

Female Journalists and Sources in State-Funded International Television News: A Five-Country Content Analysis

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Abstract

- Since the mid-2000s, the number of State-funded multilingual television networks has grown around the world.
- Many of these stations claim to provide “alternative” narratives to those of Anglo-American media and voice the “voiceless”. Whose voice is being given a platform remains an elusive question.
- A content analysis of news items (N = 803) and soundbites (N = 823) in RT, France24, HispanTV, CGTN & DW reveals significant gender gaps in reporting and sourcing.

Background

- Gender imbalances in news coverage are well-documented. Despite some progress in gender parity policies throughout the world, women are still a minority in newsrooms and leadership/governance levels.
- Scholarship has noted that females have less bylines than males, they are assigned to cover soft news more often and their source selections are different.
- The underrepresentation of females and gender bias in newsrooms also affect content creation, such as the types of stories, the sources that are selected or the prominence stories get in print and broadcast

Key findings

- #1: we found that the number of stories by male journalists (57.8%; females, 42.2%) is significantly higher ($\chi^2(1, N = 161) = 3.882, p = .05$), but the proportion is not consistent across all stations.
- #2 There's a significantly larger proportion ($\chi^2(1, N = 829) = 122.752, p < .001$) of soundbites by men (69.2%) than women (30.8%).
- #3 Soundbites by women are more likely to appear in soft news stories ($\beta = .93, p < .001$), stories ranked lower in the rundown ($\beta = .07, p < .005$), and stories by female reporters ($\beta = .01, p < .05$).

