (Administrator, Secretary, Quality Control, Research)	-	-	2	3	-	-
News Editor	-	-	-	-	3	2
Head of Programme	-	-	-	-	2	1
News Manager	-	-	-	-	1	0
Producer (Producer, Senior Producer, Programme Producer)	-	-	-	-	22	12
Journalist	-	-	-	-	7	5
News Reporter	-	-	-	-	2	0
News Anchor	-	-	-	-	0	1
Presenter	-	-	-	-	0	2
Production Assistant	-	-	-	-	2	0
No Data	15	5	67	11	7	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>23</b>

## IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW FINDINGS

This section of the report presents the findings of the qualitative study. A total of 27 female journalists were interviewed from 7 newspapers (2 Sinhala, 2 Tamil and 3 English) and 3 radio stations (1 Sinhala, 1 Tamil and 1 English). Respondents were selected for the interviews to capture the opinions and perceptions of diverse groups of females such as journalists who are still very new to the industry, those who have been in the industry for more than 20 years, those who are married and manage their roles as wives/mothers while working, journalists who are single and have less family commitments as well as those who have varying responsibilities at the workplaces. (*Refer Profile of Female Journalists Interviewed, for a detailed breakdown*)

One-to-one interviews were conducted with the selected journalists using a protocol as a guideline at their respective workplaces after obtaining prior appointments from them. It is also important to note that at one media institution the respondents were proposed by the Editor of that institution. In the other institutions even though the senior officials were not involved in the selection of respondents, the interviews were conducted with the knowledge of the institution.

The findings from the interviews with the **Newspaper and Radio** journalists are broadly divided into three sections and presented in three chapters. The first chapter looks in to the opinions and perceptions regarding the participation of female journalists in journalism activities, the second chapter presents the concerns and challenges of those interviewed as well as what contributes to strengthening their participation in journalism and the final chapter presents their aspirations about the future in journalism.

## PROFILE OF FEMALE JOURNALISTS INTERVIEWED

		No. of respondents
Age	20 – 25	5
	26 – 35	12
	36 – 45	6
	46 – 55	3
	56 – 60	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>
Marital status	Married	11
	Unmarried	15
	Separated/divorced/widowed	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>
Designation	Editor/Deputy Editor	4
	Senior journalist	9
	Journalist/ Reporter	14
	<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>
Years of experience	Less than 1 year	3
	1 to 3 years	2
	4 to 8 years	7
	8 to 15 years	7
	15 – 25 years	6
	26 years and above	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

This chapter presents the perceptions on female participation as journalists in Sri Lanka in general and specifically at the respective institutions that the respondents represent. The female journalists who participated as respondents were asked to voice their views about the descriptive and substantive participation of females in the media industry in Sri Lanka and at their work places. For example, in order to understand their views on descriptive participation, questions such as whether there has been an increase in the number of female journalists in the industry and to what extent females represent various levels within the profession of journalism were asked. In the attempt to understand their perceptions regarding substantive participation, the participants were asked to provide their views on whether females exercise as much agency as their male partners in professional matters as well as in deciding the contents of the news, features or the stories that they are involved in. It is interesting to note the level of optimism - regarding the status of female participation in media - that is reflected in the qualitative interviews.

### **Female journalists in the media industry**

As there is no data available regarding the number of journalists in Sri Lanka over the years it is difficult to trace the progress or lack of participation of female journalists in the media industry. Looking at what they have observed over the years in the industry, the journalists interviewed are of the opinion that the number of female journalists entering the media industry in Sri Lanka has significantly increased over the years. This view is shared by all the journalists interviewed who see it as an extremely positive reflection of the industry. A senior journalist remarked that it is an indication of the courage and support given to females in the industry that it can be viewed in such a positive light. Senior journalists and Editors interviewed who have been in the industry for more than 15 years said that over the years they have been glad to see the numbers increase and seeing better and more input by females. According to some from both print and radio, the increase in numbers is especially evident in the electronic media.

