IFJ – State of Play of Unions' Initiatives to Combat Online Harassment and Media Best Practices

Questionnaire 2 – "Media Initiatives to Combat Online Harassment"

ANALYSIS

The IFJ conducted this online survey of *journalists and media workers to identify the initiatives, best practices and needs in the media in the handling of online harassment and abuse against women journalists and media workers.* The collection of best practices recommendations will strengthen the support that unions and journalists' associations can provide to their members in that struggle.

<u>Main Findings</u>

Two-thirds of the 161 respondents identified as **women (67%)**, one-third as **men (32%)** and **one person as 'other'** than female, male or non-binary[1].

Thirty-seven countries are represented, with a **majority of African countries** but a **majority of European respondents**

The **gender distribution in each region** reveals that the largest proportion of women from a region who responded to this survey is from Latin America and the Caribbean (90%), followed almost equally by Europe (65%) and Africa (63%) and Middle East and the Arab World (62%). The largest proportions of men who answered the survey are from North America (100%, one respondent) and Asia and the Pacific (63%).

The **regional distribution of gender identities** reflects that 56% of the women who responded work in Europe and 24% in Latin America and the Caribbean, whereas 62% of the men who responded work in Europe (62%), followed at distance by the other regions.

Respondents are constituted by a majority of **employed journalists and media workers** (58%) **or freelancers** (32%), who are in majority **members of journalists' unions or associations** (88%), and work mainly in **private/commercial media** (53%). **Digital and print media** are their main distribution platforms for their work (34% and 28%).

Only 4 out of the 161 respondents claimed their media included **provisions addressing online abuse in collective agreements**.

Sixty-one per cent of the respondents said that they knew about cases of online harassment or abuse against their colleagues and, at the same time, **two-thirds** of the respondents (… but not necessarily the same) affirmed that **online harassment is not a priority for their media company**, and that it's even not discussed according to 44% of them.

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[1] In this report, statistics will be presented as follows: percentages will be rounded to one decimal place in the tables, and in the text, one or two significant digits will be indicated. For precise results to two decimals, see Annex 1 containing the responses to the questionnaires.

Unions support media company in adopting guidelines, awareness raising about legal tools and training on digital security but a third of the 160 respondents indicated that there was no support at all in their organisation (34%), whereas almost a quarter of respondents didn't know about it (23%).

Media company don't support enough journalists and media workers who report cases of online harassment or abuse and there is a **lack of knowledge** about it. The support from the media consists in legal assistance (14%), public support to the journalist targeted by online violence (13%) and access to safe space and trained staff to have support and counselling (9%).

According to a fifth of the respondents, their media adopted a **protocol or mechanism** that allows women journalists and media workers to report online abuse and be supported and protected in such cases.

Not all journalists and media workers get the same support from their media in case of online violence and existing protocol or mechanisms. A majority of **freelancers don't feel supported enough by their media** or don't know if there is any form of support available to them. Also, "star" journalists might receive a distinct support because of their echo to the audience.

A quarter of the respondents (26%) mentioned that their media advocated for the adoption and ratification of the **International Labour Organisation Convention C190 and its Recommendation R206** on violence and harassment in the field of work, as a legal tool to fight against online harassment targeted at women journalists and media workers.

Three initiatives should be prioritised in terms of **prevention against online harassment**: collective agreements (66%), legal tools available (65%) and training on digital and personal security (51%).

Four initiatives should be prioritised in terms of **support and reporting the cases of online violence**: samples of protocols and collective agreements, public awareness raising, information on existing legal provisions to strengthen the support and the reporting of cases (support oscillating between 37% and 49%).

Methodology

The IFJ distributed this survey via SurveyMonkey in its three official languages (English, French and Spanish). The survey was open for two weeks in late January 2022 to early February and consisted of 19 questions. The first three questions addressed demographic data and focused on the region, the country and the gender identity of the respondent. The next four questions targeted professional data and focused on the professional status, journalists' union and association, the type of media the respondent works for and the main distribution platforms for their work. The rest of the questions in the sections were structured as closed questions (yes/no/I don't know answers or multiple answers allowed), of which seven included options to answer by adding a comment and two open questions that enabled respondents to provide qualitative input (content or web link).

Results

One hundred and sixty one journalists and media workers from 37 countries, with a majority of African countries but a majority of European respondents

The questionnaire has been filled out by **161 journalists and media workers** present in **37 countries**. They all identified their gender (Q3). One respondent skipped the question about the region but identified the country, Brazil (Q1, 160 respondents), and another one skipped the question about the country but identified her gender (Q2, 160 respondents).

When asked about their regional location, the Middle East and Arab World was proposed as a region, with the idea to meet IFJ's region and reflect some common cultural dimensions of the Arabic media, although some countries included by the respondents in the region should belong to other geographical regions (as used in the IFJ's memberships divisions (Africa, Asia and Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North America). For instance, Algeria and Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen were associated by some respondents to the Arab World and to Africa, Asia or Europe, and Morocco was included in the Arab World instead of Africa. It has been decided to leave the respondents' regional identification as it was chosen. Accordingly, the data from the 'region' question (Q1) and a regional distribution of the data from the 'country' responses (Q2) don't coincide. The survey reader might want to bear that in mind.

According to the question about the <u>regional location</u> (Q1), the survey shows a **strong representation of European respondents** (59%) followed by respondents from Latin America and the Caribbean (18%) Africa (10%), Middle East and the Arab World (8%), Asia and the Pacific (5%) and North America (1%). The over-representation of respondents from France, Spain and Brazil can partly explain the regional results. There might be various explanations to this: the special awareness of the issue of online violence, the strong need for initiatives in this area, the professional connection of the respondents (membership of the same media, network, union or associations of journalists), the existence of several unions or associations of journalists who might have forwarded the survey.

