

Country overview

Zimbabwe

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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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Zimbabwe

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 specific to Zimbabwe reveal that sexual harassment has remained relatively unchanged over the past five years. Prevalence rates have increased slightly – from 38% in 2020 to 42% in 2025 – and currently sit 9 percentage points above the Sub-Saharan African average (33%).²

Women respondents in the Zimbabwean media industry experience all types of sexual harassment more frequently than men. Media professionals from both genders say they face high rates of verbal harassment – the most frequent type of workplace sexual harassment in Zimbabwe, with prevalence rates well above Sub-Saharan African and global averages.

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](#).

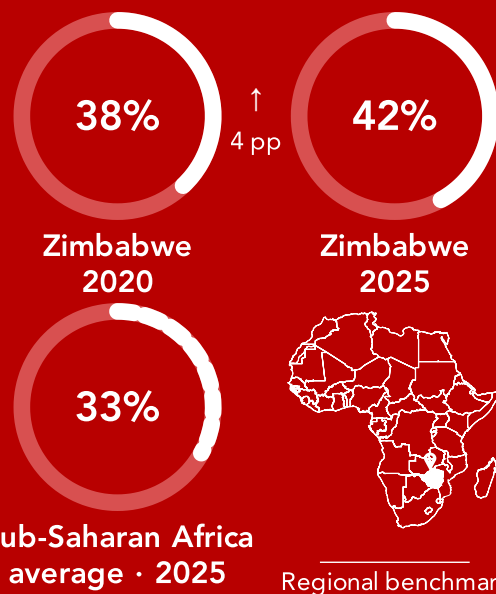
²The prevalence of sexual harassment for a given country/region is calculated as the mean average of the percentage of respondents from that location who reported having ever experienced verbal harassment, online harassment, physical harassment and/or rape while at work.



“Issues of sexual harassment should be taken as a high priority, and newsrooms should move to a highly professional setting rather than being an environment that allows people to say whatever in the name [of] ‘that’s the nature of the job’.”

Female TV journalist aged 25–34

Overall rates of sexual harassment in newsrooms



Context

Since 2020, Zimbabwe has seen a combination of legislative reform, regulatory action and high-profile court cases that have shaped public and media conversations on sexual harassment.

The [Labour Act](#) was revised in 2023 to criminalise gender-based violence and harassment, alongside a broader set of legislative amendments. This marked the formal legal recognition of workplace harassment.

In the media industry, the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC), with support from WIN, developed an industry-wide sexual harassment and sexual violence [policy framework](#) in 2023–2024. Developed in collaboration with policy actors and media stakeholders, this initiative aims to help media organisations to strengthen their internal responses to sexual harassment. In parallel, the Media Commission supported media houses to develop policies and guidelines against sexual harassment. This included assisting six community radio stations to design their own policies, and working with AB Communications and Alpha Media Holdings to review existing frameworks.

In October 2023, public debate on sexual harassment in Zimbabwe’s media sector was signifi-

cantly shaped by a [high-profile case](#) at the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), in which the director of radio services was suspended and disciplined following allegations of workplace sexual abuse. Media reported that the complaint related to demands for sexual favours from a woman employee in exchange for a workplace transfer. The Zimbabwe Union of Journalists and other media organisations publicly called for more accountability and stronger professional standards within media workplaces.

In addition to policy and regulatory measures, the Gender and Media Commission, with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), has established a [Female Journalists Protection Fund](#) in the country to support those facing harassment and related risks. The fund aims to provide resources to professionals who report incidents of gender-based harassment, with financial support to take cases forward and a peer network to share experiences.

