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UK Media Diversity Reporting 2021-2024: An Evaluation Report

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Dedication

To all the people working in EDI, especially those with protected characteristics, thank you for your commitment and perseverance. We want to acknowledge the huge effort you put in to increase diversity in the media, often at great personal cost.

Executive Summary

This evaluation examines existing knowledge and data on media diversity according to reporting in the UK in the period 2021-2024. It does so by analysing existing reporting on media diversity from the media industry, the third sector, and academic research.¹ This evaluation was initiated in response to the growing demand for more diversity within the media industry, which requires the mapping of existing knowledge and evidence around persistent barriers to diversity and related developments. The evaluation also aimed at identifying industry stakeholders who prioritise diversity in a media industry that evolves rapidly in various directions.

The objectives for this evaluation are:

-  To assess the importance given to media diversity among existing reporting in the UK.
-  To establish the prominent areas of focus on media diversity in the UK.
-  To identify patterns of frequency, scope, purpose, methodology and conclusions among existing reporting.
-  To evaluate pending gaps or questions in existing reporting.

The evaluation has led us to the following conclusions:

- 1** There is scant knowledge on diversity in online streaming, as most of the existing knowledge is on broadcast and a lot less on other mainstream media sect.

Most of the existing data and evidence on media diversity is quantitative, not qualitative. This, somehow, flags up the difficulty in holding in-depth conversations within the industry and thus in obtaining in-depth insights into media diversity in the country.

- 2** Most of the focus in existing knowledge is on protected characteristics and a lot less on other areas of diversity such as leadership roles, with talent support and training being particularly under-reported.

For example, we found that entry-level roles ranked significantly above production roles in existing reporting.

¹ Our evaluation's scope is limited to reports available in the public domain. The evidence gathering method we employed was comprehensive and aimed to be as inclusive and representative as possible.

- 3 From all protected characteristics that existing knowledge focuses on, disability and race are those reported the most.

Although this is commendable, protected characteristics such as sexual orientation, religious beliefs, gender reassignment, age and gender receive less and more-or-less the same attention in existing reporting.

- 4 There is a general lack of knowledge on intersectional patterns in media diversity.

This is problematic as the understanding of how multiple protected characteristics can interact to perpetuate inequalities in the media environment can help diversity policies and activities become more comprehensive and less unidirectional.

- 5 Existing knowledge and reporting demonstrate some good practices, alongside gaps and limitations.

Both gaps and good practices are presented in this evaluation document.

Introduction

Diversity is a vital component of the media. Recent international phenomena of political and other campaigning against equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives have only further shown that, left to its own whims, the systems of power will remain incredibly unbalanced without any thoughts towards equity and inclusion. In the UK, where the social fabric is increasingly complex and nuanced, the media have an ever-important role of ensuring that their content and those responsible for making it continuously reflect the diversity of media audiences. This is one of the responsibilities of the Office of Communication (Ofcom), which is to ensure that the broadcast sector, for example, reflects the increasing diversity of the UK audience². Indicatively, in its 2024 report on “Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Broadcasting,” Ofcom emphasises that it “...has legal duties to promote equality of opportunity in the broadcasting sector” (Ofcom, 2024a, p.6). Thus, diversity plays a critical role in ensuring that the media are representative of audiences and in fostering greater audience connectivity and trust.

In recent times, there have been notable diversity initiatives and strategies from media industry stakeholders, with the aim of improving representation and diversity in the industry. These initiatives include the BBC Creative Diversity Commitment³, ITV Diversity Acceleration Plan⁴, Channel 4 Equity by Design⁵, Sky Impact⁶ and others. These demonstrate that there has been a growing awareness of and commitment towards media diversity and improving representation both in front and behind the camera. However, these initiatives are not one-size-fits-all and significant challenges persist with gaps to be filled. For example, notable gaps remain in the print sector (Douglas, 2022; Saha, & Van Lente, 2022), such as eurocentrism and low representation of ethnic minorities. Additionally, our initial scoping of the print sector indicates that diversity commitments appear to be fragmented and not as coordinated as in the broadcast sector. Perhaps, this indicates a more system-wide challenge within the print sector, especially given recent evidence on the declining patronage of print media in the UK (Ofcom, 2024b). On the other hand, while some broadcast stakeholders undertake diversity initiatives, most have acknowledged that more progress in terms of diversity on and off screen is required. Some of this evaluation’s findings reinforce this observation.

