

# Who Gets To Tell Australian Stories?

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Putting the spotlight on cultural and linguistic diversity in television news and current affairs



**The *Who Gets To Tell Australian Stories?* report was prepared on the basis of research and support from the following people:**

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This report was researched, written and designed on Aboriginal land. Sovereignty over this land was never ceded. We wish to pay our respect to elders past, present and future, and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' ongoing struggles for justice and self-determination.



# Who Gets to Tell Australian Stories?

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## Executive summary

The *Who Gets To Tell Australian Stories?* report is the first comprehensive picture of who tells, frames and produces stories in Australian television news and current affairs.

It details the experience and the extent of inclusion and representation of culturally diverse news and current affairs presenters, commentators and reporters. It is also the first forensic examination of how our media treats cultural diversity at the workplace level.

The purpose of this report is to consider the following questions:

- Why is there an under-representation of cultural diversity in Australian television news and current affairs?
- Why does an under-representation of cultural diversity in our media matter?
- Who gets to report on, present and frame news and current affairs stories in Australia?
- How does a lack of cultural diversity affect the way news and current affairs is reported and framed?
- How do senior executives, journalists and producers value cultural diversity, including its impact on news content?
- What strategies are in place, if any, to improve cultural diversity in media organisations?

Based on three data sets and a series of qualitative interviews, we identified a distinctive gap in representation between those reporting Australia's news and current affairs and the broader Australian population.

Firstly, we examined 81 news programs over two weeks in June 2019 (**Appendix 1**). This equalled approximately 19,000 news and current affairs items broadcast

across free-to-air television. We categorised 270 presenters, commentators and reporters who presented news across Australia during the two-week period. Our study reveals that in terms of frequency of appearance on screen, more than 75% of presenters, commentators and reporters have an Anglo-Celtic background, while only 6% of presenters, commentators and reporters have either an Indigenous or non-European background.

Secondly, in June 2020, more than 300 television journalists completed a survey examining their perception of cultural diversity. More than 70% of participants rated the representation of culturally diverse men and women in the media industry either poorly or very poorly. In addition, 77% of respondents with diverse backgrounds believe having a diverse cultural background is a barrier to career progression.

Third, using publicly available information we examined the cultural backgrounds of editorial leaders in television newsrooms, as well as the composition of television network boards. 100% of free-to-air television national news directors in Australia have an Anglo-Celtic background (and they are also all male). The board members of Australian free-to-air television are also overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic. Within this group of 39 directors, there is only one who has an Indigenous background and three who have a non-European background.

This is in a nation where an estimated 58% of Australians have an Anglo-Celtic background, 21% have a non-European background, 18% have a European background and 3% have an Indigenous background.

The final component of our study consisted of in-depth interviews with a range of senior news and current affairs leaders from all free-to-air networks. These interviews revealed varied levels of understanding of cultural diversity. Most leaders recognised that their outlet failed to reflect their audience, but there remains ambivalence towards having formal diversity and inclusion policies.

When compared with the news media in the US and UK, the Australian media lags on both the representation of diversity and on organisational responses to the issue.

It is clear that Australian television news and current affairs media does not represent all Australians and this affects the way stories are told and framed. It has been almost three decades since the 1991 *National Inquiry into Racist Violence* by the then Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission raised concerns about the lack of diversity in the media leading to inadequate representation of significant sections of the Australian public.<sup>1</sup> The Inquiry recommended media

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<sup>1</sup> AHRC 1991

organisations develop and implement policies to encourage the recruitment and advancement of Indigenous and non-English speaking journalists within the industry, noting that “the employment of more people from Aboriginal and non-English speaking backgrounds in the media industry generally would help to sensitise the media to issues of concern to these groups and contribute to more informed and more realistic reporting.”

Yet, there have been few attempts in the intervening decades to increase the representation and voice of cultural diversity in the media.

Having more representative newsrooms requires a serious long-term commitment, leadership and a cultural change in news and current affairs. This should include the meaningful collection of data on cultural diversity among staff, the establishment of targets to increase cultural diversity in the talent pipeline and the senior management suite as well as recognition of both the civic and economic benefits of a more culturally diverse media.

## Research components

<b>Data set 1:</b> Quantitative analysis of two weeks of news and current affairs television reporting (pp. 10-16)	19,000 items
<b>Data set 2:</b> Survey of media industry employees (pp. 17-23)	314 responses
<b>Data set 3:</b> Quantitative analysis of leadership in the Australian media industry (pp. 24-25) and interviews with editorial leaders in news and current affairs television (pp. 25-32)	Analysis of all major networks; nine interviews with leaders
International comparisons and recommendations for Australian newsrooms (pp. 33-39)	



# Introduction

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This research project, initiated by the not-for-profit group Media Diversity Australia (MDA), is the first in-depth study of the level of cultural diversity in Australian broadcast television news and current affairs.

Television is a visual medium – one that literally shows us who we are and represents us as people and a nation. News and current affairs purports to identify and tell key stories about issues of importance to all Australians. Yet, as this report shows, those stories have been reported, selected and produced by an overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic workforce.

*Who Gets To Tell Australian Stories?*<sup>2</sup> presents data and perspectives on cultural diversity in Australian free-to-air news and current affairs television. It establishes a baseline for future comparison. It offers a rationale for why cultural diversity matters on both economic and social levels and makes recommendations on how networks can improve their cultural diversity.

Our work extends the [Leading for Change](#) research published in 2016 and 2018 by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), which challenged Australians “to do better in making the most of the talents in our multicultural nation”.<sup>2</sup> It noted that Australia does not collect comprehensive data on cultural diversity within its organisations and institutions.

The *Leading for Change* reports highlighted the lack of cultural diversity within senior leadership across Australian business, politics, government and our universities. It is therefore vital that independent research is conducted to benchmark the state of play in other institutions, including our media which is our Fourth Estate and critical to the health of Australia’s democracy.

Previous research has shown that Australia lags severely behind other similar nations when it comes to people of cultural and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds being represented in the media. Cultural institutions also fare poorly: a [Diversity Arts Australia](#) study (2019) found that the arts and cultural sectors also had poor representation of CALD communities.

A lack of cultural and geographic diversity in the Australian media workforce was identified in PwC’s [Who’s the fairest of them all?](#) study (2016). It found that

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<sup>2</sup> AHRC 2018, p. v

82.7% of the Australian entertainment and media workforce were monolingual, speaking only English at home, and that 37% of the workforce lived in Sydney, with the second highest concentration living in Melbourne.

Who we see on television is meant to be a mirror of who we are: from the anchors to those reporting the news. Just as important is who selects the stories we see: those ‘behind the camera’ making decisions, prioritising stories and framing the narratives that tell those stories.

The *Who Gets To Tell Australian Stories?* project proceeds from the premise that a culturally diverse media workforce is a stronger workforce. As McKinsey highlighted in its [\*Diversity wins - How inclusion matters report\*](#) (2020), there are clear and multiple benefits of diversity, and of getting inclusion right. For the news industry in Australia, a culturally diverse workforce would help ensure that all Australians feel represented in the way stories are sourced, told and prioritised. It would enable the telling of a broader range of stories, with greater relevance to our increasingly diverse audiences.

Our findings indicate that we have an extraordinarily long way to go in addressing that challenge.

## Who we are

The research that drives this report was gathered by academics at four Australian universities and initiated by Media Diversity Australia (MDA). MDA is a not-for-profit nationwide organisation run by journalists and communications professionals who are working to make our news media more reflective of our culturally and linguistically diverse Australia. Isabel Lo and Antoinette Lattouf of MDA secured the core funding and engaged academic and media partners for this large research project.

This research project was led by Catharine Lumby, a former journalist and a Professor of Media at Macquarie University. Dr Ann Hine, a researcher based at Macquarie University, worked with Professor Lumby to research and finalise this report. Professor Lumby partnered with Professor Tim Soutphommasane, Professor of Practice in Sociology and Political Theory at the University of Sydney (and former Race Discrimination Commissioner), Dr Dimitria Groutsis, Associate Professor of Work and Organisational Studies at the University of Sydney, Dr Usha Rodrigues, Senior Lecturer in Communication at Deakin University and Professor James Arvanitakis, Lecturer in the humanities at Western

Sydney University. It was funded by Google, the Media, Arts and Entertainment Alliance, Macquarie University and the University of Sydney. The project also received substantial in-kind support from Isentia and Telum Media.

We would like to acknowledge the early contributions of Irene Jay Liu and Nic Hopkins from Google News Lab, whose support has been instrumental in getting the project off the ground.

We also acknowledge Deakin e-research analysts Dr Andrew Goh and Dr Jerry Lai's contribution to the project. Research Assistants Subodhanie Umesha Weerakkody and Carolyn Cage of Deakin University provided significant support for the content analysis part of the project. Deakin e-research staff have also provided free service to this project. We also acknowledge the work of University of Sydney Business School Research Assistants Christine Han and Dr Annika Kaabel.

## What we did

This project aimed to investigate and develop baseline measures of the cultural diversity of presenters, reporters, and senior editorial staff in free-to-air news and current affairs Australian television. It aimed to develop the first benchmarks for a long-term longitudinal study of cultural diversity in Australia's media landscape. It also investigated data on cultural diversity in similar programs in the US and UK, and some of the strategies that increased gender and/or cultural diversity in these countries are briefly described in the section 'International comparisons'.

The research also included interviews with senior journalists and editorial staff, an analysis of the cultural diversity of presenters in a two-week slice of free-to-air news and current affairs programs, and a survey distributed to 1600 potential participants in relevant occupations and completed by 314 people. The details of these components of the research are explained where the data and findings are presented later in the report. Using publicly available information on network websites, LinkedIn and Twitter we also looked at the cultural and gender diversity of board members and senior news leadership in television as at July 2020.

In identifying the cultural backgrounds of those who appeared on screen, we adopted the methodology used by the Australian Human Rights Commission in its *Leading for Change* reports. Namely, we examined publicly available biographical information about the individual, other relevant public statements that may include information about the individual's cultural background, an individual's full name and its origins, an individual's place of birth, and visual

observation. After gathering this information, we then placed individuals' cultural backgrounds into one of four categories: Indigenous, Anglo-Celtic, European, or non-European. This was then cross checked by another researcher. Such a methodology is necessary as Australian organisations do not currently collect comprehensive data on cultural diversity; it is also consistent with academic and industry studies of cultural background, as well as some international monitoring practices.<sup>3</sup>

Before moving on to detail our findings it is useful to define cultural diversity, which is described and understood differently depending on how it is both measured and perceived.

## **Defining and measuring cultural diversity in Australia**

There is currently no legislated requirement for Australian organisations or employers to collect and report on the cultural diversity of their workforce. Despite Australia often being deemed a multicultural success story, data about a person's ethnicity, ancestry, their place of birth and the language/s they speak is only sporadically collected within Australian businesses and institutions. The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has developed a robust blueprint for how Australia could make progress in this important area.<sup>4</sup> Yet getting a precise picture of the representation of cultural diversity within the major institutions in Australian society remains elusive.

