

Country overview  
**Uganda**

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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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# Uganda

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.

The survey across newsrooms in Uganda shows that the prevalence of sexual harassment has declined over the past five years – from 53% in the 2020 survey to 40% in 2025.<sup>2</sup> However, the number of incidents remains higher than the Sub-Saharan African average of 33%.

Across genders, all types of sexual harassment measured except rape are more prevalent in Uganda than the Sub-Saharan African average. Women are more likely than men to experience verbal and physical incidents, while online harassment seems to affect both genders more similarly.

<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.

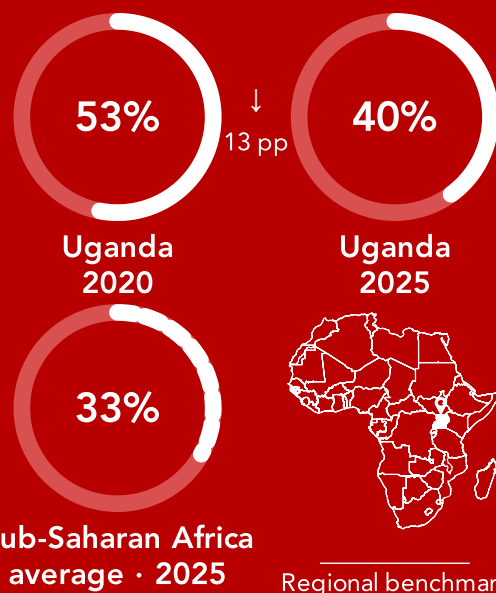
Please interpret comparisons between Ugandan rates in 2020 and 2025 cautiously, as the 2020 estimate is based on a smaller sample (n=55) than the 2025 estimate (n=206). The smaller sample carries a larger margin of error, so any apparent difference between 2020 and 2025 may reflect sampling variability rather than substantial changes.

”

*“Aside from the obvious open actions that can either be shown or told, I think sexual violence can be subtle. We need people to be aware that this is happening, speak about it and not be blamed when it happens.”*

Female multimedia journalist aged 35–44

## Overall rates of sexual harassment in newsrooms



# Context

## Between 2020 and 2025, Uganda made progress in strengthening legislation to tackle workplace sexual harassment and violence.

The most significant milestone came in 2023, when Uganda [formally ratified International Labour Organization \(ILO\) Convention 190](#),<sup>3</sup> becoming one of the first African countries to do so.

Building on this commitment, Uganda's Parliament passed the [Employment \(Amendment\) Bill 2023](#) in early 2025 (awaiting presidential assent at the time of writing). If it receives presidential approval, this would mandate employers of all sizes to introduce sexual harassment prevention measures. It would also ban mistreatment, harassment or violence against employees including intimidation, as well as physical, verbal or written abuse that interferes with work or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

Despite progress, the legal framework around sexual harassment has not advanced at a steady pace. The president vetoed the [2024 Sexual Offences Bill](#), which aimed to introduce stricter punishment for sexual offences, protect survivors

during sexual offence trials and update definitions of sexual offences in the Penal Code Act, after parliament passed it. Progress on both bills has stalled, despite continued advocacy by campaigners.

Sexual harassment remains governed by [general labour law provisions](#), namely Section 7(1) of the Employment Act, Cap 226 and the Employment (Sexual Harassment) Regulations 2012, Statutory Instrument 15 of 2012. These define sexual harassment and establish procedures to prevent it, report incidents and resolve complaints.

These legislative advances respond to alarming evidence of workplace violence. Uganda's [2021 National Survey on Violence Against Women and Girls](#) found that 86% of working women said they had experienced violence at work in the previous year, most commonly verbal harassment. Women in rural areas and recent migrant women were particularly likely to have experienced workplace abuse.

*“Conduct more training to raise awareness [of sexual harassment].”*

**Female manager at multimedia outlet aged 35–44**



<sup>3</sup>Adopted in June 2019, ILO Convention No. 190 (C190) is the first international treaty to recognise the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.

# The survey

A total of 206 media professionals from Uganda took part in the survey<sup>4</sup> through an online questionnaire distributed among WAN-IFRA WIN and BBC Media Action networks. Respondents comprised 116 women, 89 men and 1 gender non-conforming individual<sup>5</sup> (see Figure 1).

