

Country overview

# Botswana

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# Sexual Harassment in the Media

This research is the product of a collaboration between WAN-IFRA Women in News, BBC Media Action and City St George's, University of London. It was produced thanks to support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK FCDO) under the Public Interest Media and Healthy Information Environments (PIMHIE) programme.

We are grateful to our colleagues and partners in the 21 countries of the study for their support in disseminating the survey to respondents.

**Women in News** is a media development programme of the World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA). Its mission is to close the gender gap in news media. It works with 80 media organisations from 17 countries in Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia.

**BBC Media Action** is the BBC's international charity. With our partners, we reach more than 100 million people in need around the world, in more than 30 countries and 50 languages. We work to provide impartial, impactful, trustworthy media to people in need so that they can make informed choices to transform their lives.

**City St George's, University of London** has a mission to generate world-leading research on global social justice and inclusivity in journalism that brings lasting benefits to the industry through its Department of Journalism. We partner with journalists, think tanks, NGOs, and policymakers to explore how ethical, public interest journalism can be reimagined and protected for future generations.

**Principal researcher:** Dr Lindsey Blumell

**Research lead:** Molly Chimhanda

**Editorial leads:** Ellen Leafstedt and Valeria Perasso

**Editorial support:** Nadene Ghouri

**Research support:** Sofiene Omri, Neema Gupta, Keo Ranza, Zeinab Nehme, Sheila Chimphamba

**Communications:** Farah Wael, Carolynne Wheeler, Ateendriya Gupta

**Website development and graphic design:** Edit Gyenge

**Copyeditor:** Lorna Fray

# Botswana

This report is part of a 2025 international study on sexual harassment in media workplaces<sup>1</sup>, examining experiences of sexual harassment among women, men and gender non-conforming media professionals across 21 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab region, South East Asia, and Ukraine.

Conducted by the World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) Women in News (WIN) in partnership with City St George's, University of London and BBC Media Action, this is the largest study of its kind. It builds on research conducted in 2020 that identified persistent gaps in evidence on sexual harassment in media workplaces.

The results specific to Botswana show that overall rates of sexual harassment<sup>2</sup> in the country's newsrooms decreased between 2020 and 2025 from 58% to 35%, respectively.<sup>3</sup> Botswana's current rates sit close to the Sub-Saharan African average of 33%.

Media professionals surveyed in Botswana said they experienced fewer instances of physical sexual harassment overall, compared with five years ago. But data shows that women reported being exposed to more frequent verbal sexual harassment than in 2020.

<sup>1</sup>This study defines sexual harassment as "unwanted and offensive behaviour of a sexual nature that violates a person's dignity and makes them feel degraded, humiliated, intimidated or threatened". For definitions for specific types of sexual harassment, see the [methodology page](#).

<sup>2</sup>The prevalence of sexual harassment for a given country/region is calculated as the mean average of the percentage of respondents from that location who reported having ever experienced verbal harassment, online harassment, physical harassment and/or rape while at work.

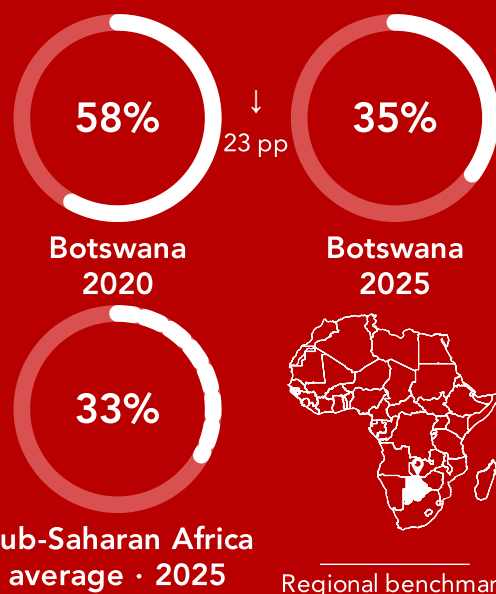
<sup>3</sup>Please interpret this comparison cautiously, as the 2020 estimate is based on a smaller sample (n=31) than the 2025 estimate (n=64). The smaller sample carries a larger margin of error, so any apparent difference between 2020 and 2025 may reflect sampling variability rather than substantial changes.

