



## Women in Israeli journalism: forwards and backwards

Einat Lachover & Dafna Lemish

To cite this article: Einat Lachover & Dafna Lemish (2018): Women in Israeli journalism: forwards and backwards, *Israel Affairs*, DOI: [10.1080/13537121.2018.1454016](https://doi.org/10.1080/13537121.2018.1454016)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537121.2018.1454016>



Published online: 04 Apr 2018.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



## Women in Israeli journalism: forwards and backwards

Einat Lachover<sup>a,b†</sup>  and Dafna Lemish<sup>a,b</sup> 

<sup>a</sup>Sapir Academic College, Sderot, Israel; <sup>b</sup>Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL, USA

### ABSTRACT

This article presents findings from investigations of acclaimed gender employment changes in Israeli journalism, focusing on two main questions: Is the feminisation process of Israeli journalism continuing? Is it improving women's employment and occupational status? Data were gathered from two international surveys that included Israel. The study found that while women are integrated in a variety of news areas, such as news presentation, and play a significant role in management, their roles and salaries are unequal to men. These findings shed light on gender (in)equality and identify some of the mechanisms that exclude Israeli women from the labour market.

**KEYWORDS** Israel; women journalists; feminisation; labor market; journalism profession; news presenters; gender inequality

The past three decades have been characterised by dramatic labour market developments, including feminisation – the mass entry of women to exclusively male domains. However, according to Sharon Bolton and Daniel Muzio, far from being evidence of equality, feminisation of professions is a fluid, ongoing process that supports male interests.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, often it results in declines in the status of the profession and conditions of employment, such as salary and benefits. A case in point is the feminisation of the teaching profession in Israel. While teaching was an elitist male occupation during pre-state and early period of the State of Israel, its status declined rapidly with the intense process of feminisation. Currently, women comprise 90% of elementary school teachers and 76% of high school teachers. Public discourse related to teachers and teaching is disrespectful, as are remunerations for employment in educational professions.<sup>2</sup> Feminisation of medicine in Israel is a similar example. A 2013 study found that women comprised 42% of physicians under the age of 65, and 46% under 45 years of age. However, in contrast to changes in the teaching profession, women are poorly represented at all levels of management positions in medicine.<sup>3</sup> The conclusion emerging is that while teaching is perceived, to large degree, as an extension from the private to the public sector

**CONTACT** Einat Lachover  einatl@mail.sapir.ac.il

<sup>†</sup>Communication Department, Sapir Academic College, D.N. Hof Ashkelon, 79165, Israel

of traditional female responsibilities of caring for the young, other professions such as medicine and journalism remain male strongholds.

Empirical data demonstrate that Israeli women have been entering the previously male dominated profession of journalism.<sup>4</sup> However, the aim of this article is to investigate the nature of this process, and to study its occupational and professional implications. Accordingly, we sought to answer two main research questions: Is the process of feminisation of the journalism profession in Israel continuing? Is the process bringing with it, simultaneously, improvements in the employment and occupational status of women in journalism in Israel?

These questions are important because they may shed light on a more complicated nature of gender (in)equality in Israel than ascribed from quantitative data, and reveal mechanisms that include, or exclude, Israeli women from the labour market and from social resources more generally.

## The feminisation of Israeli journalism

In the past, journalism in Israel was viewed as a male profession. The number of women involved in print or broadcast journalism during the first decade of the Israeli state was negligible. In 1955, only a few women (7%) were employed by six daily newspapers: *Yediot Ahronot*; *Maariv*; *Haaretz*; *Davar*; *Al-Hamishmar*; and *Jerusalem Post*. In the two subsequent decades, the percentage of women in print and broadcast media remained low: 10.8% in 1966 and 12.1% in 1976.<sup>5</sup>

In 1994, Yehiel Limor and Dan Caspi published an article in Hebrew entitled 'The feminization of Israeli journalism.'<sup>6</sup> While not the first article to deal with female journalists in Israel,<sup>7</sup> this was the first article that demonstrated systematic changes in the gender composition of the journalism profession in Israel. The authors claimed that journalism in Israel underwent a process of feminisation during the second part of the 1970s, including accelerated entrance of women that continued into the 1980s. In their 1996 update, they reported that women represented 37% of journalists in comparison to 16.2% in the early 1980s.<sup>8</sup> Limor and Caspi interpreted the process of feminisation in journalism as part of the growing entry of women into the labour market after the October 1973 War that resulted in feminisation of other professions as well,<sup>9</sup> and projected that continuation of this trend might mean that journalism would become a solidly female profession.<sup>10</sup> This article marked a turning point in development of scholarly discourse related to the topic of women journalists in Israel.

Limor and Caspi explained that the gender shift in journalism employment occurred with accelerated expansion of the news industry in Israel and the decline in prestige of journalism due to economic as well as social changes, most notably the decline in average journalist's salary and introduction of individualised employment contracts. As a result, fewer men were looking to join or remain in the profession. At the same time, more women were attracted

to the profession for three main reasons. First, changes in nature of journalism, including growing flexibility of work schedules, allowed for adaptation to women's needs, largely for child care. Second, journalism now allowed 'softer' writing styles and inclusion of human-interest stories, perceived as more fitting for women's skills and preferences. Third, in order to expand readership, newspapers added special topical sections and supplements that targeted women, and women journalists were perceived by editors to be better suited for such 'feminine' contents.<sup>11</sup>

Limor and Caspi also argued that the shift in gender employment in Israeli journalism raised concerns and created anxiety – especially among men – due to possible implications for the erosion of the profession's social status.<sup>12</sup> The authors' findings and claims can be explained by the model of feminisation in the labour market offered by Barbara Reskin and Patricia Ross. According to their model, employers reverse their gender preference for employees from preference for men to women either because of a shortage of male employees in the profession or out of a specific desire to employ women. However, interestingly, Reskin and Ross's model reverses the argument: feminisation of a profession becomes possible when there is already erosion in its status. As a result, men leave it and a window of opportunity opens up for women. They explained that the consequences of women's entry in a profession already in decline is that this adds to its declining status due to offensive stereotypical attitudes towards the quality of women's labour.<sup>13</sup>

Other studies on journalists in Israel revealed a host of methodological difficulties. First, the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics does not classify a distinct occupational category of journalists. Moreover, many journalists, especially those without tenure, are not members of professional journalism unions. Therefore, there is no comprehensive, longitudinal national data source containing reliable information about journalists in Israel in general and women journalists in particular for analysis of occupational trends.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the alternative method for investigating the status of women journalists in Israel is to conduct surveys among journalists and/or through examination of their roles in the creation of journalistic products themselves.