Results

Figure 1. News items analyzed by news station

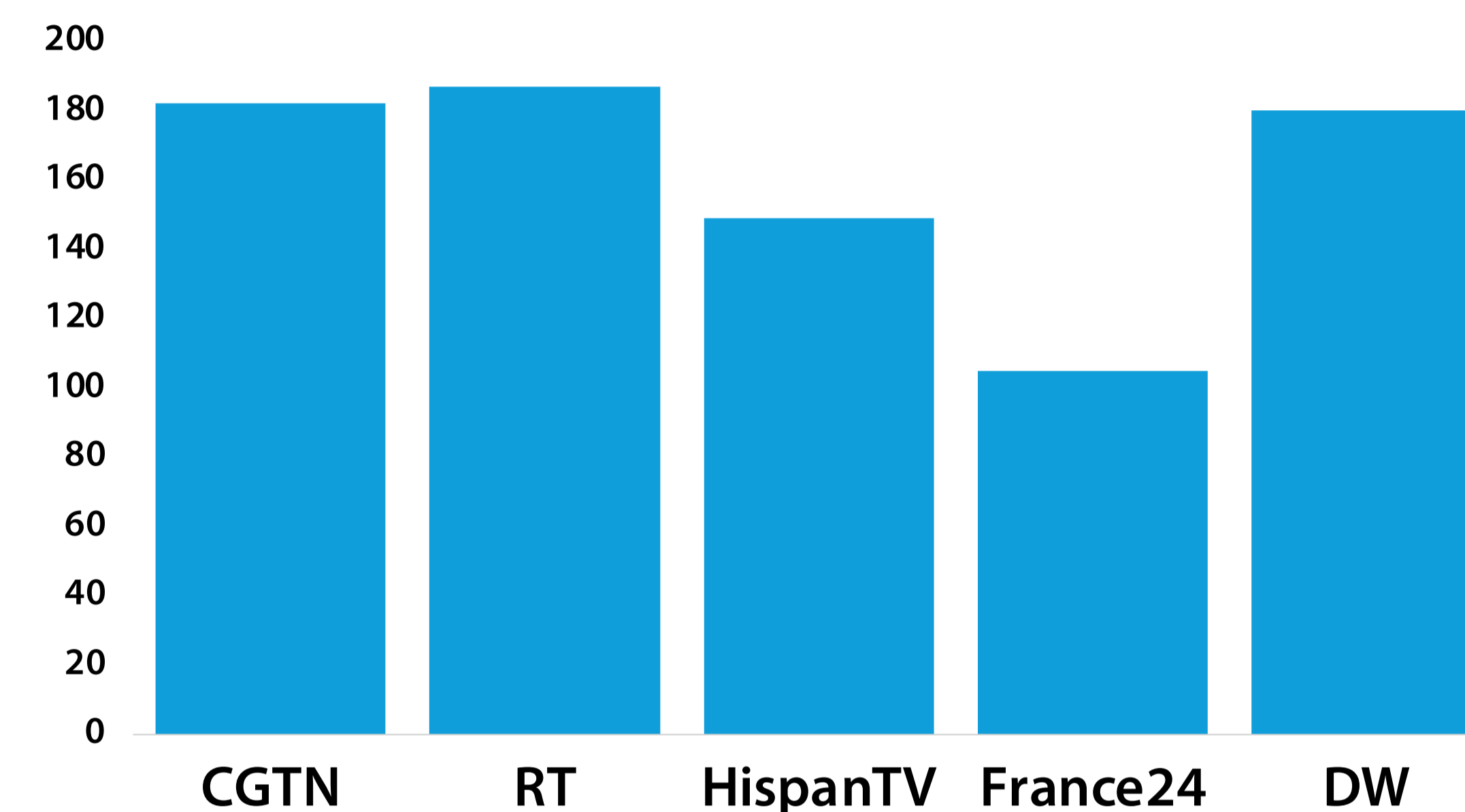


Figure 2. Gender Identity of Reporters in News Stories (by Station)

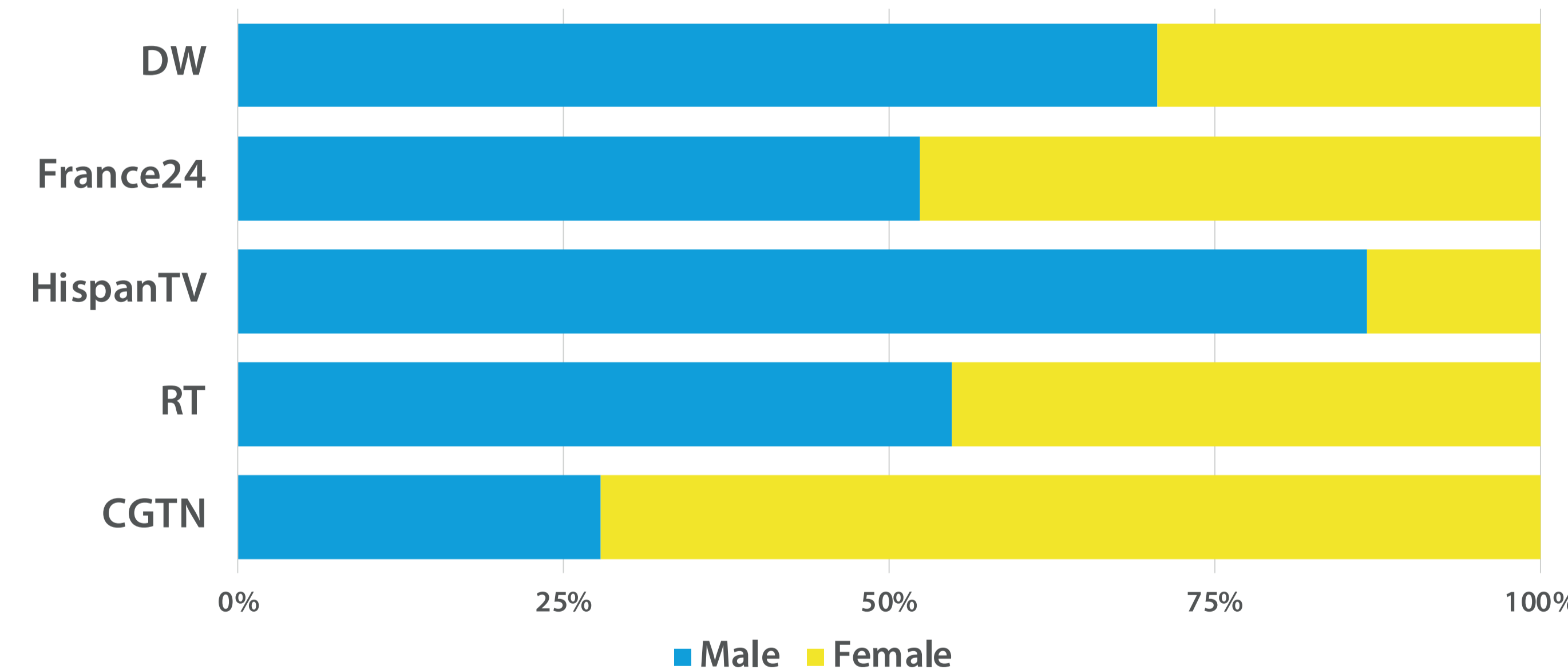


Figure 3. Gender of Soundbites in News Stories (by Station)

