
Gender representation in Dutch non-fiction television programmes in 2019 and 2021

Summary

In 2021, 39.1 percent of people appearing in Dutch non-fiction television programmes were women. This is the main result of the second study monitoring the representation of women in Dutch non-fiction television programmes. The Dutch Media Authority conducted this study on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

More women on Dutch television in 2021, but men are still in the majority

There are more women on television in 2021 than there were in 2019. The proportion of women in Dutch non-fiction television programmes has risen by 2.5 percentage points. In particular, more women are to be seen in news and current affairs programmes. In 2019, 33.3 percent of the people appearing in those programmes were women; in 2021 it's 37.8 percent. There has been a sharp increase in female reporters. The proportion of female reporters increased from a quarter (23.1 percent) in 2019 to almost 40 percent (39.5 percent) in 2021. There are also more female experts, such as politicians, spokeswomen and company directors, to be seen in news items or as guests in talk shows. In 2021, one third of the experts are woman (32.0 percent) as opposed to a quarter (23.2 percent) in 2019. With regard to professors and scientific researchers, only 26.7 percent are women. This is roughly the same as in 2019.

Coronavirus crisis has not played a crucial role in the representation of women

In the first half of 2021, the coronavirus crisis had a significant impact on reporting in news and current affairs programmes. Nevertheless, the coronavirus crisis has not played a crucial role in the representation of women. Independently of the presence of women with professional expertise in the field of the virus, the pandemic or the countermeasures, the representation of female experts rose significantly in comparison with 2019. The proportion of female experts that talk about COVID-19 is roughly the same (34.1 percent) as the proportion that talk about other topics (31.1 percent).

Mainly men appear in sports programmes, but the representation of women is increasing.

In 2021, women represented 13.2 percent of people in sports programmes, up from 3.8 percent in 2019. But the vast majority of people in sports programmes are still men. In other news and current affairs programmes it is also generally men who talk about sport. Women represent 15.6 percent of experts that talk about sport. Female experts are more likely to talk about 'social issues, health, education and welfare' (40.9 percent).

Women can be seen in particular as the subject of a portrait or as a victim

Whilst women make up one third of people in news and current affairs programmes, in entertainment shows and other non-fiction programmes the percentage of women is higher (42.3 percent). Women are to be seen more frequently as game show contestants (50.5 percent) or as the subject of a portrait (47.4 percent). The ratio of men to women appearing in news and current affairs programmes as victims, as witnesses or as ordinary people on the street is virtually 50/50 (49.7 percent). These figures are the same as for 2019.

Female experts generally younger than men in the same job

Just as in 2019, the age difference between men and women is striking. In general, female experts are younger than male experts. This applies to female presenters and reporters too. The number of female presenters, reporters and experts over the age of 50 is especially low.

In 2021, more women appeared on the public service channels

The proportion of women in programmes from the Dutch public service broadcaster rose from 32.5 percent in 2019 to 37.7 percent in 2021. The representation of women on commercial television (40.5 percent) was virtually the same as in 2019. Even so, more women appear on commercial channels than on public-service channels. In programmes on the public channels female experts make up 30.9 percent in 2021, up from 18.9 percent in 2019.

The Dutch Media Authority conducted this study using a quantitative content analysis using a method developed in-house that was based on national and international research. The sample covered 4,312 people from 261 programmes that aired in the first half of 2021. The programmes aired during primetime on public-service channels NPO 1 and NPO 2 and commercial stations RTL 4 and SBS6. The sample was supplemented with programmes with high viewing rates that aired at other times and on other channels.

