

Country overview

Myanmar

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Myanmar **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

Myanmar

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 research conducted in 2020 that identified persistent gaps in evidence on sexual harassment in media workplaces.

Media workers from Myanmar saw a decrease in the overall prevalence of sexual harassment between 2020 and 2025, from 29% to 15%, respectively.² This shift took place amid the relocation of many of Myanmar's journalists outside the country after the 2021 military coup.

The 2025 survey suggests that sexual harassment in the newsrooms where Myanmar's journalists operate is distinctly gendered – with a pronounced gap between women and men's overall experiences, compared with several other countries in the study.

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.

”

“In addition to [sexual harassment] reporting mechanisms within the department, there should also be channels to report cases to donor organisations.”

Male digital media executive aged 25–34

Overall rates of sexual harassment in newsrooms



Context

Myanmar does not yet have a comprehensive, standalone law that specifically addresses sexual harassment in the workplace.

A [2021 legal overview](#) noted that fragmented provisions in the Penal Code and labour framework offer limited workplace sexual harassment protections and enforcement mechanisms.

Between 2020 and 2025, efforts to address sexual harassment in Myanmar took place within a constrained political and media environment following the 2021 military coup. In such high-risk contexts, sexual violence and harassment can go under the radar.

Independent media outlets [have been targeted](#), facing raids, licence removals, arrests and harassment. Independent media now largely operate [outside the country](#).³ Numerous international human rights organisations have documented incidents affecting journalists and media organisations, including intimidation and legal action. While Myanmar journalists in exile can generally report more freely, this also means they often have precarious immigration status and are living without a clear idea of when they can safely return home.

Journalists in exile are subject to other legal frameworks and regulations specific to the coun-

try where they are based. [Reports suggest](#) that many often live without proper immigration documents and with limited access to traditional support networks that would allow them to respond to and report any experiences of harassment to their employer, or successfully navigate the legal system if required. Similarly, media professionals working in conflict zones of Myanmar's ongoing civil war are unable to turn to government mechanisms for redress.

In 2024 Myanmar Women in Media published the report [Crisis Under the Coup: Gender-Based Violence Against Myanmar Women Media Professionals](#). The study documents experiences including unwanted sexual advances, harassment during work assignments and travel, online abuse, and retaliation in the workplace (for instance, as a result of a colleague feeling rejected). It also exposes the existing gaps in reporting mechanisms and institutional responses within media organisations. [A 2024 media safety assessment](#) further reported gender-specific harassment and threats of sexual violence affecting women journalists in Myanmar.



“On social media, after someone realised I was a journalist, they verbally harassed me with sexually explicit messages. When I blocked them, they posted insults about me publicly online.”

Female digital media executive/senior editor aged 35–44

³Consequently, this survey explicitly invited responses from journalists from Myanmar who were living in exile.

The survey

A total of 154 media professionals from Myanmar took part in the survey⁴ through an online questionnaire distributed among WAN-IFRA WIN and BBC Media Action networks. Respondents comprised 76 women, 47 men, 11 people who preferred to self-describe their gender identity and 20 gender non-conforming individuals (see Figure 1).

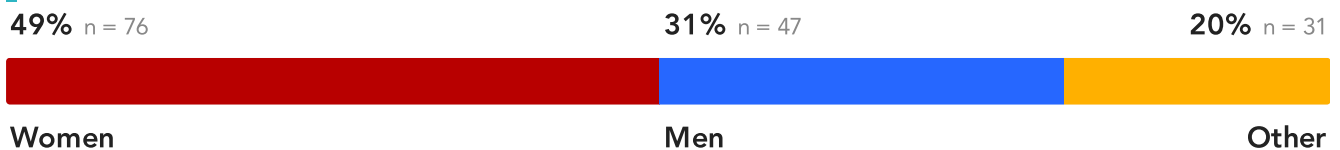
This was one of the most gender-diverse respondent sets in this global study, with gender non-conforming and people who preferred to self-describe their gender identity comprising 20% of the sample.⁵

Reflecting the exile-based nature of Myanmar's media sector following the 2021 military coup, 79% of the survey respondents were living and reporting from outside the country. Among this group, 53% were still working for organisations based in Myanmar.