² See more information on this from Ofcom’s website <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/equity-and-diversity/overview-of-diversity-in-broadcasting-remit>

³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/creativetdiversity/investment/home/>

⁴ <https://www.itvmedia.co.uk/news-and-resources/itv-announces-diversity-acceleration-plan>

⁵ <https://www.channel4.com/press/news/channel-4-launches-first-equity-strategy>

⁶ <https://www.skygroup.sky/impact/advancing-inclusivity-at-sky>

This evaluation document inaugurates what will be our annual review series into the state of media diversity in the UK, serving the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity's aim to make informed recommendations on needed change via a better understanding of the state of media diversity in the UK. The evaluation covers reporting in the period 2021-2024, so as to map out recent and ongoing trends and problems in reporting. The findings presented in this evaluation document are derived from the systematic coding and analysis of 42 relevant reports that inform us on what is working well and what needs improvement with regard to existing knowledge and gaps in knowledge around media diversity in the country. We hope that this evaluation sets the stage for further meaningful conversations around what we know and what more we should know around diversity in the media industry.

Literature Review

To contextualise this report, we draw upon recent academic and grey literature on the state of media diversity in the UK and areas of needed progress and development. We also draw upon literature on media trends that have an adverse impact on diversity, such as structural inequalities in the sector that derive from and are manifested in temporary contracts and transitory freelancing.

Specifically, while research shows that media diversity contributes to enriched democracy and fosters lasting understanding and tolerance (Helberger, 2018; Loecherbach, et al., 2020), recent literature on global monitoring and measuring of democracy has found a huge decline in the level of democracy (V-Dem, 2025). According to the V-Dem⁷ project, a record number of countries are slowly tending towards authoritarianism, and democracy has returned to the state it was in the 1990s. This diminishing level of democracy has impacted key sectors of society and democratic principles such as equality, which is embedded in diversity and inclusion, are being publicly attacked within newer government policies and in the media. Similarly, there have been heated arguments and campaigns against diversity and an overall decline in diversity research⁸ (Edward & Moss, 2024). For example, a quick search in the public domain shows that some third sector organisations that previously reported on diversity in UK media seem now to have relented.

⁷ V-Dem is an abbreviation for the project 'Varieties of Democracy'. More information about this project can be found at <https://www.v-dem.net/about/v-dem-project/>

⁸ Read the 'Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre' report for gaps in evidence at https://pec.ac.uk/research_report_entr/part-one-gaps-in-the-evidence-base/. More recent reports can be found at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c24110m30ddo> and <https://actionforraceequality.org.uk/uk-needs-to-defend-attacks-on-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility/guest-blog/>

Divisive debates around the importance of media diversity have long been put to rest, with several pieces of research establishing its importance (Deacon & Stanyer, 2021; De Vries, Vliegthart & Walgrave, 2022; EMCC, 2023; Helberger, 2018; Luther, Clark & Lepre, 2024). Nevertheless, several reports point to the lack of diversity in practice within the media (e.g., FT Strategies, 2024). There are growing concerns that initiatives that promote diversity ‘may be losing steam’ (Ross Arguedas, Mukherjee, & Nielsen, 2024, p. 2). For example, the research conducted by Paul Sissons and Eun Sun Godwin in 2024 shows that, notwithstanding industry-led initiatives on diversity in the UK, significant gaps persist, such as underrepresentation of ethnic-minorities, underrepresentation of disabled people as well as stereotypically gendered employment into media roles and overall low representation of women in the media⁹. Research has also found other forms of inequalities that hinder diversity in UK media, especially around freelancing and temporary contracts most found in the broadcast sector (Sissons & Godwin, 2024; Wing-Fai, Gill & Randle, 2015). According to a 2024 report by the Film and TV Charity, the inequality occasioned by transitory freelancing contributes to poor mental health among the media workforce and leads to a culture of silence where media staff become fearful about losing their jobs should they reveal mental health challenges (Film and TV Charity Report, 2024). More recent arguments corroborate the results from the Film and TV Charity. For example, the 2025 BBC Workplace culture review referenced the risks and challenges that some freelancers face at the BBC: ‘Some were afraid, others commented that it was part of an existing pattern, so they didn’t see any point, and some said they would have raised it if they genuinely believed there was a safe/anonymous way to do so.’ (Change Associates, 2025, p. 34).

