

Country overview

# The Philippines

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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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# The Philippines

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.

Data from 2025 indicates that the overall prevalence of media workplace sexual harassment in the Philippines is 34%.<sup>2</sup> Although this rate is based on a small sample size, this figure is considerably higher than the current regional average rate for South East Asia (19%) and also sits above the country's 2020 rate (30%).<sup>3</sup>

Women media professionals surveyed in the Philippines reported being exposed to online and physical sexual harassment more frequently than men, while verbal harassment appears to affect all genders to a similar degree.

<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.

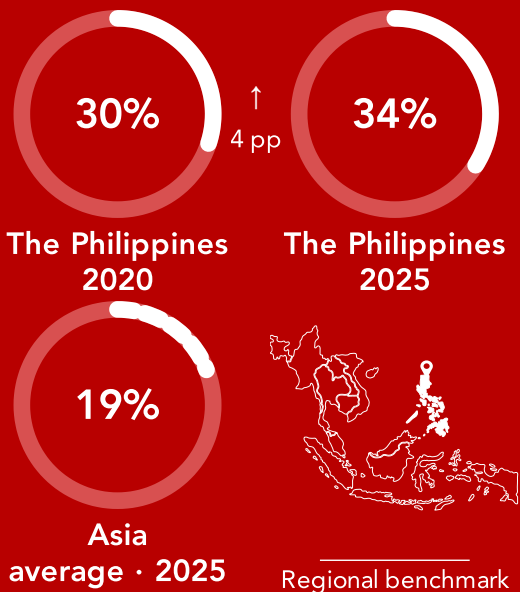
<sup>3</sup>Please interpret this comparison cautiously, as both the 2020 estimate (n=30) and the 2025 estimate (n=36) are based on small sample sizes. Smaller samples carry a larger margin of error, so any apparent difference between 2020 and 2025 may reflect sampling variability rather than substantial changes.



*“I experienced sexual harassment a few years ago and the perpetrator was an executive of a national media organisation.”*

Female online media journalist aged 45–54

## Overall rates of sexual harassment in newsrooms



# Context

**Between 2020 and 2025 the Philippines saw a tightening of rules and reporting mechanisms relating to sexual harassment across government, workplaces and media institutions, including other settings.**

In 2021 the government expanded the scope of the 2019 [Safe Spaces Act](#) to cover even small workplaces and informal workers. [Related guidelines set out mechanisms and interventions](#) for sexual harassment, including redress procedures. It outlined clearer reporting mechanisms through government agencies, stipulating that managers who fail to act on complaints may be charged with neglect of duty.

Within the media sector, various stakeholders have made stronger organisational commitments to tackling sexual harassment since 2020. In 2021 the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) agreed to [activate anti-sexual harassment mechanisms across newsrooms](#). The Commission on Women Journalists and the NUJP are tasked with establishing clear policies on sexual harassment, identifying trusted and confidential reporting channels, and designing campaigns to prevent and address the issue.

These developments sit against the backdrop of several high-profile harassment cases in the media sector since 2016. [Attacks against journalists are widespread](#), include forms of sexual harassment, and are often aimed at silencing them and hindering press freedom. The most notable case is the persecution of Nobel Peace Prize laureate [Maria Ressa](#) and her investigative outlet Rappler, with rape threats and misogynistic abuse as part of a wider pattern of harassment and abuse.

Several workplace sexual harassment cases have been widely reported in recent years. In 2024 a [22-year-old news researcher](#) for News5's Budol Alert said he was sexually assaulted by a programme manager. In response, TV5 [terminated the suspected perpetrator's contract](#) after an inquiry. Separately, a [male celebrity](#) accused two independent contractors at GMA TV Network – a head writer and a content creator – of sexual abuse, leading to [formal hearings](#).

