

Country overview

# Zambia

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Zambia **04**

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Context **05**

---

The Survey **06**

---

Experience of Sexual Harassment **07**

---

Reporting and Action **08**

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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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# Zambia

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 2025 survey shows a significant decline in sexual harassment in newsrooms in Zambia – as overall prevalence rates have fallen over 30 percentage points from 2020 to 2025 (from 59% to 22%, respectively).<sup>2</sup>

Verbal and online sexual harassment are the most frequent forms experienced by respondents, followed by physical harassment and rape – although all types surveyed remain below their respective Sub-Saharan African averages.

According to the media professionals surveyed in Zambia, women are on average twice as likely as men to be subjected to all types of sexual harassment. When it comes to verbal sexual harassment, women are almost four times as likely as men to have experienced it.

<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](#).

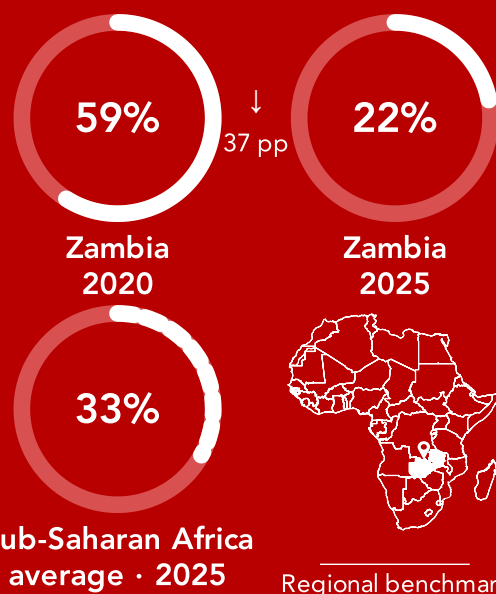
<sup>2</sup>The prevalence of sexual harassment for a given country/region is calculated as the mean average of the percentage of respondents from that location who reported having ever experienced verbal harassment, online harassment, physical harassment and/or rape while at work.

”

*“[Sexual harassment] needs to be seriously addressed and made a priority in all media institutions. It should also be mandatory that anti-sexual harassment policies are established in all institutions.”*

Female senior radio executive aged 25–34

## Overall rates of sexual harassment in newsrooms



# Context

**From 2020–2025, Zambia has taken incremental but meaningful steps to strengthen its approach to combat sexual harassment in the media sector, particularly by aligning with international standards and through targeted sectoral interventions.**

A key milestone was [Zambia's ratification](#) of International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work<sup>3</sup> in January 2025 as part of its broader agenda to strengthen workers' protections and address gender-based violence in the workplace.

Within the media sector, 2024 marked a shift towards clearer institutional safeguards. Zambia's Daily Nation [launched a sexual harassment policy](#) during aWAN-IFRA WIN training event, while Zambia Daily Mail [developed its own policy](#) with support from WIN and the Gender Division. These policies aim to shift action on sexual harassment away from ad hoc responses towards prevention, reporting and accountability mechanisms, while also promoting increased awareness of the issue.

These efforts sit within an existing policy environment shaped by Zambia's 2020 [Media Development Policy](#), which identifies journalists' safety as a core sectoral pillar (alongside media freedom, pluralism and independence). Despite not directly addressing workplace sexual harassment, the policy provides an important framework for measures to protect journalists.

Training and capacity-building to raise awareness of sexual harassment in media workplaces and the importance of institutional responses have also been a consistent feature in the country since 2020. This included sexual harassment training conducted for different media outlets and community stations, the Press Club, the Zambia Media Women Association, and media training institutions including the University of Zambia and Unicaf University.

*"I think there is a need for sensitisation – we usually ignore certain things which fall under sexual harassment."*

**Female multimedia news middle manager aged 45–54**

<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.

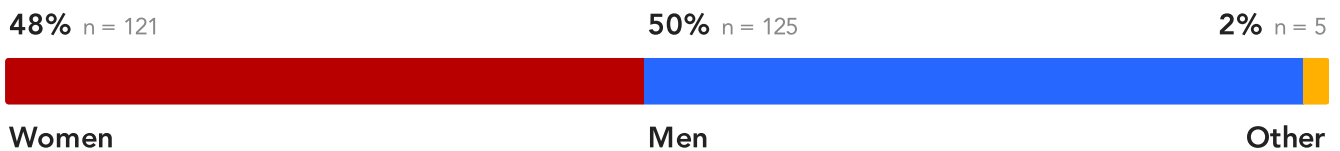
# The survey

A total of 251 media professionals from Zambia took part in the survey<sup>4</sup> through an online questionnaire distributed among WAN-IFRA WIN and BBC Media Action networks. Respondents comprised 121 women, 125 men, 2 gender non-conforming respondents and 3 people who preferred to self-describe their gender identity.<sup>5</sup>

