

Country overview

Rwanda

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Rwanda **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.

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Rwanda

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 results of the 2025 survey in Rwanda show that the prevalence of sexual harassment has remained consistent at 31% since 2020. The overall rate remains close to the 33% Sub-Saharan African average.²

Among the Rwandan media professionals surveyed, women have faced more than twice as many sexual harassment incidents across all types than men. While physical and online sexual abuse are recorded at similar rates across genders, women are more likely to have experienced verbal harassment and rape.

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](#).

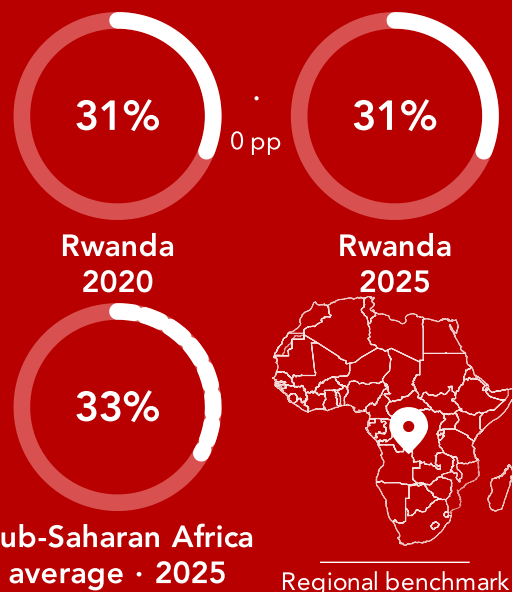
²The prevalence of sexual harassment for a given country/region is calculated as the mean average of the percentage of respondents from that location who reported having ever experienced verbal harassment, online harassment, physical harassment and/or rape while at work.

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“It is time for media owners to address sexual harassment, to allow female journalists to work in safe environments and to remain in media and do their career as men [do].”

Female media executive aged 45–54

Overall rates of sexual harassment in newsrooms



Context

Between 2020 and 2025, there has been significant progress in tackling sexual harassment in Rwanda, including by strengthening legal measures and policies to prevent, address and sanction inappropriate conduct in professional settings.

Sexual harassment in the workplace is explicitly addressed in Rwanda's [Labour Law 66/2018](#). While this law does not provide a specific definition of sexual harassment, it does reference other laws for definitions and penalties. Further provisions are outlined in the [Ministerial Order No. 002/19.20 \(2020\)](#), which establishes a list of behaviours that constitute gross misconduct and may result in immediate termination of employment. These include sexual harassment, gender-based violence within the workplace and any form of discrimination.

In terms of civil society initiatives, the Rwandan Media Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy was signed by [33 media houses](#) in 2023 with the support of Fojo Media Institute. This marked the commitment of media organisations to address and pre-

vent sexual harassment in the country's media industry. A [report](#) by African Women in Media (AWiM) about the state of the Rwandan media landscape showed that over 50% of women journalists experienced sexual harassment in the early stages of their careers, with almost four out of 10 leaving or considering leaving a media organisation as a result.

With ongoing support from Fojo, three women-led media organisations also established a gender desk offering mental health support following experiences of sexual harassment, among other issues. The consortium also visited 40 media houses to assess whether sexual harassment policies existed and were being applied, with their assessment showing mixed progress and persistent gaps across the industry.

"Let's keep breaking the silence on [sexual harassment at work]."

Female print/online news executive aged 45–54

"Sexual harassment in the newsroom is real and often silenced due to fear and lack of accountability. Stronger policies and safe reporting systems are urgently needed."

Female online editing manager aged 35–44

The survey

A total of 102 people in Rwanda responded to the survey³ through an online questionnaire distributed among WAN-IFRA WIN and BBC Media Action networks. Respondents comprised 65 women, 33 men, 2 gender non-confirming people and 2 people who preferred to self-describe their gender identity (see Figure 1).⁴