The survey

A total of 77 media professionals from Zimbabwe took part in the survey³ through an online questionnaire distributed among WAN-IFRA and BBC Media Action networks. Respondents comprised 51 women, 25 men and 1 person who preferred to self-describe their gender identity (see Figure 1).⁴

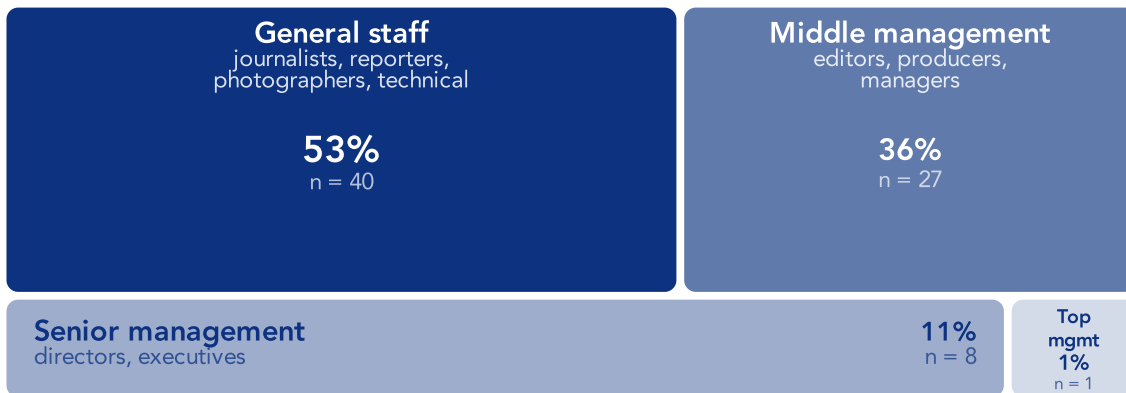
Figure 1: Respondent demographics

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-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

Both men and women surveyed report high rates of **verbal sexual harassment** at work (see Figure 2). This is the most frequent type of workplace sexual abuse in Zimbabwe across both genders, but women appear more exposed to it – some 83% of women respondents encountered verbal sexual harassment at least once, as had half of all male participants. Some 37% of women respondents said they have experienced it five times or more.

More women than men also say they face **online sexual harassment**. More than half of women

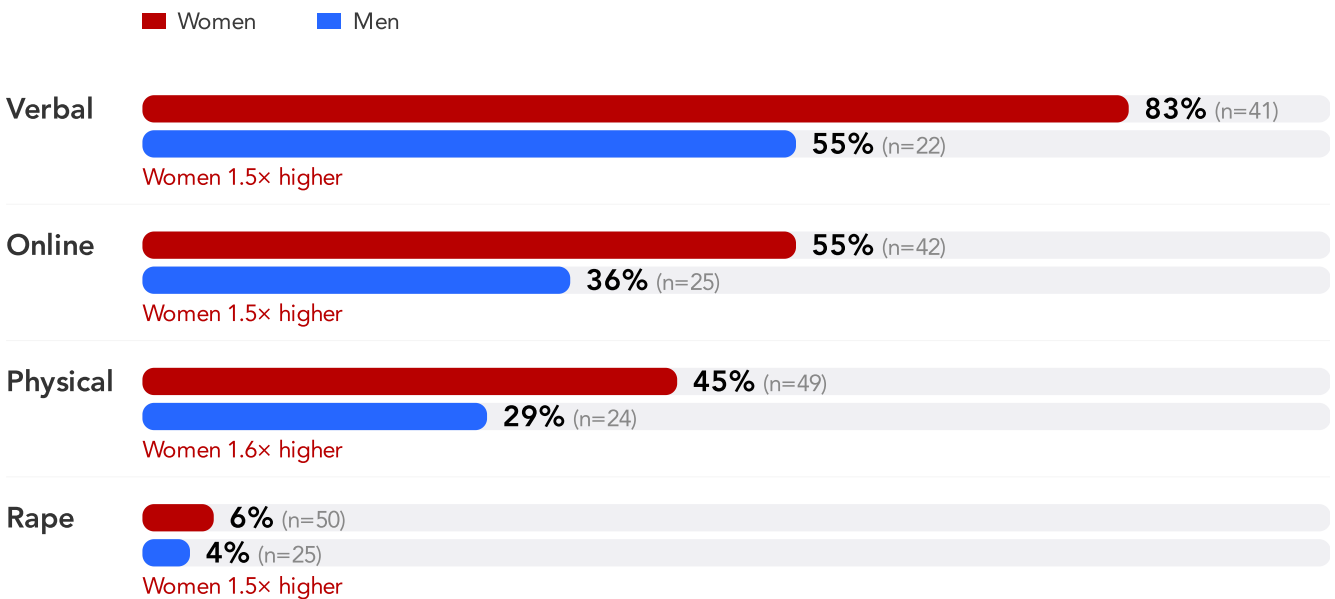
respondents have experienced this at least once, though 18% of women said they could not remember whether they had experienced it.