As the UK government recently launched a consultation on eight new Equality Laws prioritising provisions for disabled people, ethnic minorities as well as volunteers and freelancers¹⁰ in the workplace, other reports have highlighted factors that could set back media diversity (Edward & Moss, 2024; Sissons & Godwin, 2024). Some of these factors include structural limitations, such as media recruitment policies, lack of pluralism in the media (Holtz-Bacha, 2024; Neimanns, 2021; Picard, 2000), persistent class bias, and institutional bias and traditional tropes which increase stereotypes. On top of this, in the face of growing reliance on artificial intelligence and digital technologies, there have been concerns around redefining media diversity as a notion and in terms of its meaning and elements (Horz-Ishak, 2025).

⁹ A 2025 International Broadcasting Trust (IBT) report found that only 1 in 10 frequent presenters of factual programming in UK public service channels is a woman. Read more at <https://ibt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Small-World-International-factual-programming-on-public-service-channels.pdf>.

¹⁰ The call for evidence for the Eight New Equality Laws was announced in the house of Lords in April 2025. For more, see at <https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/consultation-new-equality-laws-in-the-pipeline-uk/>.

Undoubtedly, the lack of diversity in the media carries significant consequences (EMCC, 2023) such as economic loss (McGregor-Smith, 2017) and perpetuation of harmful narratives (Whong, 2024). Therefore, for media stakeholders to ensure that there is diversity within the workforce, on and behind screen, some of the notable areas that have been highlighted for further development include: diversifying place and ensuring that media is not solely concentrated in big cities such as London as majority of current media production is based in London (Lenny & Ryder, 2021; Scheuch et al, 2024); increased collaboration between the industry and academia; and tailored research on further understanding the structural dimensions of inequalities in the workplace and how these impact on diversity (Schifferes & Knowles, 2023).







In the evaluation, we have identified further areas for improvement, which lead to a series of recommendations, as presented further on in this document. However, next, we overview the methodology of our evaluation, which has determined the findings and recommendations we present later on.

Methodology

The methodology employed in the evaluation is qualitative. We have designed the evaluation as a qualitative inquiry to allow us to provide in-depth analysis of diversity data contained in relevant reporting. Below, we detail our methodological approach to sourcing evidence and data as well as to the design and conduct of the evaluation per se.

Selection criteria of reporting

The reporting that we included in the evaluation met the following selection criteria:

-  UK reporting that was published in the period 2021-2024.
-  Reporting that presents either primary or secondary data on one or more aspects of media diversity.
-  Reporting that presents one or more findings on one or more aspects of media diversity.
-  Reporting that presents data and evidence on one of the following media sectors: broadcasting, print, streaming.
-  Reporting that is generated by academic, industry or third sector actors/organisations.
-  Reporting that may include other countries but offers disaggregated data/findings specifically on UK media.

Search and sampling of reporting

To locate relevant reporting, we used a series of search keywords, which were combined to include 'search phrases', such as:

- 💡 Diversity in UK media;
- 💡 Diversity in streaming platforms;
- 💡 Diversity reports on streaming platforms UK;
- 💡 Diversity reports on YouTube, Netflix, Amazon Prime;
- 💡 Diversity reports in podcasting;
- 💡 Diversity news in broadcast media UK;
- 💡 Diversity news in print media UK;
- 💡 Diversity news in mainstream media UK;
- 💡 Diversity news in newspapers UK;
- 💡 Diversity reports in UK media;
- 💡 Reports on diversity in UK media;
- 💡 Reports on diversity in UK media pdf;
- 💡 Diversity* OR Inclusive* Or Diverse Media* Or Inclusive Media UK;

Also, our search included search words and phrases that focused on each of the protected characteristics.

To ensure that the search of reports for the review period 2021-2024 was as comprehensive as possible, we adopted a four-component method. The four components of this method included search on industry websites and pages, search on third sector/charity organisations websites and pages, search of grey literature using Google Incognito and relevant blogs, and search via academic databases such as Google Scholar.

Our search turned up 61 reports on media diversity. Out of the 61 reports, 42 underwent evaluation. During the selection and filtering process, 19 reports were removed from the review for not meeting one or more of the above selection criteria.

Also, as the search for reporting on diversity in the sector of online streaming turned up only 2 reports, we decided to leave this sector out of evaluation, as such a small number of reports was not sufficient to evaluate the whole sector. Thus, the evaluation involved reporting of diversity in broadcasting and print only.

