

Country overview

Kenya

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Kenya **04**

Context **05**

The Survey **06**

Experience of Sexual Harassment **07**

Reporting and Action **08**

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

Kenya

This report is part of a 2025 international study on sexual harassment in media workplaces¹, 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 earlier research conducted in 2020 that identified persistent gaps in evidence on sexual harassment in media workplaces. The survey across newsrooms in Kenya shows that the prevalence of sexual harassment² has declined overall from 60% to 39% between 2020 and 2025.³ However, the number of cases in Kenya remains higher than the Sub-Saharan African average (33%).

Media professionals surveyed in Kenya said they experienced fewer instances of physical sexual harassment overall, compared with five years ago. For all types of incidents except online attacks, figures show a much higher prevalence of sexual harassment among women respondents — double those of men. Meanwhile, online harassment seems to affect men and women similarly.

¹This 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](#).

²The 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.

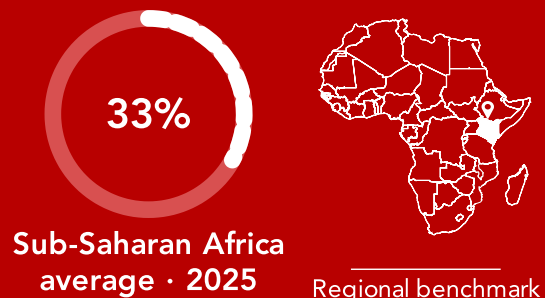
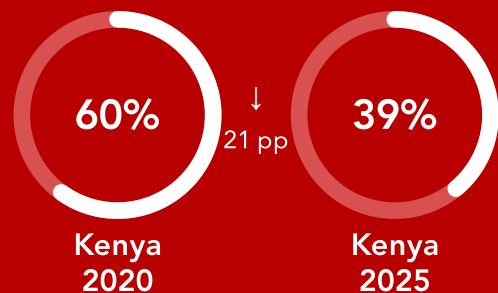
³Please interpret this comparison cautiously, as the 2020 estimate is based on a smaller sample (n=82) than the 2025 estimate (n=157). The smaller sample carries a larger margin of error, so any apparent difference between 2020 and 2025 may reflect sampling variability rather than substantial changes.



“Creating awareness on [sexual harassment] issues is key, because many people who go through this are stigmatised.”

Male radio journalist aged 35–44

Overall rates of sexual harassment in newsrooms



Context

The experiences reported in this 2025 study are set against a backdrop of several initiatives addressing sexual harassment in Kenya, including changes to employment law in 2020, academic research focused on the issue, and specific work within the media sector to tackle the problem.

Kenya's legal framework on workplace sexual harassment is primarily governed by Section 6 of the [Employment Act \(2007\)](#), which requires employers with 20 or more employees to adopt and implement sexual harassment policies and procedures. The act defines sexual harassment and sets out employers' responsibilities, including a requirement to establish internal reporting and disciplinary mechanisms. Despite this legal framework, implementation challenges have been noted in practice, highlighting the importance of effective enforcement and organisational compliance to strengthen workplace protections.

In terms of academic research on sexual harassment in media, Aga Khan University's Graduate

School of Media and Communications published [a policy brief](#) in August 2025, based on research that highlighted that sexual harassment is rife in Kenyan, Tanzanian and Ugandan newsrooms. The university's initiative included training more than 400 journalists across the three countries to help tackle the issue.

Furthermore, the Association of Media Women in Kenya was mandated by the [Kenya Media Sector Working Group](#) to lead awareness and response actions related to sexual harassment in the media sector. In 2025, WAN-IFRA WIN and the Kenya Union of Journalists also conducted training on sexual harassment awareness for junior journalists and managers.

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"[Sexual harassment] happens in subtle ways, so much so that it is normalised as flirting."

Male multimedia editing manager aged 35–44

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"[Sexual harassment] should be taken with a lot of seriousness, but the people responsible to make that happen are the perpetrators."

Female radio intern aged 18–24

The survey

A total of 157 media professionals from Kenya took part in the survey⁴ through an online questionnaire distributed among WAN-IFRA Women in News and BBC Media Action networks. Respondents comprised 110 women, 44 men, 1 gender non-conforming person and 2 people who preferred to self-describe their gender identity.⁵

