

INTRODUCTION and EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Women's visible leadership is central to achieving gender equality

Today, news media in Canada continue to privilege the experiences and analyses of men over women at a three-to-one ratio. This failure to reflect women's realities in public conversations greatly undermines women's participation and leadership in science and technology, on boards of directors, in electoral politics, and elsewhere.

And with increasing political polarization and the rise of disinformation campaigns threatening our democracy, it's crucial to share evidence-based knowledge about complex issues that allow citizens to understand threats to their interests and well-being. This simply cannot be achieved without equal gender representation in media.

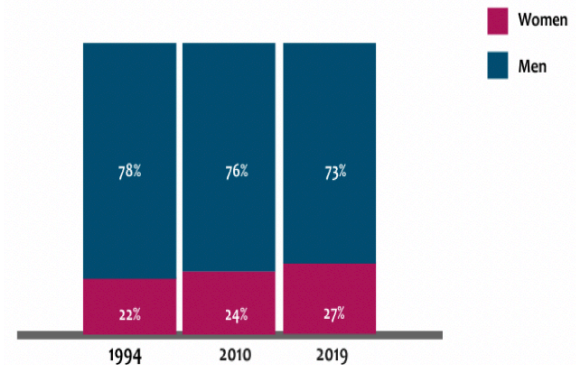
Research makes clear that including women's perspectives in decision-making at senior levels enhances organizations' profitability, accountability and ability to innovate. As long as women's voices are missing from Canadian news coverage, our capacity to identify solutions to issues that affect them more or differently will be compromised. This is fundamentally undemocratic and undermines Canada's competitiveness.

INFORMED OPINIONS is the only national charitable organization dedicated to advancing the representation of women in media, an arena which has the power to affect everything else. Incremental change in the representation of women on boards and in politics, despite significant investments, means that changing the course of gender parity in Canada requires a new approach.

Over the next three years, Informed Opinions will invest \$750,000 in bold research and cross-sector partnerships to:

- Create and Leverage a **Data for Equality Network** to promote accountability on gender parity
- Establish the **Informed Opinions Institute** to continue amplifying women's voices
- Challenge Canadian news media to **achieve a 50:50 gender balance** by tracking their sources

Who's Quoted in Canadian News Media?



The absence of women's experience-informed perspectives has profound implications for Canada's ability to identify and implement effective policy solutions for many of our most intractable social, economic and environmental challenges.

WHO WE ARE:

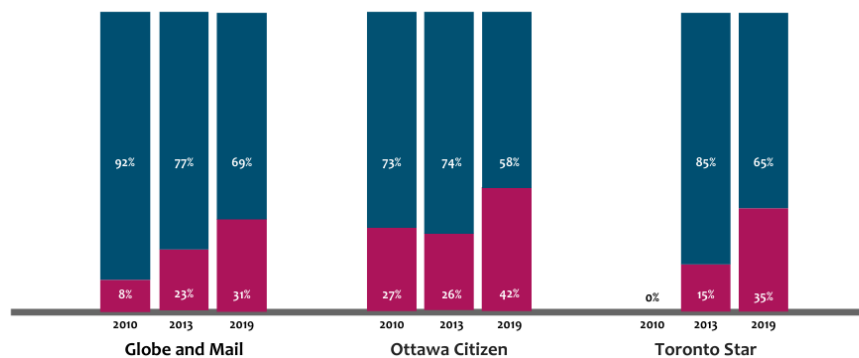
Informed Opinions is an equality-seeking non-profit that has focused its research, education and advocacy efforts on amplifying women's voices for a more democratic Canada. We train and motivate smart women to speak up, make them easier for journalists to find, and motivate the news media to better reflect the diverse audiences they serve.

WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED

→ Partnering with dozens of universities, nonprofits and corporations, we've inspired more than 3,500 expert women to amplify their voices through media, creating a measurable increase in women's presence on influential op ed pages and news sites.

Comparison of Female vs Male Op Ed Contributors

Snapshot monitoring in 2010, 2013 and 2019



→ We've built an online database of diverse and qualified sources able to make it impossible for journalists to say they couldn't find a qualified woman. Our experts, speaking in both official languages (1100+ English, 600+ French) have shared their insights on everything from fin-tech, bioethics and climate change to artificial intelligence, home care and ocean conservation.



