

Country overview

# Ethiopia

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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.

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# Ethiopia

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 Ethiopia show that the overall prevalence rate of sexual harassment in the country's newsrooms stands at almost 28%, slightly below the regional average for all Sub-Saharan African countries surveyed (33%).<sup>2</sup>

Overall, sexual harassment is more frequently targeted at women. The exception is online sexual harassment, which men and women respondents experience at similar levels.

This was the first time conducting the survey in Ethiopia, so there is no 2020 dataset available for comparison.

<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.

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*"When I worked at a previous news organisation, I was sexually harassed by various colleagues and my boss on several occasions. The reason I didn't speak up was because I knew I wouldn't gain trust in the organisation."*

Female digital media editor

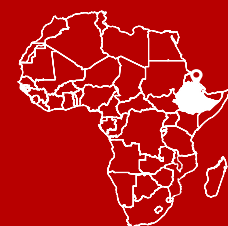
Overall rates of sexual harassment in newsrooms. First survey — no 2020 comparison

28%

Ethiopia  
2025

33%

Sub-Saharan Africa  
average · 2025



Regional benchmark

# Context

## Ethiopia's general legal framework addressing sexual harassment dates to reforms in 2004, 2017 and 2019.

These laws have significant limitations, notably [not requiring workplaces to maintain sexual harassment policies](#), leaving survivors and campaign groups to petition unions or HR departments to develop them. These weaknesses affect survivors' ability to seek redress and accountability for sexual harassment.

In the media sector, [a 2021 study by Fojo Media Institute and International Media Support](#) on gender documented a lack of sexual harassment policies in the workplace and the persistence of gendered stereotypes. This indicated the ongoing presence of structural and cultural challenges for media professionals, despite some improvements and an increase in the proportion of women working in news organisations.

These developments must be considered in the broader context of Ethiopian gender relations. Widespread sexual violence was reported during the Tigray 2020–2022 civil war. This was [condemned by the United Nations](#) and described by civil society organisations as amounting to crimes against humanity. A 2025 [report by Physicians for Human Rights](#) based on extensive medical records and health worker testimonies describes how organised sexual violence was used as a conflict tool by Ethiopian and Eritrean armed forces to destroy survivors' reproductive capacity. Accountability mechanisms following the war have been limited.



*"Our understanding of sexual harassment is limited and sufficient media coverage has not been given [to the issue]."*

**Male radio manager**

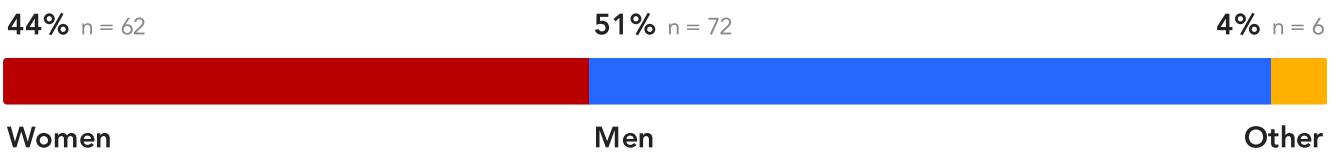
# The survey

A total of 140 media professionals from Ethiopia took part in the survey<sup>3</sup> through an online questionnaire distributed among WAN-IFRA and BBC Media Action networks. Respondents comprised 62 women, 72 men and 6 gender non-conforming individuals (see Figure 1).<sup>4</sup>