Three surveys of journalists were conducted in Israel over the last decade for purposes of examining employment, as well as professional and ethical issues. These studies surveyed large, representative samples of 200–300 journalists in 2002, 2004 and 2008.<sup>15</sup> Less than one-third of the journalists surveyed in each of the samples were women. Notably, none of the researchers speculated about the reasons for or meanings of these findings.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast, the study reported here analysed changes in occupational status of female journalists within the general social context of gender inequality in Israel. This is particularly important, given updated gender research that contextualises female employment, and argues that the main obstacles in achieving gender equality lie in Israel's enduring patriarchal power structure.<sup>17</sup> For

example, despite trends that indicate improvement in women's education and employment rates in Israel, and progressive occupational legislative policy, in practice, women in Israel have yet to achieve employment and economic equality. This conclusion is supported by gender differentials in the labour market and extant pay gap<sup>18</sup> (e.g. women continue to work fewer hours than men, with a smaller percentage of men who work part time, 18%, compared to 35% of the women; in 2011, women earned 74% of average hourly pay of full time employees for the same or similar work).<sup>19</sup>

The 2015 Israeli Gender Index assessed gender inequality longitudinally and in a cross-section of fields, including education, labour market, segregation of professions, poverty, power, health, violence against women and family status. No significant improvement in gender inequality was found since the previous examination in 2004. These data suggest that women face obstacles in translating their higher levels of educational attainment into achievements that reduce gender gaps in the labour market and power domain. The researchers argued that the reasons for this difficulty lie in the deeply gendered structure of Israeli society.<sup>20</sup>

In the case of journalism, obstructions facing women in Israel are not necessarily salient within the profession. Rather, they are subtle and probably the result of society-wide patriarchal cultural norms internalised by both genders, as suggested by the following examples of patriarchal cultural structures in Israel. First, all personal and marital issues (e.g. birth, death, marriage and divorce) remain in the hands of religious institutions, which continue to be discriminatory towards women. Second, though military service is mandatory for both genders and continues to serve as a major track of mobility in Israeli society, women remain in a significant disadvantage to men, given the limited service roles available to them in the Israeli defence forces. Third, domestic violence remains an acute problem, as domestic violence is on the rise, according to the Women's International Zionist Organisation [WIZO].<sup>21</sup> This trend, too, illuminates the consequences of powerful patriarchy in Israel.

It is within this general patriarchal context that we examined and offer explanations regarding how, in 2016, women fare in the profession of journalism in Israel.

## **The study**

The analysis reported here employs data gathered by two international surveys in which Israel recently participated. First, the longitudinal Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), initiated in 1995, studies representations of women in media globally, as well as their visibility and voice in the world's news media. The study's survey is conducted in 'waves' every five years, and gathers employment data on women journalists and news-presenters, from print newspapers as well as radio and television news programmes, on one

**Table 1.** Research corpus – GMMP, 2015.

Newspapers	Radio	Television	Internet
<i>Yedioth Aharonoth</i>	Reshet Bet 18:00 The Voice of Israel	Channel 2	Walla!
<i>Ma'ariv</i>	Galei Zahal 17:00 Israel Defense Forces Radio	Channel 10	Ynet
<i>Haaretz</i>		Channel 1	Haaretz
<i>Israel Hayom</i>			

randomly chosen day. The most recent wave took place on 25 March 2015, with data gathered in 114 countries.<sup>22</sup>

The Israeli sample gathered data from 15 media outlets, both traditional and new, as well as the main evening radio and television news programmes with the highest ratings (see Table 1). In total, 173 news items were analysed, involving 256 journalists and news-presenters. Coding of the data was aided by a uniform coding instrument designed by the international study team and was conducted by trained and supervised communication students. Results of the study were compared, when appropriate, to the results of the previous study waves.

The second international study analysed is the *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media* conducted under the auspices of the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF). The 2010 survey collected data from news production organisations in 59 countries.<sup>23</sup> Seven news companies participated in the Israeli sample: three newspapers; three radio stations; and one television station. The data include all the journalists in these companies following a two-step data collection process. In the initial stage, executive directors completed a detailed questionnaire about various dimensions of employment in their organisations (e.g. number of men and women journalists in various roles, terms of employment, and salary such as full time, part-time and freelancing, and gender-policies). In the second stage, the first author of this article interviewed each of the directors to obtain additional information. The data set from this study includes 3,377 individuals: 1,372 women and 2,005 men. All seven companies that provided employment data declined to provide salary information, even though they were guaranteed that the data provided would be aggregated and presented anonymously in the published report.<sup>24</sup> Refusal to share this type of data is common in the Israeli context.

