

**WORLD PRESS PHOTO**

# **TECHNICAL REPORT**

## 2021 PHOTO CONTEST

# Foreword

*This report is designed to enable informed conversation within our community of professional visual journalism and storytelling.*

Our commitment to transparency means we analyze and make public data on the contest related to diversity, representation, and verification. This report is designed to enable informed conversation within our community of professional visual journalism and storytelling and is not intended to be a comprehensive presentation of all aspects of the relevant issues.

2021 is a year for change at World Press Photo. Reflecting on how the COVID-19 pandemic and global social justice movements have fundamentally changed the world, we are re-evaluating what we as a foundation represent and where we stand on important issues such as diversity and inclusivity.

Under the new leadership of executive director Joumana El Zein Khoury, the foundation is currently rethinking its long-term strategy regarding contests, programs and outreach activities. More information will be shared during the year.

We know that our impact comes with responsibility and there are groups and voices that are underrepresented in our contests. Improving this is crucial to us, and we are committed to working with our community to better fulfill our mission of connecting the world to quality, diverse visual storytelling.

# The World Press Photo Foundation and the World Press Photo Contest

The annual World Press Photo Contest is one of the World Press Photo Foundation's most important and best-known programs.

The contest rewards photographers for the best single exposure pictures contributing to the past year of visual journalism. Whether entered as singles or stories, these pictures are judged in terms of their accurate, fair, and visually compelling insights about our world.

The foundation sets the contest categories and rules, requires entrants to accept the contest [code of ethics](#), and selects the jury. Once appointed, the jury, chair, and secretary are independent of the foundation, and no member of the foundation has a vote on which image or story wins. The 2021 Photo Contest jury comprised 28 professionals, 15 women and 13 men, from all six global regions. For the first time, the judging process took place entirely online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Once the winners have been selected and announced, they are all presented to the world via the foundation's website and social media channels, and are included in the foundation's annual exhibition and yearbook. These showcases mean many millions of people around the world will see the images, often for the first time.

World Press Photo is a platform that connects professionals and

the global audience through high quality, non-fiction reporting and storytelling that can be trusted.

Being a global platform gives the foundation the responsibility to present the best, most accurate and compelling work, even though the foundation has not directly chosen this work. As such, without restricting the jury's decisions, the foundation asks the jury to consider issues of representation when it was deliberating on the entries:

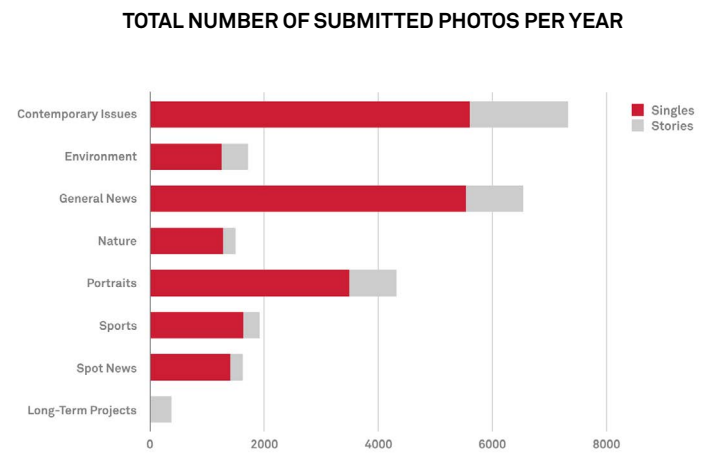
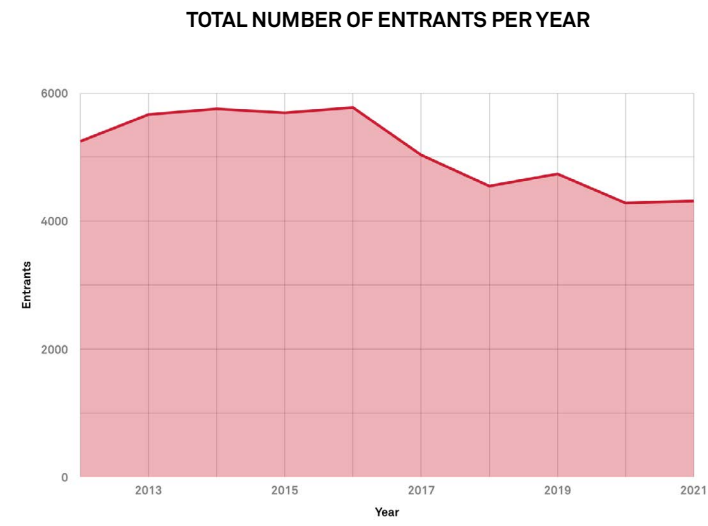
- Whether the images and stories under consideration repeat well-known examples or are distinctive
- Whether the images and stories under consideration reinforce or challenge stereotypes
- Whether graphic and violent photographs are appropriate for the story presented, especially when they involve vulnerable people
- Whether issues of the subjects' consent appear to have been appropriately handled by the photographer

