

Is there a lack of diversity within the media industry?

The media industry is an outlet that communicates information, data and entertainment. Journalism is a vital part of the media and plays a key role in gathering and delivering information to the public, through the news, writing, broadcasting and essentially any media platform. In order for this to be wholly effective, it is argued that journalists and the media should be diverse and representative of all in society and one demographic should not dominate the industry. If the media is diverse it would include proportionate numbers of: journalists from different ethnic backgrounds, a close to equal amount of female to male ratio, equal chances to women being able to access management roles and inclusion of those with a disability. However, it does not. Throughout this essay, it will be argued and evidenced that despite numerous callings to diversify the industry more, there has not been effective and long-lasting change, therefore showing there is predominantly a lack of diversity.

The reality of diversity in the media is not the best. Nonetheless, starting on a more positive note, those with a disability entering the industry do not have to worry as much. Evidence shows that there is not a significant problem with disabled people entering or staying in the industry. According to National data the amount of working Journalists with a disability is 13%. This shows it is roughly similar to that of the UK workforce as a whole with it being 14 percent.

Similarly, the proportion of women to male journalists working in the industry is relatively equal. Analysis from Office for National Statistics suggested the proportion of women journalists is 48% in comparison to 52% of men. Although not quite equal, it is said to be getting better, creating a more diverse workforce. The National Council for Training Journalists (NCTJ) suggested that distribution of jobs did not have any apparent difference, no matter of your gender.

Others would argue, although on the forefront of it women and men in the media are near equal, women are still underrepresented in senior roles. According to the Changing Media summit 65% of those who have entered Journalism in the last three years are women, who are continuously entering the field in larger numbers compared to men. However, they are still clustered in junior roles in large numbers and struggle to progress further and as fast and easy as their male counterparts. This highlights the lack of diversity in the media because those at the top of the industry are predominantly male, with more power and a bigger salary. Adopting a higher role allows more freedom and decision making in the industry. This intern can have an effect of unconscious bias to take place when allowing and not allowing certain stories to run and ideas to explore. As a consequence of women journalists stuck in lower roles, over half of them are on incomes of £2,400 or less compared to only a third of men, according to City University's research. Numerous journalists have raised this issue and gone to court to receive the correct and equal pay as their male co-workers. An example being presenter Samira Ahmed who did a similar job as a host, as did another male employer however she received notably less than he did. She won the employment tribunal after the BBC was not able to prove the pay gap was not because of her gender according to BBC journalist. This highlights the media lacks diversity because of the battle's women must go through in order to be treated as equal. If the newsroom were diverse, more women would be in higher roles giving more chance of them overseeing that discrimination on a gender basis does not happen as it could also affect them.

British Journalism is made up of 94% being white and 55% male, while only 0.2% are black and 2.5% are Asian, according to the NCTJ. This once again shows insufficient diversity in the media as there is hardly any ethnic minorities in the industry. This has been highly noticed and fifty black and ethnic minority working Journalists have accused newsrooms of not improving diversity, according to Press Gazette. It is acknowledged that since the peak of the Black Lives Matter movement this year, many media outlets have announced to invest in diversity funds in order to improve the problem. For example, the BBC commits "to increase diversity by investing £100m of its TV budget over a three-year period to produce diverse and inclusive content" (BBC, 2020). Some may say this shows steps in the right direction and with this in place it will bridge the gap between the proportion of white and BAME journalists. Traineeships and internships for those who in the BAME category have been significantly highlighted and students have been encouraged to take part in. However, some argue that we should not celebrate these schemes and instead question "why have they failed to recruit a diverse work force" (Begum, 2020). This feeling towards these schemes is championed by many and shows a problem that not only is there a lack of diversity in the media, but the issue goes way deeper than recruiting a handful of ethnic minorities for work placements each year as that still does not fix the reality and deep rooted issue.

Those who are black, or Afro-Caribbean and female are even more underrepresented in the media. Research taken out by the Women in Journalism organisation, found out that "Out of a total of 723 radio reporter appearances, just 4 were by Black women" (Darrah, 2020). The lack of black appearances on the radio or in the media as a whole could be a result of the 'colour blind' approach. This approach fails to recognise the challenges black and ethnic minorities face in society which in turn effects them more than their non BAME counterparts. Those in decision making bodies in the media should be governed by using the principle of equity rather than equality in order to diversify the industry more.

Over the years, Journalism has gone from a trade into an academic subject. As a result of this, having a degree is requested of many jobs and "having a degree is a definite advantage" (Baker, 2012). City University survey shows that over three thirds of UK journalists now have a bachelor's degree. This becomes a profound issue in relation to diversity in the media, as lower socio-economic groups are less likely to go to university and come out with a degree. "The university entry rate for men receiving free school meals in white ethnic groups is 9%" (UCAS, 2015: 14). Whereas it is 31 percent for all 18-year olds in England (UCAS, 15:11). Therefore, many workers in the media are those who can access university, and they are usually white, and in middle and higher socio-economic status'. Additional research from The Sutton Trust four years ago shows the majority of leading editors and leading print journalists attended private schools. Those of a lower social class are therefore not present and therefore are underrepresented. Many would argue that the media has the ability to frame narratives of what people believe and think. With the industry being dominated by one group, it is hard for the opposite community to connect and resonate with them as there is a significant disproportion of people from their social economic class representing them and leading the way for next generations.

In conclusion, although there is constant talk about how Journalism is changing and newspapers, corporations and media outlets are putting in more legislation and funding for diversity to increase, the reality is that the media is overly white. Conversation and talks have been happening for over several years and some would say it seems unauthentic and forced that now since the BLM movement, organisations are recruiting more diverse workers. This is underpinned by the argument that they have only taken certain steps in order to look inclusive rather than actually wanting to be

and “whatever diversity you have is just window dressing” (Reynolds, 2020). The question is raised that if the media wanted to be more diverse it would be by now after so long of uproar, but it still is not and although it may be a process, how long do ethnic minorities and females have to wait until being on the same pedestal or given the same opportunities as their white and male counterparts?