

On newspapers in France

Mostly of the leading newspapers in France are run by men. This situation has been denounced on several occasions over the last decade. In 2013, female journalists of the newspaper *Les Echos* refused to sign articles to condemn the under-representation of women in chief positions within the organisation.¹

Later, in 2018, the lack of parity in the editorial staff of *Le Parisien-Aujourd'hui* in France led a group of women journalists to submit a “symbolic” collective application to become editor-in-chief of the different sections of the newspaper as a way of protesting against the exclusively male nature of the editorial committee². Following this movement, Ms. Marie Christine Tabet was appointed as editor in chief of the Sunday edition of the newspaper.³

Notwithstanding the above, newspaper editors-in-chief in France are still largely men. As relevant exceptions, we can cite the case of the appointment of Ms. Maud Vergnol as co-editor-in-chief of the left-wing newspaper *L'Humanité* in 2019.

Also, in the same year, journalist Ms. Armelle Le Goff was named editor-in-chief of the free newspaper *20 Minutes*.

The genders of the editor-in-chief among the seven largest French national newspapers by circulation⁴ are shown in Table 1 below⁵:

TABLE 1

Newspaper	Circulation (2019) (ACPM)	Political alignment	Publishing group	Gender editor-in-chief (name) ⁶
Le Figaro	325,938	Centre-right	Dassault Group	Male (Alexis Brezet)
Le Monde	323,565	Social liberalism	Groupe Le Monde	Male (Jérôme Fenoglio)
Les Echos	130,059	Economic liberalism	LVMH	Male (Nicolas Barré)
Aujurd'hui en France (Le Parisien)	98,694	Neutral	LVMH	Male (Stéphane Albouy)
La Croix	87,682	Christian	Bayard Presse	Male (Guillaume Goubert)
Libération	71,466	Centre-left	Altice Group	Male (Laurent Joffrin)

¹ “Les Echos: “signature strike” by women journalists”, https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/medias/les-echos-greve-des-signatures-des-journalistes-femmes_1255641.html [Date consulted: July 13th, 2020]. Please note that the signature strike was about the lack of women in chief positions, not necessarily as editor-in-chief.

² “Parity: at “Le Parisien”, women journalists point the way”, https://www.liberation.fr/futurs/2018/01/12/parite-au-parisien-les-femmes-journalistes-indiquent-la-direction_1621955 [Date consulted: July 13th, 2020].

³ “Marie-Christine Tabet appointed editor-in-chief at the “Parisien”, https://www.liberation.fr/direct/element/marie-christine-tabet-nommee-redactrice-en-chef-au-parisien_76947/ [Date consulted: July 13th, 2020].

⁴ The data comes from the press circulation ranking conducted by Alliance pour les Chiffres de la Presse et des Médias (“ACPM”) relating to 2019. Further information on the survey can be found on the ACPM website: <https://www.acpm.fr/>

⁵ Sports and free newspapers have been excluded. Nevertheless, please note that (i) the third largest newspaper in France by circulation is “L'Equipe”, a sports newspaper, with an editor-in-chief of male gender, Mr. Jérôme Cazadiou, and (ii) the daily newspaper “20 Minutes”, the largest free newspaper in France by circulation, is headed by a woman, Ms. Armelle Le Goff (see Table 2).

⁶ The figure of the “editor-in-chief” has been assimilated here to the so-called “*directeur de la rédaction*”. The names indicated in the table therefore occupy this position within the newspaper. Please note that in France there are other figures such as the so-called “*directeur de la publication*”, who is intended to be the chairman of the board of directors and who has business and legal functions.

L'Humanité	36,261	Communism	Société nouvelle du Journal de l'Humanité	Male & Female (<i>Maud Vergnol & Sébastien Crépel</i>)
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Other relevant newspapers, not included in Table 1 above, that are currently run by women are indicated in Table 2 below:

Newspaper	Circulation (2019) (ACPM)	Political alignment	Publishing group	Female editor-in-chief
20 Minutes	911,128	Neutral	Groupe Rossel & Groupe Sipa - Ouest-France	Armelle Le Goff

In the light of the data contained in Tables 1 and 2 above, some facts can be inferred:

- 1) There is currently one woman at the top of the 7 national newspapers with the highest circulation in France, Ms. Vergnol at *L'Humanité*.
- 2) Among the rest of the most widely circulated French national newspapers, there is only one woman serving as an editor-in-chief: Ms. Le Goff at the free daily newspaper *20 Minutes*.
- 3) With reference to the sports press, not included in Tables 1 and 2 above but widely read in France, (currently the largest French sports newspaper (*L'Equipe*)) are headed by a male editor-in-chief.
- 4) In order to find a greater female presence in managerial positions, we must turn to French magazines and weeklies (certainly more gender-balanced) or positions other than editor-in-chief within newspapers, some of which are also relevant, such is the case of Ms. Françoise Pichard, who is the "*directeur de la publication*" (see note 6) of the right-wing French newspaper *Présent*.

In order to contextualise the importance of a proper gender balance at the head of French newspapers, according to data from 2018, 97.1% of the French population claimed to read the press every month. This means 50.9 million newspaper readers each month.⁷

⁷According to ACPM. Further information on the survey can be found on the following website: <https://www.offremedia.com/infographie-les-chiffres-cles-de-laudience-et-de-la-diffusion-presse-detailles-par-lacpm>