The foundation recognizes these are often matters of judgment, but they indicate some of the issues World Press Photo deals with as it presents the visual stories that matter to the world.

# The number of entrants and submitted photos 2012 - 2021

*The 2021 Photo Contest saw 4,315 photographers from 130 countries enter 74,470 images.*

YEAR	ENTRANTS	COUNTRIES	SUBMITTED PHOTOS
2012	5,247	124	101,254
2013	5,666	124	103,481
2014	5,754	132	98,671
2015	5,692	131	97,912
2016	5,775	128	82,951
2017	5,034	126	80,408
2018	4,548	125	73,044
2019	4,738	128	78,801
2020	4,282	125	73,996
2021	4,315	130	74,470

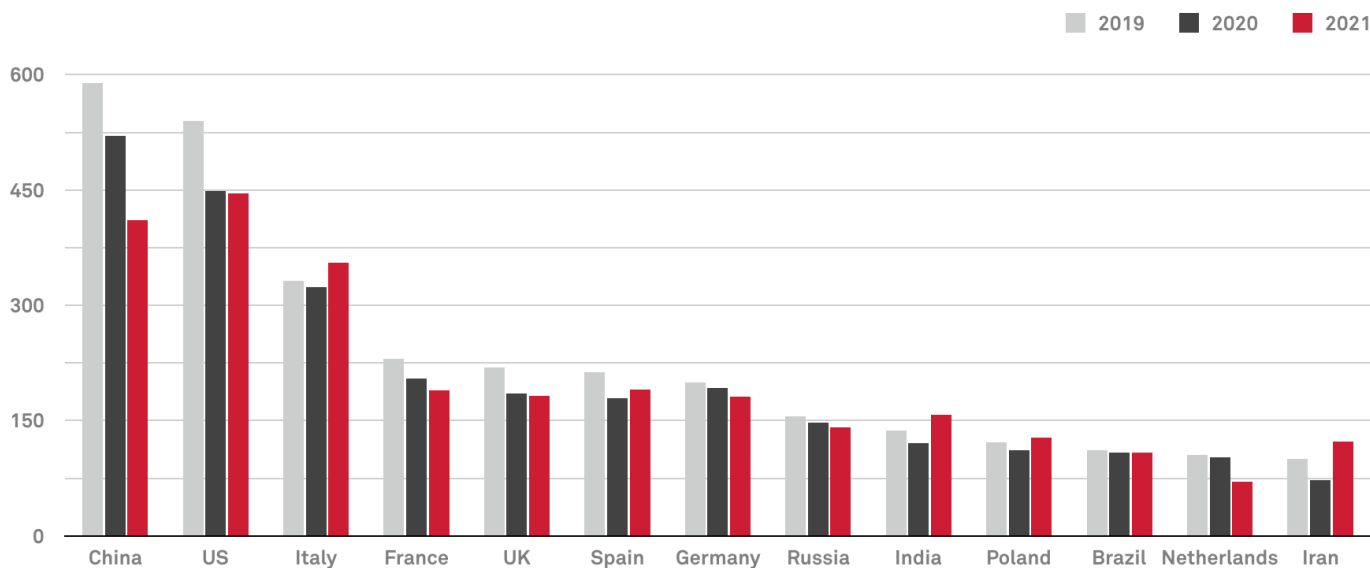


Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact on photographers around the world, we saw an increase in the number of entries received from 2020.