Physical sexual harassment is less prevalent than other types of harassment in the Zimbabwean sample. Less than half of women respondents indicated they have experienced it, although this rate is 1.6 times higher than that recorded for men.

Rape has a very low prevalence among the survey respondents, with overall rates slightly below the Sub-Saharan African average.

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

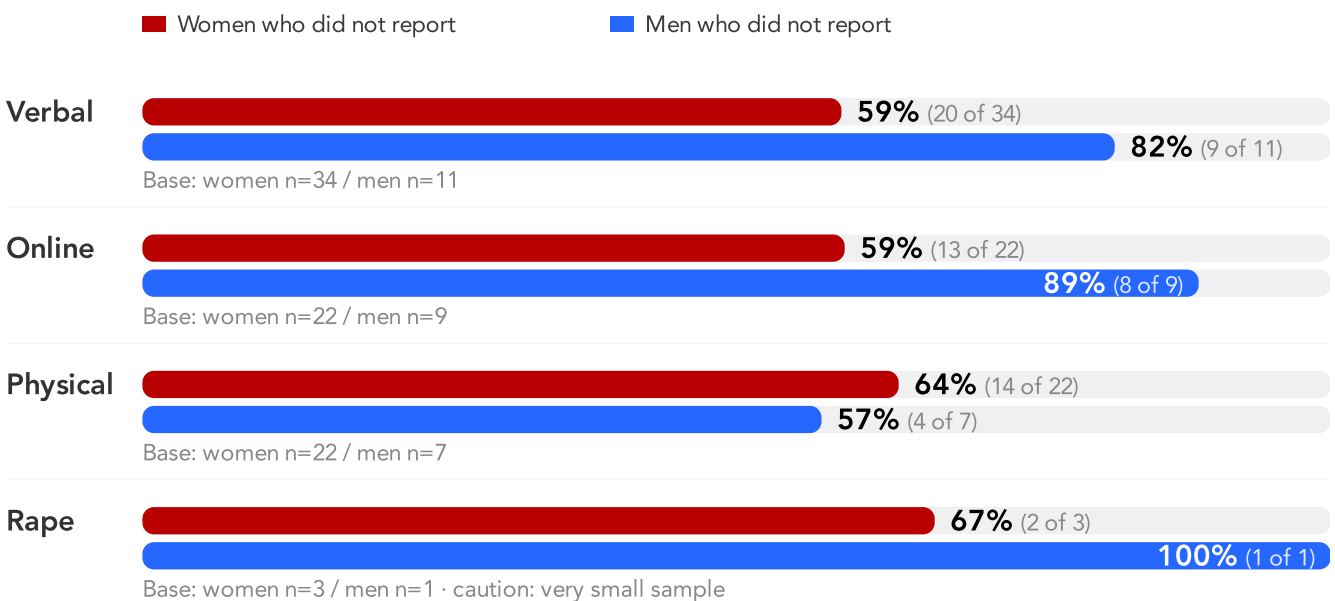
The survey asked respondents who indicated they had experienced sexual harassment at work whether they reported the incident to their organisation. In such cases, the survey asked follow-up questions to assess whether their employers had taken any action as a result.