This project sought to measure cultural diversity within Australian news and current affairs media. Data collection is necessary to accurately depict what our existing levels of cultural diversity are in Australian news media and how this compares with the makeup of our nation's population. A baseline measure also presents an opportunity to address the current under-representation of cultural diversity in news media, to benchmark Australia's performance against media organisations in other countries, and to develop targets and strategies to improve the levels of cultural diversity within Australian news and current affairs media. Robust data collection will need to be ongoing to ensure we measure these initiatives are actually making a tangible difference.

The problems associated with not having mandatory collection of cultural diversity data were exposed during this research period. As cases of COVID-19 spiked in Australia in mid-2020, it was revealed that even Australia's National

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<sup>3</sup> AHRC 2018, p. 5

<sup>4</sup> AHRC 2016, 2018

Notifiable Diseases database lacked data on the ethnicity, language spoken, and country of birth of Australian residents.<sup>5</sup> Access to such data might have enabled quicker and more appropriate communications between government officials and culturally diverse communities during this health crisis. While not directly related to the media, this situation highlights the need for effective communication and hence the importance of collecting data about cultural diversity.

Defining and measuring cultural diversity can be complex. For example, the [Diversity Council of Australia](#) includes the categories of Gender, Culture & Faith, Disability & Accessibility, Age, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and LGBTIQ+ when describing diversity. While most interview participants in this study described these categories in their understanding of cultural diversity, some also believed geographic and socio-economic diversity came under the umbrella of cultural diversity.

For the purposes of this study, *cultural diversity was understood as based on a person's ethnicity and ancestral background.*

In its *Leading for Change* report, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) considers “cultural background to refer primarily to a person’s ethnicity and ancestry. The concept of ethnicity can be understood to relate to a human group or population that has a common origin, and which may exhibit shared defining features such as homeland, language, customs, historical tradition, religion and physical appearance. [AHRC] regard ancestry – a person’s descent and family background – as inextricably tied to ethnicity”.<sup>6</sup>

A brief overview of Australia’s cultural diversity and the categories we used to measure cultural diversity in Australian news and current affairs media is below. This explains why this study has used cultural diversity to refer to ethnic or ancestral backgrounds other than Anglo-Celtic.

## Australia’s cultural diversity

Australia had a history of cultural diversity long before the arrival of colonisation. Indigenous Australians are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whose ancestors lived in Australia for thousands of years before colonisation began with European settlement in 1788.

Since colonisation, people have continued to migrate to Australia, with the 2016 Census of Population and Housing data reflecting a very multicultural Australia.

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<sup>5</sup> Jakubowicz 2020

<sup>6</sup> AHRC 2018, p. 4

More than a quarter (26%) of Australia’s population (6,163,667 people) were born overseas with over 300 ancestries separately identified. Nearly half (49%) of all Australians were born overseas or had a parent born overseas.<sup>7</sup> The Census also found great linguistic diversity, with more than 300 languages being separately identified in Australia and more than one-fifth (21%) of Australians speaking a language other than English at home. A total of 150 Australian Indigenous languages were spoken, with one in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people speaking an Australian Indigenous language at home during 2016. Indigenous Australians currently comprise 3.3% of Australia’s population.<sup>8</sup>

The following cultural background categories were used in the study:

- Indigenous background;
- Anglo-Celtic background;
- European background; and
- non-European background.

These background categories were drawn from the 2016 and 2018 Leading for Change reports, which used statistical modelling based on the 2016 Census data to create these categories.<sup>9</sup> This census data for the Australian population, broken down into these categories, are shown on the right.

Anglo-Celtic	58%
European	18%
non-European	21%
Indigenous	3%

These same categories have also been used in other diversity research including Screen Australia’s [Seeing Ourselves: Reflections on Diversity in Australian TV Drama](#) study.



<sup>7</sup> ABS 2017

<sup>8</sup> AIHW 2019

<sup>9</sup> AHRC 2018, p. 1

# Data set 1:

# On-screen presence

The first diversity data set relates to the on-screen presence of presenters, commentators, reporters on-screen in television news and current affairs programs broadcast across Australia on free-to-air-networks.

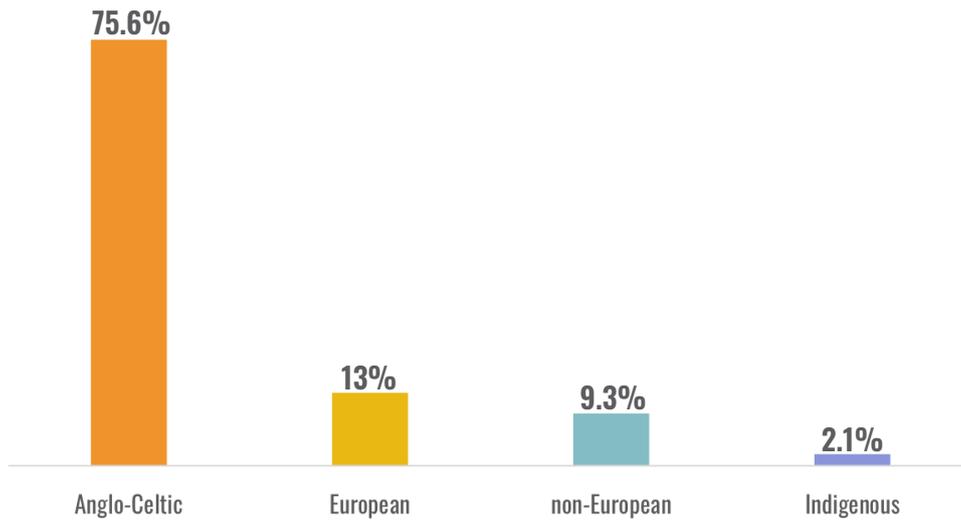
## Presenters, commentators and reporters represented on news and current affairs free-to-air television

We gathered a two-week slice of news and current affairs programming that appeared on free-to-air television between June 1 and June 14, 2019 in news and current affairs free-to-air television. This sample included 81 news programs, and approximately 19,000 news and current affairs items broadcast. These programs included breakfast news, early evening news, prime time news, late night news, weekend news, and news updates. The list also included various current affairs shows broadcast by the five networks such as *The Project*, *The Drum*, *Studio 10*, *Insight*, *Insiders* and *60 Minutes*. NITV was not included in the sample.

In total, we identified the cultural background of 270 presenters, commentators and reporters, who appeared on camera during the two-week study period (**Table 1** and **Figure 1**). In total, the presenters, commentators and reporters appeared nearly 35,000 times on Australian television screens during the two-week period (**Table 2** and **Figure 2**).

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number of presenters, commentators and reporters</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Anglo-Celtic	204	75.6%
European	35	13%
non-European	25	9.3%
Indigenous	6	2.1%

**Table 1:** Ethnicity of presenters, commentators and reporters on Australian television

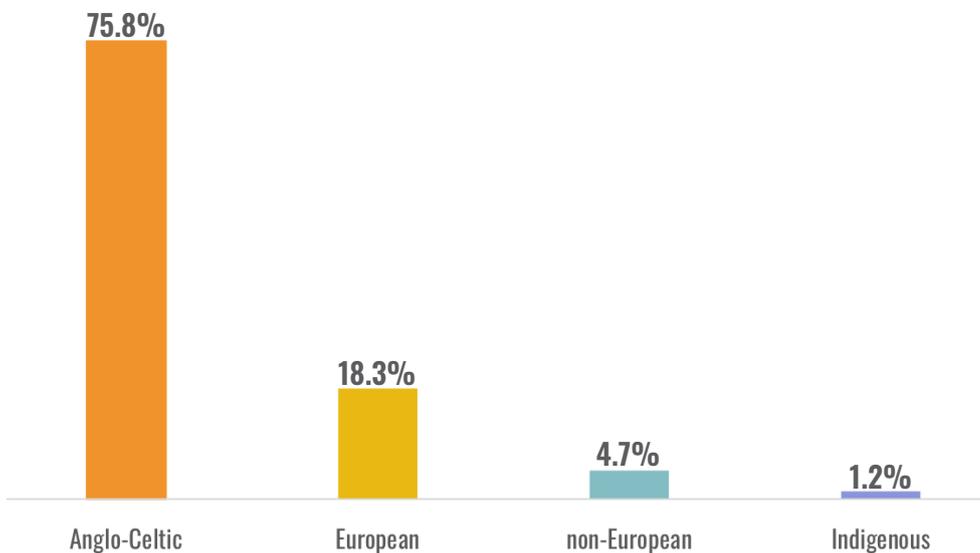


**Figure 1:** Ethnicity of presenters, commentators and reporters on Australian television

We found that more than 75% of presenters, commentators and reporters (in terms of numbers) have an Anglo-Celtic background. This is, in proportionate terms, an over-representation, when an estimated 58% of Australians have that background. There is an under-representation of European, non-European and Indigenous backgrounds. In proportionate terms, the representation of non-European backgrounds was most marked (9% compared to 21% of the general population).

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number of appearances of presenters, commentators and reporters</b>	<b>Percentage of total appearances</b>
Anglo-Celtic	26525	75.8%
European	6386	18.3%
non-European	1649	4.7%
Indigenous	422	1.2%

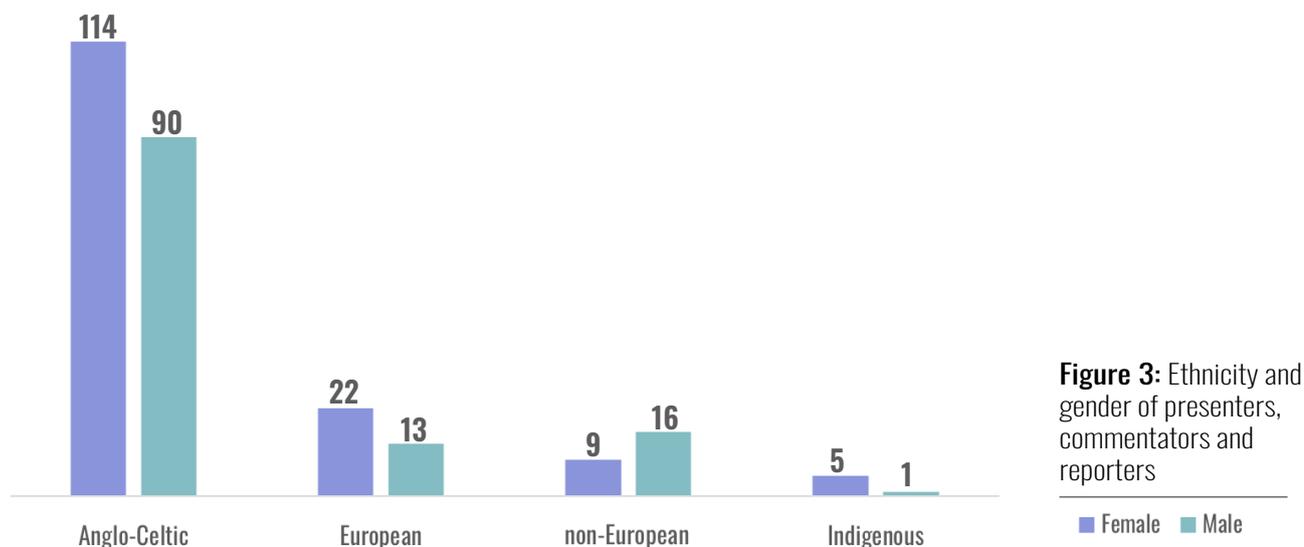
**Table 2:** Ethnicity of presenters, commentators and reporters on Australian television by number of appearances



