



Women's Equality Party Conference

26 November 2022

Title: **Regressive, reductive and misrepresentative media depictions of women**

Proposed by: **Monika Radojevic**

Proposer: **Monika Radojevic**

Signatories:

Chris Paouros

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Charlotte Murphy

Stacy Hart

Aimee Williams-Maynard

Abi Fellows

Eileen Scholes

Leila Fazal

Claire Seymour

Helena Moody

Dr Hannah Barham-Brown

Type of motion: **Policy motion**

Motion text:

- 1 The Women's Equality Party Conference 2022 reaffirms the party's core objectives of equal
 - 2 representation *by* and *in* the media and notes that the British media is backsliding on both counts
 - 3 with regressive and reductive coverage and losses in diversity in newsrooms and boardrooms.
 - 4 Conference also recognises the wider context of economic and political pressure brought to bear on
 - 5 the BBC and other news media. The party calls on editors, producers and all others in positions to
 - 6 influence commissioning decisions in news and media to:
- 7 • Have courage, speak truth to power and challenge stereotypes rather than reinforcing them.
 - 8 • Rigorously evaluate gatekeeping and commissioning processes and make any changes
 - 9 necessary to ensure a wider range of stories is told—and told better.
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- 10 • Stop inviting feminists to debate whether feminism has gone too far (it hasn't) or treating
11 debates about equality as prize fights. This approach positions urgent issues of interest to
12 everyone as sideshows.
 - 13 • Reject the false balance that insists fundamental rights, such as reproductive rights, are up for
14 debate.
 - 15 • Recognise that programmes and coverage with line ups which don't reflect the experiences of
16 the population, fail the population.
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Motion rationale:

17 Public opinion, politics and policy, our culture, our future—all are shaped by the media and that means
18 by those who decide which stories are told, how they are told and by whom.

19 Women can never achieve equality while misrepresented and underrepresented by the media. After
20 some progress on this front, gains are being eroded and new fronts opened, both because of the so-
21 called War on Woke which seeks to undermine equalities guaranteed by law and because newsrooms
22 are contracting, often losing such limited diversity they previously had achieved.

23 In 2020, 75% of front-page stories across all major national daily newspapers (from the *Daily Express*
24 to the *Times* and *Sunday Times* to the *Guardian*) were written by men.¹ Women of colour are
25 especially poorly represented across all forms of media. Research from *Women in Journalism* has
26 found only 12% of reporters are from a Black or minority ethnic background on mainstream
27 broadcasts², and that in an analysis of 723 prime time radio reporter appearances, only four were
28 Black women³.

29 Women are more likely to work in high-status professions and to have degrees and further degrees
30 than their male counterparts. Nevertheless, female spokespeople are outnumbered 5-1 as expert
31 commentators in the media⁴, or often requested to speak on siloed and trivialised aspects of women's
32 rights that undermine the feminist fight for equality.

33 The lack of meaningful representation, as well as the deliberate and harmful misrepresentation of
34 women contributes to the regressive portrayals of women in the public eye. They are pitted against
35 each other, anatomised, found wanting. In turn, cynical and dismissive attitudes towards gender
36 equality are encouraged and rewarded, undermining the societal changes that are so urgently needed,

¹ Source: [In an increasingly diverse world, why are British newspapers still so white?](#), The Guardian, 2020 and
[Seen not heard: how women make front page news](#), *Women in Journalism*, 2012

² Source: [New Research By WiJ Reveals Shocking Lack Of Media Diversity Across Newspapers, Radio &
Television](#), *Women in Journalism*, 2020

³ Source: [New Research By WiJ Reveals Shocking Lack Of Media Diversity Across Newspapers, Radio &
Television](#), *Women in Journalism*, 2020

⁴ Source: [The Gender News Gap: The Impact of Inequality in Journalism and Media](#), Man Bites Dog, 2021

37 not only to advance women's rights, but to respond to the multiple crises plaguing the country that
38 impact women in gendered ways.

39 Our Equality in the Media Objective will be strengthened by noting the shifts in the way the War on
40 Woke has taken the (mis)representation of women to a new level, rebranding and reopening debates
41 on battlegrounds already hard-fought over, and acknowledging the impact this has had and will
42 continue to have on the feminist fight for equality.