”

*"I think the perpetrators and recipients are not aware of what constitutes sexual harassment – especially catcalling, signs and remarks, because when these happen they brush it off or laugh."*

Male TV outlet employee aged 45–54

## Overall rates of sexual harassment in newsrooms



# Context

**Between 2020 and 2025, Botswana’s approach to tackling sexual harassment in public spaces and in the workplace has progressed in fits and starts, with stronger frameworks in some areas and noticeable gaps in others.**

In the public sector, sexual harassment is treated as misconduct under the [Public Service Act](#) (2008), allowing for disciplinary measures including job termination and forfeiture of workplace benefits. The [Penal Code Amendment Act of 2021](#) strengthened penalties for sexual offences and established the Sexual Offenders Registry Act (2021), but did not explicitly criminalise all forms of sexual harassment outside defined offences. The most significant recent shift is the [Employment and Labour Relations Bill](#) (from 2025, going through Parliament at the time of writing), which directly addresses violence and harassment at work in line with International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 190<sup>4</sup> and seeks to close a longstanding gap in workplace protections.

Alongside legal reform, civil society and sector-led efforts within the media industry in Botswana have focused on awareness, training and internal policy change. WIN trained staff at Duma FM and The Weekend Post between 2022 and 2024,

with both organisations [launching sexual harassment policies as a result](#). WIN also trained more than 50 media students at Limkokwing University in 2024, with plans to reach a further 100 students in 2025–2026.

The issue of sexual harassment continues to generate wider national discussion outside the media industry, notably in educational institutions. At the University of Botswana, Women Deliver ran 10 training sessions in 2022–2023, [reaching around 500 students and influencing campus policy discussions](#). Following social media exposure of harassment concerns within the student community, the University of Botswana Student Representative Council President called for [intensified sexual harassment awareness campaigns](#), alongside more robust reporting mechanisms on campus. Meanwhile, the Botswana Teachers Union [launched the first National Gender Forum](#), raising awareness of gender-based violence and sexual harassment in schools and communities.



*“I think staff need training on [sexual harassment], because of a lack of knowledge.”*

**Male print media photographer aged 25–34**

<sup>4</sup>Adopted in June 2019, ILO Convention No. 190 (C190) is the first international treaty to recognise the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.

# The survey

A total of 64 media professionals from Botswana took part in the survey<sup>5</sup> through an online questionnaire distributed among WAN-IFRA and BBC Media Action networks. Respondents comprised 44 women, 19 men and 1 gender non-conforming individual (see Figure 1).

## Figure 1: Respondent demographics

All percentages rounded to the nearest whole number

### By gender identity



### By job level



<sup>5</sup>This study employed an online survey instrument comprising 33 closed questions and one open-ended question. The latter allowed respondents to provide additional comments, and was the source of the quotes included in this report. Respondents could skip any question if they wanted.

WIN and BBC Media Action regional media networks distributed the surveys. Each network aimed for a balance of respondents by gender, role and media organisation type. Response rates and sample sizes vary by country.

Given the sensitivity of the subject, the research team gave respondents access to relevant support resources in their country. Data was handled in accordance with City St George's, University of London's privacy policy and international data protection standards. For further details, see the [methodology page](#).

<sup>6</sup>Totals include gender non-conforming individuals and those who prefer to self-describe their gender identity. Data is not disaggregated for these people at country level. To explore trends for these groups, please refer to the relevant regional or global report.

# Experience of Sexual Harassment

The 2025 survey shows that **verbal sexual harassment** is the most common form of sexual harassment experienced by Botswana’s media professionals respondents, with women being more likely to be exposed to it (see Figure 2). Over a third of the women surveyed said they have experienced it five or more times.

Women are also more frequently exposed to **online sexual harassment**, with almost half of women respondents having experienced it at least once, compared with 11% of men. The gender gap in this form of harassment is the largest