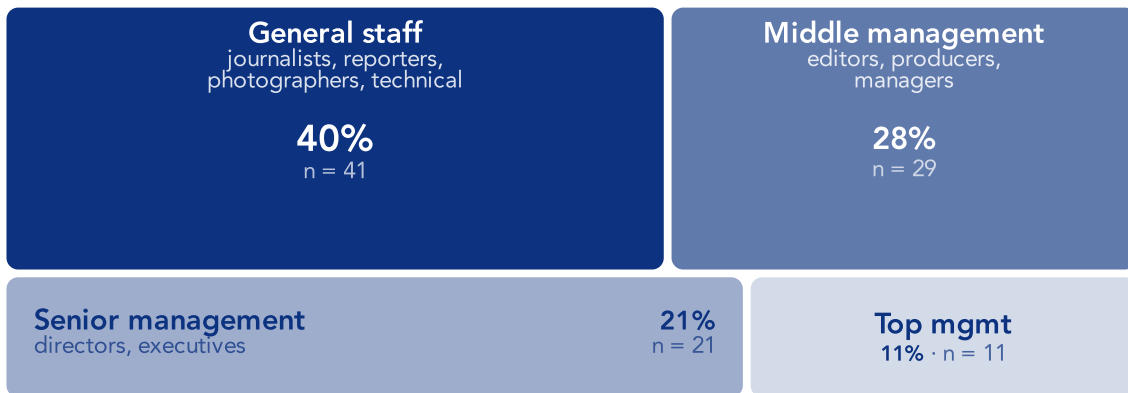
Figure 1: Respondent demographics

All percentages rounded to the nearest whole number

By gender identity



By job level



³This 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](#).

⁴Totals include gender non-confirming 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 suggests that respondents in Rwanda experience similar levels of physical and online sexual harassment across genders, with verbal harassment being more prevalent among women. Instances of rape are also more frequently recorded among women.

Women have encountered higher levels of **verbal sexual harassment** than men, with 50% of women exposed to at least one incident, compared with 36% of men. Some 20% of women respondents said they had experienced this form of harassment five times or more.

Over a third of both men and women respondents said they had experienced **online sexual harassment** at least once. Men have been subjected to online abuse more than other types of harassment, and this was the only category

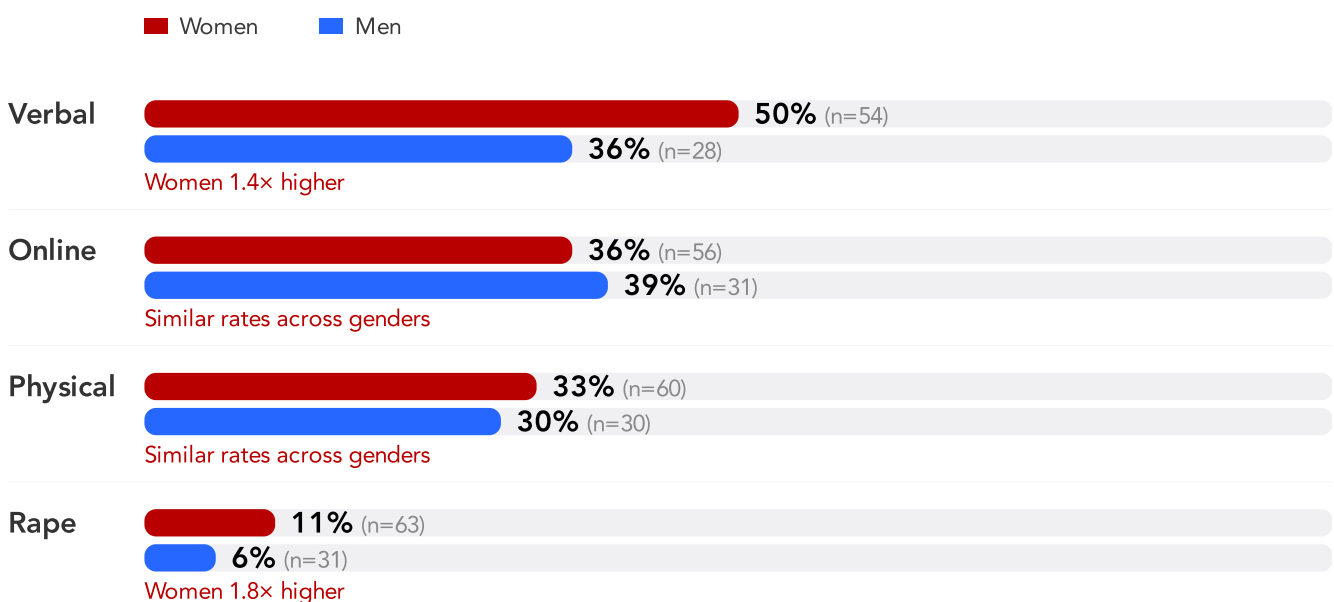
where male respondents were more likely than women to say they had experienced it.