### **Is journalism a female profession in Israel?**

There is a tendency to think that journalism in Israel is already gender balanced, but the empirical evidence from studies reported here show a stubborn resistance to substantive change. Whereas women comprise 40% of all journalists in IWMF Israel study data,<sup>25</sup> according to GMMP 2015 data, women journalists comprised 31% of the full journalistic workforce – a decline from the 34% in the 2010 data. Both waves of GMMP data are lower than the global average of

**Table 2.** Past surveys on Israeli women journalists.

Year	Source	% Women Journalists
1996	Caspi & Limor, 1999	37.7
2002, 2004, 2008	Tsfati & Meyers, 2012	30–32.5
2005	GMMP, 2005	23
2009	GMMP, 2010	34
2015	GMMP, 2015	31
2010	IWMF, 2011	40

37% that remained stable over the last decade.<sup>26</sup> The difference between the IWMF and GMMP findings can be accounted for by the fact that the IWMF study reports on a wider variety of news roles, such as technical production, and not only on news production itself, which is the focus of our concern. Irrespective of these differences, both data sets found that women journalists remain a minority in their profession (see Table 2). This is particularly striking, given that in 2015 women made up 47% of the general Israeli labour market<sup>27</sup>.

In summary, while there were clear indications of women entering the journalism profession in Israel during the 1970s and 1980s, that tendency has changed since the 1990s: there is deceleration of the trend and the proportion of women in the profession remained quite stable. We argue that this change, too, can be explained by the Reskin and Ross model that employers changed their priorities. Overall, it appears that the journalism workforce is no longer suffering from employee shortage and, in general, employment needs began to decline. Given that the desire to employ women in previous decades was due to their unique gender skills and tendencies, there was less pressure to employ them. Notably, this is not a unique Israeli phenomenon, as employment deceleration seems to be global: 2015 GMMP data suggest that while there was a growth in the proportion of women journalists during the first decade of the monitoring project (between 1995 and 2005), this process did not grow during the second decade. In the USA, for example, this transition happened a decade earlier.<sup>28</sup>

The transition to digital journalism may open up new opportunities for women who wish to be involved in the profession and to be more in control of their employment and their messages.<sup>29</sup> For example, online news in Israel, as in many other societies, is gradually becoming the central source of news information. Israelis, in general, report a decline in print newspaper consumption and increasing dependency on online news, with 61% of young people aged 18–35 reporting use of the internet as their primary source of news.<sup>30</sup> According to Suzanne Franks, British digital journalism already created new opportunities and new forms of journalism for women. While in the past they used to leave full-time journalism and write from home as freelancers, now they can write and edit from remote locations and advance branding through social media.<sup>31</sup>

**Table 3.** Women reporters and presenters, GMMP 2005–2015.

	Israel	Global	Israel	Global	Israel	Global
	2005	2005	2010	2010	2015	2015
Television presenter	47%	57%	86%	52%	60%	57%
Radio presenter	46%	49%	34%	45%	68%	41%
Total presenters	46%	53%	44%	49%	63%	49%
Television reporter	9%	29%	21%	33%	33%	35%
Radio reporter	27%	45%	25%	37%	32%	41%
Newspaper reporter	28%	42%	36%	44%	30%	38%
Total reporters	23%	37%	34%	37%	31%	37%

Note: GMMP 2005, *who makes the news?*; GMMP 2010, *who makes the news?*; GMMP 2015, *who makes the news?*.

With the growing role of internet news worldwide,<sup>32</sup> the 2015 GMMP study collected data about the role of women in online news for the first time.<sup>33</sup> The Israel results are surprising, as the percentage of women reporting internet news in Israel is significantly lower than their role in the more traditional media (22% internet to 31% traditional), while the global trend is the opposite (42% to 37%). In contrast, the Israeli data are similar to findings of other countries in the region (Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunis and in the Caribbean).<sup>34</sup>

Given the absence of data from previous studies, it is difficult to explain this finding within the Israeli context. Yet, in line with the theory proposed by Reskin and Ross,<sup>35</sup> we surmise that the online news industry in Israel has not yet developed widely enough. If so, men may be the first to integrate within it, and in time more and more women will find employment there, too. It is also important to remember that the internet, like other communication technologies that preceded it, is perceived to be a masculine domain dominated by young start-up ‘wizards’ who may be free of caregiving and other familial responsibilities.

These findings are particular significant, given that the internet plays such an important part in re-conceptualising the roles of both news producers, as well as their audiences. On the face of it, the internet was expected to facilitate news pluralism, including employment possibilities for previously excluded professionals, including women. However, at the same time, the new technologies also create new obstacles and challenges for women.<sup>36</sup>

### Women in television newsrooms

An outstanding finding in the GMMP studies that appeared in the Israeli sample over several waves is the presence of women as news presenters in comparison to their roles as news reporters, particularly in television news. Although the higher rate of women news presenters over reporters is a global trend, it is particularly the case in Israel, as can be seen in Table 3.



**Table 4.** Television women presenters, percentage by age, GMMP, 2015.

Age	Israel	Global
12 and under	n/a	100%
13–18	n/a	82%
19–34	n/a	84%
35–49	100%	49%
50–64	42%	28%
65 or more	n/a	0%

Most notably, the high visibility of news presenters on television, which remains the dominant medium in the Israeli news sphere,<sup>37</sup> may be a contributing factor to the public and even journalists' common misperception that the news world is dominated by women.

Feminist media research proposes two theoretical explanations for this global trend. First, objectification processes of women in the media are particularly salient when they appear on the screen. Patricia Holland's argument from the late 1980s that the presence of women in a perceived masculine role serves to emphasise their femininity and therefore serve as pleasing objects for news viewers, who were mainly men<sup>38</sup>, resonates in current research.<sup>39</sup> Holland also argued that women in the media are traditionally identified with emotion, exhibition of body, sexuality and engagement in private sphere matters. Such identifiers stand in contrast to traditional news characteristics: rational language; 'talking heads'; blurring of sexuality; and attribution of value of public sphere engagement. This contrast creates tension between femininity and professionalism, and contributes especially to highlighting presenters' femininity.<sup>40</sup> In regard to the latter, we cite research by Nithila Kanagasabi, who identified ways the physical environment of the news studio intensifies dwelling on the body of the presenter and the way it is represented to the audience (e.g. multiple mirrors, closed circuit cameras, etc.).<sup>41</sup>