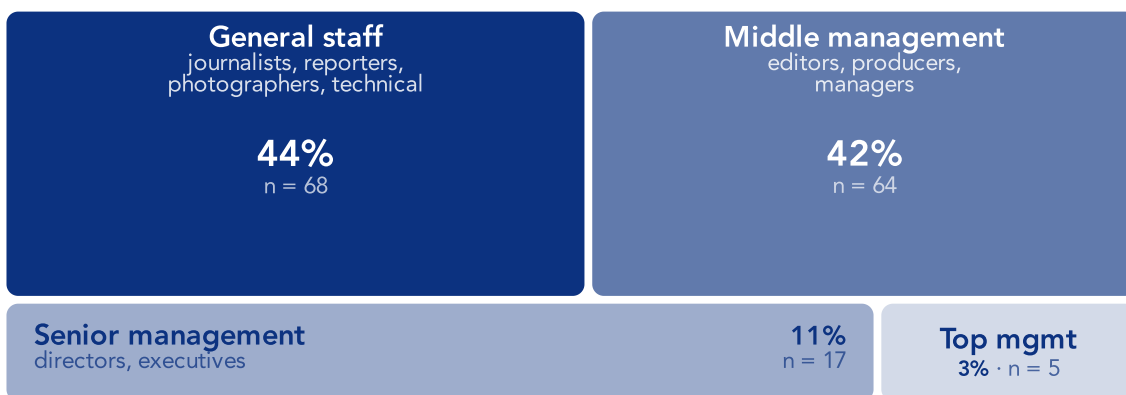
Figure 1: Respondent demographics

All percentages rounded to the nearest whole number

By gender identity



By job level



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.

Experience of Sexual Harassment

The 2025 survey reveals that **verbal sexual harassment** is the most common type of workplace harassment experienced by respondents from Myanmar (see Figure 2). Women respondents are almost three times as likely as men to have experienced this (38% and 13%, respectively), while gender non-conforming respondents are twice as likely as men, at 27%.

Online sexual harassment shows an even larger gender gap – it was cited by 31% of women (22 respondents), seven gender non-conforming

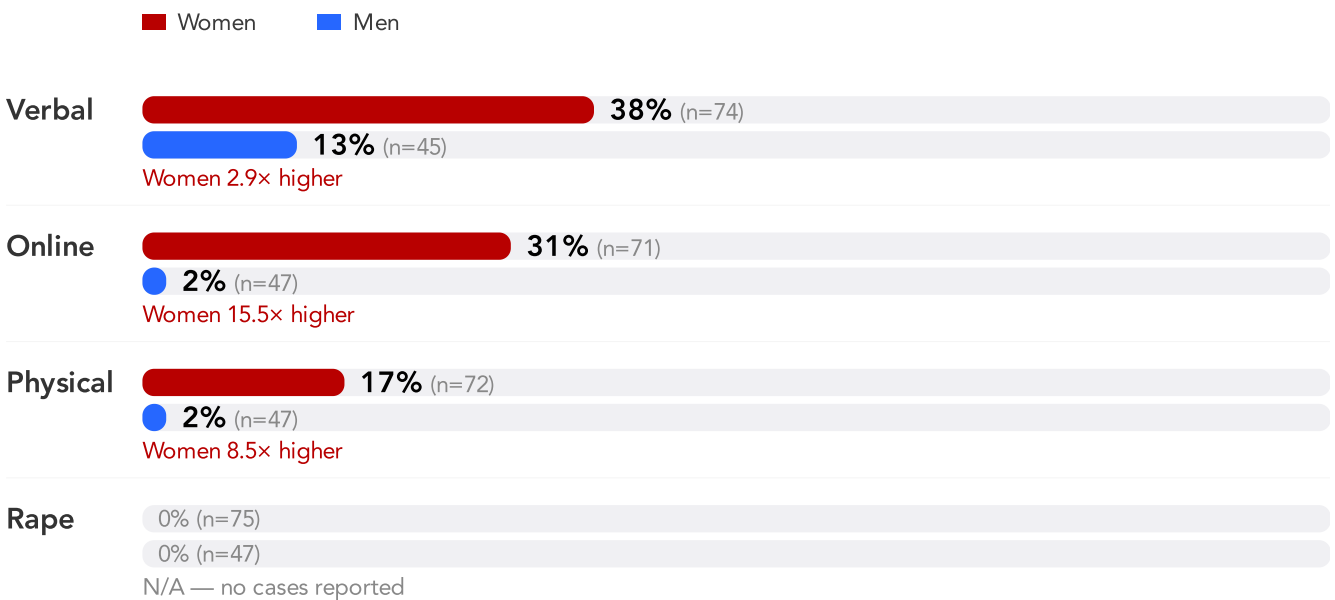
respondents (23%) and only one man (2% of the male sample).