The question about the <u>country location</u> (Q2) shifts the perspective from the weight of each region in terms of respondents to the diversity of each region in terms of countries represented in the survey. By looking to the countries of the respondents, instead of the number of respondents in each region, the figures show that **Africa is the most diverse region represented in this survey** (eleven represented countries, although the region should also include Morocco), followed by Europe (eleven represented countries), the Middle East and Arab World (seven countries, although Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey could be included in other geographical regions), Latin America and the Caribbean (six countries plus one unidentified country), Asia and the Pacific (five countries) and North America (one country). The following table gathers data from the first two questions (Q1 and Q2):

Table 1 – Respondents from each region and country (Q1-Q2)

Region (Q1) Respondents - Countries	Country (Q2) Respondents
Africa 16 respondents (10%) 11 countries	Algeria (1) Cabo Verde (1) Democratic Republic of the Congo (1) Gambia (1) Guinea (1)

	Kenya (1)
	Liberia (1)
	Mozambique (2)
	Togo (1)
	Tunisia (5)
	United Republic of Tanzania (1)
Asia and the Pacific 8 respondents (5%) 5 countries	Afghanistan (2) Indonesia (1) Pakistan (2) Sri Lanka (2) Yemen (1)
Europe 94 respondents (58.8%) 11 countries	Cyprus (1) France (22) Italy (2) Luxembourg (8) Montenegro (1) Norway (1) Slovenia (7) Spain (39) Switzerland (1) Turkey (1) Ukraine (11)
Latin America **and the Caribbean** 28 respondents (17.5%) 6 countries	Argentina (3) Brazil (18) Chile (1) Costa Rica (2) Mexico (3) Uruguay (1) Unidentified country (1)
Middle East **and Arab World** 13 respondents (8.1%) 7 countries	Algeria (1) Islamic Republic of Iran (1) Lebanon (1) Morocco (1) Tunisia (6) Turkey (1) Yemen (2)
North America 1 respondent (0.6%) 1 country	Canada (1)

A majority of women respondents

When asked about their gender identity (Q3), **two-thirds of the 161 respondents identified as female/women (67%)**, one-third as male/men (32%) and one person as 'other' than female, male or non-binary:

- 108 respondents identified as female (67%)
- 52 respondents identified as male (32%)
- 1 respondent identified as other (1%)

● No respondent identified as non-binary

By **cross-referencing the data about the regions, the country and the gender identity**, and by recalling the fact that all 161 respondents identified their gender (Q3), one respondent didn't identify the region but identified the country, Brazil (Q1), another one didn't identify the country but identified her gender (Q2), the survey provides a **gendered distribution in each country and region** as follows:

Table 2 – Gender repartition in each country and region (Q1-Q2-Q3)

Region (Q1) Respondents Women / Men / Other	Country (Q2)	Gender identity (Q3) Women / Men / Other
Africa 16 respondents 10 women / 6 men	Algeria	1 woman
	Cabo Verde	1 man
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	1 woman
	Gambia	1 man
	Guinea	1 woman
	Kenya	1 woman
	Liberia	1 man
	Mozambique	2 women
	Togo	1 man
	Tunisia	4 women / 1 man
	United Republic of Tanzania	1 man
Asia and the Pacific 8 respondents 3 women / 5 men	Afghanistan	2 men
	Indonesia	1 woman
	Pakistan	1 woman / 1 man
	Sri Lanka	1 woman / 1 man
	Yemen	1 man
Europe 94 respondents 61 women / 32 men / 1 person identified as other	Cyprus	1 man
	France	13 women / 9 men
	Italy	1 woman /1 man
	Luxembourg	2 women / 6 men
	Montenegro	1 woman
	Norway	1 man
	Slovenia	4 women / 2 men /1 person
	Spain	27 women / 12 men
	Switzerland	1 woman
	Turkey	1 woman
	Ukraine	11 women
Latin America and the Caribbean 28 respondents + 1 unidentified region (for Brazil) 26 women / 3 men	Argentina	2 women / 1 man
	Brazil	16 women / 2 men
	Chile	1 woman
	Costa Rica	2 women
	Mexico	3 women
	Uruguay	1 woman
	Unidentified country	1 woman
Middle East and Arab World 13 respondents 8 women / 5 men	Algeria	1 woman
	Islamic Republic of Iran	1 woman
	Lebanon	1 woman
	Morocco	1 man

	Tunisia	4 women / 2 men
	Turkey	1 man
	Yemen	1 woman / 1 man
North America 1 respondent 1 man	Canada	1 man

By summing up the gendered data from the countries, including the unidentified country in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the case of a respondent form Brazil who didn't identify the region, the data show the **gender distribution in each region**. **Latin America and the Caribbean** are the most represented by women in this survey (90%), followed by almost equally **Europe** (65%), **Africa** (64.5%) and **Middle East and the Arab World** (62%). On the contrary, the majority of respondents in Asia and North America identified as men, with 38% and 0% female respondents respectively. The following table highlights that the gendered distribution of the survey is not due to one or two regions.

Table 3 – Gender distribution of regions (Q1-Q2-Q3)

	Men (%)	Women (%)	Other (%)
Africa (16, 100%)	6 (37.5%)	10 (62.5%)	0
Asia and the Pacific (8, 100%)	5 (62.5%)	3 (37.5%)	0
Europe (94, 100%)	32 (34%)	61 (64.9%)	1 (1.1%)
Latin America and the Caribbean (29, 100%)	3 (10.3%)	26 (89.7%)	0
Middle East and the Arab World (13, 100%)	5 (38.5%)	8 (61.5%)	0
North America (1, 100%)	1 (100%)	0	0
161 respondents (100%)	52 (32.3%)	108 (67.1%)	1 (0.6%)

The data can also be examined from the **regional distribution of gender identities**. A large majority of the respondents identifying as women (80%) work in **Europe** (56%) and **Latin America and the Caribbean** (24%). No woman represents North America in this survey. And the proportions of women from Africa, the Middle East and Arab World, and Asia and the Pacific are below 10% (respectively, 9%, 7% and 3%).

