

UNIFOR MEDIA COUNCIL

Combating the harassment of journalists

Response training for union representatives



UNIFOR

Training objectives:

- **For shop stewards and/or national reps to respond in cases of online harassment of journalists and media workers.**
- **It is NOT about worker-on-worker harassment or harassment from management.**
- **Content warning! This course covers disturbing content that may be triggering. If you need help at any time, please reach out to your Employee Assistance Program for counselling.**

Training objectives:

By the end of this session, you will know how to:

- Respond to a co-worker facing online harassment
- Document the harassment
- Assess the threat level
- Report when appropriate
- Provide basic emotional support to the target
- Hold the employer accountable
- Conduct a basic digital security audit

Examples of online harassment:

Examples of online harassment:

Astroturfing

Concern Trolling

Cross Platform Harassment

Cyberbullying

Cyber-Mob Attacks

Cyberstalking

Deepfake

Denial of Access

Denial of Service (DoS) Attacks

Dog Whistling

Doxing

Hacking

Identity Theft

Examples of harassment in the field:

Examples of harassment in the field:

Harassment

Sexual Harassment

Bullying

Violence

Threats

Obscenities

Hateful Speech

Denial of Access

Mob Attacks

Stalking

Unit for Media Council | Conseil des médias

Cat Calling

Definition of harassment:

- According to Part II of the Canada Labour Code (the Code), harassment and violence means “any **action, conduct or comment**, including of a sexual nature, that **can reasonably be expected to cause offence**, humiliation or other physical or psychological injury or illness to an employee, including any prescribed action, conduct or comment.”
- This includes all types of harassment and violence, including sexual harassment, sexual violence and domestic violence.
- According to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety, internet harassment “is the term used to describe the use of the Internet to bully, harass, threaten, or maliciously embarrass.”

Show of Hands:

- **Who has experienced harassment in your line of work?**

Show of Hands:

- **Who has experienced harassment in your line of work?**
- **Who here knows of a co-worker who has faced harassment?**

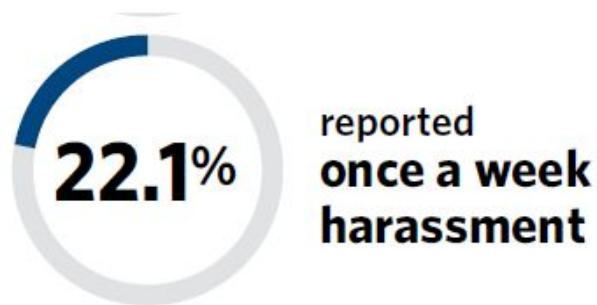
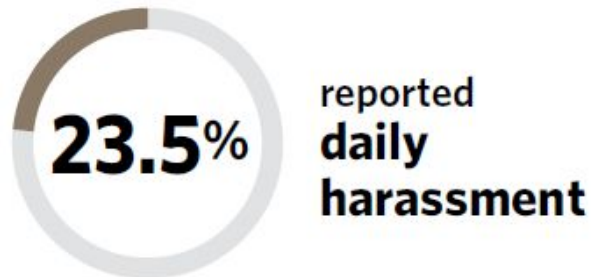
Sexist and Racist:

“

Women, workers of colour, Indigenous workers, 2SLGBTQIA+ workers and those from other equity-deserving groups are disproportionately affected by harassment.