**Figure 2:** Ethnicity of presenters, commentators and reporters on Australian television by number of appearances

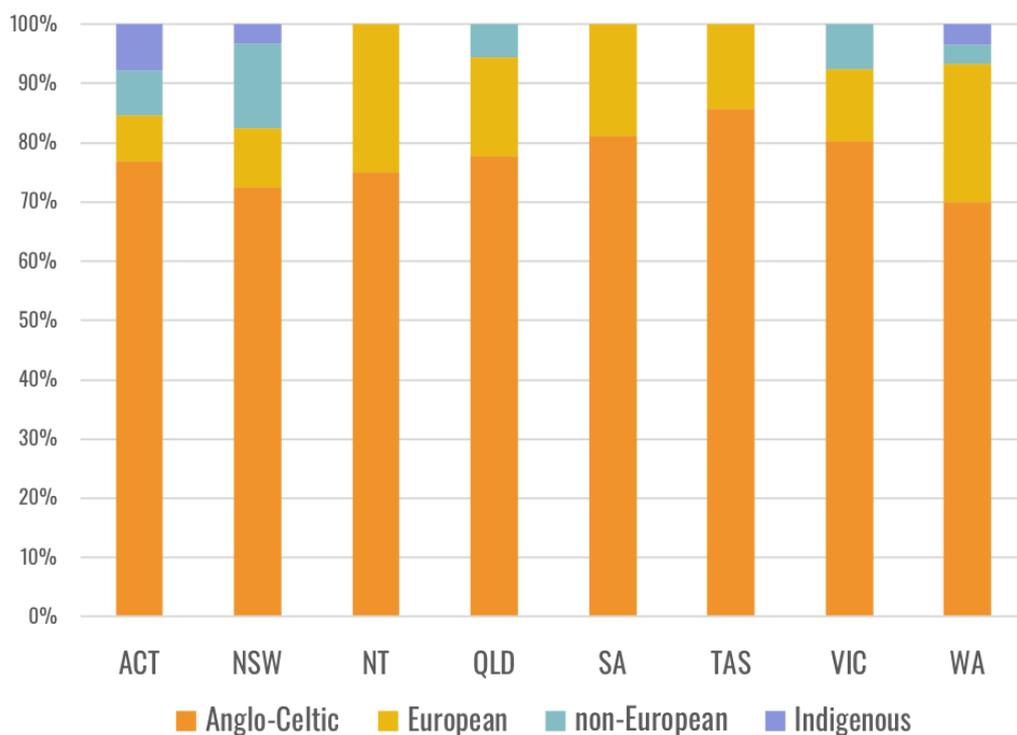
## Diversity and gender

While this report did not focus on gender, we did gather data on the correlation between gender and cultural background. Based on our sample, women were proportionally over-represented with respect to all cultural background categories, with the exception of non-European backgrounds (**Figure 3**).



**Figure 3:** Ethnicity and gender of presenters, commentators and reporters

## Diversity across states and territories



**Figure 4:** Ethnicity of presenters, commentators and reporters by state and territory

A breakdown of the cultural background of presenters, commentators and reporters appearing on television news and current affairs programs across the states and territories during the two-week period is included in **Figure 4**, above, and **Table 3** below.

Of particular note are the states and territories where there was zero representation of non-European and/or Indigenous backgrounds during the two-week sample. In five out of the eight states and territories, there was not a single Indigenous presenter, commentator or reporter within the two-week sample.

State/ territory	Anglo-Celtic	European	non-European	Indigenous
ACT	76.9%	7.7%	7.7%	7.7%
NSW	72.5%	10%	14.2%	3.3%
NT	75%	25%	0%	0%
QLD	77.8%	16.7%	5.5%	0%
SA	81.2%	18.8%	0%	0%
TAS	85.7%	14.2%	0%	0%
VIC	80.3%	12.1%	7.6%	0%
WA	70%	23.3%	3.3%	3.4%

**Table 3:** Ethnicity of presenters, commentators and reporters by state and territory

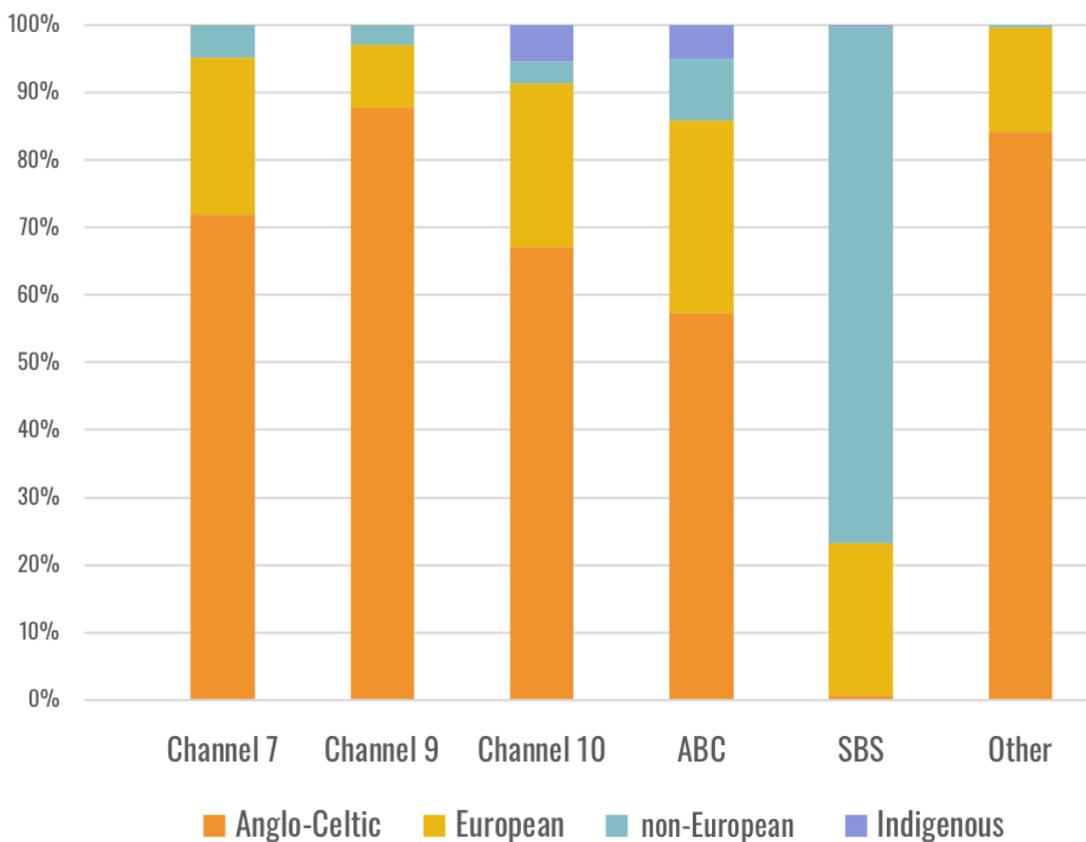
## Diversity by network

We also examined the cultural background of presenters, commentators and reporters on Australian television by network (**Table 4** and **Figure 5**). There was an extraordinarily low representation of Indigenous presenters, commentators and reporters on all networks. Channel 10 has the highest representation with 5.4%. However, Channel 7 and 9 had no Indigenous presenters, commentators or reporters identified in the two-week slice, and SBS only 0.2%.

Channel 9 had, by some distance, the highest level of Anglo-Celtic representation with its journalists on air (87.8%). None of the commercial networks (Channels 7, 9 and 10) had more than 5% of presenters, commentators and reporters, who were identified as having a non-European background.

Network	Anglo-Celtic	European	non-European	Indigenous
Channel 7	72%	23.2%	4.8%	0%
Channel 9	87.8%	9.3%	2.9%	0%
Channel 10	67.1%	24.3%	3.2%	5.4%
ABC	57.2%	28.7%	9.1%	5%
SBS	0.7%	22.5%	76.6%	0.2%
Other <sup>10</sup>	84.2%	15.4%	0.4%	0%

**Table 4:** Ethnicity of presenters, commentators and reporters by network



**Figure 5:** Ethnicity of presenters, commentators and reporters by network

## Diversity on regional television channels

The data showed that diversity is particularly lacking in regional news media. In the two-week slice of programming on Win Canberra, Seven Tasmania, Southern Cross ACT, Channel 9 Darwin, Prime7 ACT and Win Hobart, there were zero Indigenous presenters, commentators or reporters, and only one non-European represented in the sample.

<sup>10</sup> This category includes the following regional news media stations: Win Canberra, Seven Tasmania, Southern Cross ACT, Channel 9 Darwin, Prime7 ACT and Win Hobart.

This data tells us that there is virtually no cultural diversity in regional television networks. This dearth of diversity is concerning on two levels. One is the lack of diversity in the regional workforce. The other is that regional newsrooms could be considered as a potential pipeline to train and feed young journalists into more senior roles. Immersing newcomers to the media industry in an environment that is so unrepresentative of Australia is counterproductive, especially during their formative years where they require mentoring and role models to aspire to.

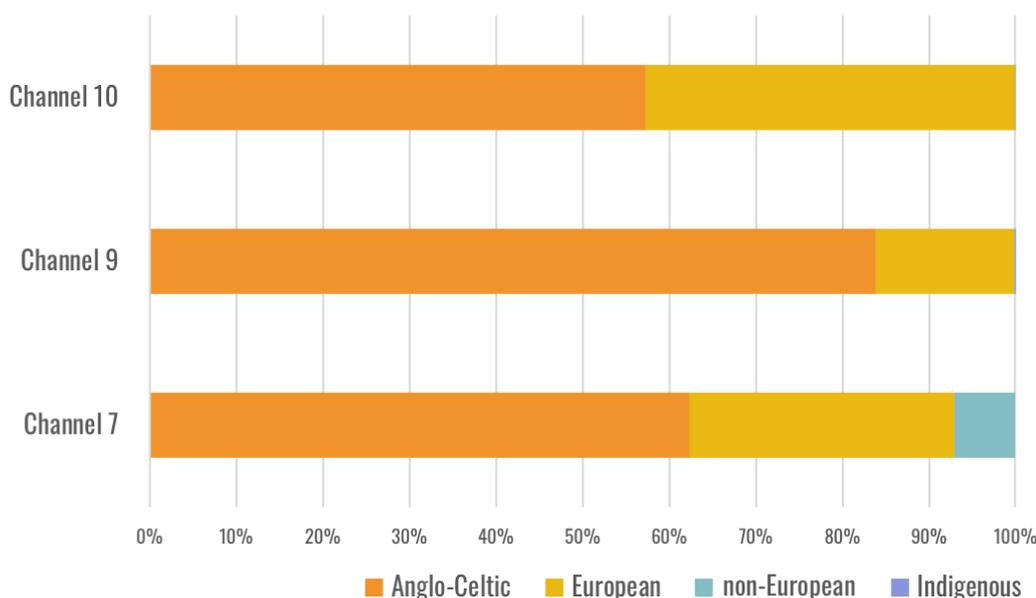
## Diversity on Australian breakfast news programs

Given the popularity of morning and breakfast news shows on Australian television, we also examined the cultural backgrounds of those presenting, commentating and reporting for morning news and current affairs shows in Australia (**Table 5**).