The results of the GMMP study reinforce this explanation, and especially the age-related characteristic, that selection of younger women emphasises their femininity. As in other places in the world, female presenters in Israeli media are younger than male colleagues:<sup>42</sup> while globally, 42% of the journalists are women among those 50–64 years of age, all the Israeli presenters are women in the 35–49 age group (Table 4). Additional support comes from the 'Yfat-Infor, Yifat Data for Business' source, where there was a gap of 14 years between the average age of women (35) and men (49) among news presenters in 2012.<sup>43</sup>

Female news presenters on Israeli television are not only younger than men, but in consonance with the dominant worldwide cultural standards of beauty,<sup>44</sup> they are Caucasian, thin, with long straight hair. A study of ratings on the basis of desired appearance published in various popular publications found that commercial media in Israel are interested in female presenters' appearance.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, a study of local public discourse, which includes comparisons of

presenters who appear on different television channels, found that there is an expectation for a standard appearance of news presenters.<sup>46</sup>

Despite their accumulated years of experience, women cease to be assigned the presenter's role as they age, as was the case for such prominent presenters at the end of the 1990s as Carmit Guy, Sari Raz and Dalya Mazor. In contrast, leading male presenters remain on the screen over extended period of time. A prime example is Haim Yavin, 'Mr Television', who served as anchor for 40 years with the leading news programme of the Israeli public broadcaster, 'Mabat La'Hadashot', since the establishment of Israeli television (1968–2008) until he retired at the age of 76. Given that women's social status depends, to a large degree, on their sexual appeal, they are expected to remain young, if not chronologically, then at least in appearance. In contrast, signs of maturation in men are perceived to promote their social status, as it is assumed they had more time to accumulate power and influence.<sup>47</sup> Similar findings of gendered ageism or 'age-sexism' of television news that results in absence of senior women journalists in the broadcast news industry were found in India.<sup>48</sup>

The second theoretical explanation for integration of women as news presenters relates to the familiar stereotype of women as caring and trustworthy. Lisbeth Van Zoonen, who analysed the situation in the Netherlands, found that women were deemed to be most appropriate for the informal presentation of human interest stories as opposed to formal, serious presentation of hard news.<sup>49</sup> An Israeli example of this phenomenon is provided by Dafna Lemish and Chava Tidhar in their case study of television presenter Orly Yaniv during the Gulf War of 1990–1. Interviews of Broadcasting Authority decision-makers revealed use of prejudicial attitudes toward women. They rationalised the exclusion of women from broadcast news during the war as being due to public need for authoritative figures during a time of crisis. In their view, Orly Yaniv was a uniquely 'soft' personality, 'compassionate' and 'motherly'. Therefore, she was 'allowed' to present news in an alternative format (e.g. conducting human interest interviews while receiving live instructions from the director in the control room about substance).<sup>50</sup>

An additional illustration of this argument is found in the rationale provided for the selection of Miki Haimovich, a veteran news presenter. The executive director of Channel 2 news, Shalom Kital, who hired her, said in an interview: 'when we put on Miki's tape, we had to admit, we just knew she was it. I understand that television is also an emotional medium.'<sup>51</sup> These illustrations reflect the common perception in society and culture that associates womanhood with motherhood and emotions. The key role of women as mothers in the Jewish-Israeli society is particularly prominent and is understood to be associated with the emphasis that Jewish tradition puts on family, Holocaust-related trauma and the ongoing Arab–Israeli conflict. Thus, women are expected to serve as 'the national womb': to bear the responsibility for childbirth and rearing, and so serve as responsible for the continuation of the Jewish people.<sup>52</sup>

**Table 5.** Stories by women reporters, by major topics\*.

Topics	2015		2010		2005	
	Israel	Global	Israel	Global	Israel	Global
Science and health	50%	43%	36%	46%	20%	38%
Economy	39%	45%	39%	35%	55%	43%
Social and legal	39%	34%	17%	39%	25%	40%
Celebrity, arts, media and sports	34%	46%	30%	27%	29%	35%
Crime and violence	33%	17%	27%	29%	15%	33%
Politics and government	31%	26%	32%	26%	21%	32%
Total	37%	31%	34%	31%	23%	31%

\*Byerly, C. M. *Global report on the status of women in the news media*. Washington: International Media Foundation, p. 52.

The presence of a professional, authoritative female figure on the main news-casts broadcast nearly every day could have significant implications for the symbolic status of women in Israel, especially since these broadcasts define and frame public discourse on current events. This is particularly important, given the exclusion of women in other realms of the traditionally male dominated public sphere; a situation that reinforces the structure and order of patriarchal society. But according to this hegemonic order, the presence of women in this realm of the public sphere is possible only if they comply with strict criteria of being young and attractive in appearance, and when they are assigned to present soft news stories. In this manner, women do ‘count’ as news presenters, but they are employed in a manner that maintains the status quo.<sup>53</sup>

### Occupational and employment status of women journalists

The GMMP 2015 study documents the existence of partial gender segregation in reporting areas: women journalists report less frequently than their male counterparts on politics, crime and violence (Table 5). Although we find a gradual increase in the percentage of women reporting these areas since 2005, this finding is largely similar to 2005 and 2010 data sets. Political and crime news are the two topics least reported by women in the GMMP global findings as well,<sup>54</sup> and this finding is consistent with 2005–2010 data. A study on Sweden and Russia identified gender as significant in journalists’ interactions with politicians, and this may explain why, globally, political news reporting has lagged behind all other topics in terms of gendered reporting.<sup>55</sup>

In contrast, coverage of the economy, science and health, traditionally perceived as masculine areas, seem less gender segregated. This may be due to their association with such ‘soft’ topics as: consumerism, in the context of economy; diet and life style well-being, in the context of science and health.