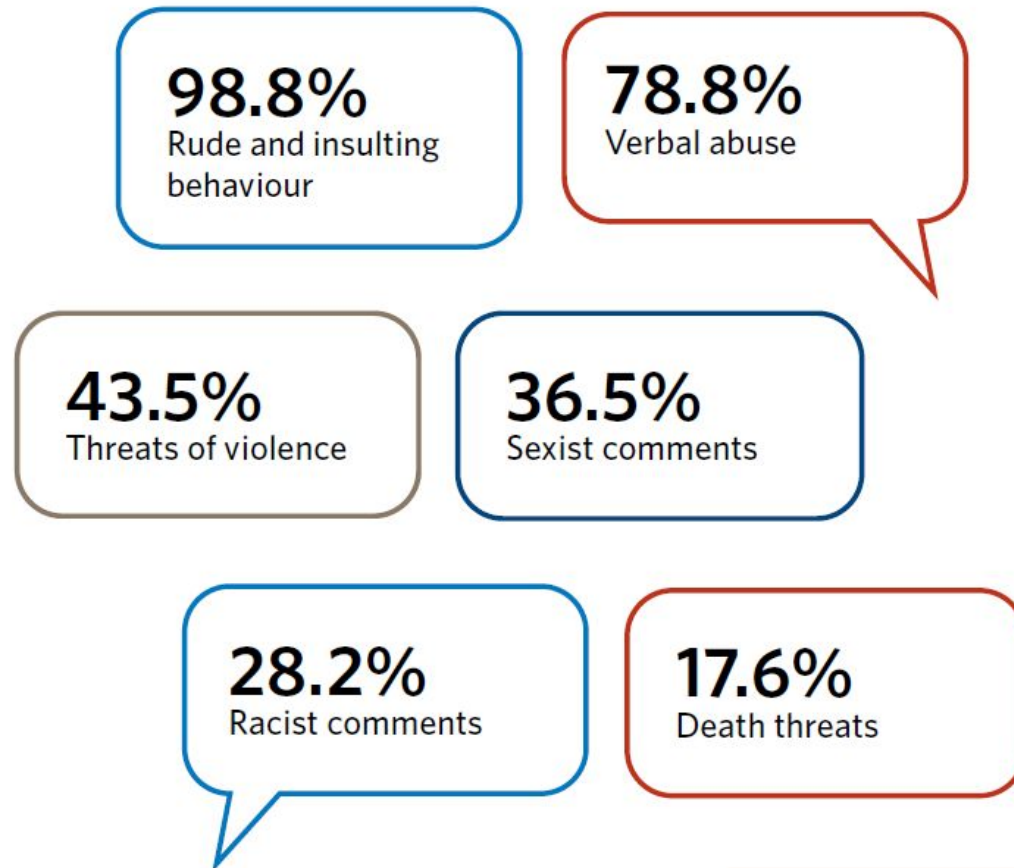
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Unifor Members' Survey:



Breaking the News: Media Workers Under Attack

Unifor Members' Survey:



Breaking the News: Media Workers Under Attack

Unifor Members' Survey:

When asked to describe the impact:



63.2%

reported feeling angry
(which was the most common
response)



25.3%

thought about leaving
journalism



26.4%

were frightened for their
safety



20.7%

felt isolated

Breaking the News: Media Workers Under Attack

Scope of the problem:

Harassment is:

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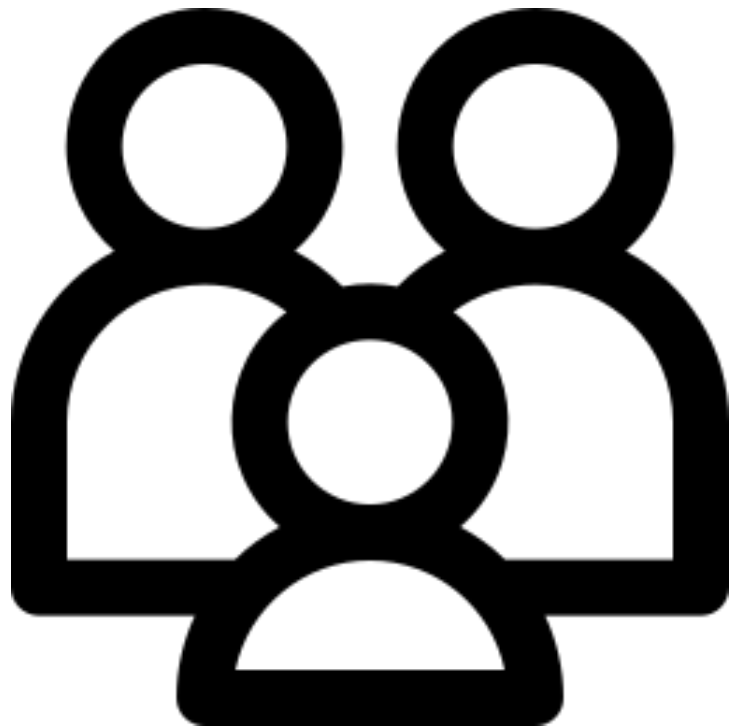
Harassment is:

- A health and safety issue
- An equity issue
- A press freedom issue
- Not 'just part of the job'

Employers' Responsibility:

- Media employers have legal obligations under occupational health and safety legislation, employment and labour acts/codes and human rights acts/codes.
- These obligations include having workplace violence and harassment policies and prevention plans, conducting risk assessments and preventing unsafe or poisoned work environments.
- Media employers need to create a workplace plan to address the problem of harassment, and this plan should emphasize the need to support employees who become victims.