# The top countries with 100 or more entrants 2019 - 2021

COUNTRIES WITH MORE THAN 100 ENTRANTS	2019	2020	2021
China	589	521	411
United States	540	449	446
Italy	332	324	355
France	230	205	189
United Kingdom	219	185	182
Spain	213	179	190
Germany	200	193	181
Russia	156	147	141
India	137	121	158
Poland	122	112	128
Brazil	112	108	108
Netherlands	105	102	71
Iran	100	73	123

THE TOP THIRTEEN COUNTRIES BY ENTRANTS 2019 - 2021

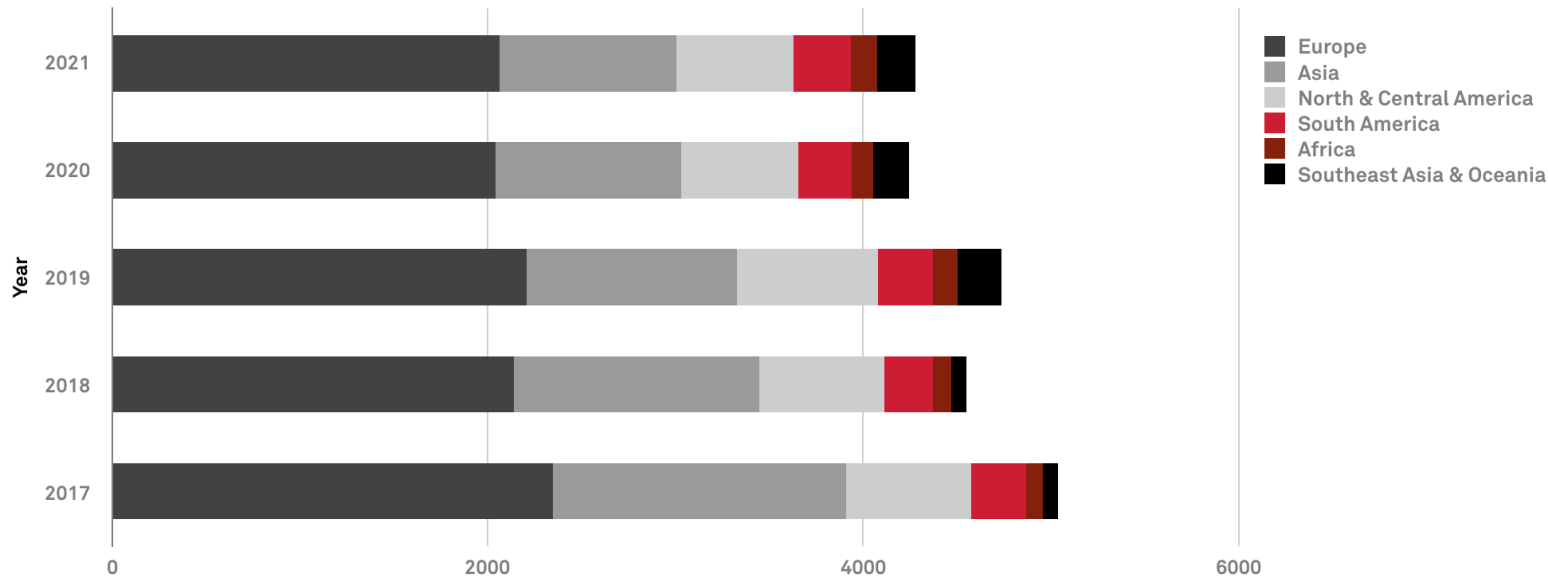


The geographic distribution of entrants is weighted towards Europe and Asia, with the 2021 data showing 47.86% of entrants came from Europe and 21.81% from Asia. North and Central America was the source of 14.41%

of entrants, 7.09% were from South America, 3.27% from Africa, and 4.7% from Southeast Asia and Oceania. From 2020, there was an increase in the proportion of entrants from Europe (+1.26%), South America (+0.89%), and Africa

(+0.47%). There was a decrease in entrants from Asia (-1.89%), North and Central America (-1.39%), and Southeast Asia and Oceania (-0.3%).