There is an extremely low representation on many breakfast television shows of people who have a non-European or Indigenous background. This is significant given that such shows are often the progenitors of wider social debates about issues concerning those groups. It is arguable that cultural diversity is rendered more or less invisible in this aspect of the daily news agenda.

Breakfast channel	Anglo-Celtic	European	non-European	Indigenous
Channel 10	57.3%	42.7%	0%	0%
Channel 9	83.7%	16.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Channel 7	62.3%	30.7%	7%	0%

**Table 5:** Ethnicity of presenters, commentators and reporters on breakfast TV news, by number of appearances



**Figure 6:** Ethnicity of presenters, commentators and reporters on breakfast TV news, by number of appearances

# Summary

Our analysis of this two-week slice of free-to-air news and current affairs television confirms that presenters, commentators and reporters who have an Anglo-Celtic background are over-represented at 75%, compared to the broader Australian population where people who have Anglo-Celtic backgrounds make up 58% of the population.

It is also clear from our data that people who have non-European backgrounds are significantly under-represented compared to the broader Australian population, in which they comprise 21%. With the exception of SBS, where 76.6% of presenters, commentators and reporters have a non-European background, at all other networks they comprise less than 10% of presenters, commentators and reporters; in the case of the commercial networks, they count for less than 5%.

One of the most concerning findings is that on all regional news networks, there were no Indigenous presenters, commentators or reporters identified in our two-week slice. There were also none identified on Channel 7, and only one on Channel 9 and 10. Even at SBS, Indigenous presenters, commentators or reporters comprised only 0.2% of our sample.

Our analysis also showed that television news and current affairs programs were not presented by anyone from non-European or Indigenous backgrounds in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania.



# Data set 2:

# Industry perspectives on cultural diversity

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This second component of the research consisted of a survey, designed and administered via a web-based portal (Qualtrics). The survey was distributed in June 2020 to 1600 potential participants through Telum Media – an Asia-Pacific-based media engagement platform with a membership base that includes journalists across all media sources and in all ranks. In total, 314 participants self-selected to complete the anonymous survey (c. 20% response rate). While self-selection bias is noted as a key limitation for surveys, this approach allows researchers to reach a broad target audience.

The survey consisted of questions seeking demographic information including country of birth, ethnicity/ancestry, gender, level of education, occupational status and family status. It also asked respondents about their perceptions of cultural diversity in the media and reporting processes.

The majority of the survey respondents identified as female (59%) and culturally diverse (58%). The majority of respondents were employed as editorial staff and on-air reporters (85%), with smaller samples of senior management positions (9%) and technical staff (5%).

According to the survey, responses (n=314), most were over 35 years old and born in Australia. They were more likely to have an Anglo-Celtic background, speak mainly English and not affiliate with any religion. Most commonly, they worked as either an on-air presenter or reporter and have been in the industry for over 10 years.



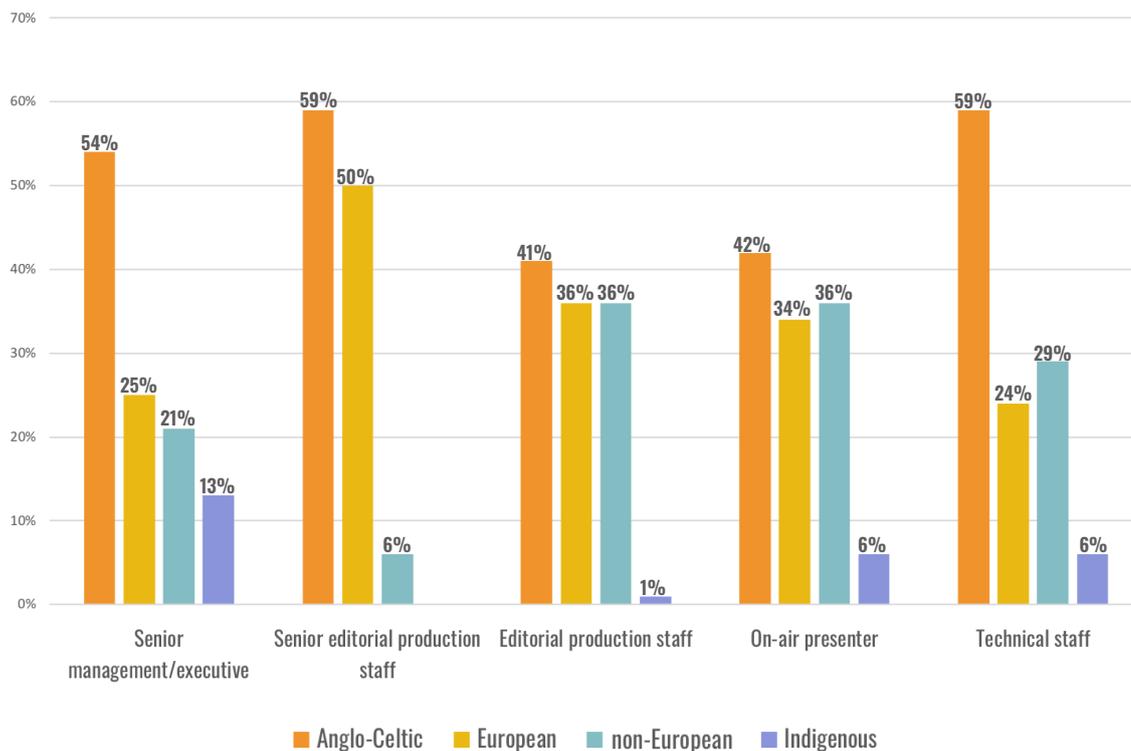
Figure 7: Survey respondent demographics

According to the survey respondents, the industry is largely dominated by individuals who have Anglo-Celtic ancestry. Yet the survey responses reflect a reasonable level of cultural diversity. This could possibly be explained by the self-selection process of this survey: it may be that people receptive to the issues around cultural diversity were attracted to participating in the survey. This highlights the importance of a broader mapping of cultural diversity of the sector when possible as this sample is only a small representation of the broader industry.

In addition to the representation of the sample, it is also important to further explore the pipeline within each of the representative divisions sampled in order to gain an insight into career progression and the senior leadership suite (Table 6 and Figure 8).

Position	Anglo-Celtic	European	non-European	Indigenous
Senior management/ executive	54%	25%	21%	13%
Senior editorial production	59%	50%	6%	0%
Editorial production staff	41%	36%	36%	1%
On-air presenter	42%	34%	36%	6%
Technical staff	59%	24%	29%	6%

Table 6: Ethnicity and current role of survey respondents (note: respondents could select more than one answer, so totals are greater than 100%)



**Figure 8:** Ethnicity and current role of survey respondents (note: respondents could select more than one answer, so totals are greater than 100%)

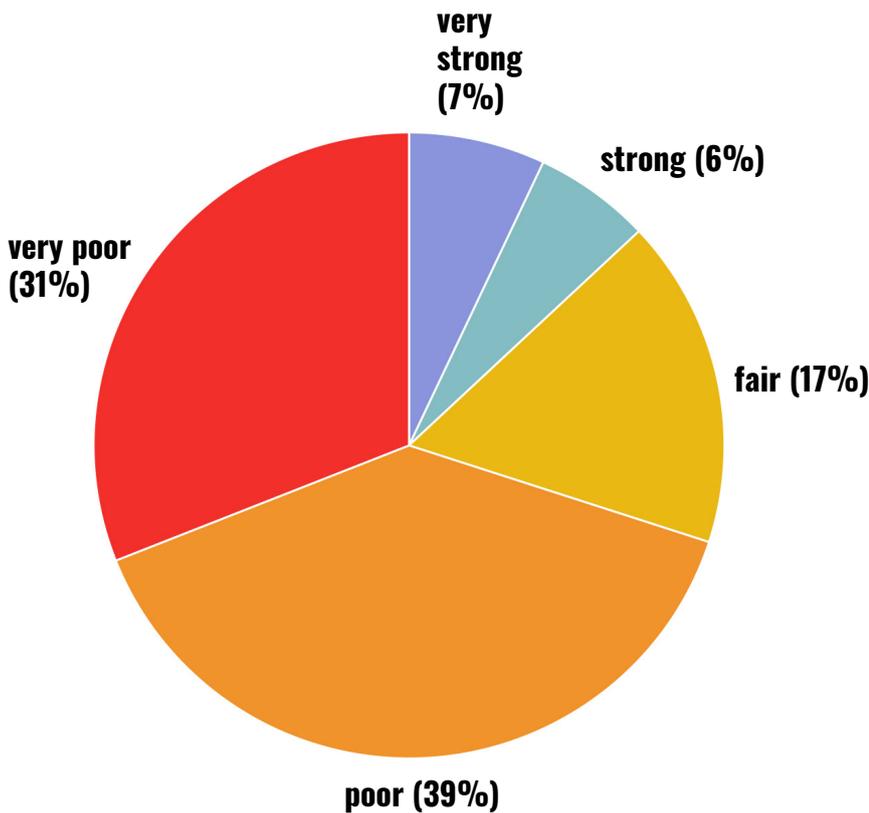
## Perceived representation of cultural diversity in the media industry

One key finding is that a clear majority of respondents (70%) rated the representation of culturally diverse women and men in the media industry as poor or very poor (**Figure 9**).

Female respondents were significantly more negative in their perception of cultural diversity in media than their male counterparts. The cultural diversity of the workforce in front of the camera was viewed as slightly more problematic than behind the camera.

Notably, whether a respondent identified as culturally diverse had little to no impact on the ratings they gave to the representation of cultural diversity in the media industry. A significant majority of respondents indicated there was a problem with the representation of cultural diversity in the media sector.

Unsurprisingly, female respondents of all backgrounds noted amplified barriers to career progression when compared with their male counterparts, highlighting the impact of gender. In terms of age, those under 35 responded more negatively about the lack of cultural diversity in the media, while those over 65 rated the industry as doing favourably when it comes to cultural diversity in the media.



**Figure 9:** Perceptions of overall representation of cultural diversity in front of the camera in news and current affairs

## Perceived barriers to work and career progression in the media industry

The majority of respondents believed that there were greater barriers for culturally diverse men and women in securing work in front of and behind the camera, as well as in progressing up the career ladder (**Table 7**). 79% of respondents believed that culturally diverse people experience more barriers when attempting to access jobs in front of the camera. Respondents believed that when it comes to jobs behind the camera (like researchers and producers) barriers are still present, but not as great, with 67% saying there were barriers in accessing these roles.

