



## Country overview

# Ukraine

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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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# Ukraine

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

The 2025 survey results indicate that sexual harassment in media workplaces in Ukraine has an overall prevalence rate of 12%,<sup>2</sup> lower than the global average (29%) and the national rates for most countries surveyed. While no comparable national dataset exists from the 2020 study, the findings nonetheless highlight that sexual harassment remains present within Ukrainian newsrooms, disproportionately targeted at women.

<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.

”

*“There is a lot of [sexual harassment] in local media, especially in small towns. A TV channel director or the owner of a website can easily flirt with, touch or ask out very young female journalists. I have seen this several times in different media outlets – not only directed at me, but at others as well.”*

Female print editor aged 25–34

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

12%

Ukraine  
2025

29%

Ukraine  
average · 2025



Regional benchmark

# Context

**Between 2020 and 2025, Ukraine took notable steps towards addressing sexual harassment, including within the media sector. These actions combined legal reform, institutional guidance and growing public advocacy.**

These reforms have unfolded against the backdrop of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which began in February 2022. The war has profoundly reshaped Ukraine's political, social and media landscape. Journalists have been operating under heightened security risks, facing displacement, trauma and resource strain. In such conditions, sexual harassment can become both more difficult to report and more urgent to address, as power imbalances deepen and institutional systems experience extraordinary pressure.

A major milestone came in June 2022, when Ukraine ratified the Istanbul Convention, strengthening its commitment to tackle violence against women and [aligning national legislation with European standards](#). This sent an important political signal that gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, remained a legislative priority even amid a national emergency.

Building on this, the Ukrainian parliament passed several bills on workplace harassment and gender-based violence. In 2022, the Ukrainian Rada adopted a [law against harassment](#), which established legal protection against "mobbing" (long-term harassment), and employers' obligations to prevent and counter it. In 2023 the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued [guidance on combating gender-based discrimination and sex-](#)

[ual harassment](#) in the workplace in law enforcement and security departments, where there had previously been limited focus on workplace harassment.

[Bill No. 8329](#) passed in 2024 legally defined "sexual violence" for the first time in Ukraine and formally established administrative liability for sexual harassment. Its [Article 173-7](#) covered verbal, non-verbal and electronic forms of harassment, including humiliating sexual messages online.

These developments mark meaningful legislative and institutional progress. Administrative penalties for sexual harassment now provide victims with a formal complaint route. But in practice, penalties are rarely imposed and [legal reviews](#) note that employees remain reluctant to report their experiences of sexual harassment.

Civil society organisations and research initiatives have continued to document the scale of sexual harassment in the media sector. [Research into online violence](#) against Ukrainian journalists by Women in the Media, a Ukrainian organisation, highlights the gendered nature of digital harassment and its chilling effect on women's participation in public discourse.<sup>3</sup> The organisation's [2022 survey of women](#) in the Ukrainian media estimates that 53% have experienced sexual harassment at work.

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<sup>3</sup>With a different scope and methodology, the Women in the Media report measures broader forms of online violence than this study, which is more strictly focused on workplace sexual harassment (including online), so the results of these two studies are not directly comparable.

# The survey

A total of 100 media professionals from Ukraine took part in the survey<sup>4</sup> through an online questionnaire distributed among WAN-IFRA WIN and BBC Media Action networks. Respondents comprised 77 women, 21 men and 2 people who preferred to self-describe their gender identity.<sup>5</sup>