Several journalists mentioned that this increase could also be as a result of the fact that there are now more people getting qualified with skills specific to the industry, such as degrees/ diplomas in Mass Communication, Journalism etc. The recognition of these degrees as well as the increase in colleges and institutions in Sri Lanka and abroad, where one could get these qualifications, have contributed to the increase in female participation in journalism.

In fact the student registry details for the Journalism courses conducted by the Sri Lanka College of Journalism (SLCJ) confirm the opinions of those interviewed. For example, if the student intake numbers for SLCJ courses from 2010 and 2011 are compared, it is evident that more female students have joined the courses. 44 female students have enrolled for the courses at SLCJ in 2010 out of the total 63 enrolments and in 2011 out of the enrolled 60 students, 33 were female students.

However, as the table below shows, females who are full time/ permanent staff constitute of just about one third of the journalists in both print and electronic media institutions that participated in the audit. Therefore, despite the quite encouraging developments regarding the increase in the female student intake for journalism courses and the positive responses by those interviewed regarding the numbers on female participation, the female participation in media in Sri Lanka is still lesser than that of their male counterparts.

***Journalists at media institutions that participated in the audit***

	Male	Female	Total
Newspapers	464 <b>(70.73%)</b>	192 <b>(29.27%)</b>	656 (100%)
Radio Stations	251 <b>(64.7%)</b>	137 <b>(35.3%)</b>	388 (100%)
Televisions stations	46 <b>(66.7%)</b>	23 <b>(33.3%)</b>	69 (100%)

Some journalists in the Sinhala print media expressed that there is no big increase in participation in Sinhala print media even though they are of the opinion that there has been an increase in female representation in the media industry as a whole. A few journalists (outside of Tamil print as well) also stated that Tamil print media is still very much male dominated. Their view is further supplemented through the institutional audit data, as comparatively, of the institutions that participated in the audit, there are slightly more permanent/full time female journalists in English print media than in Sinhala and Tamil print media.

	Language	Male	Female	Total
Newspapers	English	153 <b>(66.6%)</b>	77 <b>(33.4%)</b>	230 <b>(100.0%)</b>
	Sinhala	254 <b>(74.3%)</b>	88 <b>(25.7%)</b>	342 <b>(100.0%)</b>
	Tamil	67 <b>(71.2%)</b>	27 <b>(28.8%)</b>	94 <b>(100.0%)</b>

## Female representation at the managerial/ decision making level

An increase in female numbers only provides a descriptive indicator of the female participation in Sri Lankan media. Though it is important to have more females in the field of journalism, it doesn't however make much sense, unless the females also begin to share the important positions and decision making opportunities with their male partners. In this context, it is very encouraging to hear some of the print media journalists interviewed say that there is a notable presence of females in positions such as desk heads, Deputy Editors and Editors in newspapers which was not the case many years ago.

However, unfortunately not everyone interviewed subscribes to this opinion. Many point out that while the number of female journalists has risen over the years, this increase is not reflected at the managerial and decision making level. While there are more females at positions such as desk heads at present, the progress to the managerial and decision making level has been very slow and this is seen as very unfortunate by those who are at the decision making level, such as Editors, Deputy Editors, desk heads at present, as well as those who are not.

The tables below, compiled using data from the '*Guide to Media 2011, Department of Government Information, Sri Lanka*', confirm this opinion of the print media journalists further. It also provides an indication regarding the situation in electronic media as well. According to the tables below, the disparity in the numbers of males and females in decisions making/ managerial positions is quite high in all three media.