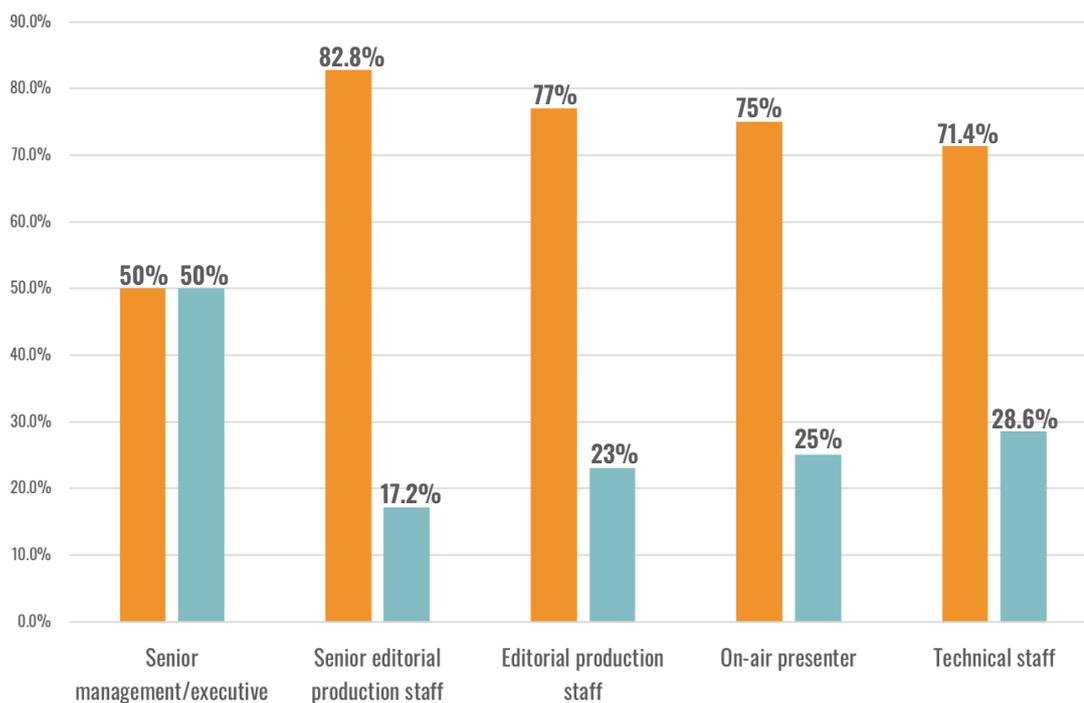
Similarly to the rating of representation of cultural diversity in front of the camera, more respondents believed that it is more complicated to access such employment if one is culturally diverse (**Figure 11**). This seems to have been the experience of many European and non-European background respondents in this study (though Indigenous respondents responded ‘yes’ and ‘no’ almost equally frequently). Most strikingly, nearly 86% of non-European background respondents believe that having a culturally diverse background represents a barrier to career progression (**Figure 13**).

The majority of female respondents perceive there to be barriers to securing work both, in front and behind, the camera, but the contrast with men is starkest in perceptions about obstacles to career progression (**Table 7**).

The fact that those in senior management positions do not see many additional obstacles, but that those in lower-level positions do (**Figure 10**), shows that the industry must work on mentoring and championing so that culturally diverse individuals reach leadership positions more smoothly.

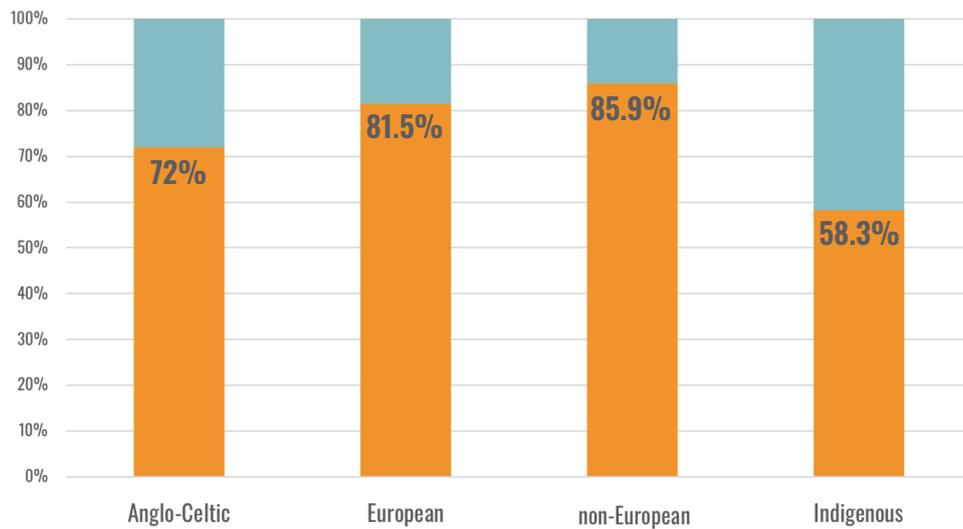
	<b>Barriers to access (in front of camera)</b>		<b>Barriers to access (behind camera)</b>		<b>Barriers to career progression</b>	
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
All survey respondents	173	47	148	72	164	56
Culturally diverse	129	28	110	47	121	36
Not culturally diverse	44	19	38	25	43	20
Female	121	23	107	37	117	27
Male	52	24	41	35	47	29

**Table 7:** Perceptions of barriers to access and progression in the media industry (response counts by cultural diversity and gender)



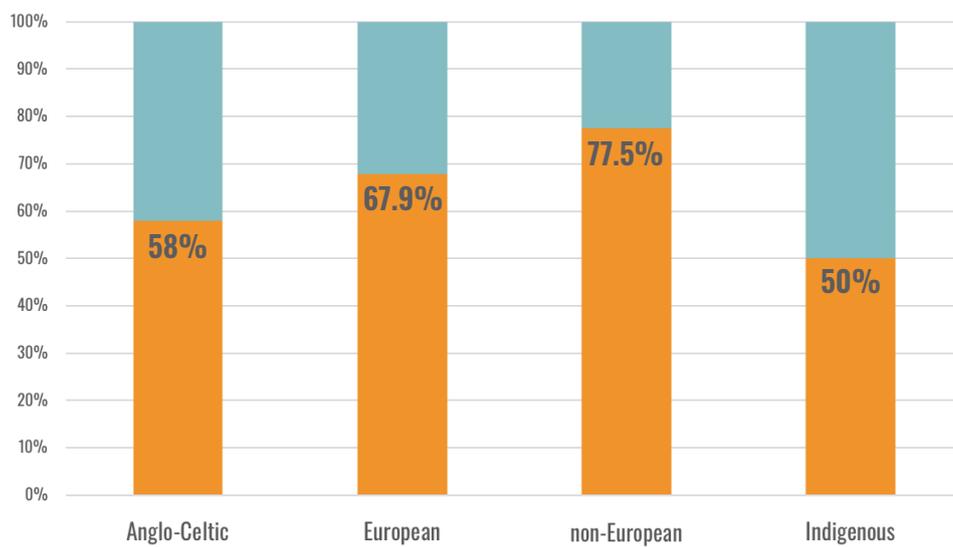
**Figure 10:** Perceptions of barriers to career progression, by respondent's current role

■ Yes ■ No



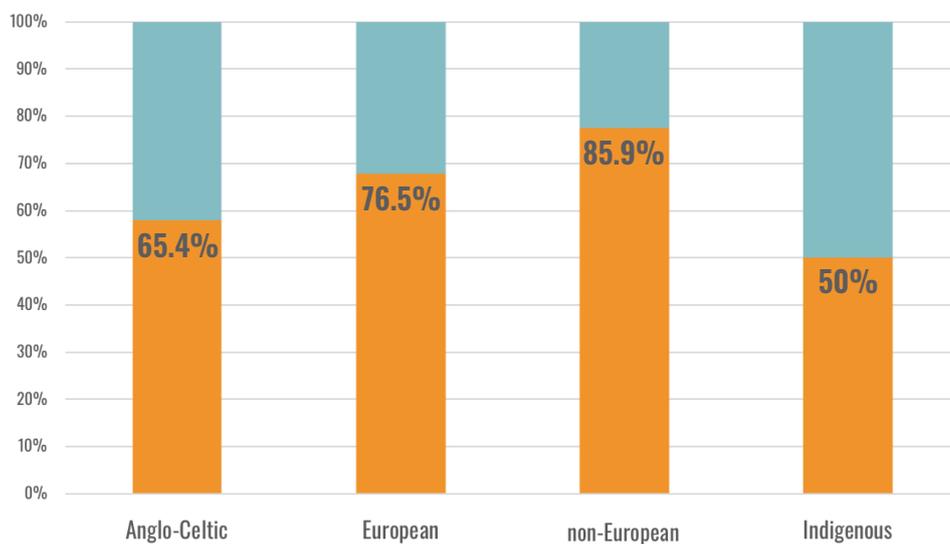
**Figure 11:** Perceptions of barriers to securing work in front of the camera, by ethnicity

Yes No



**Figure 12:** Perceptions of barriers to securing work behind the camera, by ethnicity

Yes No

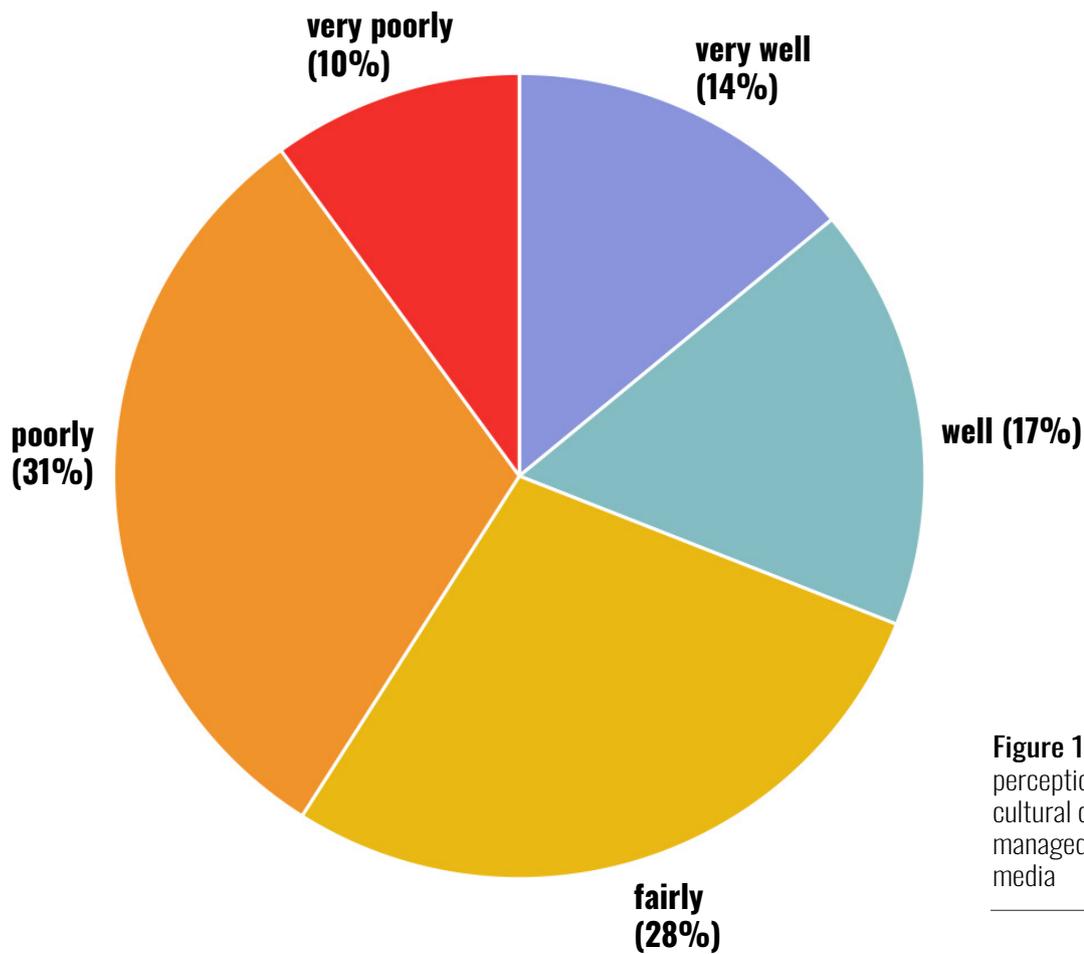


**Figure 13:** Perceptions of barriers to career progression, by ethnicity

Yes No

# Perceptions of managing cultural diversity

A significant proportion of respondents (40%) noted that they viewed the approach to managing cultural diversity (in terms of staff and audience) poorly to very poorly (**Figure 14**), highlighting that there is room for better monitoring and reporting mechanisms.