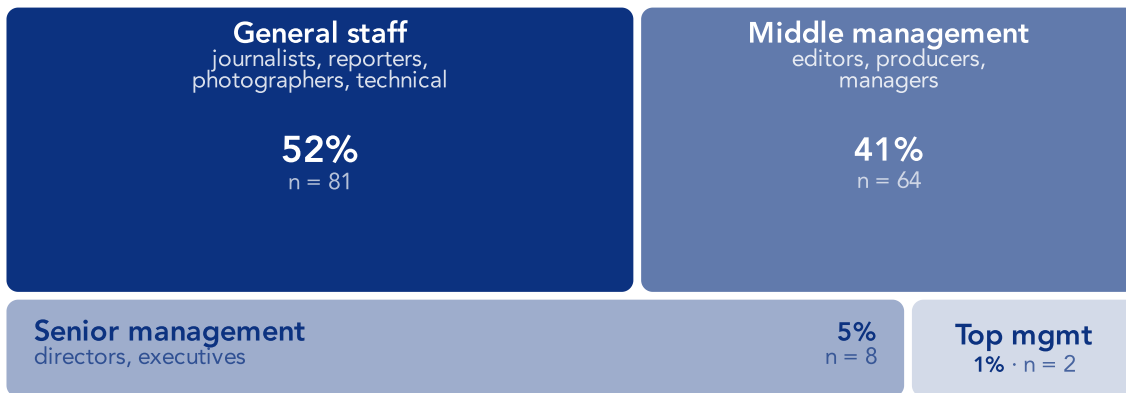
Figure 1: Respondent demographics

All percentages rounded to the nearest whole number

By gender identity



By job level⁶



⁴This 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](#).

⁵Totals 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.

⁶While the total sample size was 157, some respondents did not complete the survey in full. As a result, responses to certain demographic questions are based on a smaller number of participants due to partial non-response.

Experience of Sexual Harassment

Among the media professionals surveyed, women are twice as likely as men to experience **verbal sexual harassment** (see Figure 2). Some 81% of women say they have experienced it at least once, and 42% have faced five or more incidents. Among the men surveyed, 42% say they experienced verbal sexual harassment at least once.

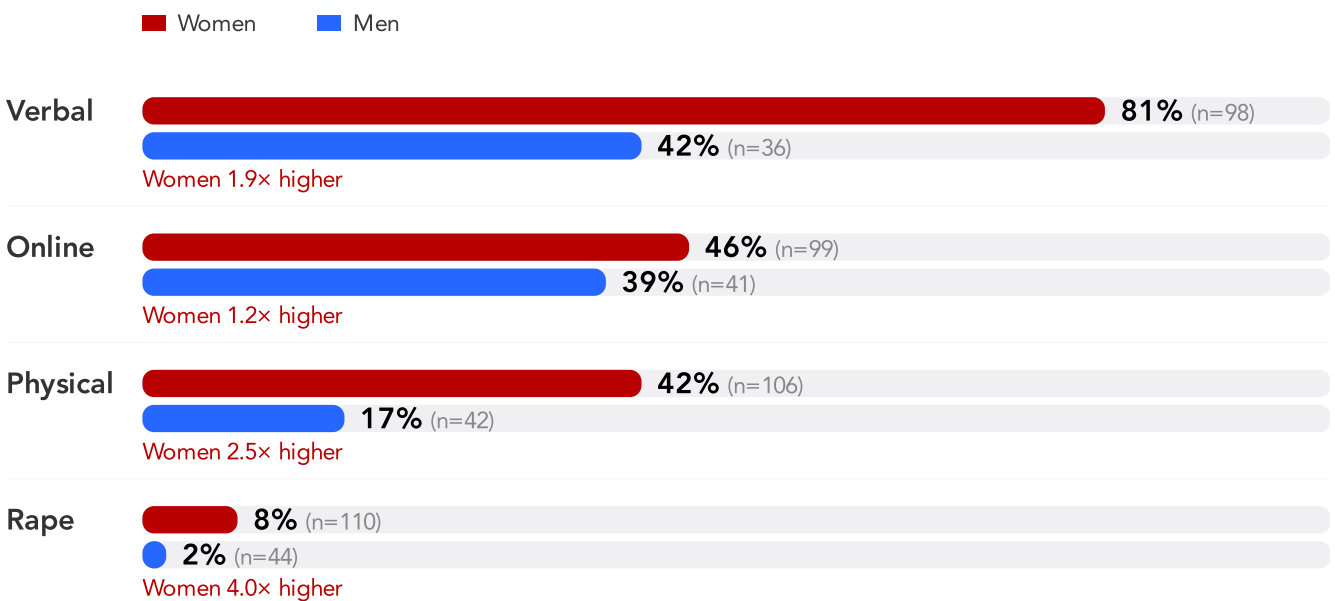
Survey results indicate that **online sexual harassment** seems to occur at more similar rates across genders.

Physical sexual harassment is less common than other types of harassment, but here too, women are more than twice as likely as men to say they have experienced it at work (42% and 17%, respectively).