The majority of respondents who had experienced different forms of sexual harassment said they did not report cases to their employers (see Figure 3). Across both genders, the most commonly cited reason for not reporting **verbal sexual harassment** was fear that it would negatively

affect their job. Among those who reported these experiences to their employer (17), only 10 cases resulted in action (see Figure 4). Issuing warnings and providing emotional support for victims were the most common measures taken by organisations.

Figure 3: Reporting rates by type of sexual harassment

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



When it comes to **online sexual harassment**, women were more likely than men to tell their employer. Even though the sample of reported cases is very small (11), it is notable that organisations took action for the one man who reported online harassment, but only responded to half of the cases that involved women. Where action was taken, it usually took the form of a warning.

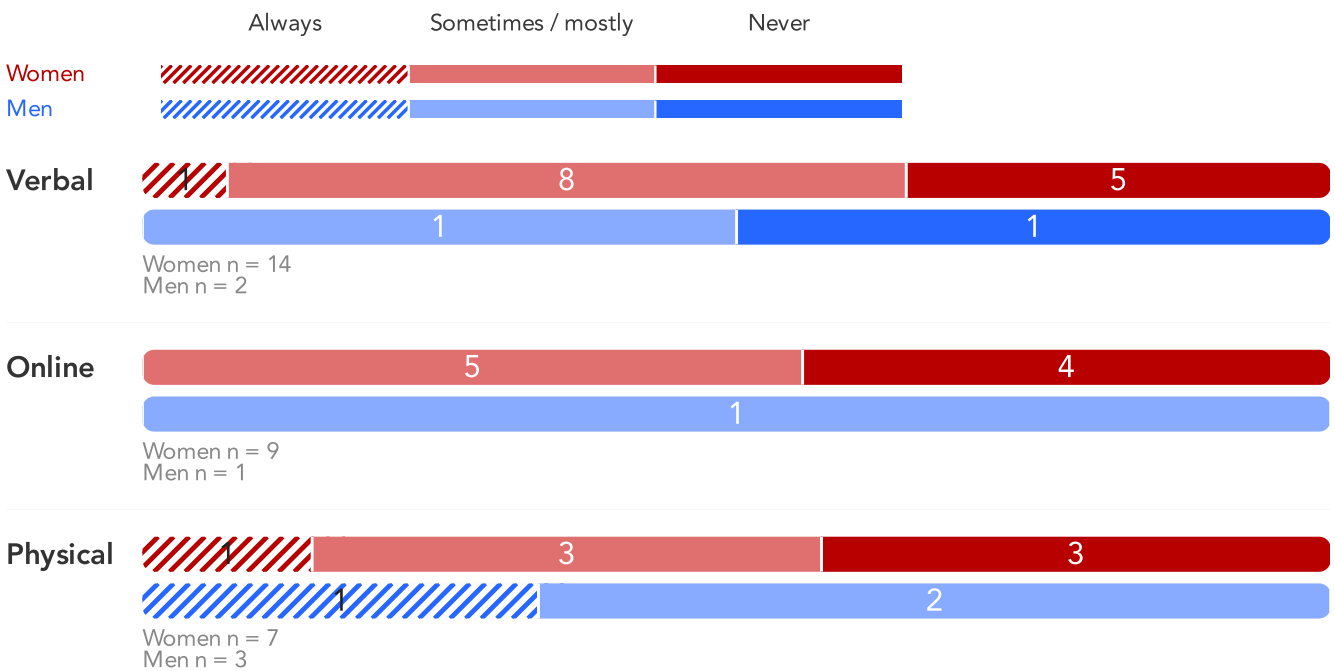
it to their employer, including more women than men. The most commonly cited reason for not reporting this experience was fear of it negatively affecting their job. Again, when reporting did happen, the most common response was a warning to the perpetrator.

Reporting of **rape** incidents to employers was rare among the sample, with only one woman having done this out of four cases in total.

Over half of all respondents who had experienced **physical sexual harassment** did not take

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").



“More could be done to equip the newsroom to [use] existing policies and have perpetrators held accountable.”

Male print media senior manager aged 35-44