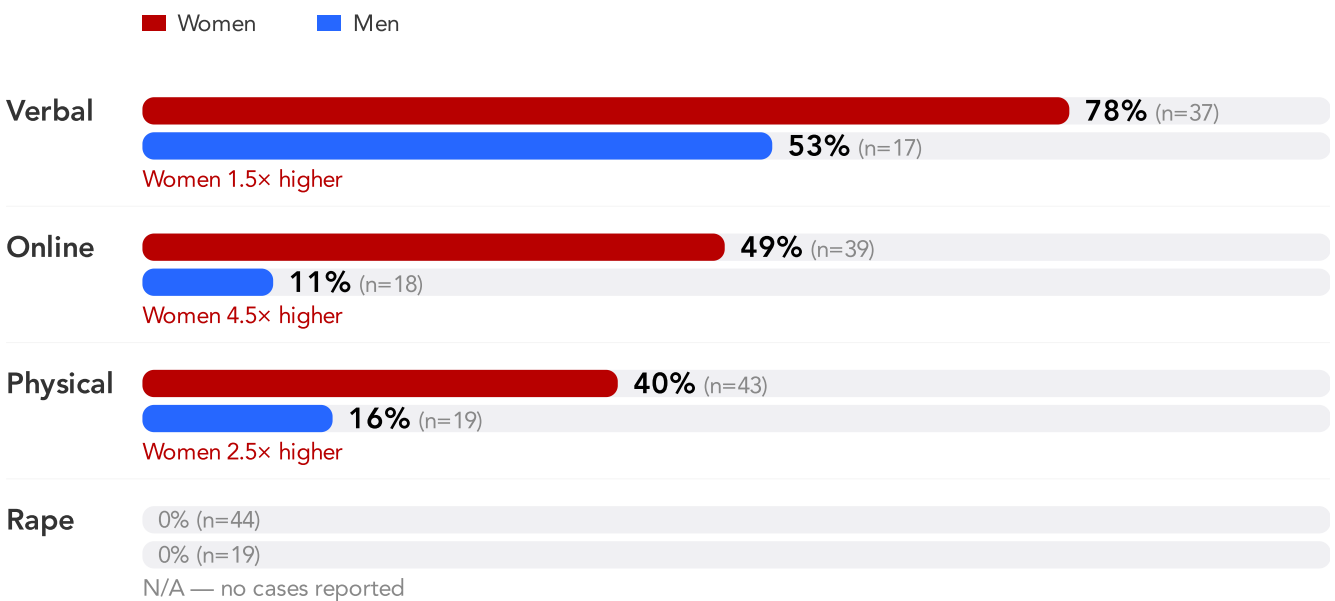
of all types surveyed, with women being almost five times more exposed to online attacks.

**Physical sexual harassment** is less prevalent in Botswana for both genders, with around two-thirds of respondents saying they have never experienced it. However, women respondents reported having experienced physical harassment more than twice as often as their male counterparts.

No person in the Botswana sample stated that they had experienced **rape**.

**Figure 2: Experience by type of sexual harassment and gender**

Base: all respondents, excluding "I can't remember". All percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.



# Reporting and Action

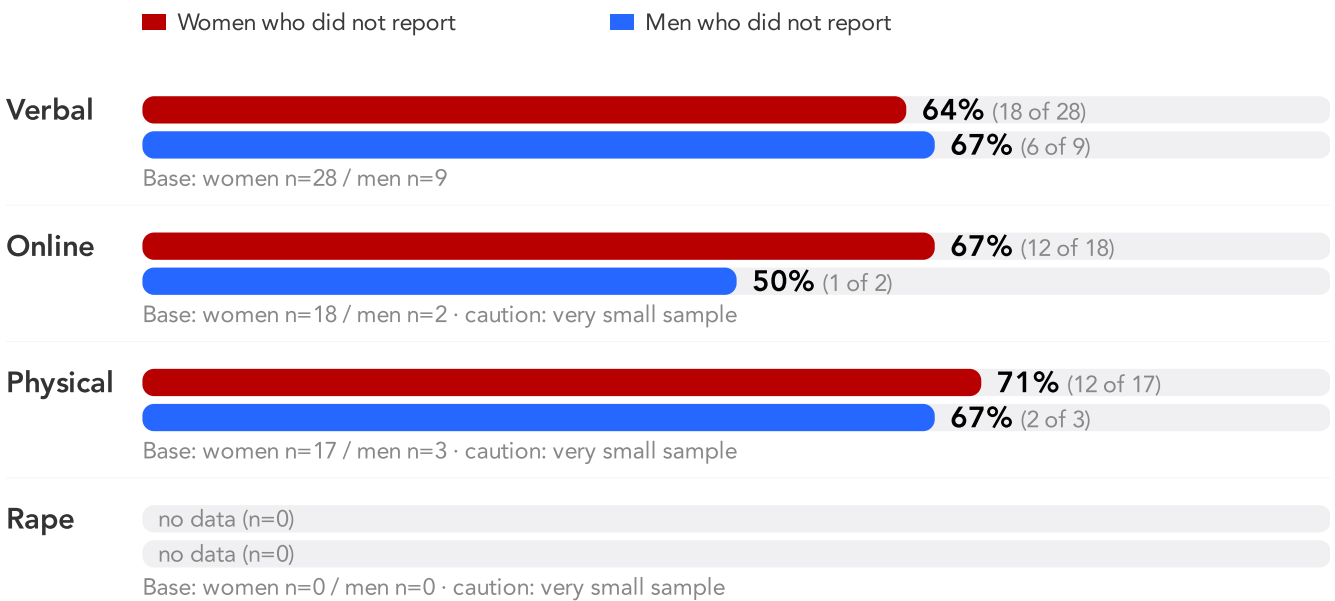
The survey asked respondents who indicated they had experienced sexual harassment at work whether they reported the incident to their organisation. In such cases, the survey asked follow-up questions to assess whether their employers had taken any action as a result.