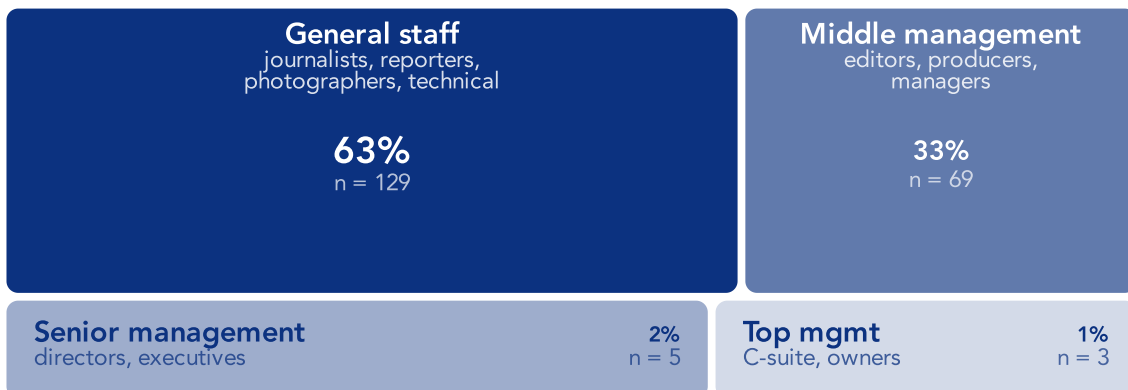
## Figure 1: Respondent demographics

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 2025 survey in Uganda shows that a significant majority of women respondents has experienced **verbal sexual harassment** in the workplace – with 78% of them saying they have experienced it at least once (see Figure 2), out of which 41 experienced it at least five times. In comparison, 45% of all men surveyed reported having experienced verbal harassment at work.

The gender difference was less drastic but still noticeable between men’s and women’s experiences of **online sexual harassment** at work, with

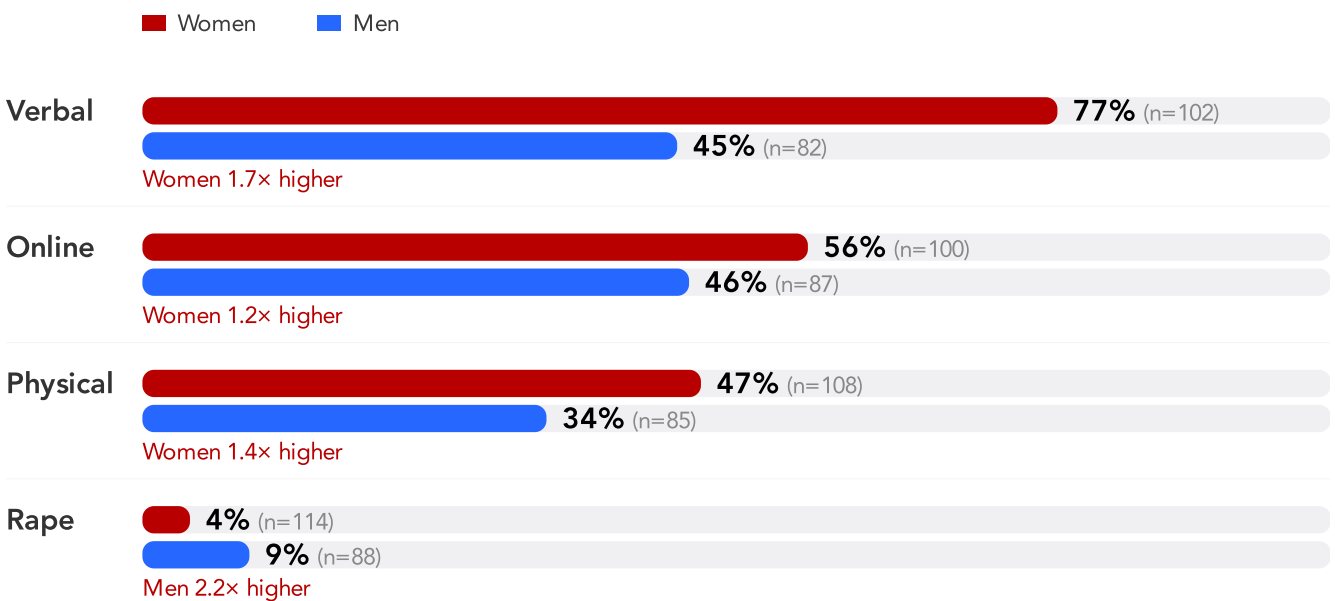
56% of women and 46% of men respondents having experienced it at least once.