# The survey

A total of 36 media professionals from the Philippines took part in the survey<sup>4</sup> through an online questionnaire distributed among WAN-IFRA WIN and BBC Media Action networks. Respondents comprised 29 women, 6 men and 1 gender non-conforming participant (see Figure 1).<sup>5</sup>

## Figure 1: Respondent demographics

All percentages rounded to the nearest whole number

### By gender identity

81% n = 29

17% n = 6 3% n = 1

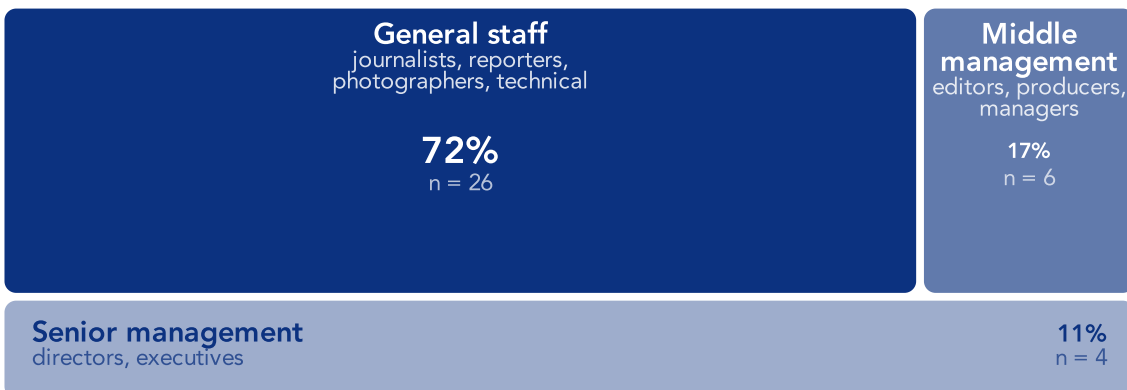


Women

Men

Other

### By job level



<sup>4</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>5</sup>Totals include the gender non-conforming individual. Data is not disaggregated for this group at country level. To explore trends for this group, please refer to the global report.

# Experience of Sexual Harassment

The sample for the Philippines was small and included very few men (six). However, data suggests that women respondents are more likely than men to have experienced most types of sexual harassment at work (see Figure 2). The exception is verbal sexual harassment, which appears to occur at similar rates across genders.

Around half of both female and male respondents – 14 women and three men – said they have experienced **verbal sexual harassment** at work at least once. One-quarter of the women respondents said they have experienced this five or more times.

The majority of respondents did not report verbal sexual harassment incidents to their employer – only one man and four women in the sample had done so (see Figure 3). Respondents cited various reasons for this, most often a lack of reporting mechanisms. Where they did report this form of harassment, organisations generally took action (see Figure 4) – mostly warning the perpetrator.

In terms of **online sexual harassment**, no men in the sample cited any experiences of this at work, compared with 15 women – although the overall under-representation of men in the sample is a major limitation here.

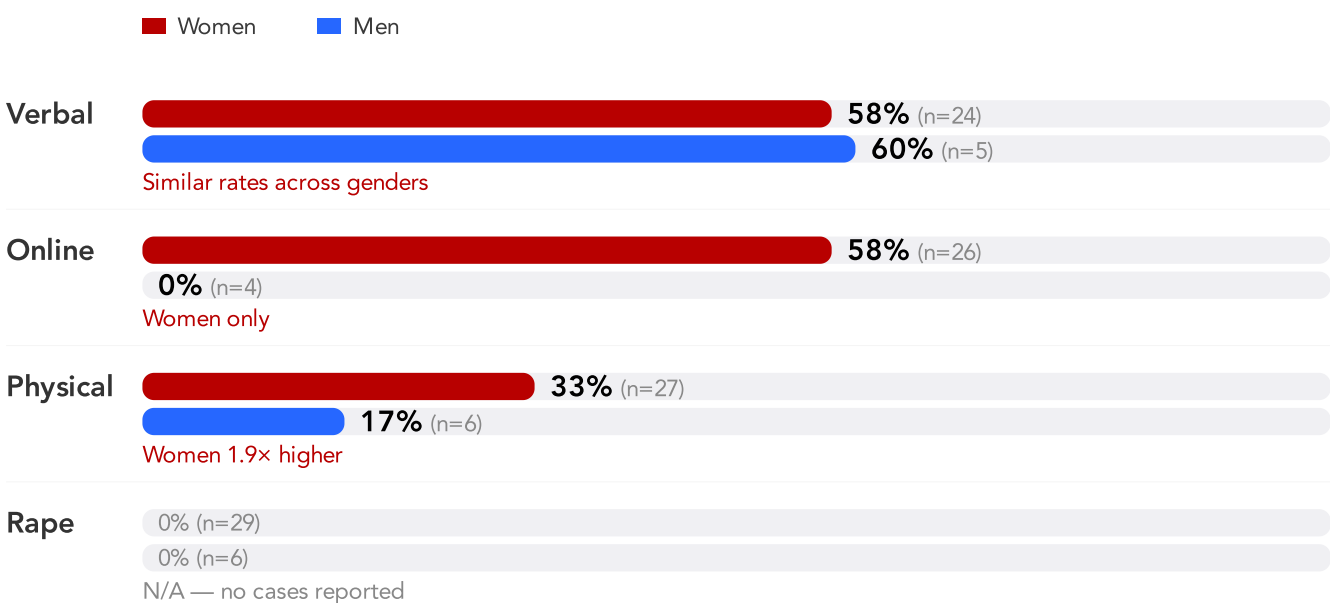
Ten of the 15 women in the sample who had experienced online sexual harassment reported it to their employer; most of the time (eight of nine cases), employers did respond. Most commonly, organisations took action by making an official complaint to another body (five cases). Where women did not report these cases, this was mostly because they did not think it was a big deal.