Physical sexual harassment prevalence rates appear lower than the South-East Asia regional average. But women are still significantly more exposed to this form of abuse – 12 women (17%), four gender non-conforming people (13%) and one man (2%) said they have experienced it.

One gender non-conforming respondent said 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.

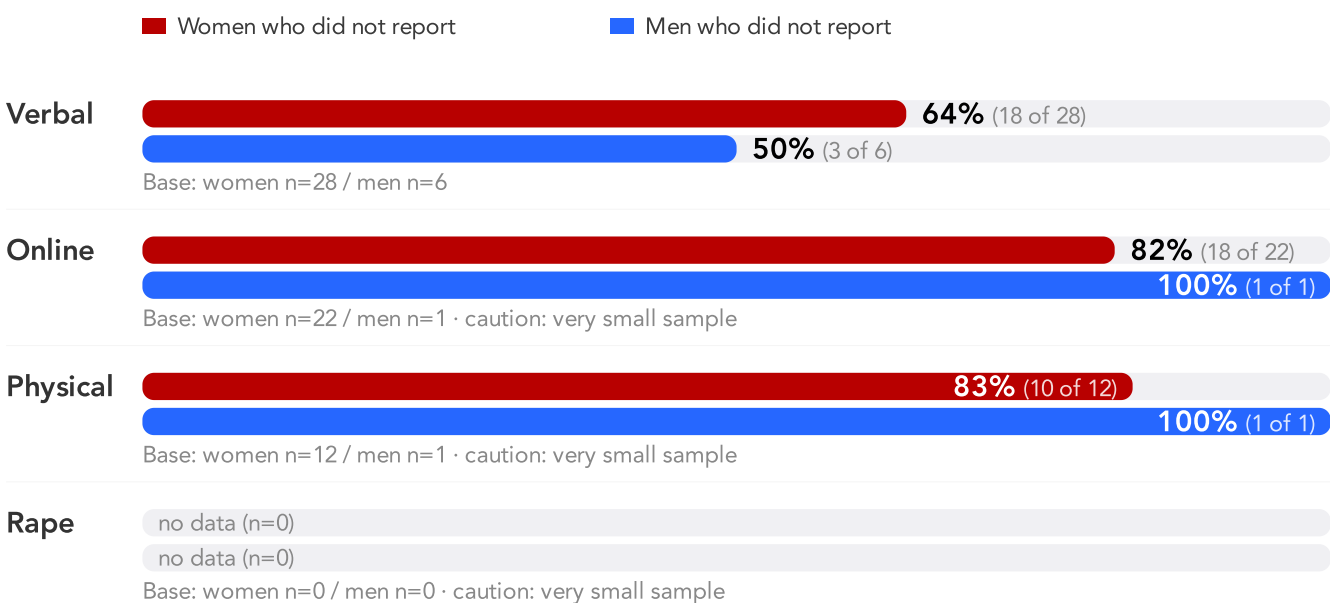
The survey shows that sexual harassment in Myanmar's media workplaces remains largely under-reported to employers (see Figure 3).

The majority of men and women surveyed did not report their experiences of **verbal sexual harassment** to their employer. The most common reasons for this were fears that reporting

would negatively affect their job, and a lack of effective workplace reporting mechanisms. Only 10 women (36%) and three men (50%) officially reported this type of harassment. Where verbal harassment was officially taken to the employer (see Figure 4), the most common action taken by organisations was warning the perpetrator.

Figure 3: Reporting rates by type of sexual harassment

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



“After the military coup, when journalists were forced to flee abroad for safety reasons, I began hearing more reports about sexual harassment and misconduct involving media founders, publishers and chief editors who took advantage of their female subordinates.”

Female multimedia editing manager aged 25–34

Among respondents who experienced **online sexual harassment** in the course of their work, only four women respondents told their employer.

Only two women (17%) who had experienced **physical sexual harassment** reported it, but neither employer took any action in response.

Among those who did not report this experience, fear that the perpetrator would retaliate was the most commonly cited reason.

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").



“He started asking me inappropriate personal questions – whether I had a boyfriend, had ever been in a relationship or had ever had sex. He even said things like, ‘If you’ve never had a boyfriend, you must still be a virgin’. I felt very uncomfortable and upset by those remarks... It was quite distressing.”

Female TV journalist aged 18–24