Evaluation framework

The framework that informed the direction and content of the evaluation consisted of the following parameters:

- 💡 Aim and purpose of reporting (brief outline).
- 💡 Frequency of reporting (annual, one-off, more regular than annual).
- 💡 Data reported (primary data, secondary data).
- 💡 Focus of reporting:
 - content/portrayal;
 - protected characteristics;
 - roles;
 - talent support and training.
- 💡 Intersectionality in reporting.
- 💡 Methodology of reporting.
- 💡 Pending questions/gaps in reporting.
- 💡 Recommendations (contained in reporting).
- 💡 Conclusions of reporting.
- 💡 Overall evaluation of reporting.

Evaluation process

All 42 reports were analysed thematically, using Nvivo 12 Plus.

Nvivo 12 Plus is qualitative analysis software that ensured the efficient organisation, profiling and management of the 42 reports and then allowed us to code relevant themes and analyse the selected reporting in greater depth using its 'memo' tool. For the coding, initial codes were first deductively derived, relying on our existing knowledge of diversity in the industry and an initial scoping exercise. However, the progression of the evaluation led us to more inductive coding based on the range and content of the selected reports, which enabled us to identify stronger patterns and themes. Furthermore, we used the software's visualisation tools, such as matrix coding and similar query tools, to further interpret the data and produce a set of outputs. Outputs and findings are presented in the next section.

Findings

In this section, we present the findings of the evaluation thematically and, where appropriate, with the support of graphs or tables. First, we present the findings on general trends in existing knowledge and reporting on media diversity, such as the source, structure and type of such knowledge. Then, we move on to unpacking the content and substance of existing knowledge on media diversity and the related gaps or problems.

Source of existing knowledge. The media industry appears to be reporting more on media diversity than the third sector and the academic sector, in particular. As illustrated in Table 1, the industry has contributed 17 reports on broadcasting and 1 report on print over the last three years. Furthermore, the third sector has contributed 14 reports on broadcasting and 6 on print. On the other hand, we found only 2 academic reports on each of the two sectors. These numbers manifest that the prevalent source of knowledge and data on media diversity for broadcasting is the industry itself. Although it is commendable that the industry takes the initiative to report on their diversity data and progress in broadcasting, this poses the question about objectivity and reliability of the reported data. Conversely, these figures show that knowledge and data on media diversity in print is mostly reported from the third sector, suggesting that the print industry is not as engaged in diversity reporting.

Table 1: Source of reporting

Source	Broadcasting	Print
Aggregate	33	9
Industry	17	1
Third sector	14	6
Academic	2	2

Structure of existing knowledge. As for whether and how existing knowledge on media diversity over the last three years is structured, Table 2 shows that knowledge is structured mostly across a series of themes and topics, rather than on the basis of recommendations or empirical data per se. Specifically, 18 broadcast reports are structured thematically while 8 print reports are structured thematically. Only 3 broadcast reports are structured by recommendations, while there is no report structured according to recommendations in print.

Table 2: Structure of reporting

Structure	Broadcasting	Print
Recommendations-based structure	3	0
Data-based structure	8	1
Thematic, topic-based structure	18	8
Unstructured	3	0

Thematic or topic-based structure is the most popular and often easy to follow, as it allows readers to navigate data via relevant themes and vice versa (Byrne, 2022). As Berkeley (2014) observes, thematic/topic-based structure of reporting knowledge demonstrates familiarity with the topic under question and a dedication to obtaining the relevant data to satisfy objectives and answer relevant questions. However, such structure often suggests a lack of clear direction or sufficient focus on recommendations and what change is needed in future. This possible disadvantage needs, though, to be explored further in reviews or evaluations of existing reporting in this area.

Type of existing knowledge. As for the type of data on which existing knowledge relies, we found that quantitative data are those driving most knowledge during the period under study.

Table 3: Type of data

Type of data	Broadcasting	Print
Case studies	9	0
Qualitative data (e.g., interviews, focus groups)	6	2
Quantitative (survey) data	16	2
Secondary data analysis	3	4
No data analysis – e.g., review	1	1

Specifically, as Table 3 illustrates, primary quantitative (survey) data is the prevalent data in the reported knowledge, followed by case studies. We found that reporting containing quantitative data often includes case studies as supplementary data. Case studies are utilised in the BBC and ITV reporting, in particular, that refers to diversity activities and recorded change towards more diverse production and content. This is commendable, as it points readers to actions rather than plans.

On the other hand, the least reported data is qualitative, including interviews and focus groups, while some reporting (7 reports) across both sectors utilise pre-existing, secondary data on media diversity.

These patterns in data typology are confirmed in Figure 1 showing that quantitative is the prominent methodology of knowledge and evidence gathering in existing reporting on media diversity, followed by mixed methodology.