**Physical sexual harassment** was less common, with nine women and one man in the sample having experienced it at work.

No respondents in the Philippines survey cited that they had experienced **rape** in the course of their work.

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

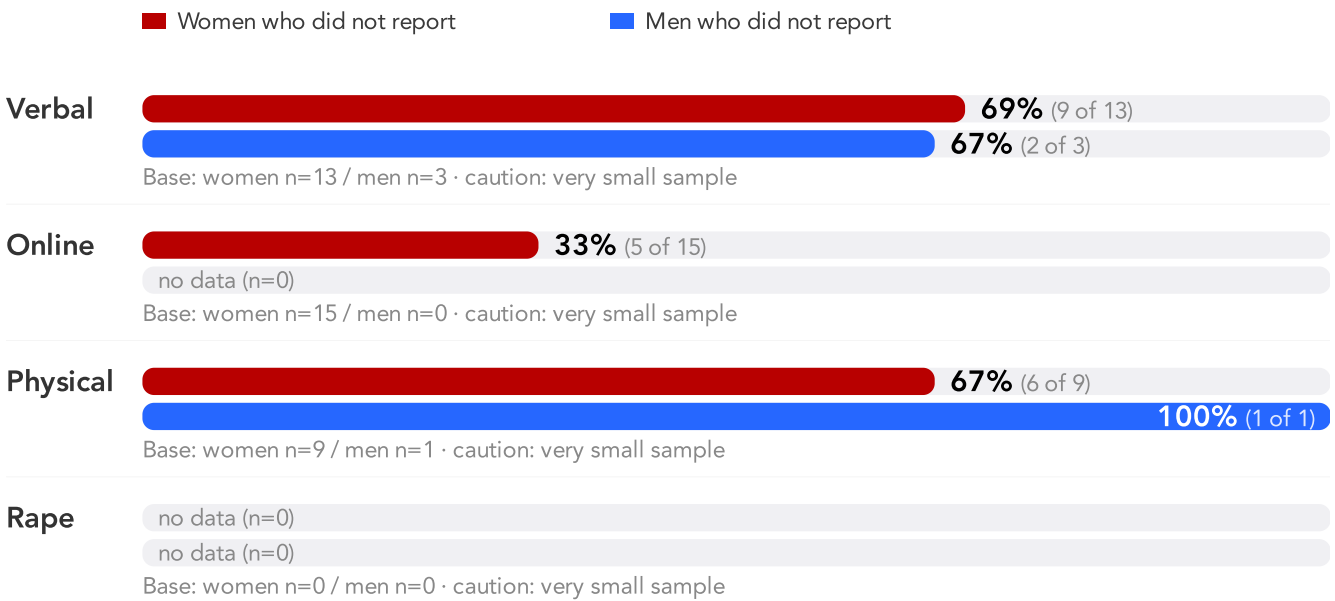
Base: all respondents, excluding "I can't remember". All percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.



As with other harassment types, the majority of physical sexual harassment respondents did not report this to their employer, mostly because of a lack of reporting mechanisms. In the three cases where respondents (all women) had reported this form of harassment to their employer, the only action taken was warning the perpetrator, in two of these cases.