Although less frequent than other forms of sexual harassment or abuse, the study shows that **rape** is a significant threat to journalists in Kenya, with 8% of women respondents and one male respondent saying they have experienced it. Based on this, the overall rate for rape in Kenya is in line with the Sub-Saharan African average.

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.

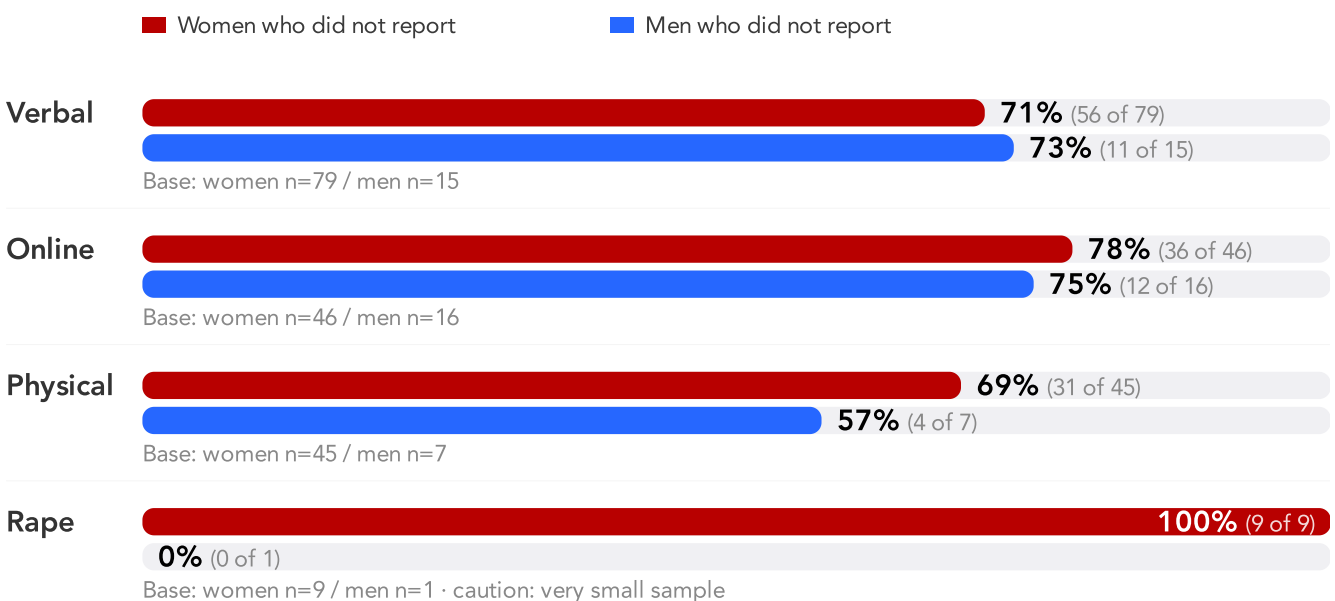


Reporting and Action

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.

Figure 3: Reporting rates by type of sexual harassment

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



The majority of respondents did not report their experiences of **verbal sexual harassment** (see Figure 3). Men and women cited similar reasons for not speaking up, most commonly a fear of negatively affecting their job. However, more women than men said they feared losing their jobs or that the perpetrator would retaliate against them.

At least three out of four of those affected by **online sexual harassment** chose not to escalate the matter in their workplace, with 78% of women and 75% of men not reporting incidents. The biggest obstacles to reporting this type of harassment were a lack of reporting mechanisms and not considering the experience a big deal.

Most respondents did not report cases of **physical sexual harassment**, with only one man and four women having done so among the respondents in Kenya. Fear that reporting would affect their job was the main reason cited by women for not doing so, with lack of reporting mechanisms, fears of retaliation and not being believed also cited. For men, the barriers that prevented them from reporting were more varied.

Among those who said they had experienced **rape**, no woman reported it to their workplace, while the one man did. Again, fear of negative impact on their job was the most common reason that prevented women from reporting rape. The police were only informed in one instance of rape.

It is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about the actions taken by Kenyan news organisations, as the reporting of sexual harassment was very limited among all categories of survey respondents. The data suggests action was mini-

mal across all types of harassment. Furthermore, 44% of the incidents reported by women did not result in any action by the organisation on average.

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 once had a colleague who decided to leave the newsroom because he was constantly facing uncomfortable advances from a female colleague who was in a more senior position. She often made personal demands, and when he didn't give in, his work environment became hostile. Eventually, he felt it was better for his peace of mind to resign. It showed me that sexual harassment can go both ways, and that sometimes men also face it but rarely talk about it."

Male radio editing manager aged 25–34