Longitudinally, findings regarding gender-based involvement in subject areas are complicated and inconsistent. This may be the result of the methodological approach of one-day snapshot data-gathering. For example, on the 2015 research day, Hollywood star and social justice activist Angelina Jolie’s

**Table 6.** Women's occupational roles in journalism in Israel\*.

Occupational level	Women	Men
Governance	31% (10)	69% (22)
Top-level management	34% (14)	66% (27)
Senior management	28% (25)	72% (65)
Middle management	35% (35)	65% (66)
Senior-level professional	41% (264)	59% (374)
Junior-level professional	32% (318)	68% (673)
Production and design	60% (247)	40% (167)
Technical professional	19% (88)	81% (380)
Sales, finance & administration	65% (342)	35% (182)
Other	37% (29)	63% (49)
Total	40% (1,372)	60% (2,005)

\*Byerly, C. M. *Global report on the status of women in the news media*. Washington: International Media Foundation. p. 56.

**Table 7.** Terms of employment by gender\*.

	Women	Men
Full-time, regular	47%	53%
Part-time, regular	63%	37%
Full-time, contract	0%	0%
Part-time, contract	50%	50%
Freelance	25%	75%
Other	0%	0%
Total	(688)	(700)

\*Byerly, C. M. *Global report on the status of women in the news media*. Washington: International Media Foundation. p. 57.

cancer-preventive breast surgery was a prime story covered in Israel, as it was in other countries. This story was framed mainly as a health issue and this may explain the high ranking of the health beat.

The IWFM study found a somewhat encouraging picture regarding the status of female journalists as Israeli women are fairly well distributed throughout the occupational levels of Israeli news companies (Table 6): women occupy 31% of highest governance positions in news organisations, and comprise 34% of the top-level management positions. These proportions are lower than the 40% women in the profession-at-large and slightly higher than the 26% in governance positions and 27% in top-level management found globally.<sup>56</sup> In skill-specific occupational levels, such as production and design, the percentage of women is notably high (60%), due perhaps to their being considered to be less prestigious occupations.

Despite these generally positive findings, vertical gender segregation continues to characterise the news media industry in Israel, with women over-represented in lower-status roles of the profession.<sup>57</sup> Similar vertical gender segregation exists in other professions in Israel, such as medicine<sup>58</sup> and law.<sup>59</sup>

Terms of employment by gender in news organisations were included in the IWFM study. Unfortunately, as cited above, data gathered from media organisations in the Israel research sample provided only partial information. This

explains the discrepancy between totals presented in Tables 6 and 7. However, the partial data suggest that the percentage of women employed full-time, including receipt of social benefits (47%), is lower than that of men (53%). Further, 23% of all women employed in journalism work part-time in comparison to 13% of men. Very limited information was provided about freelancers – only 12 employees out of the sample of 1,388 (much less than 1%) – suggesting that this form of employment is not readily evident. Another survey conducted in 2008 found that 8.4% of the journalists work as freelancers (n.b., data not gender specific).<sup>60</sup>

Overall, these data indicate major gender-based occupational differences. Israeli women tend to occupy part-time positions more than do men, as is the case in other professions. This may be due to their ‘double duties’ with professional and familial responsibilities.<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, it is important to note that such inequality contributes to a weaker job security, which in turn can drive women to be more amenable to accept the norms and expectations of the masculine workplace rather than challenge or resist them.

## Discussion and conclusions

At the beginning of the 80s, the female journalist Lea Etgar published an article entitled ‘Will journalism become a female profession?’ In the mid-90s it seemed that we should reformulate this headline in the form of a factual statement [by] deleting the question mark that was placed at the end of this headline.<sup>62</sup>

This quote opened the milestone article by Limor and Caspi that pointed out the process of feminisation of journalism in Israel for the first time. Two decades later, it seems that it is possible to continue to omit the question mark. However, there is a notable difference: whereas in the mid-1990s it seemed that the answer to this question was affirmative, today it seems that the answer would be negative –the journalism profession in Israel is not becoming feminised. The feminisation process during the 1990s, pointed to originally by Limor and Caspi, seems to have been a temporary start as women remain a minority in the profession. Furthermore, while feminisation is clearly evident in some areas such as news presentation, it can be explained as reinforcing the gender order rather than challenging it. While women integrated into a variety of news areas and their participation in management is significant, especially in comparison with the rest of the world,<sup>63</sup> they are still employed mainly in roles and remunerations unequal to men. Furthermore, in terms of policies, we submit that feminisation serves to undermine and even reverse professions as it creates an illusion of equality when it is expressed mainly through ‘head counts’, but without truly including women in all roles on equal terms.<sup>64</sup>

In terms of research approach, we demonstrated the potential to be realised when the employment status of women journalists is examined in the context of macro-social and economic processes. Such efforts need to be forward

thinking, especially in this era of advanced development of neo-liberal politics and economics in Israel, as well as globalisation processes that continue to have major impacts on the news industry and its employees, particularly women. For example, the conglomeration process of the Israeli media industry in general,<sup>65</sup> which led to concentration of media power within fewer hands, strengthened the power of news organisations within the conglomerates, intensified dependencies of journalists on their employers and weakened their power.<sup>66</sup> Given their initial lower job security, we suspect that women journalists were affected by these processes more than men.

In addition, the decline of traditional print journalism in parallel with expansion of live online and mobile journalism resulted in loss of employment for traditional journalists and photographers, but also opened new and attractive employment opportunities for innovative professional engagement with the internet and social media. As is the case in other emerging professions, men get the first chance at employment, particularly when opportunities are scarce and highly competitive. Once that profession stabilises, there is a chance that the doors will open more widely for women as well. This may happen in the online media industry if it develops so rapidly that it will need to recruit more working power than is immediately available.