The prevalence of workplace **physical sexual harassment** was also higher among women respondents but with a similar gap to that of online harassment between genders – at 47% for women and 34% for men.

Cases of workplace **rape** were rare within the Ugandan sample. However, more men than women said they had experienced this: eight men (9%) compared with four women (4%).

**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.



*“Women are always seen as sex objects.”*

Female multimedia journalist aged 18–24

# Reporting and Action

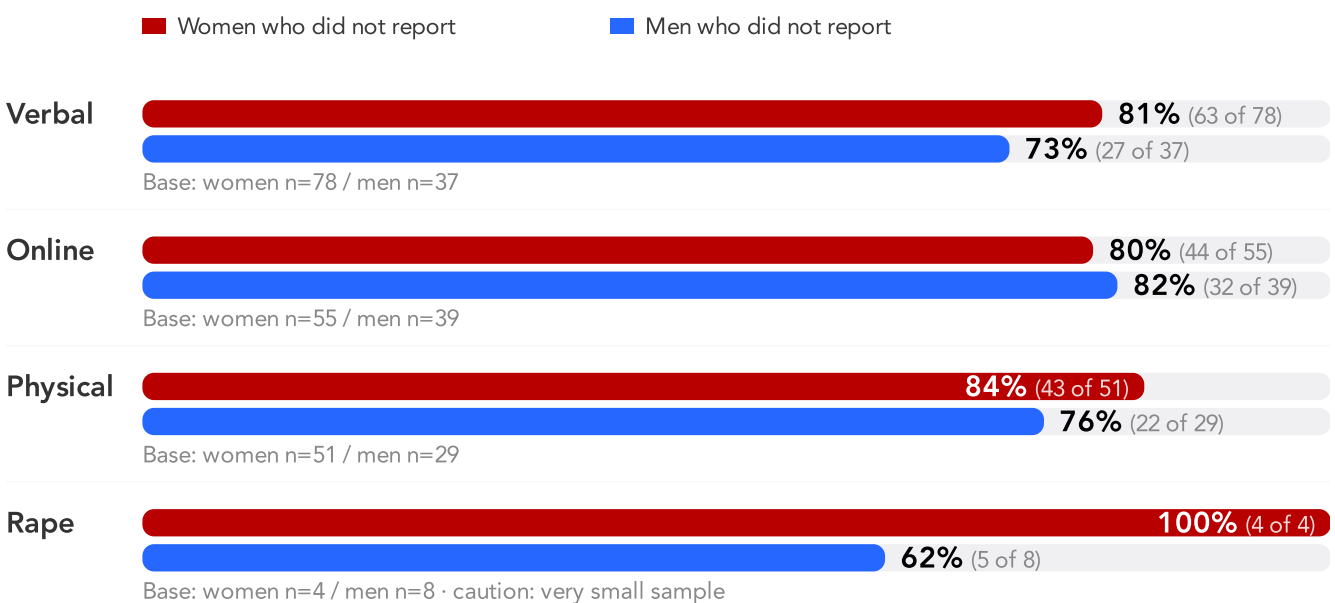
The survey asked respondents who indicated they had experienced sexual harassment at work whether they reported the incident to their organisation. In such cases, the survey asked follow-up questions to assess whether their employers had taken any action as a result.

The majority of men and women surveyed did not report **verbal sexual harassment** to their employer (see Figure 3). Only 10 men and 15 women had ever reported this (27% and 19% of those who had experienced verbal harassment at work, respectively). Both genders cited various reasons for this, most commonly fear of it negatively affecting their job or thinking the experience was not a big deal. When cases were reported, employers took action around half of the time (see Figure 4), with warnings issued to the perpetrator as the most common response.

Similarly, most respondents did not report incidents of **online sexual harassment**. Among those who had experienced this form of harassment at work, only 11 women (20% of the sample) and seven men (18%) reported this to their employer. The reasons that stopped them from speaking up were diverse, but the most common was thinking that the experience was not a big deal. The sample of cases reported to employers was small but organisations took action in two-thirds 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.