**ENTRANTS BY CONTINENT**



Encouraging a more diverse and inclusive representation of the world is a major goal for World Press Photo and we campaign all year round to attract new visual storytellers to enter the contests.

As part of our 2021 Contests outreach campaign, we organized a series of exhibitions and online programs in 2020. Initiatives included a partnership with Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa, featuring an exhibition and event program; a talk with World Press Photo Contest previous and current jury chairs Lekgetho Makola

and NayanTara Gurung Kakshapati; an exhibition in Hanoi, Vietnam, accompanied by an online side program; an exhibition in Chişinău, Republic of Moldova supplemented with sessions on issues and solutions in photojournalism; and an online information session organized together with Chennai Photo Biennale, Chobi Mela Photography Festival in Dhaka, Bangladesh, The Jakarta International Photo Festival and Photo Kathmandu, among others. We also reached out to over 1000 photography organizations around the world providing them with an outreach kit of resources to share and featured a

series of organizations on our online channels, including FotoFeminas, Women Photograph, Photo Kathmandu, Native, Angkor Photo Festival, the Uganda Press Award, and Short of the Week.

Whilst important steps to attract a diverse range of entrants have been made and the results are slowly beginning to improve, the data underlines the need for further work.

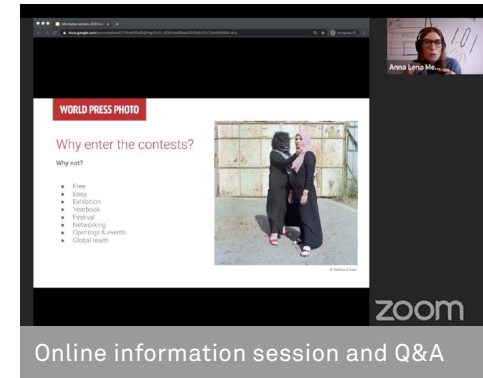
# 2021 Contest Outreach



Women's Voices Through the Lens



In conversation with: World Press Photo jury chairs



Online information session and Q&A

**W** World Press Photo @WorldPressPhoto · Dec 10, 2020  
 (2/2) "I encourage visual journalists from all over the world to participate because your descriptions of the world matter a great deal & the stories that you tell weave together a nuanced understanding of the fabric of our lives & our times." - @NTGKTM: [bit.ly/WPPH2021Contes...](https://bit.ly/WPPH2021Contes...)

**W** World Press Photo @WorldPressPhoto · Dec 16, 2020  
 On Thursday, 17 December 2020, join World Press Photo's Contests director Anna Lena Mehr for an online information session and Q&A about the #WPPH2021 Contests. Organized together with @chnpb, @chobimela, @jpfest & @photoktm. Learn more & register: [bit.ly/34icafw](https://bit.ly/34icafw)

**W** World Press Photo @WorldPressPhoto · Dec 30, 2020  
 Have you made an important story this year? The World Press Photo Story of the Year honors the photographer whose visual creativity and skills produced a story with excellent editing and sequencing. Enter the #WPPH2021 Photo Contest now: [bit.ly/2QYDDgy](https://bit.ly/2QYDDgy)