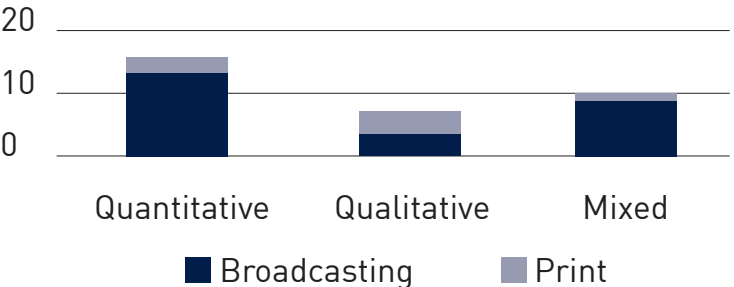


Figure 1: Methodology

However, in some of the evaluated reporting, the methodology was not clearly defined. Later, when we discuss the gaps and pending questions in existing knowledge, we talk more about the lack of methodological clarity in some reporting, which is an important issue that can undermine the quality or rigor check of reported knowledge.

Frequency of reporting. As for the frequency of reporting new knowledge across both sectors, we found that reporting in broadcasting is more likely to be annual than one-off, unlike in print where reporting of new evidence on diversity is more likely to be one-off than annual, as shown in Figure 2.

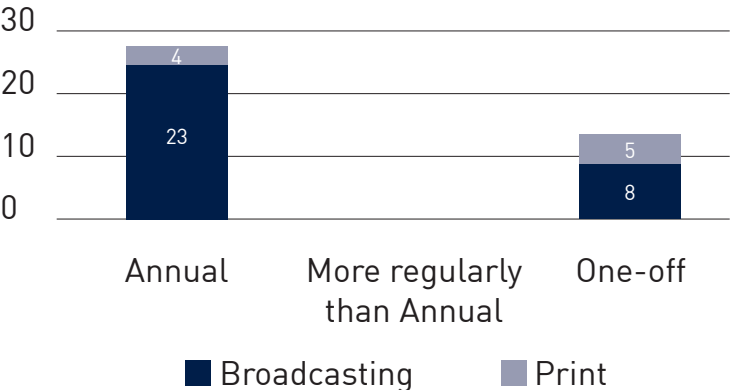


Figure 2: Frequency of reporting

Figure 2 further suggests that none of the evaluated reporting - whether in print or broadcast - is published more regularly than annually. This is possibly because media and other organisations would like to allow 12 months to record any substantive changes or progress on diversity. Annual reporting is a good practice that keeps the conversation going and ensures that diversity is tracked in good time. On the other hand, one-off reporting suggests a lack of commitment and makes media diversity to appear as being a low priority.

Content and focus of existing knowledge. To ascertain the aspects of diversity that are most prominent in existing knowledge and those that are less prioritised and/or neglected, we evaluated the focus of existing knowledge and whether focus is on protected characteristics, content or portrayal, roles, or talent support and training. Table 4 shows that protected characteristics are the focus and top priority in existing knowledge on media diversity in the UK.

Table 4: Knowledge focus by number of references¹¹

Number of references in reporting	Broadcasting	Print
Focus on content or portrayal	152	20
Authentic and representative content or portrayal	49	5
Needed change of content or portrayal	13	1
New and innovative content or portrayal	10	0
Non-authentic content or portrayal	57	12
Other	25	3
Focus on protected characteristics	644	159
Age	65	8
Disability	222	12
Gender reassignment	19	0
Marriage or civil partnership	0	1
Other (Education)	1	15
Other (social economic background)	62	22
Pregnancy or maternity	0	1
Race (inc. colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)	175	76
Religion or belief	12	7
Sex	85	20
Sexual orientation	46	4
Focus on roles	130	19
Company leadership roles	59	13
Production leadership roles	22	0
Other roles	51	6
Focus on talent support and training	70	9

¹¹ The metric of number of references is used in this table, as it illustrates the number of times a particular protected characteristic appears across the evaluated reporting and in all 42 reports. This does not reflect the number of reports per se, as in the other tables and figures, but rather the number of occurrences of the relevant focus area or topic. This metric is helpful for identifying areas or topics of focus; however, it does not automatically inform us on the number of reports per focus area or topic.

This finding is not surprising, as one of the objectives of diversity initiatives is that people belonging to one or more protected characteristics are given equal access and representation, like the rest of the population. Moreover, the data in Table 4 is significant because it shows that key aspects of diversity such as talent support and training receive very little focus, compared to content/portrayal and roles.

