

**We analyzed Canadian
news coverage of the
Hockey Canada trial
and verdict.**

Here's what we found...



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gbvinthemediac.ca

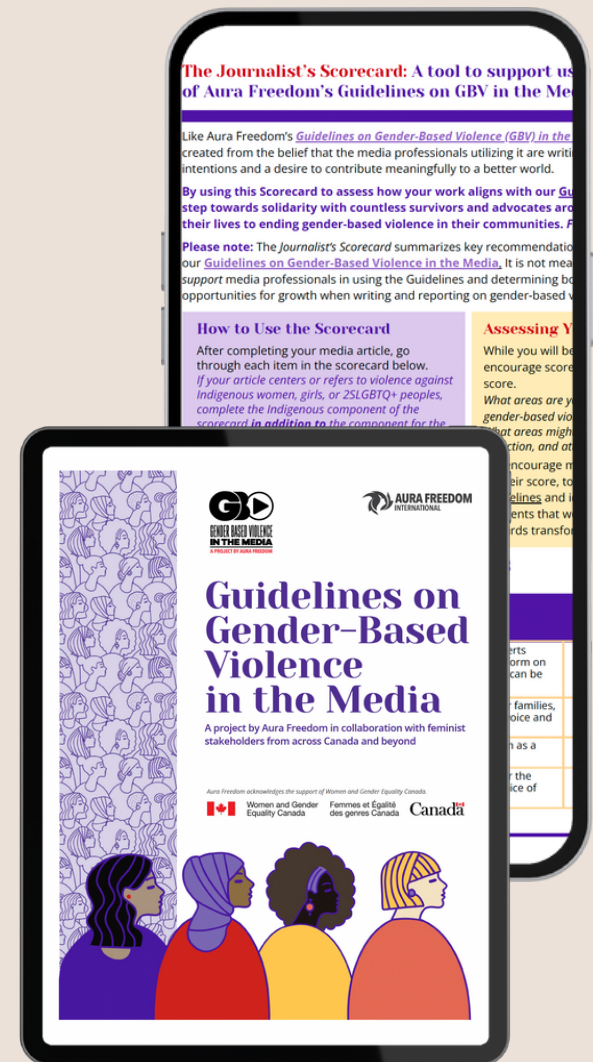
The Guidelines & Scorecard:

Free tools for transformative reporting on GBV

Using our Guidelines on GBV In The Media and our Journalist's Scorecard - free tools from Aura Freedom's **GBV In The Media** initiative - we analyzed media coverage on the Hockey Canada sexual assault case. 20+ stories were examined, compared, and scored.

We applaud the journalists who are digging deeper, seeking alternative voices beyond the criminal justice system (which are inherently not 'neutral') and have the courage to refrain from victim blaming and sensationalizing, *even if those are the headlines that get the clicks.*

Follow along for an analysis of both **harmful** and **transformative** articles on the case, based on our tools and our four main themes of *Voices, Language, Frameworks and Impacts.*



Discover more at gbvinthemediacanada.ca

The 4 Main Themes of our Tools:



VOICES: Refers to how media portrayals of gender-based violence (GBV) determine whose voices, stories and perspectives are uplifted, and whose are silenced.



LANGUAGE: Addresses the importance of terminology and the subjectivity of “neutral” language, and demonstrates how language can drive the conversation around GBV.



FRAMEWORKS: Questions whether media representations are placing GBV within a wider social context of patriarchy, sexism, gender inequality, racism, colonialism, ableism, homophobia, and other forces of oppression.



IMPACTS: Relates to how media portrayals contribute to public perception of GBV, and how they affect survivors and society as a whole, including the potential to prevent or eradicate GBV.