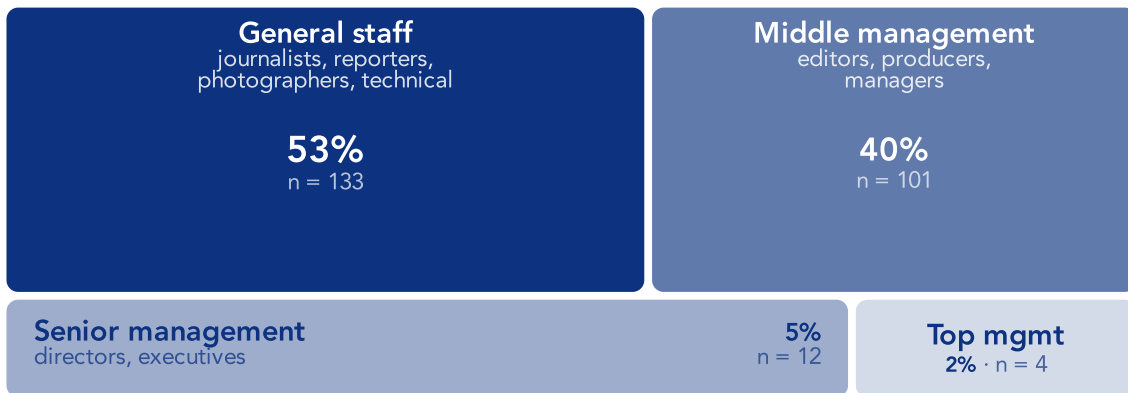
## Figure 1: Respondent demographics

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

According to the 2025 sample, women are almost four times as likely as men to experience **verbal sexual harassment** in Zambian media workplaces. The majority (61%) of women respondents say they have experienced this at least once at work (see Figure 2), and a quarter have done so five or more times. In contrast, 16% of male respondents have experienced this type of sexual harassment at work at least once.

Women surveyed in Zambia experience **online sexual harassment** twice as often as men, data

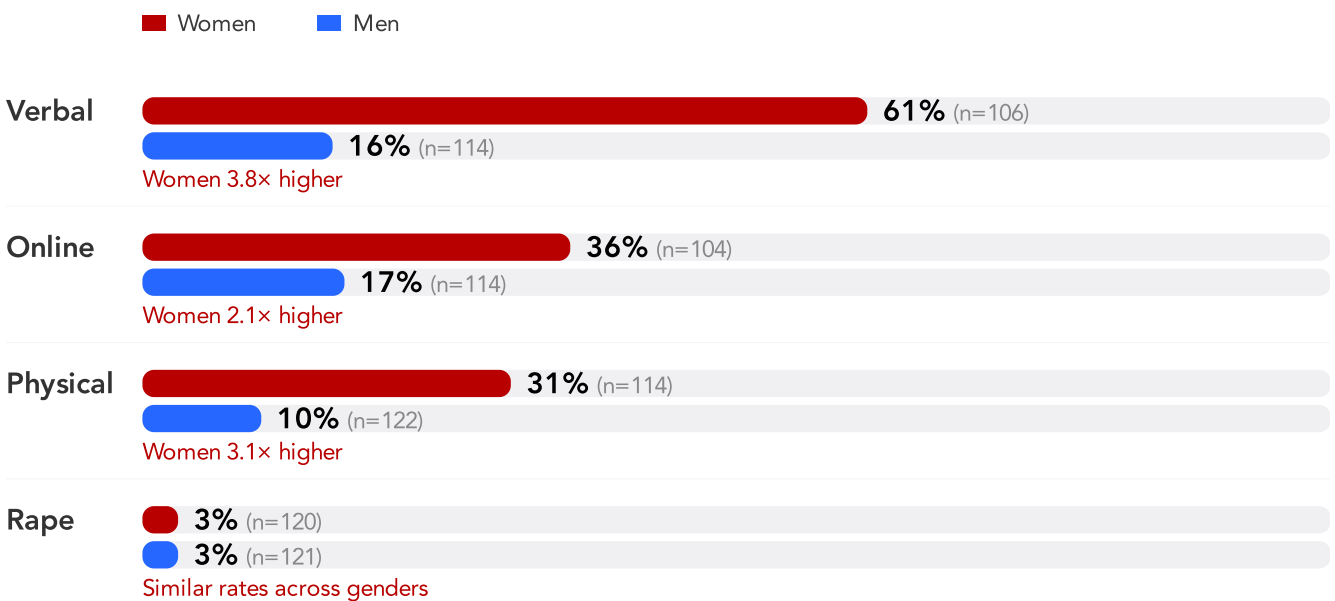
shows. More than one-third (36%) of all women respondents have received online sexual harassment at work at least once, compared with approximately 17% of male respondents.