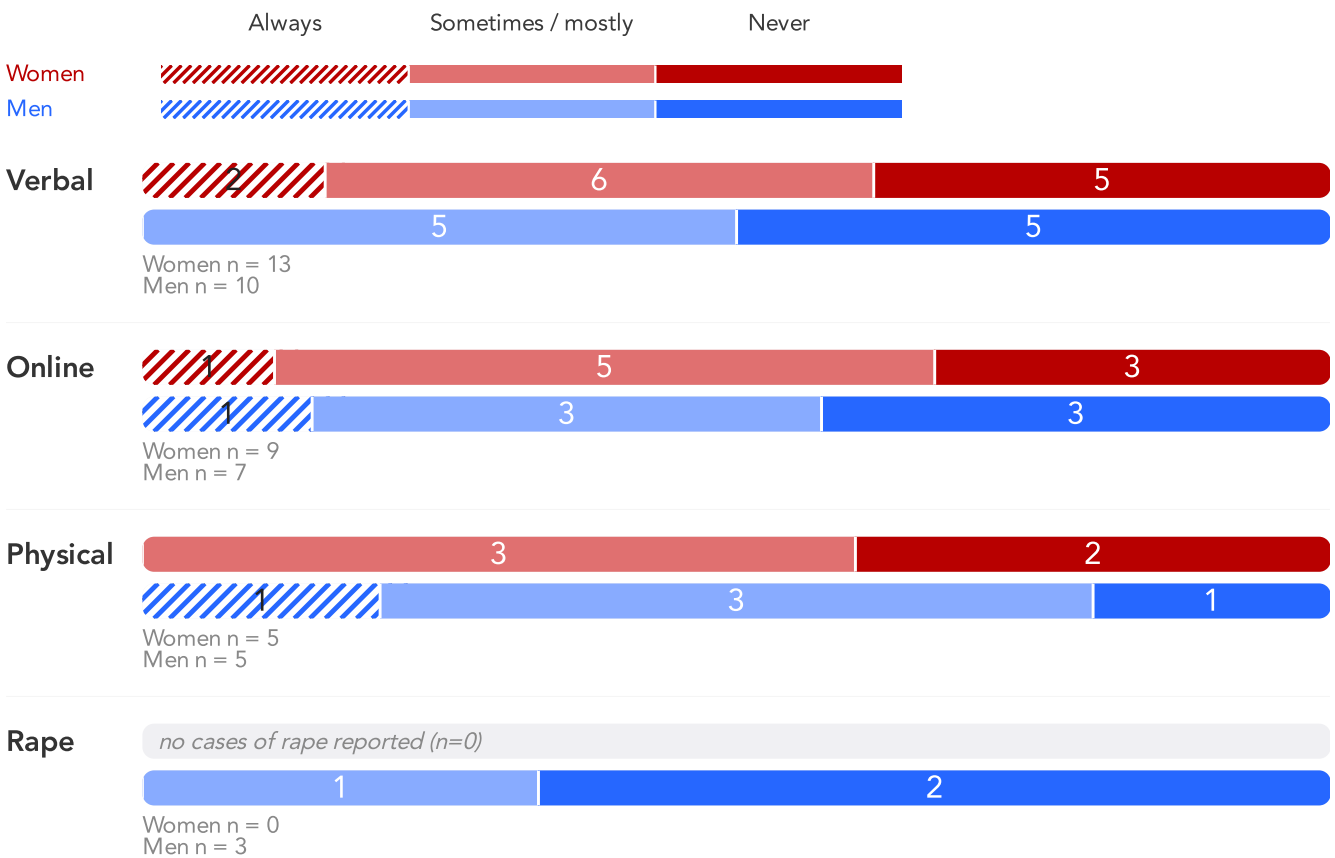
Only eight women respondents (16% of the sample) and seven men (24%) had reported experiences of **physical sexual harassment** to their employer. This was most commonly due to fears of it negatively affecting their job, among many stated reasons. Organisations took action in seven of the 10 reported cases reported to them.

Official reporting of **rape** remained extremely limited among the Ugandan sample. Among the

small number of respondents who had experienced rape at work, less than one-third of men and none of the women formally told their employer. Concerns about negative consequences on their employment or losing their job altogether were the most commonly cited reasons for this. Given the small numbers involved, these findings require cautious interpretation but they highlight significant barriers to disclosing sexual abuse in media workplaces.

**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 have a mentor who has demanded sex from me for five years now. He claims he has helped me a lot so I need to make him happy by sleeping with him... I fear reporting him to my editors because it will affect his reputation and also the friendship he has with the bureau."*

**Female print journalist aged 25–34**