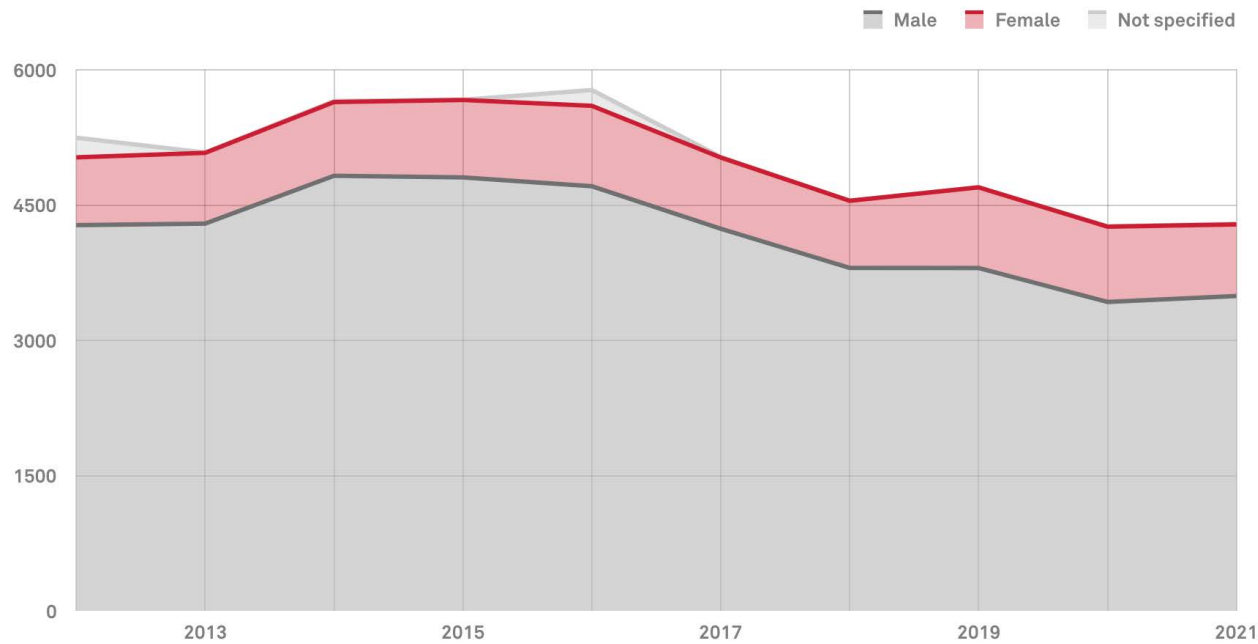
**W** World Press Photo @WorldPressPhoto · Dec 14, 2020  
 Our exhibition & public programming initiative with @photoworkshop brought visual journalists & photographers into a critical conversation about the future of visual storytelling within journalism in Africa. Watch the panel discussion recordings: [bit.ly/369O9Y6](https://bit.ly/369O9Y6)

**W** World Press Photo @WorldPressPhoto · Dec 19, 2020  
 This week on our Instagram account, we'll be sharing work by visual storytellers from the platforms @FotoFeminas, @Nativphotograph, @ShortoftheWeek, @blackfemphotogs & @AngkorPhotoFest: [bit.ly/2Fg1ZNV](https://bit.ly/2Fg1ZNV)  
 The #WPPH2021 Contests are open for entries: [bit.ly/2QYDDgy](https://bit.ly/2QYDDgy)

**W** World Press Photo @WorldPressPhoto · Jan 7  
 Only 5 days left to enter the #WPPH2021 Contests!  
 We want to spotlight the stories that matter. We want to see diverse work and different representations of our world. Help us get the best submissions for the independent jury to consider: [bit.ly/2QYDDgy](https://bit.ly/2QYDDgy)

# Gender of contest entrants 2012-2021

GENDER OF ENTRANTS



In total, 80% of the 2021 Photo Contest entrants identify as male, 19% identify as female, and 1% prefer not to say or identify with another gender. The number of female entrants has started to increase over the past five years. In 2015, the proportion of female entrants was 15%.