Juliet Daniel
McMaster University



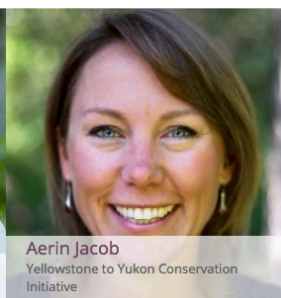
Dyhia Belhabib
Ecotrust Canada



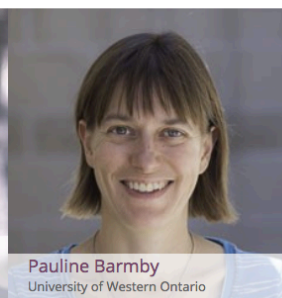
Stella Lee
Paradox Learning Inc.



Teara Fraser
Raven Institute



Aerin Jacob
Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation
Initiative



Pauline Barmby
University of Western Ontario

We're fielding approximately 150 interview requests each month, with queries tripling over the past year.

To build on this momentum, we need to expand revenues to ensure that both databases remain up-to-date, free to both experts and newsrooms, and top of mind among journalists on deadline who are otherwise likely to default to the overwhelmingly white, male sources they have relied on in the past.

→ Working with a diverse team of scientists at Simon Fraser University, we've built the Gender Gap Tracker, a publicly visible, online, data-for-good analytics tool that measures in real time the ratio of male to female experts being quoted in Canada's most influential news media.

The Gender Gap Tracker has received thousands of visitors and generated media coverage of more than 21 million views in its first few months.

In the year since we began gathering data and reminding journalists that we're publicly monitoring their performance, the ratio of women's voices has increased from 27% to 28.3%. For context, in the 26 years between 1993 and 2019, we gained approximately 5%.

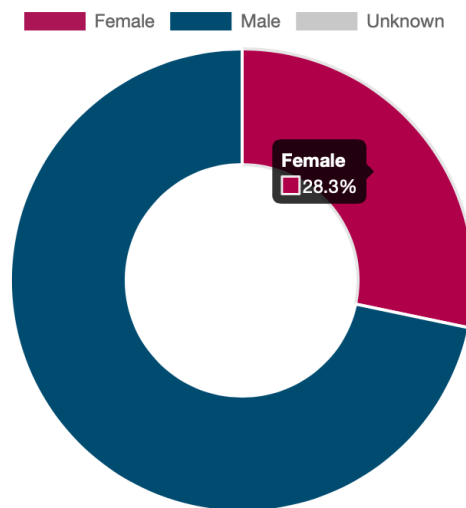
While many gains have been made, there remains so much more to do.

A recent McKinsey report finds that progress on [Advancing Women's Equality in Canada](#) has largely stalled over the past 20 years, and based on the current pace of change, achieving gender parity on indicators such as the wage gap, political representation and entrepreneurship, is likely to take between 29 and 180 years.

Viewing this incremental advancement as unacceptable, Informed Opinions has designated the next decade the **"Transformational 20s."**

We urgently need to leverage the unique cultural moment in which we're living. The #MeToo movement has sensitized citizens to the democratic necessity of including diverse women's voices in decision-making of all kinds. Just as many Canadians now recognize that all-male panels fail to ensure a rich and nuanced debate, they also expect media coverage more broadly to reflect diverse women's perspectives.

Aggregate ratio of male and female sources



In the past 10 years, Informed Opinions has successfully augmented government funding with donations, fee-for-service revenues and cross-sector partnerships to implement strategic solutions.

Now we're poised to build on this foundation and scale up our work increasing women's visibility to normalize our leadership and deliver systemic change.