Table 4 – Regional distribution of gender identities (Q1-Q2-Q3)

161 respondents	Africa (16)	Asia and the Pacific (8)	Europe (94)	Latin America and the Caribbean (29)	Middle East and the Arab World (13)	North America (1)
52 men (100%)	6 (11.6%)	5 (9.6%)	32 (61.6%)	3 (5.8%)	5 (9.6%)	1 (1.9%)
108 women (100%)	10 (9.3%)	3 (2.8%)	61 (56.5%)	26 (24.1%)	8 (7.4%)	0
1 other	0	0	1	0	0	0

(100%)			(100%)			

The gender distribution of the responses shows that **two-thirds of the 161 respondents identified as female/women (67%)**, one third as male/men (32%) and one person as 'other' than female, male or non-binary.

When looking at the **regional location** (Q1), **Europe looks overrepresented in terms of respondents** (59%) followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (18%). By paying attention to the **diversity of countries** the respondents work in (Q2), instead of the number of respondents in each region, **Africa appears to be the most diverse region represented in this survey** (eleven represented countries, although the region should also include Morocco). Europe follows (also with eleven represented countries), then Middle East and Arab World (with seven countries, although four countries identified as part of the Arab World could also be included in other geographical regions). Latin America and the Caribbean (six countries plus one unidentified country), Asia and the Pacific (five countries) and North America (one country) appear to be less represented in terms of country diversity.

By cross-referencing the data about gender identities, regions and countries (Q1, Q2, Q3), more detailed observations can be made. The **gender distribution in each region** brings another perspective. It reveals the proportion of women, men and other persons in each region who dedicated attention to this survey. The region **Latin America and the Caribbean** has the **largest proportion of women who responded to this survey (90%)**. It is followed by almost equally **Europe** (65%), **Africa** (65%) and the **Middle East and Arab World** (62%). North America (with its unique male respondent) and Asia (38% women respondents) show a bigger ratio of male respondents.

The **regional distribution of gender identities** offers yet another insight to the panel. It reflects in which region the respondents of each gender identity work. **A large majority of the respondents identifying as women (81%) work in Europe (56%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (24%)**. Results appear slightly different for the regional distribution of male respondents, since the largest male participation to the survey was made by men working in Europe (62%) followed at a distance by Africa (12%) and Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and the Arab World equally (both with 10%).

The survey wasn't intended to understand **the reasons behind the former data**. For instance, having a higher ratio of male respondents in a region could mean several things: a larger presence of men in the media sector in that region, a bigger interest in the topic of online harassment because of the reality of online violence there, or a better connection to the unions' network which distributed this survey. In the same way, one can only make assumptions about the over-representation of women who responded to this survey.

As many unions and journalists' associations, media and researchers have argued, online violence against women journalists isn't a women's issue that would only be of interest to women journalists[2]. It's a question of democracy, press freedom and labour rights to work in a safe, professional environment. It might be then suggested that the over-representation of women respondents is due to the fact that women

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[2] Barton, A. and Storm, H., Lees Muñoz, E. (ed.), Brady, S. (2018). Violence and harassment against women in the news media : A global picture. International Women's Media Foundation / International News Safety Institute. https://www.iwmf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Violence-and-Harassment-against-Women-in-the-News-Media.pdf.

journalists and media workers are more vulnerable to online harassment[3] and have experienced more online threats and violence than their men colleagues (73% of the women-identifying journalist who responded to the 'The Chilling' survey in 2021 said they experienced online violence[4]). They might have a better awareness of the issue, a better knowledge of the existing mechanisms and initiatives set up by their media outlets or organisation. And they might also have a better idea about what is needed out there in terms of prevention, support and reporting the cases.

A majority of employed or freelance journalists and media workers, members of journalists' unions or associations, from private/commercial media and distributing their work mainly on digital and print media

Respondents were asked about their <u>professional status</u> (Q4) and had the possibility to answer various statuses. More than half of the respondents are employed journalists or media workers (58%), nearly a third are freelance journalists or media workers, 11% are media managers and almost 15% identified as 'other' (15%). This last category of respondents had the option to specify their function.

- 93 respondents are **employed journalists or media workers** (58%)
- 51 respondents are **freelance journalists or media workers** (32%)
- 18 respondents are **media managers** (11%)
- 24 respondents are '**other**' (15%) and work in the academic world (journalist in a federal university, professor-foundation director-communication, professor-consultant, journalist-trainer-lecturer), in consulting (including two in communication, one in an enterprise and one in Parliament), in an institution (employee), in human resources, in unions (one as representative for a journalists' union, another as journalist and unionist, one from a media union), as freelance, as a trainee. One is a former media manager dismissed by the extreme-right government and some respondents are retired (including one after a career in a newspaper and another one who is still a blogger).

The question about the <u>membership to union or association of journalists</u> (Q5) shows that a very large majority of respondents are members of unions or associations of journalists (88%), which makes sense given that they received the survey through the IFJ, the IFJ's members and the IFJ's network of journalists' unions and associations.