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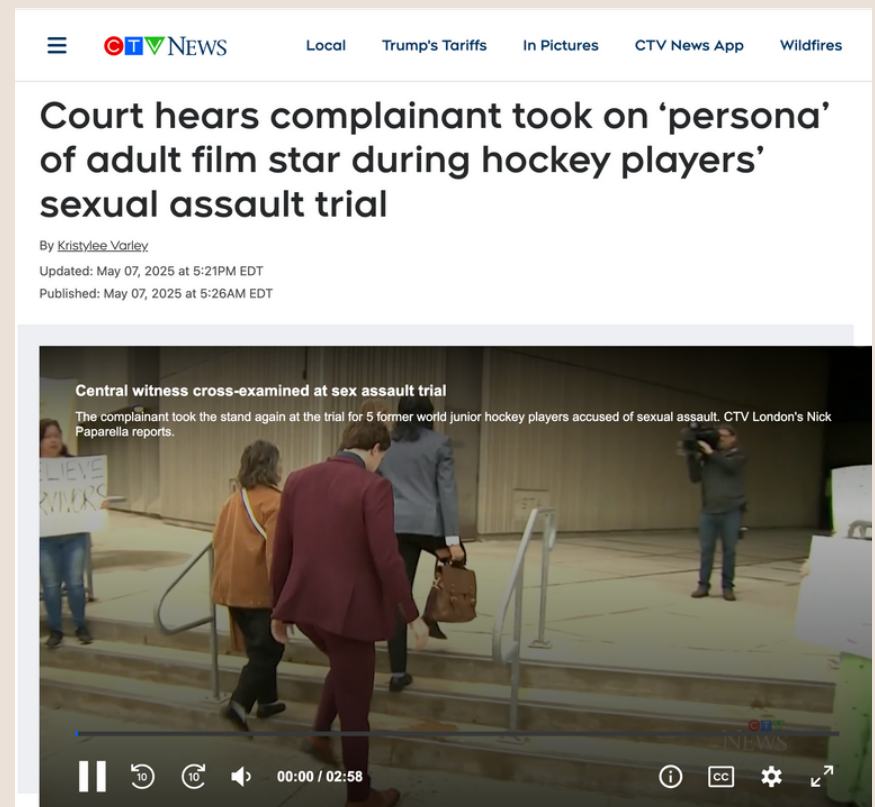
Harmful Coverage X

Voices: E.M.'s voice is reduced to selective excerpts from her testimony framed to support defence arguments, using her own words against her.

Language: The headline sensationalizes survivor experience without contextualizing coping mechanisms, fixating on her behaviour - particularly alcohol use - rather than the violence itself, and centers "physical force" as a means of sexual assault, overlooking coercion and abuse of power.

Frameworks: Focuses on survivor discrepancies without offering systemic and trauma-informed context. Fails to interrogate the role of power, coercion or gender norms. Uses sexualized framing.

Impacts: Retraumatizes by amplifying damaging courtroom language, reinforces rape culture, and discourages future disclosures by depicting survivors as performative or untrustworthy.



CTV News (London)

Journalist's Scorecard total: **8/36**

On a positive note, this article included resources and helplines for survivors of sexual violence.

"Questions about the amount of alcohol consumed..."

"There were inconsistencies in the woman's testimony."

Harmful Coverage X

Voices: Focuses on a defence-aligned witness, omitting E.M.'s voice and failing to include any perspectives from GBV advocates or experts.

Language: Headline & body repeat harmful rape myths and use sensational, victim-blaming language that continuously implies consent from a single disputed comment.

Frameworks: GBV is treated as "he-said/she-said", overwhelmingly using statements of accused without greater systemic context on power, coercion, or culture. Personable, humanizing framing and backstory is reserved for the accused, not for E.M.

Impacts: Perpetuates public misunderstanding of consent, sending a dangerous message to survivors that the media may amplify distorted narratives rather than protect their dignity.

"Hockey Canada trial: Witness testified woman asked players to have sex"



Windsor Star

Journalist's Scorecard total: **9/36**

"He [the defence witness] said he saw no signs the woman was not consenting."

"The woman gave the impression she was okay with what was going on, the witness said."

Harmful Coverage X

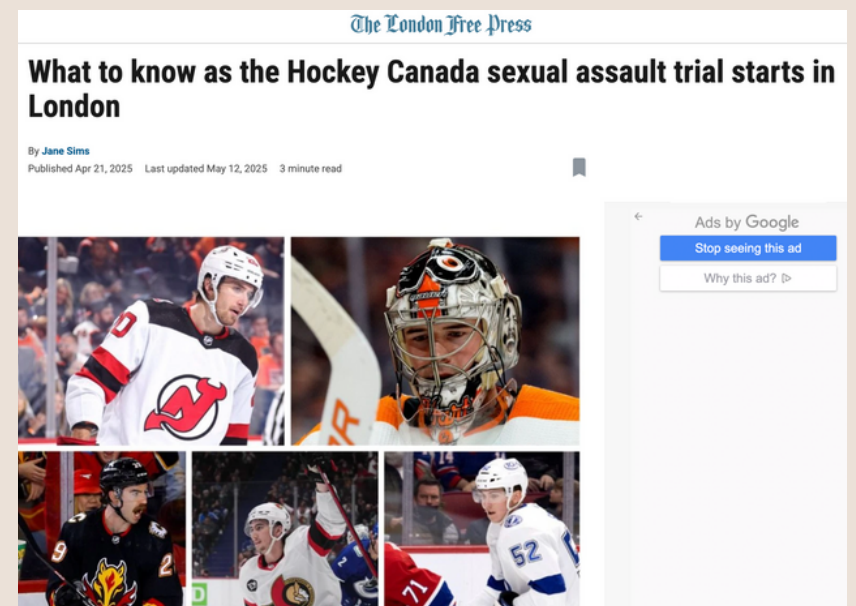
Voices: Poses to be a guide for the case, but relies solely on court/procedural updates, ignoring systemic context and resulting in a tone disconnected from realities of GBV.