On the other hand, regarding areas or topics of focus by number of reports, Table 5 strengthens the finding that the focus of most reporting is on one or more protected characteristics. Specifically, we see in Table 5 that only 15 reports in the broadcast sector and 5 reports in print focus on talent support and training. This corroborates our earlier finding from the reference count that talent support and training category does not receive much focus in reporting.

Table 5: Knowledge focus by number of reports

Focus topics or areas	Broadcasting	Print
Focus on content or portrayal	24	5
Authentic and representative content or portrayal	16	4
Needed change of content or portrayal	8	1
New and innovative content or portrayal	5	0
Non-authentic content or portrayal	13	4
Other	10	2
Focus on protected characteristics	33	9
Age	14	5
Disability	26	6
Gender reassignment	4	0
Marriage or civil partnership	0	1
Other (Education)	2	8
Other (social economic background)	14	7
Pregnancy or maternity	0	1
Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)	23	8
Religion or belief	6	5
Sex	18	9
Sexual orientation	10	3
Focus on roles	18	6
Company leadership roles	16	5
Production leadership roles	6	0
Other roles	11	2
Focus on talent support and training	15	5

Focus on protected characteristics. Delving deeper into the prominence of protected characteristics, we found that existing knowledge focuses on disability and race more than any other protected characteristic. Specifically, Table 5 shows that 26 reports focused on disability and 23 focused on race. Sex, age and socio-economic background received less but similar attention in media diversity reporting. On the other hand, marriage or civil partnership and pregnancy or maternity received nearly no mention in reporting.

We should note, though, that we found reports focusing on more than one protected characteristic. For example, one report might focus on race, disability and sexual orientation at the same or similar grade.

Focus on content or portrayal. It has historically been acknowledged that content or portrayal has been the primary focus of media diversity studies (Rupar & Bracho, 2024). However, as evidenced in Table 5, existing knowledge's focus on portrayal follows and is less prominent than the focus on protected characteristics. Nevertheless, in our evaluation, we looked into different aspects of focus on content or portrayal. Specifically, we searched for evidence on the following:

- focus on authentic and representative portrayal;
- focus on the need for changed, different content or portrayal;
- focus on new and innovative content or portrayal;
- focus on non-authentic content or portrayal; and
- focus on other possible aspects of content or portrayal.

As shown in Table 5, most of the knowledge we have is about authentic and representative media content or portrayal and the reverse, inauthentic and non-representative media content or portrayal. Nevertheless, 8 broadcast reports and 1 print report acknowledge the need for change in content or portrayal, while just 5 broadcast reports evidenced new and innovative content or portrayal, which is concerning demonstrating the lack of evidence on progress when it comes to innovative or new types of content or portrayal.

Focus on roles. Turning now to the focus on roles in the media industry, as Table 5 shows, we found that we have too little knowledge on production leadership roles, while just 21 of the 42 reports were focused on top level roles, including company leadership roles. A 2024 Reuters Institute study on race and leadership in the media found that there is very little diversity in UK media's top leadership compared to the number of journalists that identify as minorities (Ross Arguedas, Mukherjee, & Nielsen, 2024). This is concerning because diversity at the top does matter for and influence diversity in every other aspect of the media including content, representation or portrayal, as well as talent support and training.

Focus on talent support and training. An important aspect of diversity is the support and training provided to staff, especially to creative talent. As illustrated in Table 5, talent support and training is the least evidenced focus category, as less than half of the evaluated reporting has a focus on talent support and training. This lack of focus on talent support and training is quite concerning, as ensuring that staff training is up to date and staff receive support for personal development would enable staff to grow in their roles in an ever-dynamic media industry.

Intersectionality in existing knowledge? In our evaluation, we identified a negligible amount of intersectional data and related knowledge. This suggests that existing knowledge often lacks nuance and contextualisation, without, for example, situating evidence within other relevant industry data. Existing reporting appears to often present individual protected characteristics alone and in disconnection from other diversity areas or topics of focus, such as portrayals, genre, and roles.

Specifically, in the evaluation we examined whether existing knowledge explores:

- 3 or more protected characteristics;
- 2 protected characteristics;
- protected characteristics and leadership role(s);
- protected characteristics and portrayal;
- protected characteristics and support or training.