- 142 respondents are **members** of unions or associations of journalists (88%)
- 19 respondents aren't **members** of unions or associations of journalists (12%)

Regarding the <u>type of media respondents work for</u> (Q6), more than half of the 160 respondents work in private/commercial media (53%, one respondent skipped the question). A bit less than a third work in public service media (28%), followed by 6% respondents from the community media sector. The opportunity was given to those who answered 'other' (14%) to specify the type of media they work for.

[3] Posetti, J. (Dec. 15 2017) in "Women journalists more vulnerable to online harassment".
https://www.rappler.com/nation/191178-women-journalists-more-vulnerable-online-harassment/.
[4] Posetti, J., Shabbir, N., Maynard, D., Bontcheva, K., Aboulez, N. (Apr. 2021). The Chilling. Global trends in online violence against women journalists. Research Discussion Paper. UNESCO.
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377223/PDF/377223eng.pdf.multi

The answers to Q6 were as follows:

- 85 respondents work for **private/commercial media** (53%)
- 44 respondents work for **public service media** (28%)
- 9 respondents work for **community media** (6%)

- 22 respondents work for **other types of media** (14%): news agency, press relations agencies, public media and community radio, 2 non-profit media, NGO, association/personal, independent media (all related to water as a human right), owned media, privately owned but provide public service (special status due to national media act), television, science journal, 2 cooperatives, unions, institutions, freelancers, institutions and freelancers, freelancers for various print and audio-visual media.

The last question on the respondents' professional profile was about the main distribution platforms for their work (Q7). Digital and print media are the most represented in this survey, covering together 62% of the answers (34% and 28%). They're followed by multimedia (17%) and linear broadcasts (14%). The respondents who have other main distribution platforms (6%) had the option to specify.

- 55 respondents work on **digital platforms** (34%)
- 45 respondents work on **print** (28%)
- 28 respondents work on **multimedia** (17%)
- 23 respondents work on **linear broadcast** (14%)
- 10 respondents work on **other distribution platforms** (6%): various respondents work on all types of media (print, digital, multimedia, websites and social networks), whether for an enterprise, a press agency, television, radio or a print media.

Very few negotiated provisions in collective agreements

When asked whether their media negotiated provisions against online abuse in any collective agreements or other types of agreement (Q8), only 4 of 161 respondents answered positively (2%). A large majority of the respondents stated that there were no such negotiated provisions (67%) and almost a third didn't know about it (30%).

- 108 respondents confirmed that their media didn't negotiate such provisions (67%)
- 49 respondents didn't know whether their media negotiated such provisions (30%)
- 4 respondents confirmed that their media negotiated such provisions (2%)

These four respondents who answered positively to the former question were invited to describe the type of agreement and what the provisions contain and to add a link to the agreement if it was accessible online (Q9). Although they commented what follows, no specific information was provided regarding the topic of online harassment against women journalists:

- 'The agreement was signed through a Collective Labour Agreement between the media companies of the state of Paraná (Brazil) and the Union of Professional Journalists of Paraná (SindijorPR). Description of the agreement: "Harassment Clause Thirteenth One - Harassment

and Conflicts in the Workplace Environment. Companies should adopt the following principles aimed at preventing conflicts and harassment in the workplace: a) respect diversity, cooperation and teamwork; b) help employees become aware of the need to build a healthy work environment; c) contribute to the promotion of ethical and legal values." Link: http://sindijorpr.org.br/documentos-convencao' (translated from Spanish; editor note: this link refers to the collective labour agreements of the union Sindijor)

- 'The use of protocols has been negotiated in the Union and the Tribunal' (translated from Spanish)
- 'There is consensus on agendas in line with human rights' (translated from Portuguese)
- 'Protection against abuse' (translated from Spanish)

Online harassment not seen as a priority for the media

Respondents were asked about the priority level given to online harassment against women journalists in their media company (Q10, four respondents skipped the question). According to **two-thirds** of them, **online harassment isn't a priority for their media**, it isn't even discussed (44%) or it has been mentioned but without being a priority (32%). Online harassment is a priority according to almost a quarter of the respondents: a priority (14%), a high priority (7%) or the highest priority (3%). In these cases, media discuss the topic, have some work in progress on the matter or have already taken measures (such as protocol, campaigns, collective agreements with specific provisions against violence).

- 69 respondents answered that online harassment against women journalists isn't a priority and isn't discussed (44%)
- 51 respondents answered that this isn't a priority, but the topic has been mentioned (32%)
- 22 respondents answered that this is a priority, the topic is in discussion (14%)
- 11 respondents answered that this is a high priority, there is a work in progress regarding this topic (7%)
- 4 respondents answered that this has the highest priority, measures have been taken (3%)

In case that measures have already been taken, the respondents had the possibility to add a comment (four comments), as follows:

- 'Always in defence of minorities, especially women' (translated from Portuguese)
- 'Alliances with other social forces' (translated from Spanish)
- http://lapoderio.com/2018/11/02/periodistas-violadas-la-punta-del-iceberg-de-la-violencia-hacia-las-profesionales-de-la-informacion/ (Editor's note: this link refers to the article 'Journalists raped, the tip of the iceberg of violence against female media professionals' in Colombia.)
- https://www.igualdadlazubia.es/newslettermayo/diciembre21/ (Editor's note: this link refers to the newsletter of the Centre for Equality in La Zubia, Spain, which gathers contents related to gender.)