**Figure 14:** Respondents' perceptions of how well cultural diversity is managed in Australian media

# Data set 3: Diversity and leadership in Australia's media industry

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This section examines the diversity of members of television network boards as well as national news directors, state directors/editors, and bureau chiefs. This publicly available information has been drawn from network websites, LinkedIn and Twitter. It reveals the cultural and gender diversity of board members and those working in senior news leadership as at July 2020. Although it is encouraging to see that some women are chairing boards and that SBS has achieved a gender and culturally diverse board, there is still a serious lack of cultural diversity elsewhere.

The key findings after examining the boards of TV networks are that:

- of the 39 television board members/leadership teams, only member one is Indigenous (at SBS);
- ABC, Seven, and Nine's boards have overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic representation;
- Ten's most senior management<sup>11</sup> is composed of almost exclusively leaders who have Anglo-Celtic backgrounds (the one exception has European background);
- ABC has a female-dominant board (67% female);
- Seven has a male-dominant board (78% male); and
- SBS has the most gender- and culturally-diverse board (37.5% Anglo-Celtic, 37.5% European 12.0% non-European, 12.5% Indigenous and an even gender split).

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<sup>11</sup> Network 10's Board is based in the US for ViacomCBS. Therefore, this is a summary of top tier leadership in Australia at the broadcaster.

# National news directors, state directors and editors and bureau chiefs as at June 2020

The lack of diversity extends to those working in senior television news management roles. This cohort includes national news directors, state directors/editors and bureau chiefs. The key findings from this data set are that:

- as of July 2020, every national news director in Australia has an Anglo-Celtic background (100%) and is male;
- of the 32 people working in the most senior news management roles, 28 (87.5%) have an Anglo-Celtic background, 3 (9.4%) have a European background and 1 (3.2%) has a non-European background;
- of the 32 people working in the most senior news management roles, 9 (28%) are women and 23 are men (72%), and 100% of these women have an Anglo-Celtic background; and
- the number of women working in news leadership roles vary (Seven has 0% women, Nine has 14%, Ten has 43%, ABC has 43% and SBS has 50%), though all women leaders identified have an Anglo-Celtic background.

Under-representation in both gender and cultural diversity means that Australian television networks are not functioning at their optimal capacity. McKinsey's research has shown that companies with increased gender and cultural diversity outperform less diverse companies.<sup>12</sup>

## Findings: Interviews with editorial leaders in news and current affairs television

In this section, the final element of the research data is presented. It discusses the findings from interviews conducted with nine senior news and current affairs leaders from all five free-to-air Australian television networks. The interviews took place in the first half of 2020.

Interviews were transcribed with data qualitatively analysed by two researchers in the team. As previously stated, cultural diversity was defined as an ethnic background/language or ancestry other than Anglo-Celtic. Interviewees were not given a specific definition of 'cultural diversity' because researchers wanted the leaders to share their particular understandings of what cultural diversity meant to them.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Hunt et al. 2020; Hunt et al. 2018

<sup>13</sup> Participants were deidentified in an effort to encourage candour and openness, and to avoid an ad hominem analysis.

## **Leaders blur cultural diversity with other diversity characteristics**

Responses on what constitutes cultural diversity were mixed, with some leaders understanding cultural diversity as referring to a person's ethnicity, country of birth, spoken language, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic circumstances, geographic location and/or religious views. There were clearly aspects of diversity described that do not fall under the umbrella of cultural diversity. This may indicate that leaders have a poor understanding of cultural diversity and have not assigned enough meaning to it. This could explain why they are not actively driving efforts to increase cultural diversity.

## **Leaders believe their networks are increasing diversity - but they are not**

Each leader thought their network was becoming more culturally diverse, but their perceptions are not borne out by the data collected in this study. Some discussed success with increasing gender diversity but acknowledged less efforts had been made to increase cultural diversity:

*“I think from an HR perspective there has been a lot done on that regard around gender. I think less has probably been done around cultural diversity.”*

Such comments indicate that cultural diversity can just be grouped with gender diversity. However, these two characteristics of diversity are very different and require different strategies to bring about positive change. Despite leaders expressing enthusiasm for trying to increase cultural diversity, it is clearly not a priority. Most leaders are not working strategically to build greater cultural diversity in their workforces.

## **Addressing stereotyping appears to be a low priority in most newsrooms**

Most networks do not have employees, including managers, undertaking cultural awareness training to deal with unconscious bias. “Unconscious (or implicit) biases are learned stereotypes that are automatic, unintentional, deeply engrained, universal, and able to influence behaviour”.<sup>14</sup> In fact, Deloitte describes bias as an “Achilles Heel” for leaders.<sup>15</sup> Becoming conscious of bias is critically important because programs that help people recognise their unconscious biases may alter instinctive ways of thinking, and eventually reduce discriminatory behaviours.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Noon 2018

<sup>15</sup> Bourke and Dillon 2018, p. 88

<sup>16</sup> Fiarman 2016

Such awareness raising may result in different recruitment outcomes and build a more inclusive workplace culture.

*“When you’re in the majority it’s very difficult to see the world through the eyes of the minority. So yes, do we sometimes stereotype things? Probably, without even us realising it.”*

## **Newsrooms without charters lack diversity and inclusion policies**

While SBS and ABC have Charters that require them to measure and report cultural diversity, commercial networks do not. When leaders were asked if their network had a diversity and inclusion policy, responses included:

*“I’m not aware of any written policy or measurements around diversity.”*

*“I’d have to look it up. I’m sure they would have something somewhere on their intranet.”*

Such responses do not instil confidence about inclusive leadership when network leaders don’t even know whether they have a diversity policy or not. Increasing cultural diversity must start at the highest levels of the organisation. If strategy is driven from the top with visible leadership and accountability, it is more likely to permeate through the entire workforce. “Cultural diversity at the highest levels of company leadership can serve as a signal to employees and other stakeholders that the organisation truly understands and values the community and customers they serve.”<sup>17</sup>

The response from leaders was mixed when they were asked about affirmative action as a pathway to increasing cultural diversity in the media industry. Some leaders who had seen affirmative action getting results while working overseas were very positive about the concept. They felt their networks overseas were more culturally inclusive than Australian networks. Another had witnessed affirmative action during university and was impressed:

*“When I was in university, they had it a lot ... so much debate. But it made progress. It worked, in so many ways, because it gave people a chance that may not have got it ... and then they got to prove themselves.”*

<sup>17</sup> Hunt et al. 2018, p. 13

One leader even described the positive impact of a warm welcome and invitation to engage with cultural rituals, which helped him to settle into a new country where he was no longer one of the dominant culture. However, a number of leaders were critical of affirmative action, such as data measurement, did not believe it would lead to change and were highly opposed to targets and quotas:

***“I wouldn’t be very happy if [measurement] started becoming a mandated process.”***

***“I don’t think it would make too much of a difference. I think that leads to a quota system which I’m definitely not in favour of.”***

***“I think quotas and targets are the same thing because it becomes box ticking and number checking and spreadsheeting then and that’s not what it’s about.”***

Contrary to what the leaders think, setting targets is proven to be an effective way to increase cultural diversity, and ongoing data collection and measurement is essential to evaluate any affirmative actions.<sup>18</sup>

Leaders described the barriers they believed people from culturally diverse backgrounds face when attempting to enter and progress through the media industry. They included the difficulty of accessing cadetship programs:

***“You’ve got to have gone to UTS or Sydney University to get into any of those elite cadetships at the ABC or SBS.”***

It is difficult to know whether the lack of diversity on television repels applicants from undertaking journalism degrees, or whether the focus on a small sample of elite institutions limits the application pool.

Another factor which may also be contributing to the lack of cultural diversity in newsrooms is recruiting from a largely graduate-only workforce. A British study of cultural diversity in journalism found that undergraduate journalism cohorts are not representative of the general population, with students often coming from wealthier circumstances and attending elite universities.<sup>19</sup> This means that choosing mainly from a graduate-only pool can in itself lead to less cultural diversity amongst the journalism workforce.

<sup>18</sup> Ofcom 2018, 2019a, 2019b; Hunt et al. 2020

<sup>19</sup> Spilsbury 2017

Clearly, there needs to be new and more innovative ways to attract and support culturally diverse people wishing to enter the media workforce. Leaders described that culturally diverse journalists rarely applied for positions:

***“I can’t begin to tell you how often I don’t receive an application from someone who’s from a diverse background.”***

Leaders sometimes call a culturally diverse colleague or friend to see if they know of someone who might be suitable for the position. It was suggested that perhaps Media Diversity Australia could host a portal so that aspiring culturally diverse journalists could upload pitches and portfolios that demonstrate their talents. Being able to upload material to a portal for the aspirant enables easy access for recruiters wishing to identify talent.

Leaders discussed some of the successful collaborations they have established between their networks and organisations such as the Walkley Foundation and Media Diversity Australia. Working in partnership to target and recruit under-represented journalists has provided new entry points for some culturally diverse journalists into the industry. One leader explained:

***“We did embark last year with Media Diversity Australia to offer a six-week internship and that’s been a real success.”***

There is also an opportunity for media organisations to partner with universities not only on traditional recruitment initiatives but also on programs specifically designed to target students from culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous backgrounds.

The Media Mentorship Program at Macquarie University partners media organisations, including SBS, ABC and Network 10, with culturally and linguistically diverse students, Indigenous students and low SES students across their Media Studies degree. The program includes skills development workshops, production opportunities, networking with industry professionals and mentored industry placements. Ongoing evaluation of this program shows that 70% of participants who graduate secure employment in the media industry.<sup>20</sup>

While such collaborations are to be encouraged, it is critical that once a culturally diverse person becomes an employee they must continue to be supported and encouraged to pursue their careers. An initiative that may succeed in this area is

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<sup>20</sup> Internal data from Macquarie University

the revamped ABC cadetship program. The program is prioritising the inclusion of under-represented groups and includes developing a post-cadetship retention plan for its participants.<sup>21</sup> Journalists may also find additional support through mentoring and sponsorship programs.