The survey shows that **physical sexual harassment** in Rwanda is less prevalent than verbal and online forms of harassment. Incidence rates for this type of abuse are similar across genders, with around a third of men and women saying they had experienced physical abuse.

Rape is rare but is targeted at women more often than at men – among the respondents, seven women and two men said they had experienced it 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.



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.

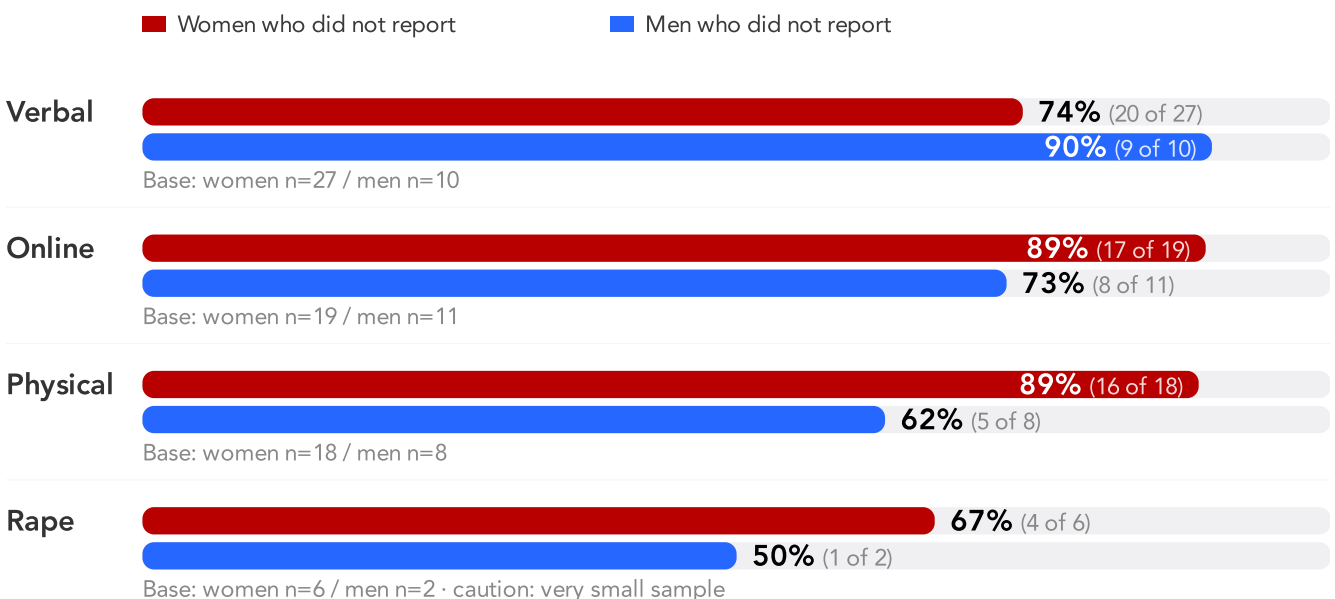
Across all types of sexual harassment, under-reporting was the norm for both men and women in the Rwandan sample (see Figure 3). When survivors did report sexual harassment, organisations in Rwanda typically took action (on average 85% of the time) – but these responses were limited and inconsistent.

The majority of respondents did not report their experiences of **verbal sexual harassment** – only one man and seven women had done this. Fears

of either losing employment or negative impacts on their job were cited as the main reasons that prevented them from speaking up in the workplace. Among the small number of respondents who said they had reported verbal sexual harassment to their employer, organisations took action in the majority of cases – although this was only six out of eight cases, as few incidents get reported in the first place. The most common disciplinary measures were warnings or specific training for 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.



Similarly, most respondents did not report their experiences of **online sexual harassment** at work – only three men and two women among them had ever done this. Most respondents said they failed to do so because they did not think it was a big deal. Organisations took action in response to three out of the five cases of online sexual harassment reported.

Despite similar incidence rates of **physical sexual harassment** across genders, the level of reporting for this type differs for men and women, with men speaking up twice as often. The most common reason that stopped people from reporting was fear it would negatively

affect their job. The survey recorded five reported cases of physical sexual harassment. Organisations took action in every case, ranging from informing the police to transferring or suspending the perpetrator. In one instance, the complainant was fired.

Most respondents who had experienced **rape** at work did not report it, most commonly because they felt people would not believe them. Organisations took action in the three cases of rape reported to them, with the perpetrator being fired in two cases and the police being called in for the third.

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").