A further question asked respondents whether they were aware of online harassment or abuse against their colleagues (Q12, one respondent skipped the question). **A majority of them answered that they were**

aware of such cases (61%) although not all of them knew whether these cases had been reported or not. Still, a large minority wasn't aware of such cases (39%). More precisely:

- 63 respondents didn't know whether there were cases of online harassment or abuse (39%)
- 36 respondents were aware of such cases that were reported (23%)
- 34 respondents were aware of such cases but didn't know whether they were reported (21%)
- 27 respondents were aware of such cases that weren't reported (17%)

Although the correlation between the two questions (Q10 and Q12) hadn't been done and the correspondence between the different answers can't be assumed, it's nevertheless interesting to put in perspective the two most answered propositions: **61% of the respondents said that they knew about cases of online harassment or abuse against their colleagues and, at the same time, two-thirds** of the respondents (… but not necessarily the same), asserted that **online harassment isn't a priority for their media**, and it's even not discussed (according to 44%).

Unions support media in adopting guidelines, awareness raising about legal tools and training on digital safety

<u>The organisation (journalists' union or association) can provide the media with different types of support in order to elaborate prevention measures that limit online harassment and raise awareness to this phenomenon</u> (Q11, one skipped the question). When asked about the support already provided by organisations to media, with multiple answers allowed, a **third of the 160 respondents indicated that there was no support at all** in their organisation (34%, one respondent skipped that question). Almost a quarter of respondents didn't know about it (23%). The different types of support to the media were solicited as follows:

- According to 54 respondents, there is no support at all (34%)
- According to 44 respondents, there is support to adopt guidelines related to online harassment in collaboration with employees, unions and associations of journalists (28%)
- According to 37 respondents, awareness is rising about the legal tools available for journalists and media workers who are facing online harassment (23%)
- 37 respondents don't know whether there is any kind of support (23%)
- According to 31 respondents, there is support to professional training about digital and personal safety, and the resources available (safety training organised by associations of journalists or digital actors, tips, existing mechanisms for reporting abuse to the digital platforms and social networks, etc.) (19%)
- According to 17 respondents, there is support to set up appropriate guidelines and standards for the online moderation of comments, sensitive to misogyny, sexism, homo/lesbo/transphobia, racism, religious hate and other forms of discrimination (11%)
- According to 7 respondents, there is support to set up online moderation teams that are gender-balanced, diverse and inclusive (4%)
- According to 6 respondents, there is support for setting up a section on the media website, a help desk, a cyber cell, an alarm, number or email and/or relevant resources dedicated to prevent and react to online harassment (4%)

When journalists' unions or associations provide support to media, it seems that they first help in the **adoption of guidelines** related to online harassment in collaboration with employees, unions and associations of journalists, in **awareness raising about the legal tools available** for journalists and media workers who are facing online harassment, and in **professional training about digital and personal safety**, and the resources available in that matter (safety training organised by journalists' associations or digital actors, tips, existing mechanisms for reporting abuse to the digital platforms and social networks, etc.).

Limited media support in case of online violence, but legal information, public support and access to a safe space can be provided

When asked about the kind of support provided by the media when a colleague reported a case of online harassment or abuse (Q13), with multiple answers allowed, 10 respondents skipped the question, the larger group of the remaining respondents didn't know (34%), directly followed by those who answered that there hadn't been such case reported yet (32%) and those who said that the organisation couldn't assist the journalist or media worker although they asked for support (13%). In case that there was some kind of support from the media, it consisted in legal assistance (14%), public support to the journalist targeted by online violence (13%) and access to safe space and trained staff to providesupport and counselling (9%). Financial support (5%), other kinds of support (5%) and basic medical, psychological and employment support (2%) come after. There following was answered:

- 52 respondents didn't know whether such case had been reported (34%)
- According to 49 respondents, there had been no such case reported (32%)
- According to 21 respondents, a legal assistance (reporting to the police, complaint on behalf of the member) has been provided (14%)
- According to 19 respondents, the organisation couldn't assist although the journalist or media worker asked for support (13%)
- According to 19 respondents, the organisation gave public support to the harassed journalist (13%)
- According to 14 respondents, the support consisted of access to safe space and trained staff to support and advises people affected by online harassment (9%)
- According to 6 respondents, the organisation provided financial support (lawyer and counselling costs, work interruption) (5%)
- According to 3 respondents, the organisation provided basic medical and/or psychological support, including support at work(2%)
- 7 respondents specified other kinds of supports (5%)

Those who answered 'other' kinds of support were invited to specify the support (5%). They confirmed the options above.

- 'The young reporter elected not to react legally in order to prevent future stigma, the media had to respect her decision'
- 'I suffered harassment. I asked for help and was fired for not giving in. I became ill, and to this day I'm still undergoing treatment (translated from Portuguese)'

- 'I have had no further information' (translated from Spanish)
- 'There was no support' (translated from Spanish)
- 'Raising awareness among women journalists to break the silence' (translated from French)
- 'Participating in all campaigns in defence of human and minority rights' (translated from Portuguese) 'Media selectively support journalists, meaning that they support those, when there is a big echo in the public or right-wing journalists. When I was harassed, part of the management quietly accepted harassment'

The last response raised an interesting aspect that hasn't been taken into account in the survey: the support provided to journalists in case of online violence isn't always equal or automatic, given their **celebrity** or the **echo** they can have on a particular audience or **political wing** in the media. This highlights the fact that not all journalists and media workers enjoy the same level of power in the media house, the same status or the same fame, which might lead to a **differential support** by their organisation in case of online violence against them.