Survey results indicate that **physical sexual harassment** occurs less frequently in Zambian media workplaces. Yet women are three times more likely to experience it than men, with prevalence rates of 31% and 10%, respectively.

**Rape** cases rates recorded by the survey are low and at equal rates for women and men.

**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 majority of men and women respondents in Zambia did not report any **verbal sexual harassment** they had experienced, with only 28% of men and 35% of women taking to their employer at least one incident (see Figure 3). Primary reasons for not reporting included fears that doing so would negatively affect their job, as well as a lack of reporting mechanisms in place and not thinking it was a big deal.

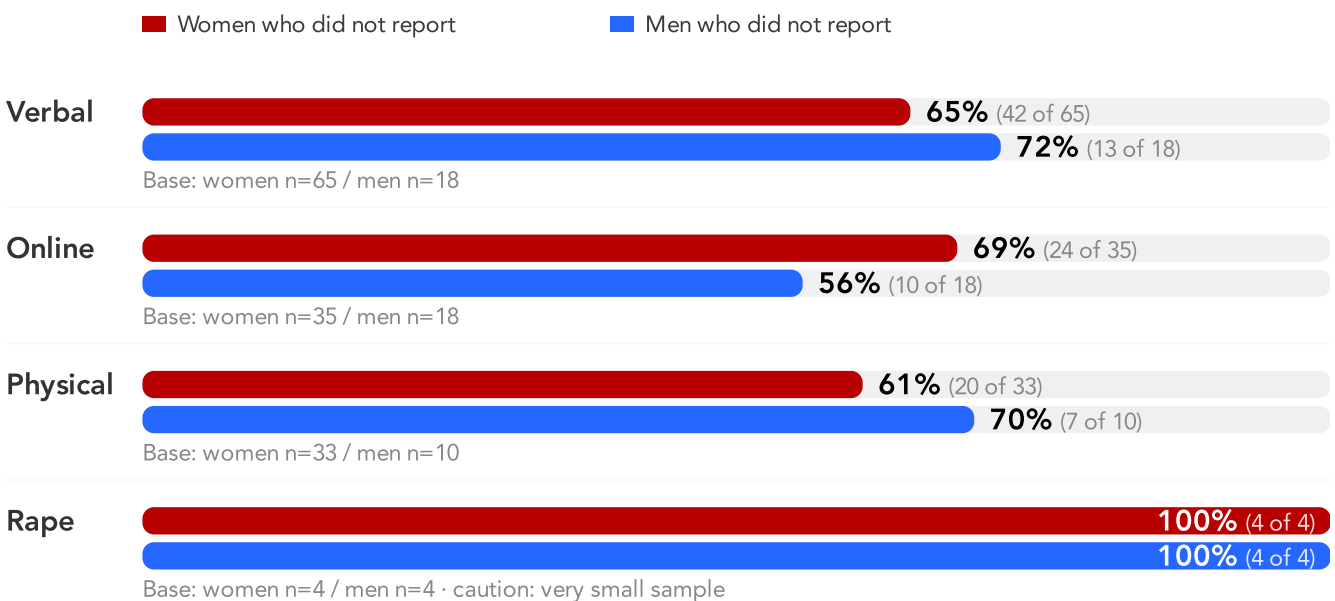
Despite the small sample size of those who had officially reported verbal sexual harassment, the survey’s findings point to weak institutional responses. In cases involving men, no action was taken in the majority of instances. Among women, seven out of 20 said that no action was taken after they reported verbal sexual harass-

ment. However, it is notable that perpetrators were fired in three reported cases.

A relatively large minority of **online sexual harassment** experiences were reported to employers (45% among men and 31% among women respondents), mostly because of the belief that this was not a big deal. While the sample of those who officially reported was small, organisations took action more often in response to cases reported by women than by men (see Figure 4). The most frequent response was providing emotional support, with training for the perpetrator or termination of employment occurring less often. On one occasion, the police were informed about an online sexual harassment incident.