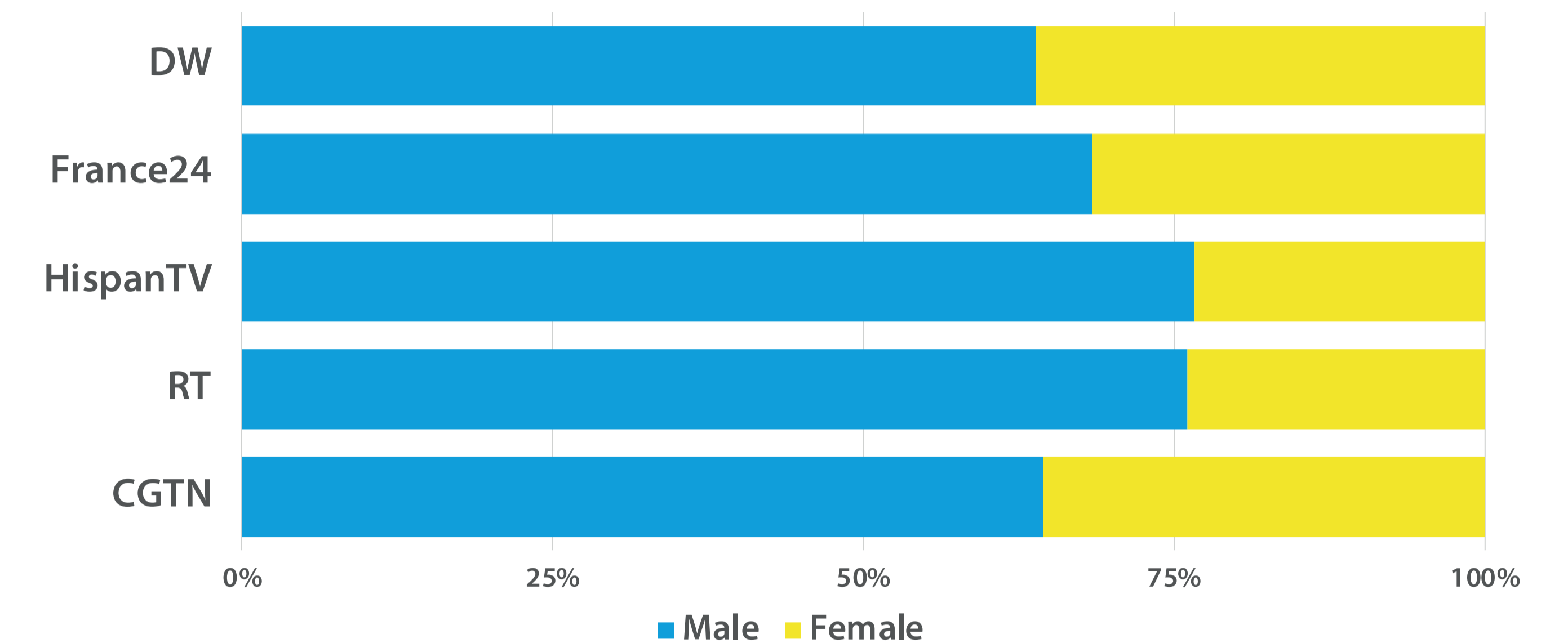
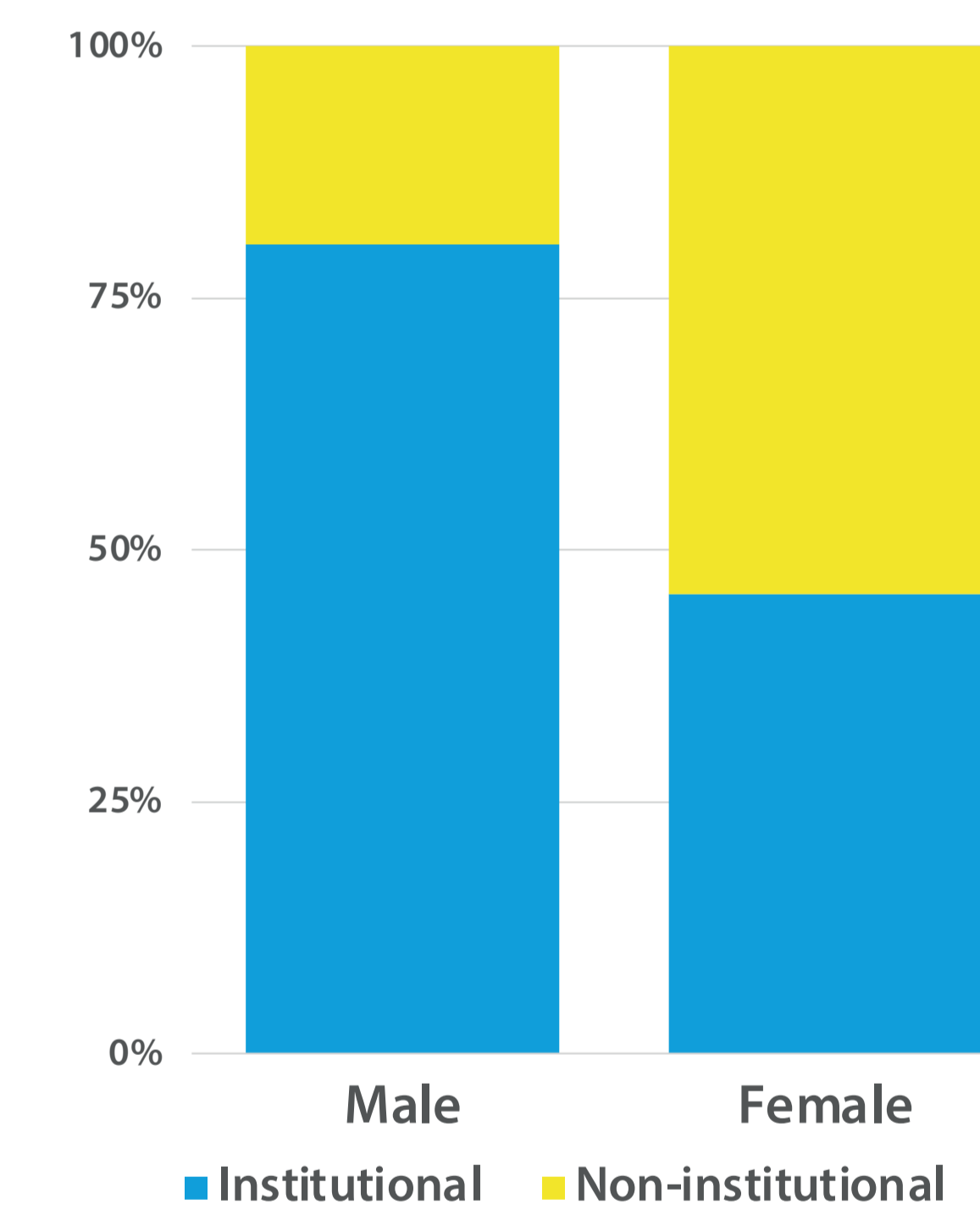


Figure 4. Gender & Type of Soundbite



Methods

- This study uses quantitative content analysis to assess how prevalent the voices of women are in five State-funded international television stations broadcasting in Spanish.
- We constructed two random weeks in 2020, for a total of 14 newscasts per station, and a total of N = 803 stories. We also analyzed N = 823 soundbites in n = 389 news stories).
- Stories were coded for format (e.g., length, position), sourcing (e.g., gender of the speaker in a soundbite) and theme (e.g., hard/soft news).

Conclusion

- Despite often presenting themselves as “alternative” to prevailing journalistic models and narratives, and claiming to give voice to the “voiceless,” the television stations surveyed in this study appear to do relatively little to provide a space for women voices, be as storytellers or subject matter experts.
- Attention needs to be paid to the rise of State-sponsored television news across the world, particularly in languages that are largely understudied in journalism studies and academic in general.

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