Leaders discussed the time constraints associated with maintaining mentoring programs in busy environments like newsrooms. Perhaps the COVID-19 pandemic has presented us with different opportunities for mentoring. With technologies transcending geopolitical boundaries and time zones and enabling access to a large pool of potential mentors, mentoring might be practiced in new ways in the future. Another effective way to support and encourage culturally diverse employees is by increasing access to sponsorship opportunities.<sup>22</sup>

Through the interviews, another barrier to recruitment was identified. It became clear that familiarity and a reliance on “insider recommendations” can influence who finds out about job opportunities, who gets to apply and who is offered an interview. These present significant barriers to increasing cultural diversity in the workforce. A person from a culturally diverse background is unlikely to have had the same opportunities to build familiarity in media networks they have no connection to, or to hear about job opportunities and apply for them. One leader explained that with newsrooms facing intense time pressures, recruiters are more likely to just contact a peer in the industry to ask about and identify talent to fill positions. He also commented that:

***“You’re going to call people who are very similar to you.”***

Recruitment practices also seem to favour those who have previously worked in the industry. Journalists with prior experience but currently not working in the industry, are often “tapped on the shoulder” and offered work, again reducing the chances of aspiring journalists from culturally diverse backgrounds getting into newsrooms.

Another pipeline issue which emerged was the barriers culturally diverse employees experience moving from middle management to more senior roles:

***“Change is happening, but there’s this sort of prevailing sense that culturally diverse people won’t get jobs in higher positions.”***

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<sup>21</sup> ABC 2019, p. 22

<sup>22</sup> AHRC 2018, p. 25

The leader who made this comment could not really elaborate on why they thought this was the case. Other leaders talked about barriers existing between middle management and higher leadership positions but also believed that positive change was happening.

It would be surprising if significant change was happening. Change in the UK media industry only occurred with structural change through inclusive leadership, ongoing data measurement and reporting and through affirmative action such as setting targets. And although there has been some improvement the rate of change remains slow.<sup>23</sup>

## **Networks don't build diversity into their business cases, but advertisers do**

While there is robust evidence that increasing cultural diversity is part of developing a strong business case,<sup>24</sup> few Australian television networks build their business cases around diversity.

In 2020, global management consultant company McKinsey again confirmed that companies with both ethnic and cultural diversity and gender diversity in corporate leadership are outperforming non-diverse companies on profitability. They found: “The most diverse companies are now more likely than ever to outperform non-diverse companies on profitability”.<sup>25</sup>

While networks might be slow on the uptake, advertisers and corporate marketers are not. They are increasing cultural diversity to attract a wider range of audiences. A number of leaders described how they noticed businesses were changing their marketing strategies and were actually breaking down stereotypes through their advertising. Increasingly, more people from diverse backgrounds are appearing in television advertisements, with businesses clearly wanting to target a broader range of people.

It is surprising that more television networks aren't developing business cases around diversity. As this leader remarked:

***“I mean, obviously [advertisers and marketers] are using it for commercial gain but ... if they can do it, then the rest of the media industry should be doing it.”***

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<sup>23</sup> Ofcom 2018, 2019a, 2019b

<sup>24</sup> Hunt et al. 2020; Hunt et al. 2015; Hunt et al. 2018

<sup>25</sup> Hunt et al. 2020, p. 3

In an online era when traditional media outlets are dealing with enormous challenges to their business models, it is critical to include and reflect on the clear financial benefits of building a culturally diverse workforce into strategic and business plans. It is clear from these interviews with network leaders that the advertising industry has already understood and acted upon the economic benefits of representing culturally diverse people in their content and targeting more diverse audiences. When will television networks follow suit?

## **Leaders' ideas for increasing cultural diversity**

In their interviews, these leaders suggested the following strategies to increase cultural diversity in news and current affairs media:

- Affirmative action plans to recruit people who would normally face barriers and allow them to prove themselves.
- Institute positive discrimination to get the culturally diverse workforce we want.
- Have a Charter to steer commercial networks to represent a culturally diverse Australia and to guide editorial decisions.
- Have structured mentoring and sponsorship programs to support culturally diverse employees to develop their talents and to progress through their careers.
- Encourage a real change of understanding at the top.
- Have a repository showcasing the work of culturally diverse potential employees to help with talent identification and recruitment.
- Have news media role models talking to young people at schools and universities so that young people become aspirational.
- Media organisations offering scholarships to culturally diverse journalists at university to encourage them.
- Change the wording on application forms to encourage journalists of all backgrounds and diversity to apply for cadetships and jobs.
- Support incoming staff to make them feel welcome and believe that they belong and deserve to be in the newsroom.
- Start identifying people from the reporting ranks and looking at what opportunities there could be for them to progress through the industry.

These suggestions were considered when writing the recommendations for the *Who Gets To Tell Australian Stories?* report.

# International comparisons

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## How does Australia's news media compare to the US and UK?

In the future, Australia will be able to benchmark its cultural diversity data against other nations. The UK and US have been actively working to increase cultural diversity in their media over a much longer period of time. Both nations deem that progress is too slow but continue to make concerted efforts while evaluating new diversity initiatives.

### United Kingdom

The UK government-approved regulatory and competition authority, the Office of Communications (Ofcom), mandates and annually reports on diversity data including evaluation strategies<sup>26</sup> from its 10 major TV broadcasters. Ofcom publishes information about which broadcasters supply or do not supply the requested data. Below is a snapshot of cultural diversity in UK television today.

Ofcom's 2019 [Diversity and Equal Opportunities in Television](#) report demonstrated progress with more culturally diverse people and less white people now working in the UK-based TV industry than working in the UK labour market (**Figure 15**).

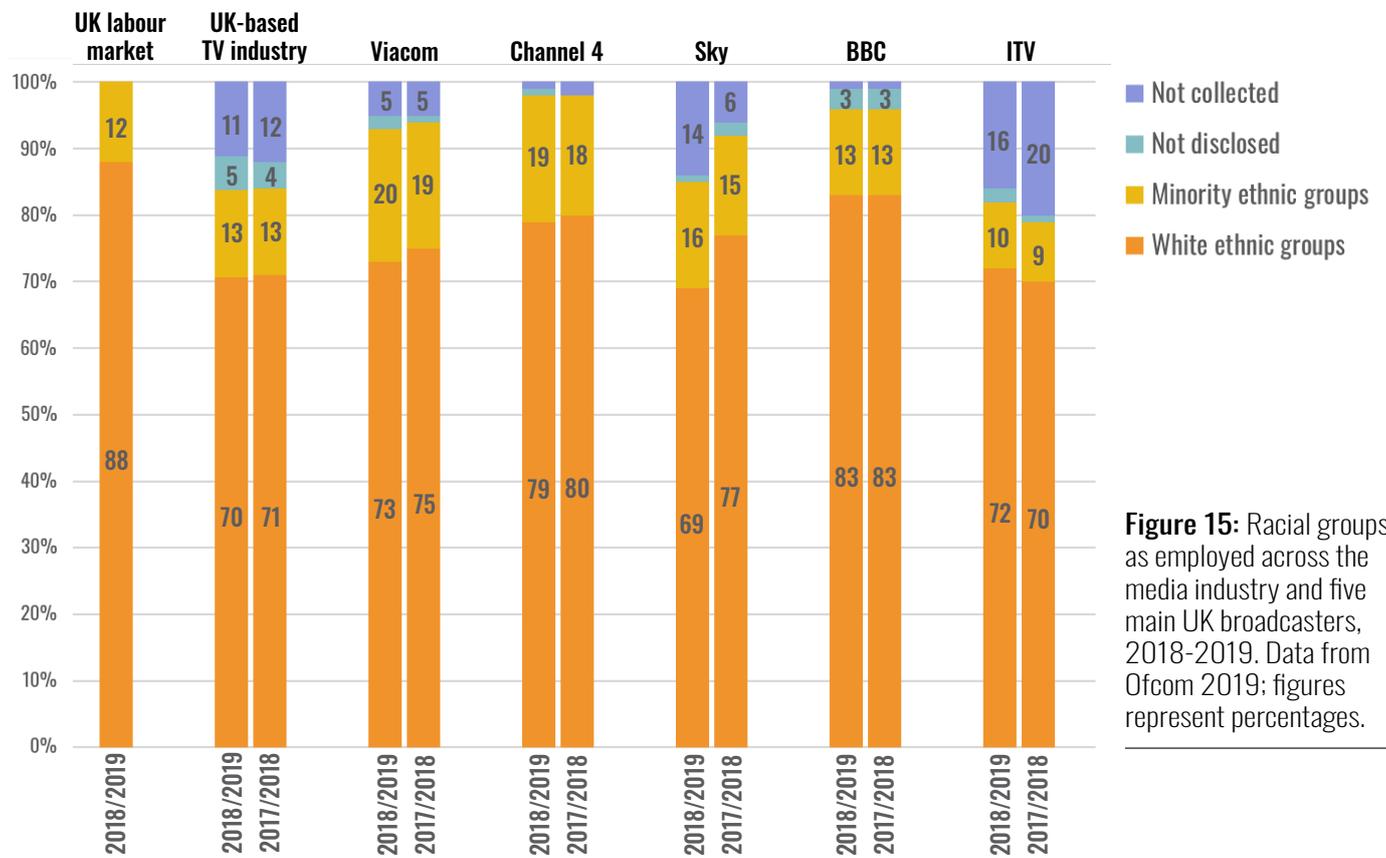
Increasing cultural diversity leadership in UK television has been identified as a priority. In the UK context, the acronym BAME is used to describe the categories of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups. That is, BAME describes all ethnic groups except White ethnic groups. Direct comparisons are difficult to make, given data is collected differently and diversity classification differs.

The table below (**Table 8**) shows encouraging signs of increased diversity with a higher rate of BAME employees being promoted in most UK television networks

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<sup>26</sup> Collection of evaluation data began in the 2018/19 reporting period.

than the proportion of BAME employees working within them. Interestingly Viacom, now the owner of Channel 10, has the most culturally diverse team.



**Figure 15:** Racial groups as employed across the media industry and five main UK broadcasters, 2018-2019. Data from Ofcom 2019; figures represent percentages.

	<b>Proportion of employees from a minority ethnic background</b>	<b>Proportion of those promoted who are from a minority ethnic background</b>
UK-based employees	13%	13%
Viacom	20%	23%
Channel 4	19%	18%
Sky	15%	18%
BBC	13%	15%
ITV	10%	11%

**Table 8:** Proportion of media employees promoted from minority ethnic backgrounds. Data from Ofcom 2019

As Channel 4 and Viacom have had success in increasing their cultural diversity, it is worthwhile examining how they have done this.

#### **Channel 4: Diversity Charter with targets**

In 2015, Channel 4 launched its comprehensive and far reaching [360° Diversity Charter](#) which is backed by the power to withhold executive bonuses if targets are not met. Two targets included having:

- a 20% BAME workforce by 2020
- 20% of its highest 100 income earners from BAME backgrounds by 2023.