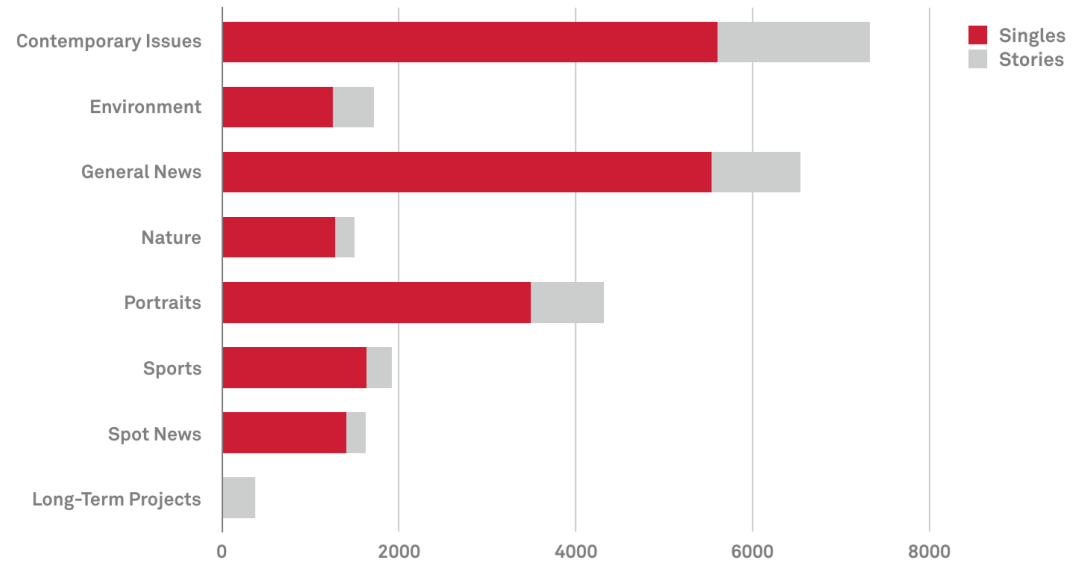
One hindrance to clarity on this topic is the fact that we do not know what proportion of the professional photojournalism industry is female, so we cannot confirm whether or not the proportion of female entrants is reflective of the industry.



# Contest entries by category

CATEGORY	SINGLES	STORIES
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES	5598	1730
ENVIRONMENT	1253	466
GENERAL NEWS	5538	1000
NATURE	1278	219
PORTRAITS	3494	824
SPORTS	1633	289
SPOT NEWS	1404	219
LONG-TERM PROJECTS		379
	<b>20198</b>	<b>5126</b>

NUMBER OF PHOTOS ENTERED AS SINGLES OR STORIES PER CATEGORY



# Award nominees by country

This table shows the number of awards per country from 2012-2021, not the number of winning photographers. For 2012-2017 it shows winners and for 2018-2021 it shows nominees. This means if a photographer is nominated for or awarded a prize in two categories, the

country is counted twice. The table does not include either nominees for or winners of World Press Photo of the Year and Story of the Year. Note also that the nationalities of the nominees and winners are provided by the entrants when they submit, and on occasion the nationalities have

changed after announcement, when dual nationalities are sometimes declared by photographers. 0.5 indicates dual nationality. As entries are judged anonymously, the country of entrants is not a visible factor during the judging process.