Few protocols or mechanisms implemented in-house and lack of information about them

Respondents were asked whether their media had adopted a protocol or mechanisms that allow women journalists and media workers to report online abuse and be supported and protected in such case (Q14, five respondents skipped the question). For a large majority of the respondents, the answer was 'no' (53%) or 'I don't know' (29%). For the remaining 18% of the respondents who answered 'yes', only very few could describe the protocol (3%) whereas the others knew about the existence of such protocol but didn't know what it was (15%). The following was answered:

- 83 respondents knew that there were no such protocol or mechanisms (53%)
- 45 respondents didn't know whether there were a protocol or mechanisms (29%)
- 23 respondents knew that there was a protocol but they didn't know what it was about (15%)
- 5 respondents knew that there was a protocol and could describe it (3%)

Four respondents added a comment to their responses about the protocols or mechanisms adopted by their media to support the women journalists targeted by online harassment or abuse, as follows:

- 'Yes, but there is no protocol because this is a tiny outlet and discussion flows freely, thus, instant reaction is possible'
- 'Each case is analysed' (translated from Portuguese)
- 'Specific Department'
- 'CNIL, cyber malware, Pharos' (translated from French. *Note from the editor*: CNIL is the National Commission for Information Technology and Liberties in France that 'is responsible for ensuring that information technology is at the service of the citizen and that it doesn't infringe on human

identity, human rights, privacy or individual or public freedoms.'[5] Pharos is the official portal for reporting illegal content on the Internet from the Interior Ministry in France[6]).

It is interesting to note the variety of the protocols or mechanisms adopted, even among four responses. Thus, in-house support can be provided on a **case-by-case basis** or by a **specific department**. Media can rely on **official institutions' mechanisms or digital tools** to report cases of online harassment. The small size of a media outlet may also limit the means of action and make it **difficult to adopt small outlet-specific protocols**.

Journalists' status matters when it comes to media support, and media workers receive the same support from their media

An important aspect of the support provided by media and journalists' unions or associations to women journalists and media workers is linked to the status of the media professional. Respondents were asked whether the measures, protocol or mechanisms applied in the same way to all their colleagues, regardless of their journalist's status (employee, freelance, trainee, or correspondent) (Q15, four respondents skipped that question). In line with the former questions, more than half of the respondents recalled that their media didn't have such measures (34%) or answered that they didn't know if their media had such measures or if the measures applied to all the colleagues (27%). Almost **a fourth of the respondents confirmed that all journalists and media workers had the same support from the media** (23%), followed by respondents who affirmed **the contrary (14%)**, as follows:

- 54 respondents asserted that their media doesn't have such measures (34%)
- 43 respondents didn't know (27%)
- 36 respondents confirmed that the support applied in the same way to all their colleagues, regardless of their journalist status (23%)
- 22 respondents considered that the support did not apply the same way to all their colleagues, regardless of their journalist status (14%)

All respondents had the opportunity to add a comment to this question, which was made by two respondents (1%), as follows:

- 'The measures aren't the same when it comes to a **star journalist** and a reporter or a desk journalist who is not **famous**' (translated from French)
- 'In Costa Rica, protocols for the online protection of journalists are just being implemented, and there is even **collaboration with organisations** to ensure that protection is provided to citizens with a gender focus' (translated from Spanish)

The first comment made a relevant point, already mentioned by another respondent in a former question: beyond or regardless of the status of the journalist, it's the celebrity, the 'star' label that can lead to a differential and unequal support from the media. The second comment highlights the option of

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[5] https://www.cnil.fr/fr/cnil-direct/question/la-cnil-cest-quoi (translated from French)
[6]
https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/A-votre-service/Ma-securite/Conseils-pratiques/Sur-internet/Signaler-un-contenu-suspect-ou-illicite-avec-PHAROS

collaboration, partnership with institutions or associations extern to the media outlets, as it has also been mentioned in another question.

More education and advocacy in favour of the ILO Convention C190 is needed

When asked whether their media advocated for the adoption and ratification of the International Labour Organisation Convention C190 and its Recommendation R206 on gender-based violence and harassment in the field of work, as a legal tool to fight against online harassment targeted at women journalists and media workers (Q16, one respondent skipped that question), a quarter of the respondents answered positively (26%) whereas the remaining respondents didn't know (40%) or knew that their media didn't advocate for the adoption and ratification of ILO Convention 190 (34%). Responses are as follows:

- 64 respondents didn't know (40%)
- 54 respondents answered no, their media didn't advocate for the ILO Convention C190 (34%)
- 42 respondents answered yes, their media advocated for the ILO Convention C190 (26%)

The responses to this question reveal the need for a better knowledge of the ILO Convention C190 and its Recommendation C206. More education and more advocacy in favour of them are needed. The fact that the Convention has been poorly implemented might be a reason for its lack of awareness. However, the fact that the Convention contains a specific provision addressing violence online is a significant element that unions and associations of journalists can use to push for proper protocols and policies addressing online abuse in media.

A strong need for collective agreements, legal tools and training on digital safety

Respondents were asked which initiatives they would prioritise in terms of prevention against online harassment at work (Q17, six respondents skipped that question), multiple answers were allowed. Three initiatives in terms of **prevention** received the **support of more than half of the respondents: collective agreements (66%), legal tools available (65%) and training on digital and personal safety (51%)**. Guidelines about online harassment or content moderation, a special dedicated desk or number, an inclusive and gender-balanced moderation team for the online content were less requested, as the following responses shows:

- Collective agreements that provide a 'zero tolerance' approach towards online abuse in newsrooms (103 respondents, 66%)
- Legal tools available for journalists and media workers who are facing online harassment (101 respondents, 65%)
- Training on digital and personal safety (79 respondents, 51%)
- Guidelines on how to handle online harassment in collaboration with media employers and employees (67 respondents, 43%)
- Special section on media websites, help desk, cyber cell, alarm number or email dedicated to prevent and react to online harassment (55 respondents, 35%)

- Guidelines and standards for the online moderation of comments, sensitive to misogyny, sexism, homo/lesbo/transphobia, racism, religious hate and other forms of discrimination (49 respondents, 32%)
- Online moderation teams that are gender-balanced, diverse and inclusive (46 respondents, 30%)

Samples of protocols and collective agreements, awareness raising, information on existing legal provisions needed