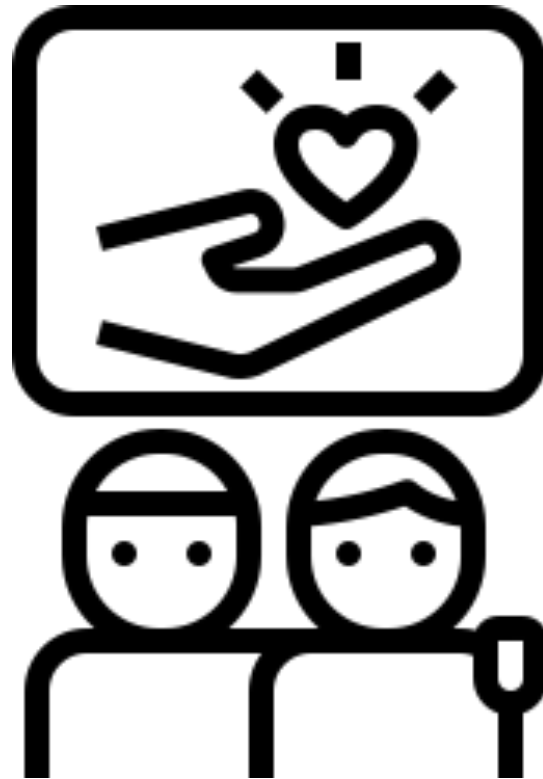
Six steps to support workers targeted by harassment



Before you begin:

1. Ensure the union member experiencing harassment is safe and not in any immediate danger. If they are, call 911 and notify the employer immediately.
2. Make sure the union member does NOT delete any offending messages. They are evidence.

Step 1: Emotional Support



Step 1: Emotional Support

1. Start by asking what happened, and listen carefully without judgment.
2. Take notes, and use active listening skills.
3. Ask how they feel, and empathize with those feelings.
4. Tell them it's not their fault. Harassment is on the rise, and they are not alone.

Important Tips!

- Harassment is meant to disempower, belittle, intimidate and frighten people. It's often sexist and racist.
- Resist the urge to “rescue” them.
- Be mindful that some union members may not be ready for full-scale action. They may want to just talk to you first.

Step 2: Document/Gather Info



Step 2: Document/Gather Info

- Along with your notes also save, print, screenshot everything. Save it all in a folder or memory stick.
- Ask the member to write a statement with details, such as where and when the attack happened, with a description and nature of the harassment, while it's still fresh in their memory.
- Use the harassment abuse log to record details of the incident(s). (see handout)

Step 2: Document/Gather Info

1. For emails, try to locate the IP address if the sender is not anonymous. DO NOT FORWARD the email. You may lose data if you do. Use these steps to trace the IP address:



Step 3: Assess the Threat



Step 3: Assess the Threat

- A threat is defined as “a statement of intention to inflict pain, injury, damage or other hostile action” against a target.
- This can include death threats, threats of physical violence, threats to family members, and for women, often threats of sexual violence.

Step 3: Assessment tool from PEN America

- **Has your harasser made an explicit threat that names you specifically and/or includes specific details** (“Someone should do something” VS “Here is how I am going to do this thing to you”)?
- **Does the content of your harasser’s messages contain personal details about you or your loved one(s)** (e.g., your location, your place of employment, the name of your child’s school)?

Step 3: Assessment tool from PEN America

- **Are you seeing “indicia of irrationality”?** In other words, is your harasser using their real name, real email address, real phone number, or otherwise openly identifying themselves while threatening you?
- **Is your harasser engaging in a course of conduct?** In other words, are they attacking or threatening you repeatedly in a concerted way and/or across platforms?

Step 3: Assessment tool from PEN America

- **Do you know the person who is harassing you?** If so, do you believe them capable of escalating the abuse? Do they have a history of violence?
- **Is the unwelcome content extending to other people in your network?** Has the offender researched you and begun reaching out to your job, friends, and family?
- **Have you been hacked?** i.e., have your accounts been compromised or taken over?

Step 3: Assessment tool from PEN America

- Is the behavior – frequency, violence, and volume – escalating?
- Has the abuser shared (or) threatened to share sexually explicit images of you without your consent?
- Are you concerned that the content of your harasser's messages, circulating publicly, will negatively impact your personal or professional life?