<b>Newspapers</b>	Male	Female
Chief Editor, Managing Editor, Associate Editor, Director Editorial, Senior Associate Editor, Deputy Editor, Sub Editor, Senior Editor	<b>99</b>	<b>15</b>

<b>Radio stations</b>	Male	Female
Channel Director, News Director, Programme Director, Head of News & Current affairs, Channel Head, News Editor, Manager News, Additional Director (News), Assistant Director – Programme & News, Assistant General Manager - News & Current Affairs, Assistant News Director, Assistant News Manager	<b>60</b>	<b>11</b>

<b>Television stations</b>	Male	Female
Programming Director , Executive Producer News, Chief News Editor, Deputy Director General (News & Current Affairs), General Manager (News & Current Affairs), Head of News, Manager News, Assistant Manager News	<b>16</b>	<b>1</b>

*Source - Guide to Media 2011, Department of Government Information, Sri Lanka*

According to many journalists who participated in the in-depth interviews, one of the main reasons why there is a low level of representation by females at top positions is because of the fact that female journalists do not continue working long enough to reach the decision making/ managerial levels. This is a view strongly held by those in the Sinhala media (print and radio), as well as several journalists in both English and Tamil media. As females have other roles to fulfil as mothers and wives, they stop working after a while or make a conscious decision not to progress beyond a certain point and this is seen as one of the main reasons why there are minimal numbers of females at decision making and managerial levels when compared to the male numbers.

A respondent said that at the time she became Editor of the newspaper she works at, it was an unheard of appointment and she is now glad to see that there are a few more females who hold the same position as her in the industry. However, she believes that the media industry, especially the print media, is very much male dominated and referred to it as a “boys club”. She cited the Editors Guild of Sri Lanka as an example of this view. She strongly believes that the industry needs to accept females climbing the ranks for this inequality to change and that while the progress in the media industry has been good, it is not enough. Furthermore, she expressed that there should be more support among the females themselves. She explained this by saying that she had personally never got any solidarity or support from fellow female journalists in the industry. She felt that this was unfortunate as there are only very few at the higher positions and therefore there should be more support so that there can be more female journalists reaching higher positions.

Many are positive that the change needed at the managerial and decision making levels will come in time to come. As one senior journalist said, “There was a time when female journalists could only go up to heading a magazine or program section of media organisations. Now there are several who have managed to break through and rise to the top and in time more females will follow suit”.

## **Work assignments**

The journalists interviewed cover a broad spectrum of areas at their institutions – from politics to news to entertainment to fashion to social issues. All the journalists who work in the print media are currently working in their area/s of interest and specialisation. Contrary to the popular belief outside of the media industry that there are certain sections that are male dominated, such as news and politics and that entertainment and features sections are female dominated – according to the journalists interviewed, there are no such divisions. The journalists say that they have the freedom to write outside of their assigned beats/ areas and that none of them have been restricted by the institutions that they work for. Those interviewed say that they have the freedom to write outside of their assigned beats/ areas and that none of them have been restricted by the institutions, unless it is an institution policy not to cover particular topics.

A few journalists who have been covering politics and news for ten to fifteen years stated that they have personally never been discriminated against when it comes to assignments. They further explained that while areas such as politics tend to have more men covering them at times, it cannot be generalised to the whole industry and branded as male dominated areas.

Drawing from their observations over the years, some of the senior journalists said that restrictions with regard to covering particular topics, travelling out of town are usually not imposed on journalists by the institution but by the individual themselves. These self-imposed restrictions sometimes arise due to family or other obligations or even due to cultural and personal beliefs of each individual. "For some, their hesitancy to work on certain assignments, travel or work late comes not from any personal experience but it is imbedded in them – it is part of culture", said one senior journalist.

This observation was also mentioned by a journalist who has been working at a mainstream Tamil newspaper for the last five years - "As a female journalist when I receive an assignment I consider whether it is safe for me and if not I will explain to my Editors and I will say that I can't do that particular assignment."

Journalists who have been working on areas such as news, parliament and politics for many years said that sometimes female journalists do not push themselves enough and that there is still a reluctance to take on tougher topics such as military and crime beats and that more should venture into these areas.