In terms of support and reporting of online harassment cases, respondents were asked which initiatives they would consider most appropriate (Q18, multiple answers allowed, three respondents skipped the question). All the proposed initiatives were requested, with support oscillating between 37% and 49%. Initiatives that provide samples of protocols and collective agreements, raising public awareness about the issue, informing on existing legal provisions received the best support from the respondents, although none of them were requested by a majority of respondents, as the results show:

- Samples of protocols already in place in world media that address online abuse (78 respondents, 49%)
- Samples of collective agreements that address online harassment of media workers (77 respondents, 49%)
- Raising public awareness of the potential dangers of online abuse on social platforms (71 respondents, 45%)
- Information on existing legal provisions available to tackle online abuse (70 respondents, 44%)
- Better understanding of psychological implications of online abuse on media staff (69 respondents, 44%)
- Improve facilities on digital platforms and social networks to report harassment case (SOS Button) and enter in safer modes (66 respondents, 42%)
- Peer support put in place in newsrooms (sorting through comments, documentation of the abuse case, screenshots of hate speech, report of litigious accounts, etc.) (64 respondents, 41%)
- Information on existing National campaigns for the adoption and ratification of the International Labour Organisation Convention C190 and its Recommendation R206 on gender-based violence and harassment in the field of work, including online abuse (60 respondents, 38%)
- Increase responsibility and accountability of digital platforms and social networks in the handling of privacy and data protection and online abuse claims (59 respondents, 37%)
- Alliances, national agreement or common front against harassment with involvement of political actors, research centres, organisations for gender equality and digital communication, etc. (58 respondents, 37%)
- Other (6 respondents, 4%)

The six respondents who opted for 'other' initiatives were invited to specify them. The following comments were made:

- 'To be able to denounce the aggressors and have them punished. And not the victim, which usually happens' (translated from Portuguese)

- 'Processes of national political, social and media negotiation on gender in media and politics' (translated from Spanish)
- 'Intensify training and awareness raising for women and men in the media on the issue (translated from French)
- 'I have never been confronted with the subject' (translated from French)
- 'Nothing' (two respondents)

Beside the comments which confirmed the above proposed initiatives, one comment highlights the effort that needs to be done in order to **change the victim blaming and punishing frame**. As already commented above, the victim of online violence who reports the case and asks for support might face negative consequences in the professional environment and might refuse or step out from the denunciation process. This situation is part of the broader narrative of victim blaming in all issues of gender violence against women.

A majority of freelancers don't feel supported by their media

The IFJ research team decided to dedicate a specific section of the survey results to freelance journalists and online abuse. The decision was based on the precarity of the freelance status, their limited coverage by collective agreement, and the trend for many women freelancers to be targeted by online abuse.

By filtering the answers of the respondents by their status as freelance media workers (Q4, 32%, 51 respondents), the following demographic and professional information can be highlighted:

- More than half of them were based in Europe (54%) and in Latin America and the Caribbean (26%).
- A large majority of them were women (69%).
- Some of them combined their freelance status with other types of status: 12% were also partly employed and 6% media managers.
- 88% of the freelancers in this survey were union members
- They worked mainly in private/commercial media (52%) followed by public service media (20%).

When asked if their media negotiated provisions against online abuse in any collective agreements of other types of agreement, only one respondent (2%) answered yes. The majority of respondents answered no or didn't know. Two freelancers answered that online harassment against women journalists had the highest priority in their media and that measures have been taken (4%). But for a large majority, this issue wasn't a priority in their media when it was mentioned (25%) or because it wasn't even discussed (42%).

When asked about the types of support provided by the organisation (journalists' union or association) to the media in order to elaborate prevention measures that limit online harassment and raise awareness to this phenomenon, more than half of freelancers said there was no support or didn't know about the support. A third of freelancers answered that there was no support at all (33%), and a bit less didn't know whether there was any kind of support (29%). Around a fifth of freelancers mentioned guidelines related to online harassment, awareness raising about the legal tools available and professional training about digital and personal safety.

When asked about the kind of support provided by the media when a colleague reported a case of online harassment or abuse, the majority of the respondents attested a lack of support, or a lack of knowledge about the availability of any support. Almost half of the freelancers didn't know (45%), a quarter answered that there had been no such case reported (25%) and according to 14 % the organisation couldn't assist although the journalist or media worker asked for support.

The exact same proportion of employed media workers and freelancers (16%) said that their media had adopted a protocol or mechanism that allows media workers to report online abuse and be supported and protected in such cases. However, they claimed that they didn't know what it was. Thirty-three percent of media managers responded positively to the same question. When asked whether these measures, protocol or mechanisms applied in the same way to all their colleagues, regardless of their journalist's status (employee, freelance, trainee, or correspondent), 33% freelancers didn't know but 27% answered positively. And according to 32% freelancers, their media advocated for the adoption and ratification of the International Labour Organisation Convention C190 and its Recommendation R206.

The three initiatives that freelancers would prioritise to prevent online harassment at work were legal tools for journalists and media workers who are facing online harassment (65%), collective agreements that provide a 'zero tolerance' approach towards online abuse in newsrooms (62.5%) and training on digital and personal safety (56%). n terms of support and reporting of online harassment cases, the three most supported initiatives were those which provide samples of collective agreements that address online harassment of media workers (56%), better understanding of psychological implications of online abuse on media staff (52%) and samples of protocols already in place in world media that address online abuse (46%).

Campaigns aren't enough!