COUNTRY	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	TOTAL
USA	7	4	11	9	9	5	10	10	5	6	<b>76</b>
ITALY	7	6	3	9	2	4	5	3	6	3	<b>48</b>
RUSSIA	3	1	3	3	2	4	1	1	1	5	<b>24</b>
FRANCE	4	1	4	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	<b>21</b>
AUSTRALIA	1	2	2	1	4	2	2	3	3	1	<b>21</b>
GERMANY	1	1	3	2	2	3	5	1.5	2		<b>20.5</b>
CHINA	3	4	3	6	2	1	1				<b>18.5</b>
SPAIN	2	3	2		2	3	1	1.5	3	1	<b>18.5</b>
SWEDEN	3	1	1	1	4	1	2	1.5		1	<b>15.5</b>
UK	2	1	4	1		2	2	1.5	1		<b>14.5</b>
IRAN	1	3	1	2	1	1		2		2	<b>13</b>
THE NETHERLANDS	5	1	1				3	1.5		1	<b>12.5</b>
SOUTH AFRICA	2	1	1		1	1	1	2.5	3		<b>12.5</b>
CANADA	1	1			2	2	1	0.5	2	1	<b>10.5</b>
POLAND	2	2	3	1					1	1	<b>10</b>
DENMARK	2	4		1			1		1	1	<b>10</b>
MEXICO	1	1	1		2			2	1	1	<b>9</b>
BRAZIL		1			2	2		1		1	<b>7</b>
BELGIUM		2		1			1	1	2		<b>7</b>
TURKEY		1		2	1	1		1	1		<b>7</b>
IRELAND	1			1			2		1	1	<b>6</b>
JAPAN	3				1				2		<b>6</b>
BANGLADESH			2	1			1			1	<b>5</b>

# Award nominees by country

COUNTRY	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	TOTAL
SYRIA					2	2		1			5
ARGENTINA	1	1	1							1	4
INDIA	1	1				1				1	4
CZECH REPUBLIC		1	1			1		1			4
PORTUGAL		1			1			1		1	4
SWITZERLAND		1			1					1	3
HUNGARY						1		1	1		3
SERBIA		1	1				1				3
EGYPT	1						1	1			3
PERU		1							1	1	3
SLOVENIA					2					1	3
VENEZUELA							2	1			3
PHILIPPINES						1		1		1	3
CHILE		1				1					2
AZERBAIJAN			2								2
FINLAND			1			1					2
INDONESIA		1								1	2
JORDAN		1	1								2
MALAYSIA		2									2
NEW ZEALAND			1			1					2
NORWAY	1							1			2
AUSTRIA					1				1		2
BELARUS									1	1	2
PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES		1									1
BULGARIA			1								1
COLOMBIA							1				1

# Award nominees by country

COUNTRY	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	TOTAL
EL SALVADOR			1								1
AFGHANISTAN	1										1
ALGERIA									1		1
ARMENIA										1	1
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	1										1
ETHIOPIA									1		1
ERITREA				1							1
GREECE										1	1
LITHUANIA									1		1
MYANMAR										1	1
PAKISTAN						1					1
ROMANIA						1					1
SOUTH KOREA									1		1
VIETNAM		1									1

# Verification Process

*The annual World Press Photo Contest has four verification processes to ensure compliance with its code of ethics and entry rules.*

Photography gives us a creative interpretation of the world. However, when we want pictures to record and inform us of the varied events, issues, people, and viewpoints in our world, so they can be visual documents, there are limits to how pictures can be made so that the audience can trust them. This is why we take a strict stance on manipulation.

We are the only photo contest that has this extensive a verification process, and we are the only photo contest that can say all the nominees and winners have successfully passed an extensive verification process.

## A) ENTRY CHECKS

**Entry rule 11** states the contest is for single frame, single exposure pictures. This means multiple exposures, polyptychs (diptychs, triptychs, etc.) and stitched panoramas (either produced in-camera or with image editing software) are not eligible. These entries that are not eligible are removed from the contest by a team of checkers.

## B) MANIPULATION REVIEW

The manipulation review implements entry rules 11, 12, 13.

**Entry rule 12** states *“the content of a picture can not be altered by adding, rearranging, reversing, distorting or removing people and/or objects from within the frame.”*

There are two exceptions to this:

- (i) cropping that removes extraneous details is permitted;
- (ii) removing sensor dust or scratches on scans of negatives is permitted.

The process for ensuring compliance with both entry rules 12 and 13 takes place in the latter rounds of judging.

Entrants whose pictures remain in the contest and could be eligible for nominations and awards are contacted and required to provide the file as recorded by the camera.