Explaining why there is a larger concentration of male journalists covering news, politics and crime, a journalist working in a mainstream Sinhala newspaper for the past fifteen years, said that it can be attributed to the ease with which men can travel anywhere, at any time and do not require as much protection that a female journalist would require. She says that there is nothing stopping female journalists from covering these areas but looking at it from a practical point of view, it is obvious that these are the areas that more male journalists would be assigned to cover.

When handing out assignments to journalists, an Editor of a mainstream English newspaper said that she assigns stories based on the strength of each individual and that all the journalists who work there are open to travel and working late and that gender is never really an issue. She also strongly disagrees that there are divisions such as male dominated sections and female dominated sections and said that males and females have the equal opportunity to work in any area they wish to, if they believe that they are capable of handling the work.

Radio journalists do not have a particular area that they work on exclusively given the nature of radio reporting. The journalists who work on the news said that they cover all types of news while journalists who work in programming said that work is assigned to them based on their interest and experience.

## Work schedule

Depending on whether they work in print media or radio, the schedules of the journalists differ. In the print media, journalists who work in English and Sinhala newspapers do not have a fixed schedule and those in senior positions describe their schedule as “erratic” on certain days of the week. The flexibility of their schedules is considered as an advantage by all the journalists even though there are days they work till very late and there are days when they do not know what their schedule is like and where they will be going.

As there are days that they cannot devote time to any activities other than for the articles they are writing, the off days and the flexibility to work from home brings a balance to their responsibilities and work outside of the newspaper. There are also no strict work timings that they have adhere to, which means no one is restricted to the office for a certain number of hours every day. Only at one English newspaper did the journalists say that they are required to come to office everyday during the week, but they don’t find this an issue as they work on their articles or interview people for information during that time anyway.

Those interviewed say that as long as their deadlines are met and complete their assigned work/articles on time, it doesn’t matter where they work from or how long they stay in office. Those who work in office till late in the night or work over the weekend say that their families have adjusted to this schedule and they don’t consider this unconventional work schedule as a hindrance to their personal life.

An Editor of one newspaper said that she does not ask her journalists to come in every day. She has requested them to keep her posted throughout the week and update her on their work and to meet their deadlines.

With regard to journalists interviewed at Tamil newspapers, they go into office every day of the week for a certain number of hours. One journalist said that they have time schedules that they can choose according to their convenience and she prefers the 2pm – 10pm shift, while all the others said that they work during the day. The work that those who were interviewed do at the moment does not require them to work till late in the night or work over the weekend.

Radio journalists work on a shift basis or have a fixed schedule for the week. Therefore most of them do not face the unpredictability in schedule that print journalists face. However, a journalist who works for an English radio station said that there are days when she has to work over the weekend and also on public holidays which is a problem at times.

On days that they work after 7pm, journalists in both print and radio are provided transport which means they are not inconvenienced or face any resistance to their work from their families.

## Work attire

The respondents were asked about their attire for work as attire and their portrayal either as feminine or masculine is perceived to be having an influence on their journalism activities. Whilst some of those interviewed were of the opinion that attire does not have an influence on their work and that it is largely an individual choice, some were of the opinion that attire has a certain influence on their work. Whether or not a feminine portrayal or a more masculine portrayal has an influence on their work and their experiences while working is also largely an individual outlook and differs with their beliefs and personality.

Most journalists interviewed stated that there is no particular dress code imposed upon the journalists by the institutions that they work for. They all follow a personal dress code that they feel is appropriate for their work. Interestingly, the outlook towards their choice of clothing differs among the journalists interviewed.

Looking at the perspectives of the print journalists, most say that they have to wear clothes that are casual and practical because sometimes you do not know where you will be going on work. As one journalist described her criteria for the clothes she wears to work – “I wear something that I can interview people in a slum and attend a cocktail party in the evening”. Another, who covers news and politics said that due to the nature and unpredictability of her work, she has to dress casual and in clothes she can move around easily and also travel in at any given time. She firmly believes that attire makes a very small difference and that what is important is how you carry yourself and approach your work that contributes to the impression that you make.