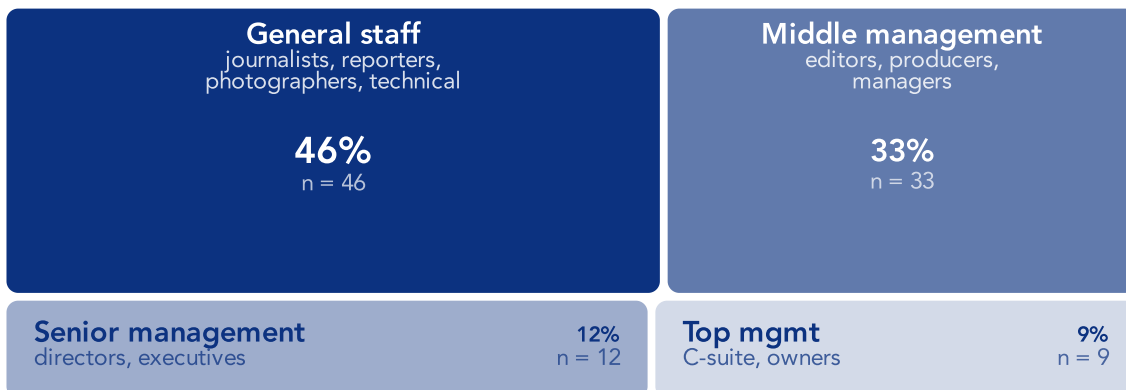
## Figure 1: Respondent demographics

All percentages rounded to the nearest whole number

### By gender identity



### 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 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 prevalence of **verbal sexual harassment** among respondents in Ukraine (see Figure 2) is among the lowest of the countries included in this study. However, the gender pattern remains clear – with 24% of women respondents (17) saying they have experienced verbal harassment at least once, compared with nearly 6% among male respondents (just one man). Even where overall prevalence appears lower, sexual harassment in media workplaces continues to disproportionately affect women.

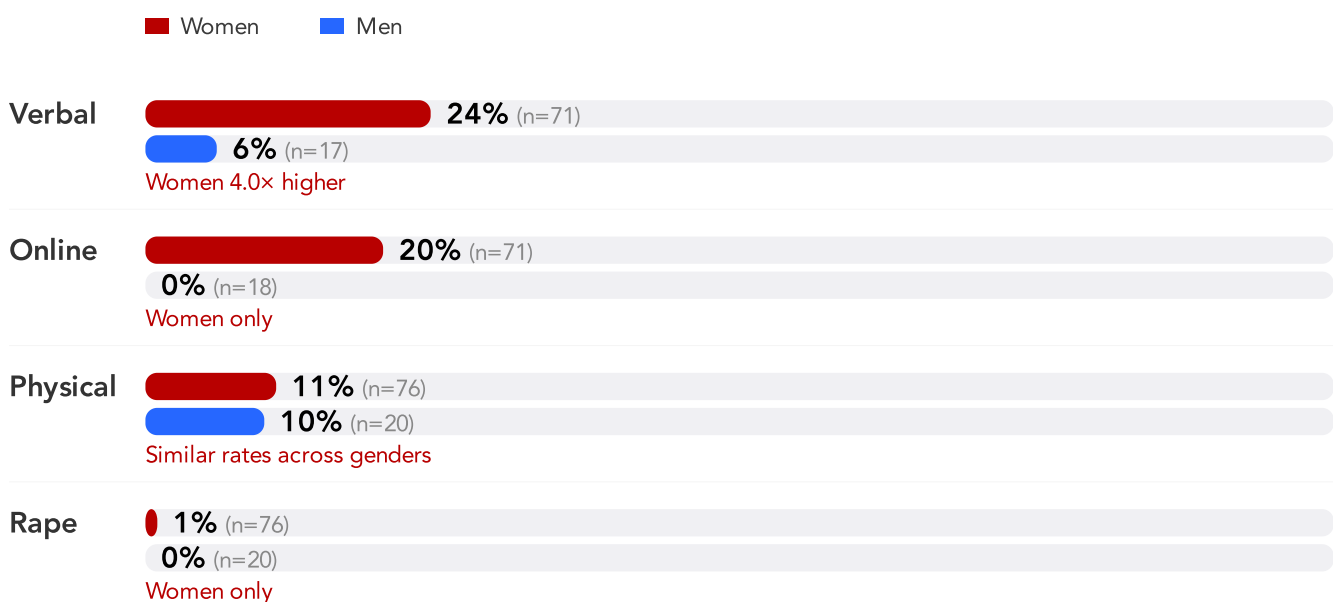
No men in the survey said they had experienced **online sexual harassment** at work, while 14 women had (20%).