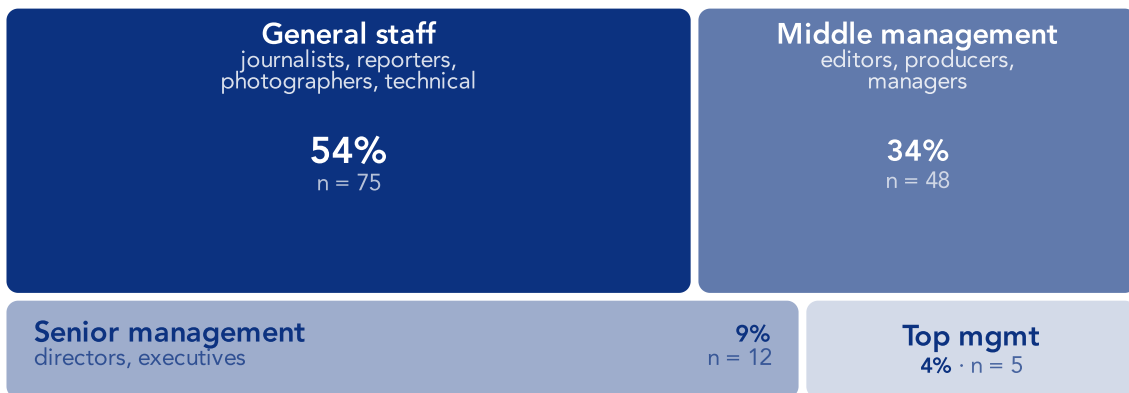
## Figure 1: Respondent demographics

All percentages rounded to the nearest whole number

### By gender identity



### By job level



<sup>3</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>4</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 study shows that **verbal sexual harassment** is the most common form of sexual harassment experienced by Ethiopia’s media professional respondents (see Figure 2). Approximately 41% of the survey’s participants said they had faced verbal harassment at least once, with women nearly twice as likely as men to have experienced this – at 57% and 30%, respectively.

Instances of **online sexual harassment** seem to occur to men and women at similar rates, with 23 women and 23 men citing they have experienced

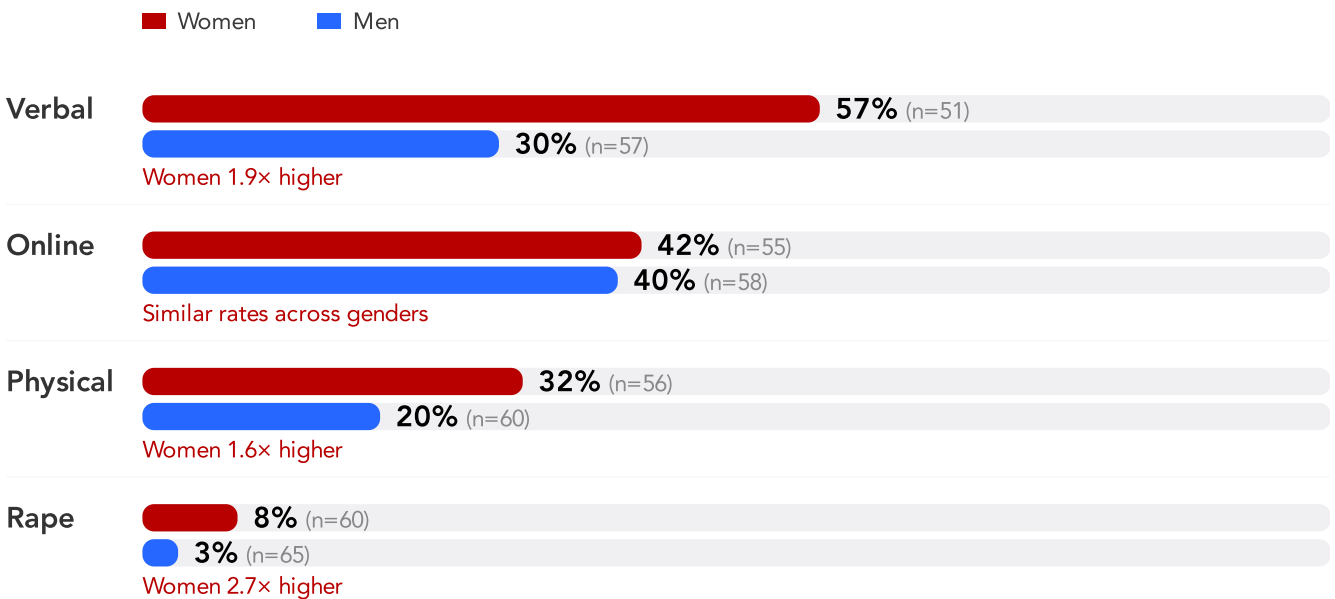
it at least once (42% and 40% of the sample, respectively).