However, most journalists believe that clothes do make a big difference and that while their clothes are more casual compared to those in the corporate sector, they dress in a way that is appropriate to the places they go to and the people they speak to. Most radio journalists interviewed stated that they opt for slightly more formal clothes as they sometimes have to go for functions and press conferences.

A feminine portrayal in this line of work is a barrier for some while for others it does not make a difference. A few journalists said that they find it easier to get their work done if they are wearing pants rather than wearing a dress or a skirt, as sometimes they find that their attire can distract the people they meet. However most journalists disagree with this as they say that they wear dresses, skirts, shalwars and sari – whatever that they are comfortable in and consider appropriate - and have never found a feminine appearance to be a barrier to their work. This view is also shared by those who have covered news, parliament and politics beats for many years.

This chapter on Challenges in the media industry looks at the issues faced by females such as their difficulties in managing the multiple roles prescribed to them and how they overcome them and various types of discrimination and harassment as well. Whilst acknowledging that these are not issues unique to females in the media industry alone, it was interesting to find out if these issues are prevalent in a different way or in different degrees, given the somewhat unconventional nature of a female journalist's job. We would like to emphasise that the findings cannot be generalised to the media industry and that this section represents the experiences and perspectives of those interviewed.

### Multiple roles

The ability of each individual to manage their multiple roles as career woman, daughter, wife and mother is largely dependent on the individual themselves and how they distribute their work and manage all that they have to do. Support from their family is also extremely important. These are the two key points mentioned by almost all the journalists when asked about the impact of traditional structures on their work and how they cope with them as females.

For the journalists who work in radio, this is not a problem as they work a certain number of hours a day and have a fixed schedule. While some of them do work over the weekend, they do not feel that their work comes in the way of family life.

Managing their duties is sometimes a bit difficult for journalists who work at newspapers due to their erratic and long working hours. However, they say that they have never felt that the multiple roles that they have to play have ever been a barrier to their work or stopped them from progressing in their career. Those who have been in the field for many years say that over the years, with more females entering the work force, it has gotten much easier to handle all the work as the level of support from those around them has also increased. For some travelling out of Colombo is not always easy as they have many responsibilities at home but they say that they manage somehow.

Those who are married praised their husbands and said that their support has been one of the main driving forces behind their success at work. They openly admit that without open minded and supportive husbands, journalism is a difficult field to continue to be in. However, a senior journalist

working at a Sinhala newspaper said that once a person is married or has children it is sometimes difficult to continue working as a journalist as their husbands prefer their wives to have more conventional jobs or stay at home. The acceptance of this kind of work in Sri Lankan society is still low is what she feels.

Journalists who are mothers admitted that there have been times where they have felt guilty about whether they are neglecting their children or whether they have been unfair by them. However, they said that their children know the importance of their work as well as the nature of it and therefore they understand. One senior journalist said that by having a flexible schedule and working from home a few days of the week enables her to spend time with her children and fulfil her duties as a mother.

A senior journalist who joined the industry straight after school and has been working as a journalist in the print media for more than 20 years said that after she had her first child, she stopped working and stayed at home. She subsequently had another baby and ended up taking off six years from journalism so that she could be at home with her children. After six years she came back to her old job and has continued since. However, she says that this is not always the case and that she had quite a few colleagues who stopped working completely after they got married or had children.

Depending on whether they work at daily or weekly newspaper, and also depending on their designation, print journalists have particular days off every week which makes it easy for them to spend time with their families. An Editor of one newspaper said that while there are three days of the week that she simply cannot devote any time to anything outside of the newspaper, her off days help her balance this schedule and enables her to dedicate her time only for her family and household work.