Table 6: Intersectionality

Intersectionality in the report	Broadcasting	Print
3 or more protected characteristics	11	1
2 protected characteristics	17	0
Protected characteristics and leadership role(s)	3	0
Protected characteristics and portrayal	2	0
Protected characteristics and support or training	2	0

As illustrated in Table 6, intersectional data is missing. There is limited reporting in the broadcast sector presenting intersectional data on multiple protected characteristics and other diversity areas of focus. Where this is the case, discussions remain stand-alone without much context, as noted earlier. For example, the BECTU 2024 report, which provides data on people planning to leave the media workforce, does not consider multiple protected characteristics. In this case, it would have been useful to know whether multiple characteristics, such as being black and female or, being white, female and disabled, act together to influence leavers and what gap this might present in diversity policies of media organisations. As Gopaldas and DeRoy (2015, p. 333) acknowledge, an intersectional approach is vital to reporting on diversity especially because ‘only intersectional research can reveal how multiply disadvantages are often completely erased (intersectional invisibility) or disproportionately ridiculed (intersectional travesty).’ More broadly speaking, intersectionality in reporting could enable relevant stakeholders to note and understand how multiple protected characteristics work together to perpetuate inequality within varying and overlapping contexts, and, when that happens, how best to diversify policies and practices for the increase of representation on and off camera.

Diversity initiatives. A key task in the evaluation involved the understanding of whether existing knowledge offers evidence on other, additional initiatives in the direction of diversity promotion and implementation. We argue that the development of other initiatives to help achieve diversity plans is commendable.

We found that about one third of reporting in 2021-2024 refers to other initiatives developed alongside to help with diversity plans. This was more prominent in broadcast reporting than in print, as 13 broadcast reports evidenced the development of other initiatives on improving diversity, while just 4 print reports referenced other initiatives. This illustrates the existence of a degree of commitment within the relevant organisations to accomplishing stated goals and diversity plans, but a lot more progress is required in this direction.

Pending gaps and questions. Another important aspect of the evaluation was the assessment of possible gaps and questions that existing knowledge does not address. More specifically, we identified:

- **Moderate lack of clear aims and purpose.** Some reporting clearly outlines its aims and purpose, but some other instances of reporting lack clarity of aims and purpose. Some reports merely begin with the presentation of data without first outlining their aim and what they hope to achieve via this data presentation. We argue that it is important that future reporting goes beyond institutional aims and stated policies on diversity, while presenting in clear terms the significance of reporting progress and evidence for conversations and actions on media diversity
- **A lack of conclusion or argument.** Some of the reporting does not present a clear/strong conclusion or argument. At other times, reporting simply ends abruptly with the presentation of data without embedding a clear concluding argument on media diversity. This gap relates and somehow leads to the next gap.
- **Limited recommendations.** Only half of the evaluated reporting offers specific and evidence-based recommendations on improving media diversity in the future. In other reporting, one can find general references to transformative initiatives, which do not demonstrate the existence of future action plans on diversity. For example, Table 7 demonstrates that out of 33 media diversity reports on broadcasting only 19 contain clear recommendations on diversity. Conversely, just 3 reports of the 9 print reports contained recommendations. This means that those reporting new knowledge or evidence often do not explore further possible action that could contribute to DEI within the media industry.

Table 7: Recommendations on media diversity

Recommendations	Broadcasting	Print
Yes/clearly stated recommendations	19	3
No/not possible to identify recommendations	14	6





- ***A lack of depth and critical outlook.*** Existing reporting does not offer a critical discussion of data and evidence. We found reports wherein data was merely presented without substantial discussion. In other instances of reporting, data and findings are discussed briefly without contextualisation in other industry and broader trends and phenomena. Such a narrow and rather superficial approach make it difficult to draw a broader picture of the state of diversity beyond a particular media provider. Depth and critical outlook are vital, as they place data and evidence in the context of previous knowledge and broader industry realities and thus can enhance the possible impact of reported knowledge on media organisations and other stakeholders.
- ***Methodological gaps.*** Finally, as hinted earlier, there is a lack of clarity regarding methodology/methods used in the generation of knowledge on media diversity. Methodology was not clearly defined in some of the reporting, while some other reporting ignored methodology/methods altogether. Although we identified the prevalence of quantitative research methodology in existing reporting, we also found reports where the discussion of methodology/methods is either not clarified or ignored. This reinforces the above-mentioned gap of the lack of a critical outlook on reported evidence, while it can lead to reduced credibility of and confidence in such evidence.

Conclusion

We undertook this evaluation of existing knowledge on media diversity in the UK to multifacetedly assess the importance given to media diversity in the UK by media and other organisations, especially in the face of the current backlash and campaigning against EDI initiatives and activities.