Similarly, few survey participants said they had experienced **physical sexual harassment** at work. Some 10% of male respondents had encountered physical harassment, as had 11% of their female counterparts.

There is one incident of **rape** cited in the survey.

## 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.



*"I experienced several cases where the 'big names' of publications spread rumours about alleged sexual harassment on my part. This was retaliation for criticism."*

Female print editor aged 45–54

# 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.

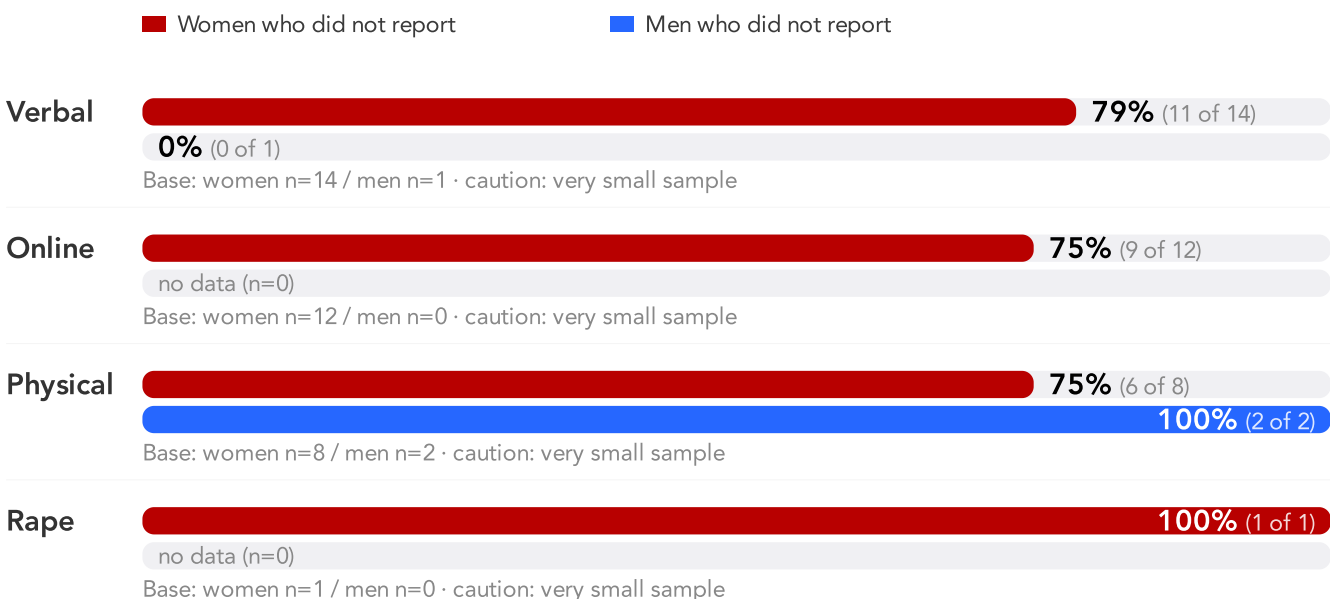
Workplace reporting of any type of sexual harassment was low in the Ukrainian sample (see Figure 3). Some 79% of women respondents did not report their experiences of **verbal sexual harassment** to their employer, while the sole man in this sample did tell his employer. The most common reason that stopped respondents

from speaking up was thinking that the issue was not a big deal.

In the few cases when sexual harassment was reported, organisations generally took action in response, especially in cases of verbal harassment (see Figure 4). However, the sample size is small, which makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions from the data.

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

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



Only three individuals reported incidents of **online sexual harassment** to their organisations, the survey showed. Again, respondents’ primary reason for not doing so was that they did not see it as a big deal.