Step 3: Assessment tool from PEN America

- PEN America's threat assessment tool:



Step 3: Assess the Threat

If you answered yes to any of these questions:

- Alert the employer immediately.
- Consider contacting law enforcement.
- Consider actions in the next steps

Step 4: Response



Step 4: Response

- If the abuse is on social media, report it to the platform.
- If the abuse is overwhelming, have someone take over the union member's social media accounts or email to offer a mental break.
- Don't respond to the abuse. Trolls and harasser are often looking for a reaction. Don't engage.

Step 4: Report to Employer

- Report to the employer and keep a record of all interactions with management, including details of their response.
- Some companies are developing their own tracking and response tools. Find out what they are and use them.
- Ensure the employers response is in accordance to the Collective Agreement and prevailing legislation.

Step 4: Report to Employer

- Report to your local Health and Safety Committee.
- If your [Federal] employer has more than 300 employees, report to the Policy Health and Safety Committee.
- Consider filing a grievance or human rights complaint if the company's response is not adequate or appropriate.

Step 4: When to Report to Police

- Report to police if and when appropriate.
- Offer to accompany the union member to the police station or sit in on the phone call.
- Take notes of police officers' names, badge numbers, phone numbers and any file/case numbers.
- For continued harassment and repeat calls to the police, ask for the original officer you filed a report with.
- Take notes of everything, including any commitment(s) made by the officers.

Step 4: Criminal Harassment

264. (1) Criminal harassment - No person shall, without lawful authority and knowing that another person is harassed or recklessly as to whether the other is harassed, engage in conduct referred to in subsection (2) that causes that other person reasonable, in all circumstances, to fear for their safety or the safety of anyone known to them.

Step 4: Criminal Harassment

- 264. (2)** Prohibited conduct - The conduct mentioned in subsection (1) consists of repeatedly following from place to place the other person or anyone known to them;
- (a)** repeatedly following from place to place the other person or anyone known to them;
 - (b)** repeatedly communicating with, either directly or indirectly, the other person or anyone known to them;
 - (c)** besetting or watching the dwelling-house, or place where the other person, or anyone known to them, resides, works, carries on a business or happens to be; or
 - (d)** engaging in threatening conduct directed at the other person or any member of their family.

Step 4: Uttering Threats

264.1 (1) Every one commits an offence who, in any manner, knowingly utters, conveys or causes any person to receive a threat

- (a) to cause death or bodily harm to any person;
- (b) to burn, destroy or damage real or personal property; or
- (c) to kill, poison or injure an animal or bird that is the property of any person.

Step 4: Hate Speech

- Hate speech comes in many forms. It can include hatred rooted in racism (including anti-Black, anti-Asian and anti-Indigenous racism), misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, antisemitism, Islamophobia and white supremacy.
- Both Canada's Criminal Code and B.C.'s Human Rights Code describe hate speech as having three main parts:
- It is expressed in a public way or place.
- It targets a person or group of people with a protected characteristic such as race, religion or sexual orientation.
- It uses extreme language to express hatred towards that person or group of people because of their protected characteristic

-From the BC Human Rights Commissioner

Step 5: Digital Security



Step 5: Digital Security

- Digital security can be a response to an attack but it is best used as a preventative tool.
- Conduct a digital/social media audit to see what personal information is publicly visible.

Step 5: Digital Security

- Delete or change security settings on publicly available information, such as email addresses, phone numbers, photos of family, home residence, etc.

(Note: you may need to ask the digital desk to remove stories or columns you've written with revealing personal information).

Step 5: Digital Security

- Double-check privacy settings on social media, and untag from photos and comments,
- Use a password manager program, such as 1Password or Bitwarden

Step 6: Follow up/Self Care



Step 6: Follow up/Self Care

- Make a safety plan to ensure to the best of your ability that the harasser(s) can't access the union member
- Ensure that the member is aware of all the supports available to them. Ie: Mental health benefits, Employee Assistance Plans (EAP), other employer or community supports.

Step 6: Follow up/Self Care

- Ask the union member what they do to help alleviate stress (meditate, go offline, journal, take a break from work, spend time outdoors, with family/friends etc.)
- Offer to keep lines of communication open for ongoing emotional support/follow up advocacy

Step 6: Help is Here

A Unifor Media website to support journalists and media workers



Step 6: Breaking the News

A Unifor Media discussion paper on the issues and possible solutions



Breaking the News:

Media Workers Under Attack

Practice Exercises:

- Break into groups of two and role play with the scenarios given to you.
- Use the handouts to record the attack and determine next steps.
- Be prepared to discuss your answers/results.
- Then switch roles, and try it again.

Questions?

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