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

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



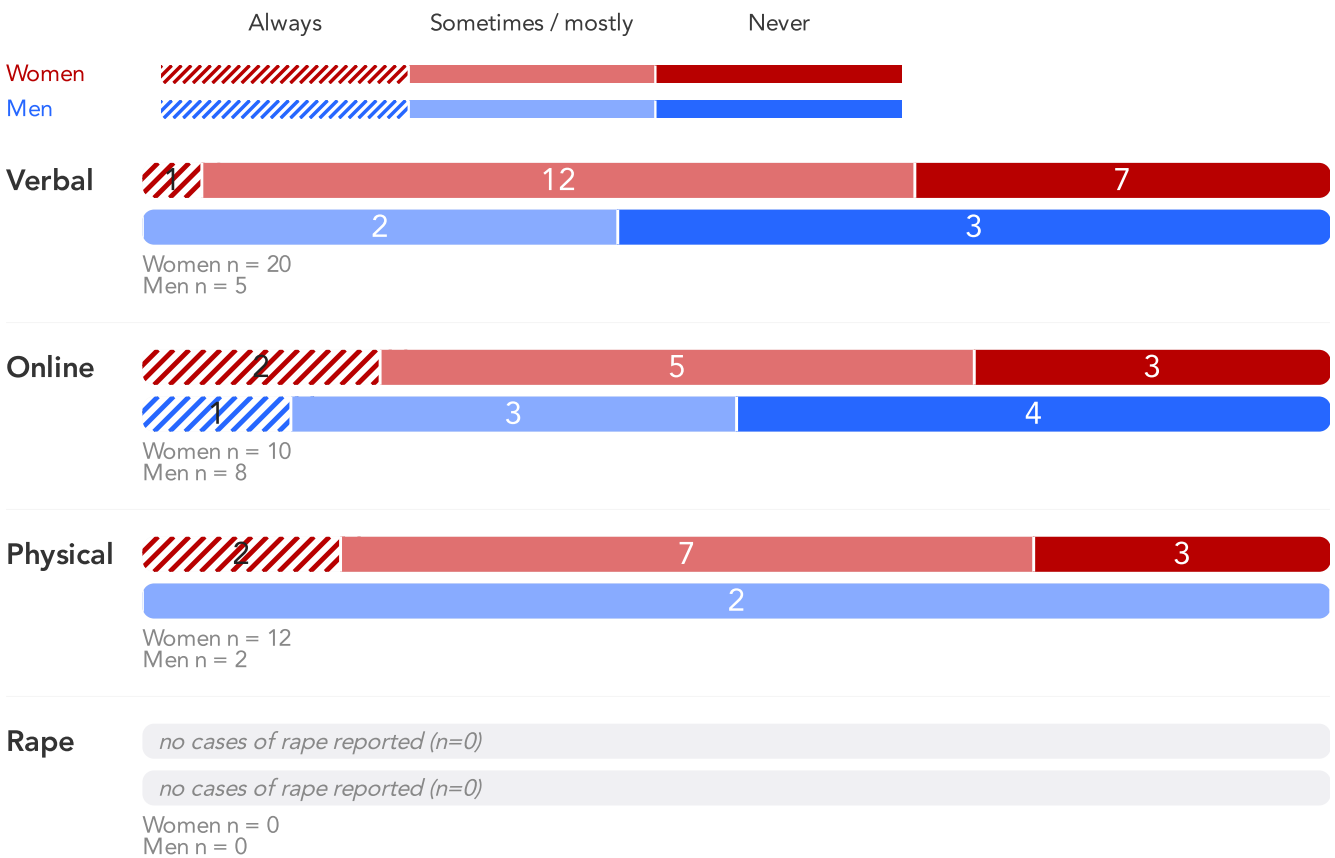
Over half of those respondents who experienced **physical sexual harassment** did not report it to their employer. This happened for a range of reasons, but a lack of reporting mechanisms was the most common explanation given by respondents. When physical sexual harassment was

reported to an employer, warnings were the most common form of action taken.

Among the eight recorded cases of **rape** in the Zambian sample (four experienced by women and four by men), none reported the abuse to their employer.

**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").



*“Sexual harassment in my workplace is subtle. It is done in such a way that those that turn away sexual advances/affairs from supervisors will be frustrated and sidelined... It is difficult to report because managers seem to be indifferent.”*

**Female print journalist aged 35–44**