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

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

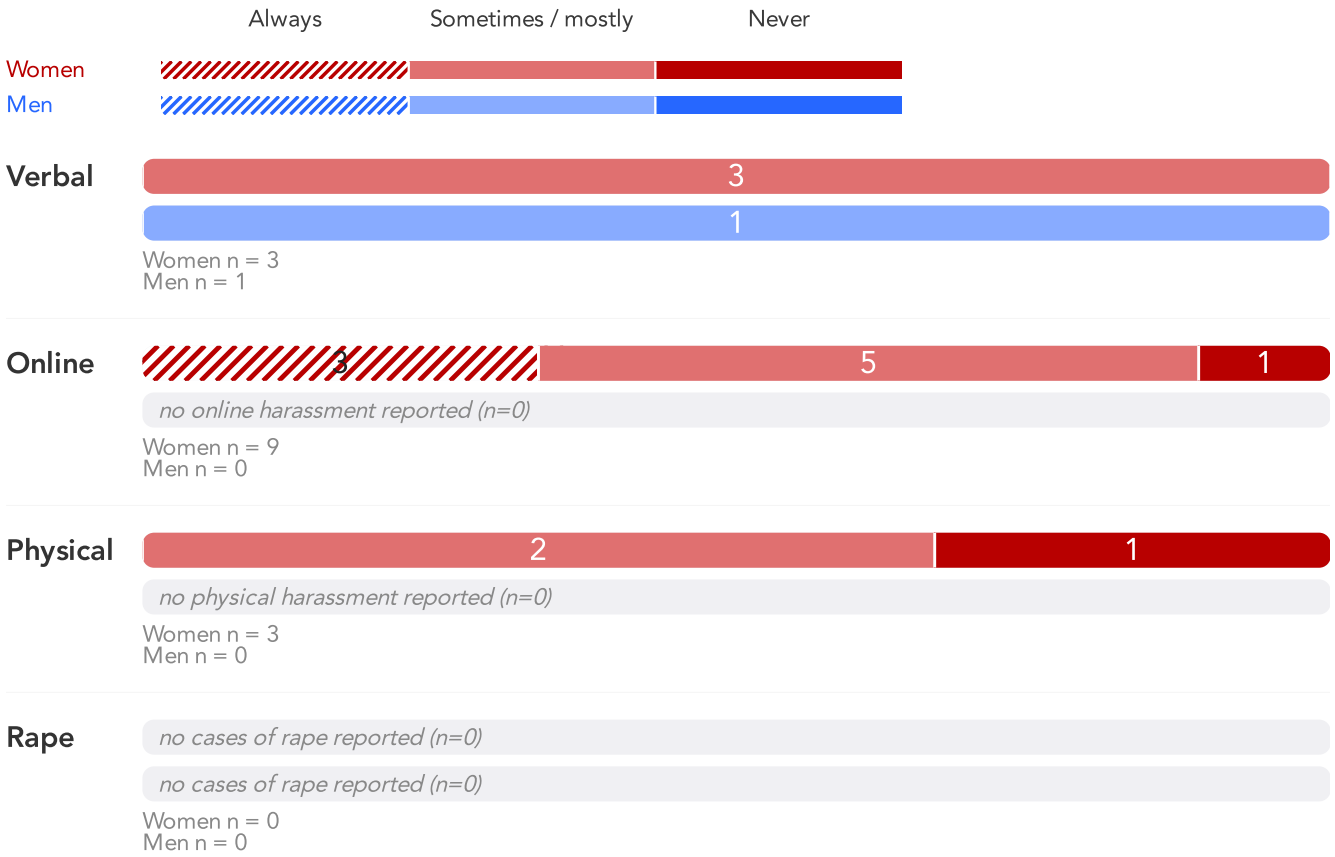


*“Workplaces must be safe places. Women journalists in the workplace must have peer support and safe places for intergenerational sharing on sexual harassment – what to do, how to avoid it, etc.”*

Female print managing editor aged 65+

**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").



*"It takes a long time for management to respond to reported cases, especially if it involves [high-profile] personalities. I saw this happen many times."*

**Female online media middle manager aged 55–64**