**Physical sexual harassment** is less prevalent in Ethiopian media workplaces than other types of sexual harassment. Yet women are more likely to face this, with 18 women respondents and 12 men respondents citing they have experienced it (32% and 20%, respectively).

Incidents of **rape** are rare, according to the data, but a total of seven respondents (two men and five women) said that they have been raped at work.

**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.

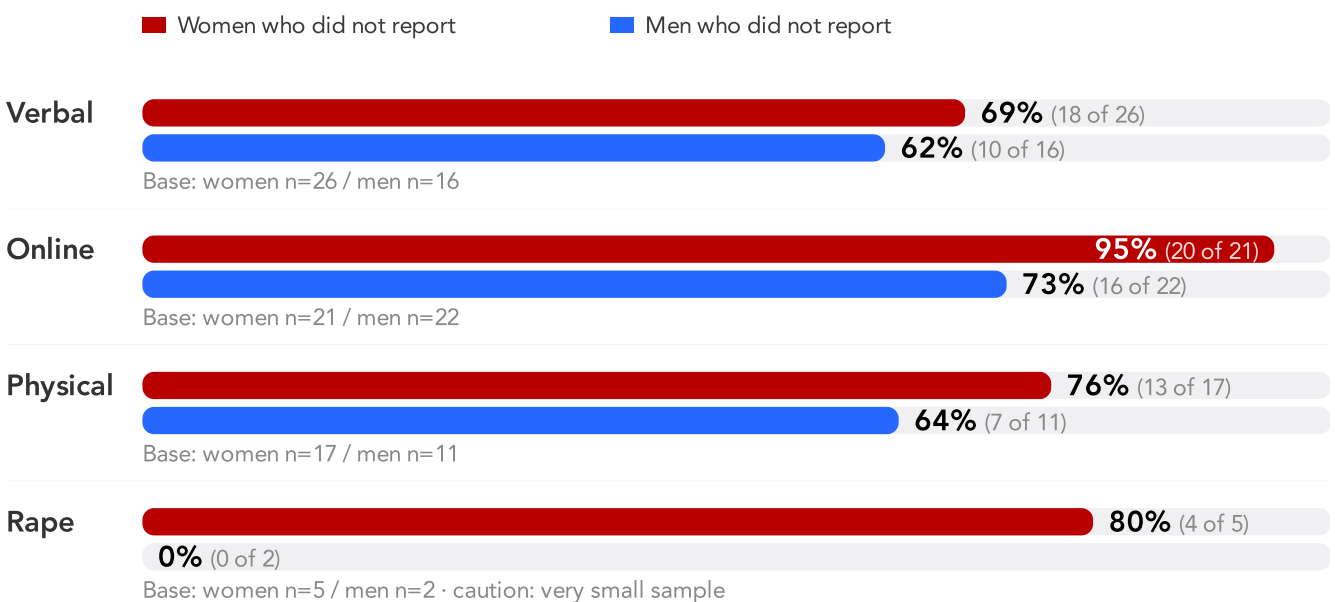
The 2025 data shows that reporting rates of workplace sexual harassment in Ethiopia are alarmingly low (see Figure 3).

Across all types of sexual harassment, women respondents are less likely to tell their employer about their experience than their male counter-

parts. This was particularly noticeable with **online sexual harassment**, where only one woman (5%) officially reported their experience, compared with six men (27%). This is striking considering that responses suggest that women and men experience digital sexual harassment at similar rates.

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

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



**Physical sexual harassment** reporting follows a similar pattern, with only 24% of women and 36% of men reporting incidents that take place in the course of their work. The gap narrows when it comes to instances of **verbal sexual harassment**, where men and women respondents seem to report at similar rates (37% and 31% respectively).