Ofcom was impressed with Channel 4's progress and particularly its evaluation strategies that are "frequent, measured, include a range of sources of feedback and benefit from external, independent insight".<sup>27</sup>

#### **Viacom: Equal opportunities recruitment, partnerships and training practices**

Ofcom found the Viacom network is leading the way with employees from BAME backgrounds comprising a fifth of the entire organisation.<sup>28</sup> Viacom has focused on equal opportunities initiatives especially in its Recruitment, Partnerships and Training practices. These include but are not limited to:

- recruitment agencies used by Viacom UK needing to meet diversity and inclusion requirements on shortlists;
- all Viacom hiring managers attending mandatory training on unconscious bias
- training schemes that promote a diverse and inclusive workforce;
- a diversity and inclusion section on its careers site;
- partnerships with charities, job boards and social networks that focus on
- minority ethnic groups, and;
- a global mentoring scheme for all Viacom employees across the world.

## **United States**

In the US, the News Leaders Association (NLA) has been collecting diversity data including gender and cultural diversity statistics since 1978 through the annual ASNE survey. The longitudinal data below shows how cultural and gender diversity in USA newsrooms has changed over time.

Between 2001 and 2018, racial diversity increased in 40% of newsrooms while 16% lost racial diversity. In a 2020 analysis of three decades of data, the NLA noted that while there has been progress in increasing diversity, the racial diversity

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<sup>27</sup> Ofcom 2019a, p. 33

<sup>28</sup> Ofcom 2019b, p. 73

of newsrooms wasn't increasing at the same rate as the nation's increasingly diverse population was.<sup>29</sup>

The lack of cultural diversity within US news media has also been investigated by organisations such as the nonpartisan American think tank, Pew Research Centre (PEW). In 2018, PEW reported that “newsroom employees are more likely to be white and male than U.S. workers overall”.<sup>30</sup> In 2019, PEW also identified a lack of diversity in geography demographics. Approximately one in five US newsroom employees (22%) lived in just three locations, either New York, Los Angeles or Washington DC.<sup>31</sup> Parallels can be drawn with these figures and the majority of Australian media employees living in either Sydney or Melbourne. Both demonstrate a serious lack of diversity.

Positive signs of increased diversity emerged when the 2019 Diversity Study found that “digital-only platforms drive race and gender inclusion among newsrooms in 2019.”<sup>32</sup>

The 2019 data revealed that at online-only publications, 30.8% of salaried workers are people of colour, an increase of 5 percentage points since 2018. As well, in both 2018 and 2019, women comprised 50% of employees in online-only newsrooms. It will be important to consider the impact of online newsrooms when designing and measuring future diversity initiatives in Australian newsrooms.

In 2019, Australia's national broadcaster launched its detailed and ambitious [ABC Diversity & Inclusion Plan 2019-22](#). In keeping with developing an inclusive culture, all teams in the ABC were involved in its development. The plan sets clear strategic directions and has targets which will be monitored and regularly reported to the ABC Leadership Team. The key focus areas will be workforce diversity, building an inclusive workplace culture and creating inclusive content and services. Cultural diversity targets include:

- That by August 2022, 15% of content maker roles and 15% of executive roles will be filled by CALD employees, and;
- 3.4% of employees at ABC will have Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander/ Indigenous backgrounds.<sup>33</sup>

It will be very useful in the future to be able to benchmark data from the ABC with overseas nations such as the UK and US.

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<sup>29</sup> NLA 2019

<sup>30</sup> Grieco 2018

<sup>31</sup> Grieco 2019

<sup>32</sup> NLA 2019

<sup>33</sup> ABC 2019, p. 14

# Conclusion

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As this report has demonstrated, the Australian news and current affairs media has a long way to go when it comes to building a workforce that truly represents Australia's diverse cultures.

We lag significantly behind comparable Western democracies when it comes to collecting data on cultural diversity, actively promoting culturally diverse and inclusive media workplaces and implementing measures to recruit, mentor and promote people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

There is evidence that cultural diversity strengthens organisations, including their business models. There are tested, best-practice models for how to increase cultural diversity. But our free-to-air television newsrooms are failing to fully, or in some cases, even partially implement these strategies.

If we want to increase cultural diversity in our news and current affairs media we have to address the unconscious biases and in-house hiring practices that are endemic to our media.

To cite the ABC's current Diversity Plan, it means "embracing diversity and fostering a culture that values people's unique backgrounds, experiences and perspectives". Inclusion in the teamwork that grounds media production is about acknowledging "people's individual experience and the extent to which they feel respected and valued. It means creating a supportive environment in which our people feel safe to be themselves and inspired to contribute to the ABC's vision".<sup>34</sup>

There can be no question that a robust media is equally a diverse media - one that truly engages with the rich diversity of Australian culture and tells all of our stories.

## Recommendations

Best practice research referenced in this report tells us that increasing cultural diversity in any organisation requires structural change. It cannot be achieved on a case by case basis.

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<sup>34</sup> ABC 2019, p. 8

Future initiatives to increase cultural diversity in the Australian media must necessarily align with the commercial interests of the outlets and be grounded in a solid business case. Robust plans for both benchmarking and ongoing evaluation are critical to maintaining progress in ways which ultimately benefit media organisations, their audiences and the way in which Australian stories are told.

The following recommendations are based on the research conducted for this report and in a survey of key research conducted both in Australia and internationally and an analysis of initiatives implemented by media organisations in comparable nations.

### **Recommendation 1: Make the case for diversity**

Educate your existing workforce, including leaders, about the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce and actively build a workforce that is literate about the benefits of cultural diversity -- including better and broader news content as well as the flow-on effect that more nuanced reporting has on social cohesion. Train them about diversity and inclusion, including training on unconscious bias. Engage an experienced external educator who is evidence-based, brings an understanding of how media organisations work and who can work with teams to deepen understanding of the benefits of diversity.

### **Recommendation 2: Collect data on cultural diversity**

All media organisations, including free-to-air television networks, should establish measurable, meaningful and manageable data collection practices on cultural diversity in their organisations. This process should be initiated by asking everyone in the organisation to complete a diversity questionnaire related to gender, language and ancestry. Without data collection followed by rigorous and consistent measurement there is no capacity to monitor change in cultural diversity levels within the organisation.

### **Recommendation 3: Establish targets to increase cultural diversity**

Establish targets to develop a more culturally diverse workforce and report on progress. Targets are aspirational goals rather than mandated quotas. To be effective, targets should be clearly measurable and leaders should review their progress on a regular basis. Everyone in the organisation should be informed about the benefits of recruiting and retaining a more diverse workforce and the role of targets in achieving the goal of a more inclusive organisation.

## **Recommendation 4: Recognise the economic benefits of a more culturally diverse workforce**

In an online era when traditional media outlets are dealing with enormous challenges to their business models, it is critical to incorporate the clear financial benefits of building a diverse workforce into strategic and business plans. KPIs for senior executives should reflect this. It is clear, as referenced in this report, that the advertising industry has already understood and acted on the economic rationale for representing and targeting more diverse audiences.

## **Recommendation 5: Prioritise diversity in the organisation's approach to recruitment and promotion**

Initiatives include:

- Reducing reliance on insider recommendations
- Collaborating with culturally diverse people when developing plans to ensure cultural diversity and inclusion
- Developing an alternative set of entry-level opportunities for non-graduates
- Establishing portals which can act as repositories for talent identification – for example, by giving potential recruits an opportunity to pitch and show portfolios of their work
- Promoting the organisation's commitment to employing a culturally diverse workforce
- Providing opportunities for entry-level employees to work in a range of roles in multiplatform newsrooms
- Establishing pathways for increased collaboration between employees working across digital and TV newsrooms.



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# Appendix 1

## News and current affairs programs broadcast across Australia between 1 and 14 June 2019

1. 7:30
2. 07:00 WA SUNRISE NEWS
3. 07:30:00 WA SUNRISE NEWS
4. 08:00 WA SUNRISE NEWS
5. 08:30 WA SUNRISE NEWS
6. 10 NEWS FIRST
7. 10 NEWS FIRST (WEEKEND)
8. 10 NEWS FIRST (WEEKEND)
9. 60 MINUTES
10. A CURRENT AFFAIR
11. A CURRENT AFFAIR PROMO
12. ABC NEWS
13. ABC NEWS (WEEKEND)
14. AUSTRALIAN STORY
15. CHANNEL NINE NEWS (SUNDAY)
16. EARLY NEWS
17. FOUR CORNERS
18. HEADLINE NEWS
19. INSIDERS
20. INSIGHT
21. LANDLINE
22. LATE NIGHT ABC NEWS
23. MEDIA WATCH
24. NATIONAL NINE EARLY NEWS
25. NATIONAL NINE MORNING NEWS
26. NATIONAL NINE NEWS
27. NATIONAL NINE NEWS (SATURDAY)
28. NATIONAL NINE NEWS (SUNDAY)
29. NATIONAL NINE NEWS (WEEKEND)
30. NATIONAL PRESS CLUB ADDRESS
31. NIGHTLY NEWS
32. NIGHTLY NEWS (SATURDAY)
33. NIGHTLY NEWS (SUNDAY)
34. NINE AFTERNOON NEWS
35. NINE MORNING NEWS
36. NINE NEWS AT 5PM
37. NINE NEWS CANBERRA
38. NINE NEWS NOW
39. OFFSIDERS
40. PRIME NEWS UPDATE 13:45
41. PRIME NEWS UPDATE 16:45
42. PRIME NEWS UPDATE 19:15
43. PRIME NEWS UPDATE 21:25
44. Q AND A
45. SEVEN MORNING NEWS
46. SEVEN NEWS
47. SEVEN NEWS (SATURDAY)
48. SEVEN NEWS (SUNDAY)
49. SEVEN NEWS (WEEKEND)
50. SEVEN NEWS AT 4
51. SEVEN NEWS AT 4PM
52. SEVEN NEWS AT 5PM (WEEKEND)
53. SEVEN NEWS QLD AT 4PM
54. SEVEN NEWS VIC AT 4PM
55. SEVEN NEWS WA AT 4PM
56. SPORTS SUNDAY
57. STUDIO 10
58. SUNDAY NIGHT
59. SUNRISE
60. THE DAILY EDITION
61. THE DRUM
62. THE LATEST: SEVEN NEWS
63. THE MORNING SHOW
64. THE PROJECT
65. TODAY
66. TODAY EXTRA
67. TODAY ON SATURDAY
68. TODAY ON SUNDAY
69. TODAY PERTH NEWS 7:00
70. TODAY PERTH NEWS 7:30
71. TODAY PERTH NEWS 8:00
72. TODAY PERTH NEWS 8:30
73. TODAY TONIGHT (SA)
74. TODAY TONIGHT (WA)
75. WEEKEND SUNRISE
76. WIN NEWS
77. WIN'S ALL AUSTRALIAN NEWS
78. WORLD NEWS AUSTRALIA
79. WORLD NEWS AUSTRALIA (LATE)
80. WORLD NEWS AUSTRALIA (SATURDAY)
81. WORLD NEWS AUSTRALIA (SUNDAY)