The last question offered respondents the possibility to add anything to the previous questions (Q19, 124 skipped that questions). Out of the 37 responses, many were **thanks** to the IFJ for taking up the issue and a suggestion for a **translation** of the survey **in Arabic**. One comment also recommended exploring the issue of **online violence performed by other journalists, colleagues or media managers against women journalists.**

The initiatives and strategies recommended by the respondents were the following: inform about the reality of women journalists and identify the forms of online violence; advocate and educate about ILO Convention 190 and lobby public authorities; support the elaboration of a zero-tolerance policy in-house; support initiatives that facilitate the report of online abuse cases and initiatives from smaller media outlets and community radio; build partnerships with other organisations more experienced in fighting online violence; organise digital safety training; strengthen peer support in newsrooms and, especially for unions; strengthen their support for freelance media professionals who can't rely on their media protocols or mechanisms. The remaining comments were the following:

- 'I understand that most journalists in Mexico and Latin America are unaware of the International Labour Organisation's Convention C190 and Recommendation R206 on gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace. There is a **need for greater dissemination** of the issue' (translated from Spanish)
- 'We count on your support to carry forward our **initiatives in our community radio** made by women' (translated from Portuguese)
- 'The struggle of minorities and human rights is expanding, but we must always maintain the defence of these rights' (translated from Portuguese)
- 'We must constantly work towards the safety of journalists, **not be limited to developing campaigns**'
- 'Let this research serve to show the reality of women journalists' (translated from Portuguese)
- 'Unfortunately, in Manaus there aren't many reports of abuse by other fellow journalists, but there are many cases of abuse'
- '3 urgent processes: Identification of the most common forms of violence in the networks, media 2. Elaborate a "zero-tolerance" policy. 3. Establish instruments, mechanisms and legal framework for prevention and sanctioning' (translated from Spanish)
- 'Establish or strengthen partnerships with organisations that have more experience in combating this type of harassment' (translated from French)
- 'Yes, **members of management bodies** who are **involved in online harassment**, **colleagues** who do it should be immediately punished'
- 'I hope this questionnaire is prepared in **Arabic** to reach the widest possible audience'
- 'I'm too old to have to deal with this problem! And as a self-employed person I have always worked alone. So, my situation is less risky. I'm not in contact with my male colleagues' (translated from French)
- 'This questionnaire isn't really relevant for **freelance journalists** because we aren't dependent on editorial offices and we're **alone when these situations arise**. That's why I join the SNJ and UPP, to get support if needed' (translated from French)
- 'The defencelessness in which we women journalists find ourselves, especially those who work in public institutions' (translated from Spanish)
- 'Perfect topic to discuss on current situation'
- 'We, the National Union of Press Professionals, thank the IFJ for its investigation. The subject is very delicate. Today, many of our media are confronted with this kind of violence. We really need several advocacy actions with the authorities, to propose laws on the subject, training on safety, gender, popularisation of laws, integration into our collective agreements' (translated from French)
- 'There is much work to be done to prevent harassment of women in newsrooms, online and in society at large' (translated from Spanish)
- 'Training on how to handle online harassment will be helpful to journalists. The idea of **peer support in news room** is good'

Conclusions and recommendations

For the media

The survey result has clearly demonstrated the lack of involvement of media organisations in adressessing online abuse. According to the statistics, 61% of respondents said that they knew about cases of online harassment or abuse against their colleagues and, at the same time, two third of the respondents asserted that online harassment wasn't a priority for their media, and that it was not even discussed (according to 44%).

When cases of online abuse are being reported, **media support remains very weak** and consists mainly in legal assistance (14%), public support to the journalist targeted by online violence (13%) and access to a safe space and trained staff to receive support and counselling (9%).

However, for the majority of respondents, there is no media support even when it has been asked, or they just don't know about it because, among other things, there have not been any cases reported yet .

The absence of **protocol or mechanisms** that allow women journalists and media workers to report online abuse and be supported and protected in such cases was pointed out. Information about the mere existence of such mechanisms or their contents is also lacking.

Professional status should not be an issue when it comes to support. Freelancers don't feel supported enough by their media, because they aren't always included in the protocol or mechanisms in place and should rely on unions to get support in case of online violence against them, or because they are not aware about the support they could receive.

Some recommendations:

- Develop protocol and mechanisms in-house, such as peer support, to tackle online abuse. The IFJ has adopted guidelines for media and unions that can be easily adapted.
- Media should strengthen their support to freelancers, even after the story has been published and paid.
- Publicity among staff is needed to make initiatives known to those who need them, including freelancers.
- Analyse and act against online violence performed by other journalists, colleagues or media managers against women journalists.
- Reflect on how gender-based violence is covered in news stories with a gender lens.

For unions

Journalists' unions or associations seem to already support media with three types of initiatives. They help to **adopt guidelines** related to online harassment in collaboration with employees, unions and associations of journalists. They contribute in raising **awareness on the legal tools available** for journalists and media workers. They organise **professional training about digital and personal safety** and they provide the resources available in that matter (safety training organised by associations of journalists or digital actors, tips, existing mechanisms for reporting abuse to the digital platforms and social networks, etc.).

The responses revealed the need for a better understanding of the Convention C190 as a legal tool to fight against online harassment targeted at women journalists and media workers, and a better awareness from the public authorities.

Some recommendations:

- Adopt specific provisions in collective agreements that provide a zero tolerance approach to online abuse and mechanisms to counter it.

- Educate members and media on the **International Labour Organisation Convention C190 and its Recommendation R206** on violence and harassment in the field of work.
- Inform members on **legal tools** available to tackle online abuse.
- Organise **training on digital safety**.
- Engage in dialogue with **small media outlets and community media** to raise awareness and existing tools against online abuse.

- Reflect and take action against the **victim blaming and punishing framework**. The potential negative consequences in the professional environment of journalists or media workers make them refuse or step out from the reporting process.

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