The evaluation has manifested the prominent focus, the strengths but also the weaknesses of reported knowledge. Specifically, it has shown that there is a lot more knowledge in the broadcast sector about diversity trends and practices than in the print sector, while there is a series of more 'qualitative' differences in reported knowledge in these two sectors, such as: primary source of knowledge is the industry itself in the broadcast sector and third sector organisations in print; frequency of reporting is more annual than one-off in the broadcast sector and more one-off than annual in print. As for the focus of existing knowledge, the evaluation found that the most prominent focus is on protected characteristics, such as race and disability, while talent support and training, in particular, is not given much attention in existing reporting. Even so, we have limited knowledge on intersectional patterns among the range of protected characteristics and in relation to other possible areas of focus in existing reporting.

Nevertheless, the evaluation identified some good practices in the production and reporting of knowledge on media diversity, such as:

-  Some of the reporting uses case studies and examples from within the media industry to illustrate diversity and inclusion in action.
-  Some of the reporting is self-critical and acknowledges limitations, for example, in terms of methodology and defined aims/objectives.
-  Some of the reporting shows consideration of other, supplementary diversity initiatives for supporting future plans and goals for media diversity.
-  Some industry and third sector actors have dedicated annual diversity reports, which enables the annual tracking of whatever progress achieved or even of possible areas of regression.

Nevertheless, we identified a series of gaps in existing knowledge. Aside the gaps presented in the relevant section above, we should flag up that the knowledge into diversity in online streaming is scant, which is why we were unable to evaluate that sector. Also, the gaps in the provision of concluding arguments and recommendations in existing reporting go hand-in-hand with the observation that some of the reporting states that diversity targets have been attained and that all diversity commitments have been achieved, bringing up the question of whether what is reported as 'achieved' may be tokenistic phasal interventions that have been completed. Since it is commonly acknowledged that there is more to be done regarding diversity, authentic representation and inclusion in the media, we should ask whether a longer-term and sustainable strategy for diversity, beyond what could be seen as 'phasal interventions', is needed.

Overall, we argue that there are very important benefits to media diversity reporting when done right. These benefits include enabling media diversity initiatives to become more focused on areas that require the most attention, informing local and global practices on media diversity, setting the pace for a more equitable and inclusive media environment, and providing public enlightenment to dispel dis and misinformation.

Our Recommendations

Drawing upon our conclusions from the evaluation of existing knowledge on media diversity reporting in the period 2021-2024, we recommend the following:



More knowledge into diversity and inclusion in online streaming.

There is a need to understand diversity and inclusion practices in online streaming platforms such as Netflix, in podcasting and related online information and communication environments, given the speedy increase of popularity of digital media technologies among nearly all categories of media audience. It is commendable that some media diversity reporting, such as the Creative Diversity Network (CDN), are already thinking in this direction (see CDN Diamond the Seventh Cut¹²).



Knowledge for the print sector to be more regular and structured.

What we currently know shows low interest in media diversity reporting in the print sector, and this is a problem.



More qualitative and ‘deeper’ knowledge.

As currently quantitative evidence dominates and a critical outlook is missing from existing reporting, we argue that more qualitative evidence will add depth and critical perspective to future knowledge into patterns, progress and barriers to media diversity.



More intersectional knowledge into media diversity.

Reporting in the UK should offer more intersectional data so that it is possible to understand whether and how multiple characteristics can contribute to the various aspects and elements of diversity, or the lack of it. As stated earlier in this document, intersectional analysis of diversity data can help improve diversity policies and ensure that diversity plans are more targeted to where they are most needed.

¹² See more on https://creativediversitynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Standard-main-Report_Diamond-The-Seventh-Cut_CDN_12-Sept-2024pdf.pdf.

Our Recommendations (continued)



Future diversity strategies and activities to adopt more even focus on protected characteristics.

This is to ensure that there is no hierarchy or perceived preference for one protected characteristic over another. While race and disability are currently of outmost importance, other protected characteristics are of great importance and there is need to ensure that diversity actions are more evenly distributed. Where this is not possible because of tailored and/or specific interventions, the specific reporting should state and explain it.



Future reporting to ensure clarity of methodology/ies.

This is important in order to ensure that stakeholders and media audiences have confidence and trust in whatever is reported around diversity and inclusion in the UK media. Whilst some of the current reporting outlines their methodology, other is not clear about the used methods of knowledge generation and, in some instances of reporting, methodology is ignored altogether.

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