WE BELIEVE IT IS ESSENTIAL TO ACT NOW TO:

1. Create and Leverage a Data for Equality Network to Promote Accountability on Gender Equity

Informed Opinions will work towards creating a pre-eminent national data equality network, bringing together a unique coalition to collaborate for change. We will leverage partnerships with aligned universities specializing in data science, non-profits advocating for gender equality, and private companies that have demonstrated engagement and leadership in advancing women. Bringing evidence-based analytics and impact metrics on gender inequality across sectors in Canada will pave the way towards the modernisation of archaic and unfair norms. We will:

- Mine research data being collected to measure metrics that influence gender equity (including, for example, the attention being paid to issues that disproportionately affect women like accessible childcare, affordable housing, wage parity, advancement of women in business, gender-based violence, reproductive health).
- Create an annual report card and corresponding event(s) and data + story communication campaigns to focus attention on the real-life consequences of women's voices being under-represented – in the media and elsewhere.
- Increase the capacity of the Gender Gap Tracker to enhance and deepen the data analysis beyond mere representation, asking, for example: if women are still defined more frequently in terms of their appearance and/or relationships to men; how experts are identified as being authorities; which areas of the news feature the most and fewest female experts; and what, if any, relationship exists between authors and the sources quoted;
- Translate the Gender Gap Tracker to monitor Canada's Francophone media; and
- Implement community engagement efforts to amplify the messages “what gets measured gets done” and “reflect reality”, encouraging citizens to actively advocate within their workplaces and communities for equality data tracking, concrete targets and increased accountability.

2. Establish the Informed Opinions Institute to Continue Expanding our Reach and Impact

In an age of diminishing newsrooms and a 24-hour news cycle, journalists are more time strapped than ever. At the same time, the rise of social media and women's vulnerability to being trolled reinforces and perpetuates the historical dominance of male sources. In this context, continuing to support women to embrace their agency and leadership opportunities and become more strategic and effective in expanding their influence through media channels is paramount.

- Informed Opinions will expand its reach and relevancy, developing a cost-efficient model of growth and training other facilitators to supplement and expand its collaboration with research institutions across Canada to continue amplifying expert women's voices.
- Additionally, Informed Opinions must ramp up the online support available to women. Creating online versions of the organization's existing, high-demand knowledge translation programming, as well as supplemental videos and educational materials, will support the increasing numbers of women – including those living in remote areas – eager to share their knowledge.
- Enhance media engagement capacity within the Canadian gender equality eco-system, building on relationships cultivated through Data for Equality Network (described above) to increase the ability of gender equality advocates and partners to amplify their voices on related issues.

3. Challenge Canadian News Media to Achieve a 50:50 Gender Balance

Corporations and governments alike have invested in efforts aimed at advancing equality for women. Many of these have been met with systemic resistance. But in the media realm, forward-thinking news organizations outside Canada have demonstrated that gender parity in sources is achievable. Individual journalists and their employers (including [the BBC](#), [Bloomberg News](#), [The Atlantic](#)) that track their efforts have proven this. Canadian media currently lag behind our country's progressive reputation; encouraging them to better reflect their full potential audience is good for women, journalism and democracy.

- Informed Opinions will collaborate with leading Canadian news media organizations to adapt BBC's successful [50:50 Challenge to encourage](#) Canadian journalists to track their sources in the spirit of "what gets measured gets done", in pursuit of achieving both gender parity and diversity more broadly.
- Informed Opinions will recruit journalist champions who are already committed to diversifying their sources to launch challenges within their newsrooms; visit newsrooms and journalism schools across Canada (in person and virtually) to share relevant research, incentives and tools, including database and tracking spreadsheet, to make achieving greater diversity easier; and enrich the Gender Gap Tracker data analysis and the value of the database of experts with insights gleaned from newsroom partners' research and learnings.

THE BIG PICTURE

Gains made in the media arena will be both visible and measurable and can therefore be leveraged to increase women's participation, leadership opportunities and profile elsewhere.

Amplifying the voices of qualified women with expertise across disciplines makes it easier for women to see themselves as leaders, and for political parties to identify potential candidates among the media-engaged and for corporations to promote women in their company.

Our research finds that the issues in this word cloud receive less attention when women's voices are missing.

Incorporating women's insights into public discourse will significantly enhance Canada's ability to identify and implement effective policy solutions for many of our most intractable social, economic and environmental challenges.

The Transformational 20s are about breaking down systemic barriers and making it difficult for organizations of all kinds to claim that women capable of serving and providing insight do not exist.



We hope you will join us on this journey.

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