One of the most prominent obstacles facing women journalists in developed countries, including Israel, is the need to balance commitment to work and family.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, as news cycles shorten and demands increase for 24/7 multi-media presence, the nature of the work has become more challenging, especially for women who continue to shoulder disproportionate domestic responsibilities.<sup>68</sup> In Israel this situation is particularly complicated. While in the rest of the world, there are fewer female journalists who are married and have children than male counterparts, in Israel it seems that journalists internalise the Israeli expectation for sanctification of the institution of family and have the same number of children as do their male colleagues. At the same time, just like other professional women, they are challenged by unequal division of labour in the domestic sphere.<sup>69</sup> The underdeveloped comprehensive support services for families in Israel – such as daycare, longer school days, tax deductions for employing a caregiver, etc. – create significant burdens on women journalists who wish to progress in their profession. The existence of a clear and public gender policy was one of the research questions in the IWFM. None of the seven Israeli news organisations included in the study had any form of activity or training for women and only two offered daycare services within.

Overall, then, our claim is that women's continuing minority status in journalism is a result of systemic biases inherent in the social reproduction of the profession. The investigations presented here demonstrate the need to study involvement of women in the profession of journalism well beyond equal employment opportunities. For example, researchers could continue to build on initial research findings that suggest female journalists provide different kinds

of news coverage: they choose different topics to cover and bring perspectives and points of view not necessarily salient to male journalists. They tend to interview more women and other marginalised sources, and they are more attuned to stigmatisation of representations of gender in the media. In doing so, they provide a more inclusionary and diverse journalistic coverage of social reality.

Accordingly, future research efforts might investigate the gendered characteristics of newsrooms, as studies found that despite growing numbers of female journalists, they are still expected to adapt to the enduring masculine culture, environment and professional practices.<sup>70</sup> Future research would also do well to investigate gender equality in the newsroom in terms of potential intersectional exclusions. For example, are the voices of Arab Israeli, religious and orthodox, and new immigrant women still missing in the public Israeli sphere?

Finally, an important question: Have Israeli female journalists advocated for change within their profession? Until recently, there was no institutionalised feminist activism with the news profession. The first women-journalist group in Israel devoted to advancing the conditions of employments, as well as to promotion of more egalitarian representation of women in the media, was established in 2011. While it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this advocacy group, it is important to continue to document and assess if, and if so what, enduring changes are promoted and achieved.

## Notes

1. Bolton and Muzio, "The Paradoxical of Feminization," 281–99.
2. Turin, *Portrayal of Teachers in Israeli Media*.
3. Israeli Medical Association, *Women Status in Israel Medicine*.
4. Limor and Caspi, "Feminization of Israeli Journalism," 37–45.
5. Caspi and Limor, *Mass Media in Israel*.
6. Limor and Caspi, "Feminization of Israeli Journalism," 37–45.
7. See for example, Etgar, "Women in Journalism," 175–83.
8. Caspi and Limor, *Mass Media in Israel*.
9. Izraeli, "Women Managers in Israel," 183–216.
10. Limor and Caspi, "Feminization of Israeli Journalism," 37.
11. Lachover, "Women Journalists in Israel," 179–216.
12. Limor and Caspi, "Feminization of Israeli Journalism," 37.
13. Reskin and Ross, *Job Queues, Gender Queues*.
14. Limor and Caspi, "Feminization of Israeli Journalism," 37; Tsfati and Meyers, "Journalists in Israel," 443–57.
15. Meyer and Cohen, "Self-portrait of Israeli Journalists," 107–34; Tsfati, "Journalists' Perceptions of Audience Trust," 274–91; Tsfati and Livio, "Exploring Journalists' Perceptions of Media Impact," 113–30; Tsfati et al., "Israeli Public and Journalists' Perspectives," 152–73.
16. Tsfati and Meyers, "Journalists in Israel," 443–57.
17. Fogiel-Bijaoui, "Gender Inequality in Israel," 423–36.
18. Ash Kurlander, *A Shadow Report*.
19. Fogiel-Bijaoui, "Gender Inequality in Israel," 423–36.

20. Tzameret-Kertcher et al., *Gender index*.
21. Fogiel-Bijaoui, "Gender Inequality in Israel," 423–36.
22. GMMP2015, *Who Makes the News?*
23. IWMF, *Women in the News Media*.
24. Byerly, *Global Report on Women in the News Media*.
25. Lachover, "Women Still a Minority," 122–36.
26. Byerly, *Global Report on Women in the News Media*, 50.
27. Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys Quarterly*.
28. Weaver et al., *The American Journalist in the twenty-first Century*; Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist in the 1990s*.
29. Central Bureau of Statistics, *Labor Force Surveys Quarterly*.
30. Mann and Lev-On, *Israeli Media in 2015*, 30.
31. Franks, *Women and Journalism*.
32. Byerly, *Global Report on Women in the News Media*, 60.
33. The global study included a pilot regarding the Twitter news in 68% of the participating countries (ibid.). Based on the low level of twitter use in Israel, it was not monitored.
34. Byerly, *Global Report on Women in the News Media*, 65.
35. Reskin and Ross, *Job Queues, Gender Queues*.
36. Byerly, *Global Report on Women in the News Media*, 62–63.
37. In 2015, Television broadcast news enjoyed overall rating of 36% (Mann and Lev-On, *Israeli Media in 2015*, 30).
38. Holland, "When a Woman Reads the News," 133–49.
39. See, for example, Mitra, et al., "Physical Appearance of Television Newsreaders," 45–57.
40. Kanagasabi, "The silence of the newsroom," 663–77.
41. Ibid.
42. GMMP2015, *Who Makes the News?*; Franks, *Women and Journalism*.
43. Na'amat, "Women in Israeli Journalism."
44. Wolf, *The beauty Myth*.
45. Cohen, "Women Presenters We Like," *Mako*, November 15, 2009, <http://bit.ly/29NrkiW>; "Tali Moreno - the sexiest on screen". *The City Mouse*, December 30, 2007, <http://bit.ly/2aTETux>.
46. See, for example, Neta Alexander, "What does look the same?" *Haaretz*, October 24, 2013, <http://bit.ly/29P1nM8>.
47. Kama and First, *Mediated Representations of Minority Groups*.
48. Kanagasabi, "The silence of the newsroom," 663–77.
49. Van Zoonen, "The Changing Gender of Journalism," 33–46.
50. Lemish and Tidhar, "The Disappearance of Israeli Women-Broadcasters," 13–21.
51. "The Anchor," *Tik Tikshoret*. December 24, 2010, <http://www.the7eye.org.il/40807>.
52. Berkowitz, *From Motherhood to Citizenship*; Lemish and Barzel, "The Womb in the Public Sphere," 147–69.
53. Lemish, *Screening Gender in Children's TV*.
54. Lachover, "Women Still a Minority," 52.
55. Voronova, GMMP, 2015, *Who Makes the News?*
56. Lachover, "Women Still a Minority," 122–36.
57. Weaver et al., *The American Journalist in the twenty-first Century*; Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist in the 1990s*.
58. Israeli Medical Association, *Women Status in Israel Medicine*.
59. Bechar, *Law in Israel*.