These files could be:

- RAW file(s)
- Full format JPEG file(s). These must be as delivered by the camera, and provided in a series showing at least seven frames (three frames before the contest entry, the frame of the actual contest entry, and three frames after

the contest entry)

- For smartphones, the image captured with the built-in, stock camera app, emailed from the phone to contest@worldpressphoto.org
- Unprocessed positive scans of film negative(s), plus a contact sheet to show a series of at least seven frames (three frames before the contest entry, the frame of the actual contest entry, and three frames after the contest entry)

Each year we find that nearly all entrants readily comply with this requirement. That is testament to their openness and commitment to transparency on how images are produced. It underlines the fact that photographers do not want to mislead either the jury or the audience.

Two independent digital analysts compare original files with contest entries to determine whether the content of any picture (either a single picture or frame in a story) has been altered ([click here for details on how this is done](#)). The [guidance on manipulation](#) describes and shows what alterations to the content of a picture are not allowed. We produced videos with visual examples, and they have been viewed tens of thousands of times.

This year we requested original files for 316 entries (including both singles and stories) from 280 photographers. One photographer was excluded because their entry was not lens-based, one photographer was excluded because there was no verification possible, one photographer was excluded because they violated entry rule 11, 36 photographers were excluded because they violated entry rule 12, and one photographer was excluded because they violated entry rule 13. Some photographers had multiple entries that were excluded, but as we count the photographer, not the entry, we count it as one exclusion.

From 2018 the foundation decided that when cloning was clearly detected in entries they would be automatically excluded from the contest, without recourse to the photographers, and the jury was informed of these decisions.

This revised process followed our guidance that “altering the content of a picture by ‘adding, rearranging, reversing, distorting or removing people and/or objects from within the frame’ is manipulation and makes an entry ineligible for the final round,” and was enabled by [entry rule 22](#).

The relatively few instances of cloning involved very small, often tiny, elements being removed. A number of them replicated almost exactly the examples of what not to do shown in our guidance video on removal of content.

#### Entry rule 13:

Adjustments of color or conversion to grayscale that do not alter content are permitted, with two exceptions:

(i) Changes in color may not result in significant changes

in hue, to such an extent that the processed colors diverge from the original colors.

(ii) Changes in density, contrast, color and/or saturation levels that significantly alter content by obscuring or eliminating information in the picture are not permitted. The jury determines which changes are significant, following the video guidance on [what counts as manipulation](#).

It is important to emphasize that entry rule 13 is not about processing itself. All images are processed, but the line is drawn at those instances where there is darkening or lightening of area of an image so that material content is obscured and in effect removed. This was detailed in our [guidance video on unacceptable color changes](#). In contrast, levels of processing that produce changes within the rules are judged as aesthetic choices, and factored into the jury's general deliberations on the overall merits of an entry.

#### C) FACT-CHECKING

Since 2018, an independent analyst checks the context in which each remaining image or story was produced, distributed and/or published during the judging process. No problems were found via these checks.

Entry rule 10 states “all pictures must have accurate captions,” and the guidance on captions details what information must be provided in captions.

The process for ensuring compliance with this rule takes place after the jury decides on the nominees. An independent fact-checking team reviewed all captions to verify the accuracy of the information given. They also examined the metadata in the picture files.

The independent fact-checking team found no problems with any of the nominated pictures, and was able to verify their captions and metadata.

The fact-checking process is where clause 2 of the code of ethics (that entrants “must not intentionally contribute to, or alter, the scene they picture by re-enacting or staging events”) is handled. Captions must explain the circumstances in which a photograph was taken.

#### D) STORY TEXT

Finally, once the jury has selected the nominees, the World Press Photo Foundation deploys a research team to gather background information on each image and story. While we rely on the photographers for the basic captions, which are lightly edited by World Press Photo for accuracy and clarity, we often need additional information. This is so we can provide - in the yearbook, exhibition and on the website - the full story that gives the context for each image and story. The foundation is responsible for the content of this text.

## To access previous technical reports

[2020 for download](#)

[2019 for download](#)

[2018 for download](#)

[2017 for download](#)

[2016 for download](#)

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