“I have never held myself back at any point in my career but I made a personal decision not to progress beyond this (current position) because I think it will take away more time from my family,” said a journalist who is a mother of two and been in print media for more than thirty years. She is now a Deputy Editor of a mainstream English newspaper and doesn’t see this choice as a restriction of any sort and said that this is the position that she aspired to reach and now that she has achieved it, she is content with staying on this position. This sort of decision was mentioned by even those who are not married or have children, that while none of them see it as a restriction, there will be a point in their careers where they will make a conscious decision to not go beyond a certain position so that they can continue to balance life at work and at home.

## Gender discrimination and harassment

Overall, the female journalists interviewed say that they have had a positive experience throughout their career at the institutions they are working in or worked at previously. None have felt that they were discriminated against or had an assignment or promotion held back from them due to their gender. Many journalists spoke extremely positively about the male heads that they work under or have worked under previously and believes that they have received a lot of encouragement and support from them over the years.

With regard to discrimination while at work, some journalists said that sometimes it is a bit difficult to gather information or cover an incident/ event at a public place where there are mostly males as they don't tend to take females very seriously or have issues in giving information to them. Two journalists held opposite views about whether being a female helps or is problem while in a public forum, such as a press conference. One said that in her experience, female journalists tend to get passed over or ignored at press conferences during the question and answer sessions while the other said that her experience is that female journalists have a better chance of getting chosen to ask questions. Her opinion is that as there are not too many female journalists at press conferences covering fields like politics and therefore they tend to stand out, which in her opinion is an advantage.

When asked about harassment at their workplaces and in the line of their work, some of the journalists explained that they have experienced situations where they have been intimidated by men or faced situations where men have tried to take an upper hand in matters.

A few journalists mentioned that when they go out on work, they have faced situations where men try to intimidate them or try to act authoritative when they are asked for information. Most of the time, these have been men who hold fairly high positions in their line of work. They had handled it by not allowing the men to have their way and knowing when to end the discussion before it gets out of hand. A journalist who handles news and politics said that in Sri Lanka, it is very common that men pass remarks and comments at women and it is best to ignore them while working. When it comes to male colleagues at their institution who are more assertive, the experience of one radio journalist has been that sometimes it is better to let to step back but there have been instances where she has stepped up and made her position strongly felt.

A senior journalist who has been in the print media for 14 years covering economic and political news believes that in this field, one must be calm and handle each situation carefully. She related one particular incident where she was asked to come to the office of a Chairman, about whose Corporation she had written an article about. When she walked into his office there had been two other directors present and as soon as she had sat down the Chairman had started yelling at her, questioning her audacity to write an article about his company in negative light and that she had

reported about things that were in fact not true. She had calmly listened to him and said that as a public official he is answerable to the people and that if he could show her documents and records to prove that what she had written about was false, she would retract her article. This had immediately changed the tone of the discussion and she had ended the meeting, thanked him and walked out. She believes that by calmly handling the situation she didn't allow herself to be pushed around and therefore, the Chairman who thought he could intimidate her had immediately backed down. She further went on to say that Sri Lanka is still very much a patriarchal society and when men feel intimidated by a woman they react in this manner and therefore it is important that a woman knows how to handle herself in such situations.

When asked for their opinions specifically regarding harassment of a sexual nature, none of the journalists interviewed said that they have personally faced such issues. However, almost every journalist interviewed was of the opinion that sexual harassment is prevalent in the industry. They say that they had heard of instances where female journalists had been sexually harassed, either by male colleagues or by men they had met while on work.

Some of them related a few incidents that they have heard of or knew had happened to some female journalist known to them. Except for at two media institutions where the interviews took place, the incidents related by those interviewed are said to have taken place at media institutions that were not their own.

A senior journalist of a mainstream English newspaper said that sexual harassment was prevalent at their newspaper but that no one speaks out about it. Whilst not elaborating on the issues, she said that "No one makes a big fuss as it is difficult to work here afterwards. There are enough and more incidents but the most that will happen is that the Editor will be notified". She continued to say that in her capacity as one of the senior female staff members there, she advises the young female journalists on how to handle these situations.