60. Fogiel-Bijaoui, "Gender Inequality in Israel," 423–36.
61. Ekert-Jaffe and Stier, "Fertility and Women's Employment in Israel." 644–55.
62. Limor and Caspi, "Feminization of Israeli Journalism," 37.
63. In 2015, television broadcast news enjoyed overall rating of 36% (Mann and Lev-On, *Israeli Media in 2015*, 30).
64. Bolton and Muzio, "The Paradoxical of Feminization," 281–99.
65. Limor, "Israeli Media in an Era of Changes," 29–46.
66. Caspi, "Pillars of the Israeli Democracy," 9–26.
67. For example, in the US Smith, *Women Journalists Newspaper Careers*.
68. Byerly, *Global Report on Women in the News Media*, 65.
69. Limor and Caspi, "Feminization of Israeli Journalism," 37.
70. See for example in Israel, Lachover, "Women Journalists in Israel," 179–200; in India, Kanagasabi, See note 44 above; in Ireland O'Brien, "Producing Television and Re-producing gender," 259–274 and in Britain and Scotland Melin-Higgins, "Gendered newsroom culture," 195–220.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Notes on contributors

*Einat Lachover* is lecturer at the Communication Department, Sapir Academic College, Israel.

*Dafna Lemish* is professor and associate dean for Programs School of Communication and Information Rutgers the State University of New Jersey.

## ORCID

*Einat Lachover*  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6503-6675>

*Dafna Lemish*  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6166-0692>

## Bibliography

- Ash Kurlander, Y. *We Keep Running, but Are We Getting 'somewhere Else?' a Shadow Report Submitted to the Beijing +15 Conference*. Jerusalem: The Israel Women's Network, 2010.
- Bechar, S. *Report 101 - Law in Israel: A Feminization of the Profession*. Tel-Aviv: Golda Meir Institute for Social and Labor Research, Tel-Aviv University, 1999. [Hebrew]
- Berkowitz, N. *From Motherhood to Citizenship: Women's Rights and International Organization*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.
- Bolton, S., and D. Muzio. "The Paradoxical Processes of Feminization in the Professions: The Case of Established, Aspiring and Semi-Professions." *Work, Employment and Society* 22, no. 2 (2008): 281–299.
- Byerly, C. *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media*. Washington, DC: International Women's Media Foundation, 2011.

- Byerly, C. *The Palgrave International Handbook of Women and Journalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Caspi, D. "Introduction. 'the Pillars of the Israeli Democracy. Chap. 1, in *Communication and Democracy in Israel*. Tel-Aviv: Van Leer Jerusalem Institute/Hakibutz Hammeuchad House. [Hebrew]
- Caspi, D., and Y. Limor. *The in/Outsiders. Mass Media in Israel*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1999.
- Central Bureau of Statistics. *International Women's Day 2016*. March 2016. Accessed July 17, 2016. <http://bit.ly/1Yr44X9> [Hebrew]
- Central Bureau of Statistics. *Labour Force Surveys Quarterly*. January-March 2016. Accessed July 4, 2016. <http://bit.ly/29OYUBv> [Hebrew]
- Ekert-Jaffe, O., and H. Stier. "Normative or Economic Behavior? Fertility and Women's Employment in Israel." *Social Science Research* 38 (2009): 644–655.
- Etgar, L. "The Increasing Number of Women in Journalism." *Yearbook of the Association of Tel-Aviv Journalists*. Tel-Aviv: Association of Tel-Aviv journalists (1981): 175–183. [Hebrew]
- Fogiel-Bijaoui, S. "Navigating Gender Inequality in Israel: The Challenges of Feminism." In *Handbook of Israel: The Major Debates*, edited by J. H. Schoeps, O. Glockner and E. Ben-Rafael and Y. Sternberg, 423–436. Oldenbourg: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2016.
- Franks, S. *Women and Journalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Global Media Monitoring Project 2005. *Who Makes the News?*. London: World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), 2005. <http://bit.ly/29VvjLk>
- Global Media Monitoring Project 2010. *Who Makes the News?*. London and Toronto: World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), 2010. <http://bit.ly/29XIN7R>
- Global Media Monitoring Project 2015. *Who Makes the News?*. London and Toronto: World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), 2015. <http://bit.ly/21exo5B>
- Hanitzsch, T., and H. Folker. "Does Gender Determine Journalists' Professional Views? A Reassessment Based on Cross-National Evidence." *European Journal of Communication* 27, no. 3 (2012): 257–277.
- Holland, P. "When a Woman Reads the News." in *Boxed in: Women and Television*, edited by H. Baehr and G. Dyer, 133–149. London: Pandora, 1987.
- Israeli Medical Association. *Report: Task Team for Promoting Women Status in the Israel Medicine*. May, 2015. [Hebrew]
- IWMF (International Women's Media Foundation). *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media*. Washington: International Women's Media Foundation, 2011.
- Izraeli, D. "Women Managers in Israel." In *Women in Management Worldwide*, edited by N. Adler and D. N. Izraeli, 183–216. New-York: M. E. Sharpe, 1988.
- Kama, A. and A. First. *Exclusion: Mediated Representations of Minority Groups* Tel Aviv: Resling, 2015. [Hebrew]
- Kanagasabai, N. "In the Silence of a Newsroom: Age, Generation, and Sexism in the Indian Television Newsroom." *Feminist Media Studies* 16, no. 4 (2016): 663–677.
- Kim, K-H, and Y. Youngmin. "The Influence of Journalists' Gender on Newspaper Stories about Women Cabinet Members in South Korea." *Asian Journal of Communication* 19, no. 3 (2009): 289–301.
- Lachover, E. "Israel: Women Still a Minority, but in a Better Place." In *The Palgrave International Handbook of Women and Journalism*, edited by Carolyn M. Byerly, 122–136. New York: Palgrave, 2013.