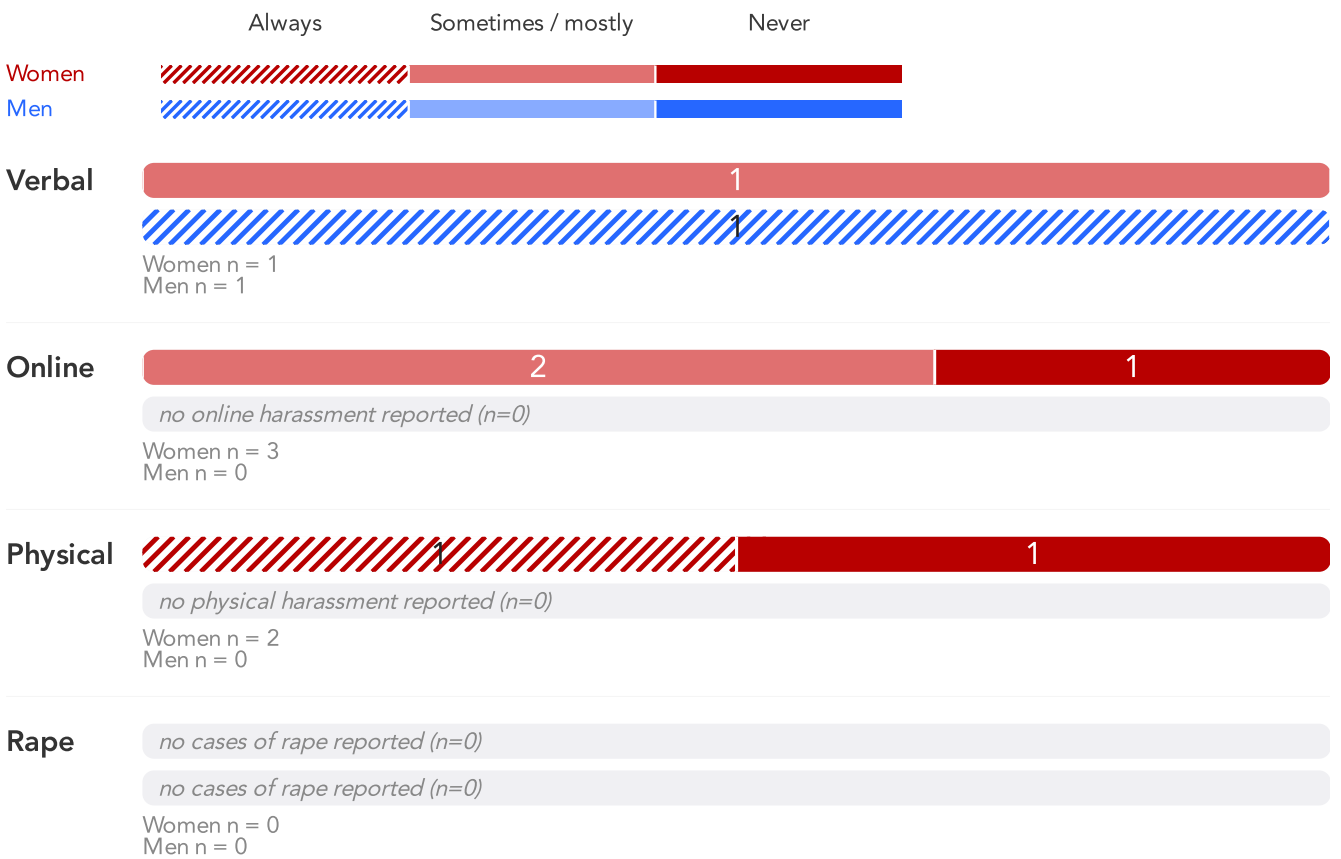
no men did. As with other types of harassment, the most common argument cited for not making formal complaints was thinking that the issue was not a big deal.

Also only two women (25%) reported **physical sexual harassment** to their organisations, while

In the single case of **rape** recorded in the survey, the individual chose not to report it to their organisation.

**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 had not heard of training for combating sexual violence at work, I did not even know that there was such a thing... I can't even imagine a mechanism to counteract this phenomenon, especially when the perpetrator is the manager."*

**Female digital media manager aged 35-44**