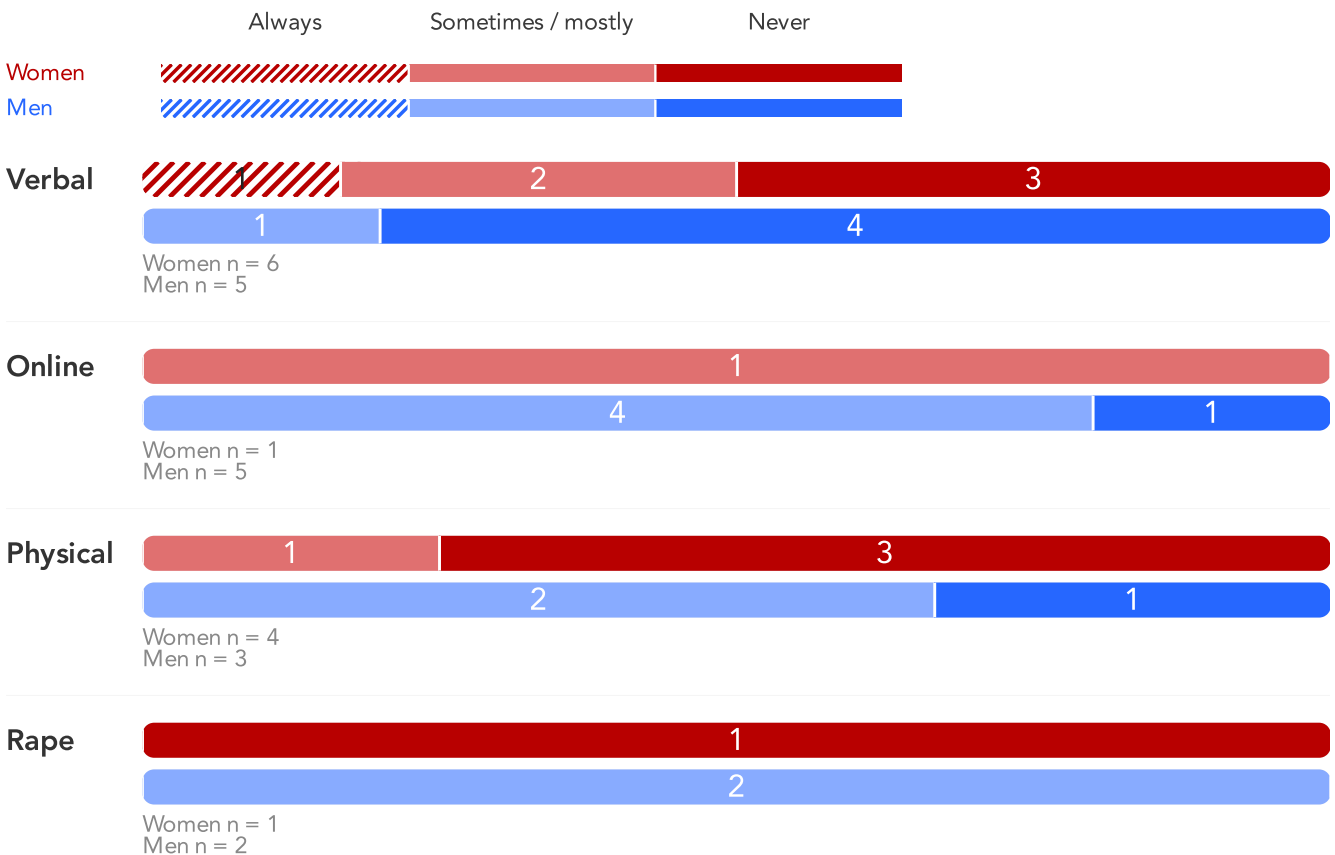
There were very few cases of **rape** in the Ethiopia sample, limiting the conclusions drawn from reporting data. Less than half of rape cases were reported to the employer, with just three people speaking up - two men and one woman- out of

seven cases among all respondents. As with other types of sexual harassment, women respondents were less likely than men to take their case to their employer.

When asked about the reasons for not reporting incidents across all harassment categories, respondents most frequently cited a lack of reporting mechanisms in place in their respective organisations. Although organisations responded most of the time when incidents were reported, this made up a small number of cases (see Figure 4).

**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").



*"I have experienced [sexual harassment by a superior or manager]. I do not feel safe."*

**Female multimedia manager**