- Lachover, E. "Women Journalists in Israel." In *Women Journalists in the Western World. What Surveys Tell Us?*, edited by R. Froelich and S. A. Lafky, 179–200. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2008.
- Lemish, D. *Screening Gender in Children's TV: The Views of Producers around the World*. New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2010.
- Lemish, D., and I. Barzel. "'Four Mothers' the Womb in the Public Sphere." *European Journal of Communication* 15, no. 2 (2000): 147–169.
- Lemish, D., and C. E. Tidhar. "Where Have All the Young Girls Gone? The Disappearance of Israeli Women-Broadcasters during the Gulf War." *Women and Language* 14, no. 1 (1999): 13–21.
- Limor, Y., and D. Caspi. "The Feminization of the Israeli Journalism." *Kesher* 15 (1994): 37–45. [Hebrew]
- Limor, Y. "'The Little Prince' and the 'Big Brother': The Israeli Media in an Era of Changes." In *Communication and Democracy in Israel*, edited by D. Caspi, 29–46. Tel-Aviv: Van Leer Jerusalem Institute/Hakibutz Hammeuchad House, 1997. [Hebrew]
- Mann, R. and A. Lev-On. *Annual Report: The Israeli Media in 2015 Agendas, Uses and Trends*. Ariel, Israel: Ariel Institute for the Study of New Media, Politics, and Society. <http://bit.ly/2acYzgr>. [Hebrew]
- Melin-Higgins, M. "Coping with Journalism: Gendered Newsroom Culture." In *Gender and Newsroom Cultures, Identities at Work*, edited by M. De Bruin and K. Ross, 195–220. Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2004.
- Meyers, O., and J. Cohen. "A Self-Portrait of Israeli Journalists: Characteristics, Values, and Attitudes". *Media Frames: Israeli Journal of Communication* 4 (2009): 107–134. [Hebrew]
- Meyers, M., and G. Lynne. "African American Women in the Newsroom: Encoding Resistance." *Howard Journal of Communications* 26, no. 3 (2015): 292–312.
- Mitra, B., M. Webb, and C. Wolfe. "Audience Responses to the Physical Appearance of Television Newsreaders." *Participations Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 11, no. 2 (2014): 45–57.
- Mizrachi-Simon. S. *Violence against Women*. November 2015. The Knesset Research Center, <http://bit.ly/2aAkhZd> [Hebrew]
- O'Brien, A. "Producing Television and Re-Producing Gender." *Television and New Media* 16, no. 3 (2015): 259–274.
- Reskin, B. F., and P. A. Ross. *Job Queues, Gender Queues, Explaining Women's Inroads into Male Occupation*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1990.
- Rodgers, S., and E. Thorson. "A Socialization Perspective on Male and Female Reporting." *Journal of Communication* 53, no. 4 (2003): 658–675.
- Smith, V. *Outsiders Still. Why Women Journalists Love – And Leave – Their Newspaper Careers*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015.
- Tsfati, Y. "Exploring Possible Correlates of Journalists' Perceptions of Audience Trust." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 81, no. 2 (2004): 274–291.
- Tsfati, Y., and O. Livio. "Exploring Journalists' Perceptions of Media Impact." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (2008): 113–130.
- Tsfati, Y., O. Meyers, and P. Peri. "What is Good Journalism? Comparing Israeli Public and Journalists' Perspectives." *Journalism* 7, no. 2 (2006): 152–173.
- Tsfati, Y., and O. Meyers. "Journalists in Israel." In *The Global Journalist in the 21st Century*, edited by D. H. Weaver and L. Willant, 443–457. New-York: Routledge, 2012.
- Turin, O. *The Portrayal of Teachers in Israeli Media*. Tel Aviv: Mofet, 2014. [Hebrew]
- Tzameret-Kertcher, H., H. Herzog, and N. Chazan *Gender Index - Gender Inequality in Israel*. Jerusalem: WIPS - The Center for the Advancement of Women in the Public Sphere and The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 2015. <http://bit.ly/29OZdfo>

- UN Women, *Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation*. Accessed August 1 2016. <http://bit.ly/1ziG5j6>
- Van Zoonen, L. "One of the Girls? The Changing Gender of Journalism." In *News, Gender and Power*, edited by C. Carter, G. Branston and A. Stuart, 33–46. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Weaver, D. H., and G. C. Wilhoit. *The American Journalist in the 1990s*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1996.
- Weaver, D. H., R. A. Beam, B. J. Brownlee, P. S. Voakes and G. C. Wilhoit. *The American Journalist in the 21st Century: U.S. News People at the Dawn of a New Millennium*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2007.