Across all types of sexual harassment, the majority of both male and female respondents did not report incidents (see Figure 3). Women cited a lack of reporting mechanisms in the workplace as the main barrier that prevented them from speaking up about either verbal or online sexual harassment incidents.

Reporting of **online sexual harassment** was very low overall, with only one man out of two and six women out of 18 having reported incidents they had experienced. The majority of women surveyed did not report online sexual harassment at all, despite being more likely to experience it. When asked why, the main reason mentioned was a lack of reporting mechanisms, followed by assuming it was not a big deal.

**Figure 3: Reporting rates by type of sexual harassment**

Base: those who experienced each type and answered the reporting question. All percentages rounded.

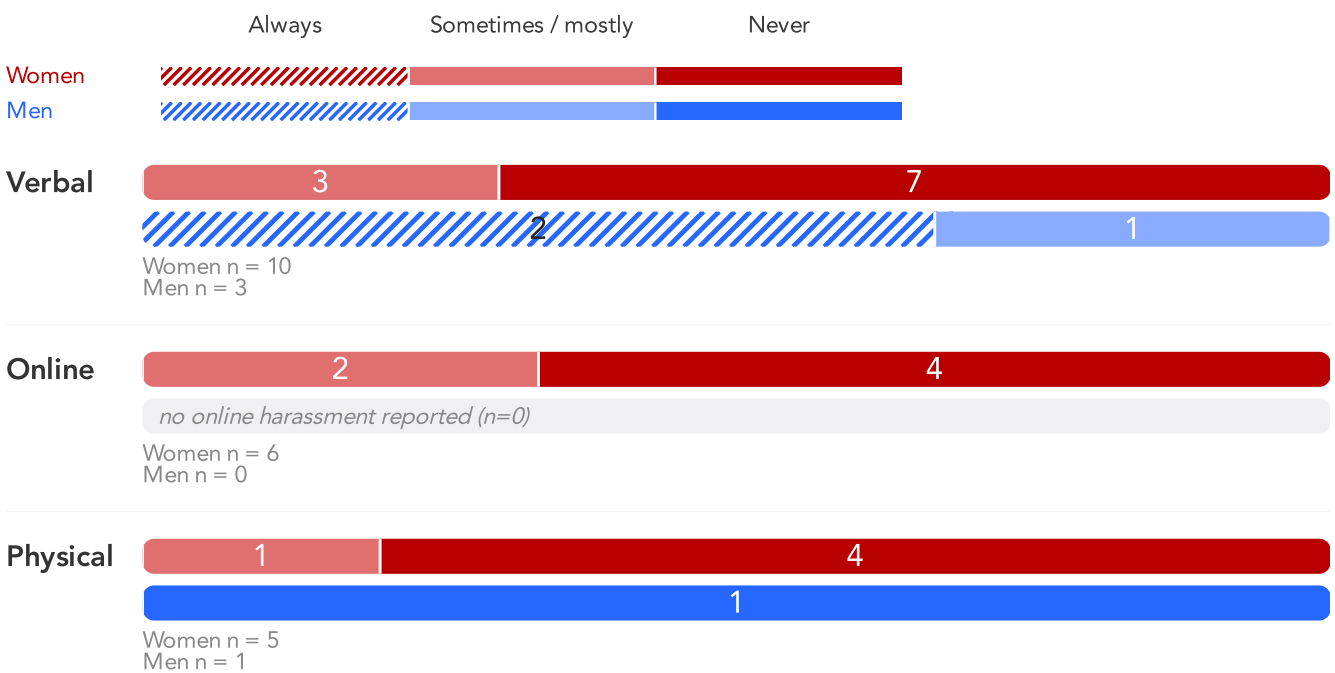


Less than one-third of the women surveyed had reported an incident of **physical sexual harassment**, despite being more than twice as likely as men to have experienced it. Their most common reasons for not doing so were fears that this would negatively affect their job, assuming they would not be believed, and lack of mechanisms to report effectively.

Across all types of sexual harassment, the few respondents who had reported incidents usually said that their organisation took no action. In the very few cases where employers did intervene, the most common course of action was to warn the perpetrator (in two out of seven cases for verbal harassment, two out of four for online harassment, and one out of three cases for physical harassment).

**Figure 4: Action taken by organisations on reported sexual harassment**

Base: those who reported harassment and answered the action question (excluding "I can't remember").



*"After the training we had, we take sexual harassment seriously and we have a policy in place."*

**Female radio middle manager aged 25–34**