Language: Though not overtly harmful, the language is clinical and occasionally minimizing, very little trauma-informed context and instead showcasing the subjectivity of “neutral” language.

Frameworks: Touches on Hockey Canada's public image, but avoids deeper analysis of GBV systems, cultural norms, or prevention. Narrow framing lacks consent education or survivor-centred context, instead focusing primarily on criminal court framing of guilt or innocence beyond a reasonable doubt.

Impacts: By reducing E.M's experience to trial logistics, the article risks normalizing detachment and framing sexual violence as a legal issue rather than a persistent and growing societal and human crisis.

“What to know as the Hockey Canada sexual assault trial starts in London”



London Free Press

Journalist's Scorecard total: **13/36**

“The defence does not have to prove anything and all defendants are considered to be innocent until proven guilty.”

“The complainant... has alleged she was sexually assaulted... after... accompanying one of the men for consensual sex at the hotel.”

Transformative Coverage ✓

Voices: Features legal experts clarifying public misunderstandings about consent law, though it does not include survivor or advocate voices.

Language: The language is clear, respectful, educational, and avoids sensationalism, focusing on correcting misconceptions and being survivor-centred.

Frameworks: This article addresses systemic gaps in public knowledge about consent, offering an informative lens on how Canadian law interprets sexual violence.

Impacts: This piece contributes to national consent literacy and myth-busting, giving hope to survivors and contributing to prevention.



CTV News (National)

Journalist's Scorecard total: **35/36**

"The experts say what happened in the courtroom shows that the public often doesn't understand how Canadian law views consent."

Transformative Coverage ✓

Voices: Centers E.M.'s experience and critiques the power imbalance, giving moral authority to her voice. Features academic and expert voices.

Language: Avoids victim-blaming language and holds systemic forces, not just individuals, accountable for the violence.

Frameworks: Situates trial within a broader analysis of misogyny in sports, institutional failure, and a justice system biased against survivors, highlighting structural roots of GBV.

Impacts: Illustrates the emotional, legal, and societal toll on survivors while prompting cultural reflection and critique of how Hockey Canada responds to gender-based violence.

Analysis

Canada's hockey case raised questions about toxic culture – so why did the accuser end up on trial?

Olivia Bowden
in London, Ontario

Judge seemed to scrutinize female accuser more harshly than the five hockey players who were charged with sexual assault but ultimately walked free



The Guardian (Canada)

Journalist's Scorecard total: **34/36**

"What happens when our sons are taught that fame is power, and that power can be used without consequence?"

"The language in the courtroom reinforced a culture that still demands perfection from survivors while excusing boys for being boys."

Transformative Coverage ✓

Voices: Amplifies the voices of GBV advocates, conveying survivor-informed concern about the verdict's broader implications.

Language: Empathetic and respectful tone affirms the emotional weight of the case and avoids “neutral” or dehumanizing language, using plain speech to validate survivor experiences. Avoids sensational headlines/quotes.

Frameworks: Connects the trial outcome to systemic issues like survivor silencing, cultural attitudes about consent, and the urgent need for prevention and education.

Impacts: Emphasizes community harm and discouragement, effectively communicating the chilling effect on survivors and calls for upstream, systemic solutions to GBV.



CTV News (Kitchener)

Journalist's Scorecard total: **32/36**

"We need to talk about consent, power, and gender dynamics long before a courtroom is involved."

"It's retraumatizing to have your credibility constantly questioned under oath..."



Your story matters, so does hers.

Discover Aura Freedom's
Guidelines on Gender-Based
Violence in the Media.

A toolkit to support
journalists to responsibly
and transformatively report
on gender-based violence
in Canada.

Available at gbvinthemediac.ca



**GENDER BASED VIOLENCE
IN THE MEDIA**

A PROJECT BY AURA FREEDOM