An Editor of another mainstream English newspaper said that while she has never personally faced sexual harassment, as the Editor she has had to deal with her staff on matters relating to sexual harassment, which she says were always unpleasant experiences. She strongly believes that every media institution should have a unit within the organisation to handle complaints from staff and take stern action against the perpetrators.

On the whole the female journalists interviewed are content with their careers as journalists. Most of those interviewed say that they have always aspired to be a journalist. Even those who are relatively new to the industry with less than 3 years of experience believe that this is their career for life. A few journalists working in Sinhala and Tamil radio stations who say that this is not their life time career say that it is because they are working while they finish their studies or because they hope to join the government sector at some point.

Two journalists who have been working at a Sinhala weekly newspaper for less than a year said that their families were not very keen about them continuing to work as journalists. They feel that as they are unmarried and young, the long hours and travel out of Colombo is not always seen in a good light in Sri Lankan society, therefore they do not see themselves being able to continue working as journalists for very long.

For most print journalists, they aspire to become desk heads or even Editors and two said that they are open to the idea of even joining the management one day. The senior journalists plan to continue their work for as long as they can as most of them are in positions that they have always aspired to be in.

One senior journalist who does not wish to become a desk head or the Editor feels that she will have to spend more time doing “desk work” in the event, and would therefore, rather continue reporting and writing as she enjoys being a journalist.

What was interesting about the female journalists interviewed was that journalism was the first job of every journalist interviewed, save for one. Therefore the fact that most intend to stay in the media industry and not change careers is a positive reflection of the media industry in Sri Lanka indeed.

# ANNEX



## Guidelines for in depth interviews

### Respondent's Profile

Organization	
Designation	
Marital status	
Age	

*\*information of individual's will not be divulged in the report. If a specific incident/ particular information is included, a pseudonym will be used.*

#### **1. Background of the journalist**

- a) What are your educational/ professional qualifications?
- b) Why you joined this particular media organization?
- c) How long have you been a journalist?
- d) Main motives behind becoming a journalist?
- e) What areas of news do you cover?
- f) Is it a personal decision to work in that specific area?

#### **2. Internal structures within which she works – organization**

- a) Tell me about allocations of assignments for journalists.
- b) What are the working hours like?
- c) Tell me about the pay for all the journalists?
- d) What sort of dress code do you follow for work?

#### **3. External structure – media industry**

- a) Are there a lot of women working in the media industry in Sri Lanka?
- b) Do you feel there is a representative amount at the managerial/ decision making level?
- c) What are your thoughts of women as heads of the media industry?

#### **4. Issues**

- a) How you experienced any form of gender discrimination or sexual harassment?
- b) Do you feel that you have restrictions such as family/ motherhood that come in the way of your work?
- c) Women vs women – are women a barrier to women in career progress/ work life?

#### **5. Aspirations for the future/ her career**

- a) Do you want to go up to a managerial/ decision making level?
- b) Do you want to be a journalist for life or is this something that you are engaging for a few years?



The Sri Lanka Press Institute was established by the Newspaper Society of Sri Lanka, the Editors Guild of Sri Lanka, the Free Media Movement, and the Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association, to provide direction and leadership in media related activities. This includes the Press Complaints Commission of Sri Lanka, which encourages self-regulation and accountability and provides readers the right to challenge or correct reporting, while the Sri Lanka College of Journalism is the training arm focusing on skills development for the journalistic profession. Overall, the mandate of the Sri Lanka Press Institute is to create a professional body of journalists who are responsible and accountable to the public.

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Social Indicator (SI) is an independent social research organisation, which conducts polls on socio-economic and political issues. Operating under the Board of Directors of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), SI was established in September 1999, and filled a longstanding vacuum for a permanent, professional and independent polling facility in Sri Lanka on social and political issues.

Polling is an instrument of empowerment, a means by which the silent majority of the public can express their opinions on issues affecting them. Our mission is to conduct surveys on key social issues, thereby providing a means through



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