



Peaceful
Change
initiative



Women in Media

Serbia Survey

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INTRODUCTION

Between November 2020 and December 2022, Peaceful Change initiative (PCI) convened a series of Media Consultation Dialogues between media professionals from Kosovo and Serbia. We gathered online a group of Kosovar and Serbian journalists, in order to hear their reflections on the position of women in the media, their status, advancement opportunities, specific gender related issues such as sexual violence in the workplace, and how do they perceive gender representation in the media.

The meeting took place when the COVID-19 pandemic was still an entangled part of our life, job, daily activities and discussions. We had already witnessed how the virus further exacerbated inequalities, as many of the hidden experiences of the crisis were gendered: from the increased burden of unpaid labor to increased number of gender-based violence cases. It was also a time when we witnessed how women are on the frontline of the pandemic, as cashiers at grocery stores and as nurses. Among those on the frontline was also one particular group: female journalists, reporting about the virus since its outbreak.

The screen presence of female reporters confirmed again something that media workers already have been saying inside their circles: that women make the majority of field reporters in Serbia. However, newsrooms in Serbia not only failed to use their power and influence to challenge traditional social and cultural norms that perpetuate the oppression of women, but often end up reinforcing and maintaining harmful gender perceptions and stereotypes.

This was also suggested by journalists during the discussion which highlighted how newsrooms fail to include perspectives, experiences and voices of women in their media productions. But they also highlighted that newsrooms are failing them too, as gender inequality and sexism are not just part of the headlines, but also of their workplace.

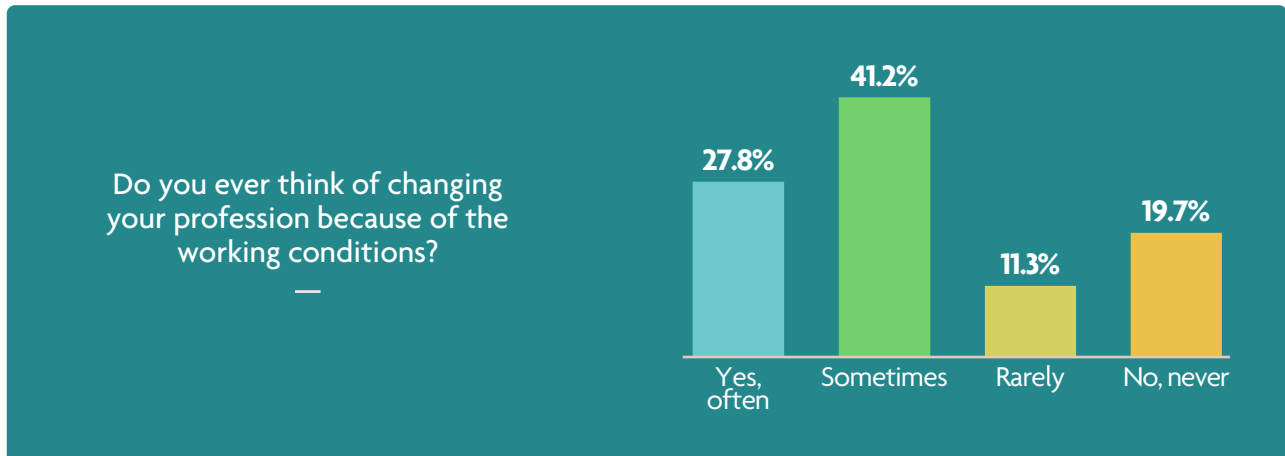
This report derives from participants themselves who expressed the need for a survey looking into the position of women in the media, and provide a better picture of gender (in) equality in the newsroom.

We hope that survey findings will pave a way to this conversation.

MAIN FINDINGS

- **41.4 percent** of women respondents (hereinafter: respondents) earn less than the national average;
- **40 percent** of them work 40 hours or more per week;
- **34.9 percent** believe that they earn less than their male colleagues for the same work;
- **26.5 percent** were discriminated against due to their appearance, and **36 percent** due to their age;
- **29.1 of respondents** were victims of sexual harassment;
- **42.7** feel that their private life suffered because of work, and **24 percent** feel that their private life affects their job to a great extent;
- **46.1 percent** believe that women are less present than men in the media content.

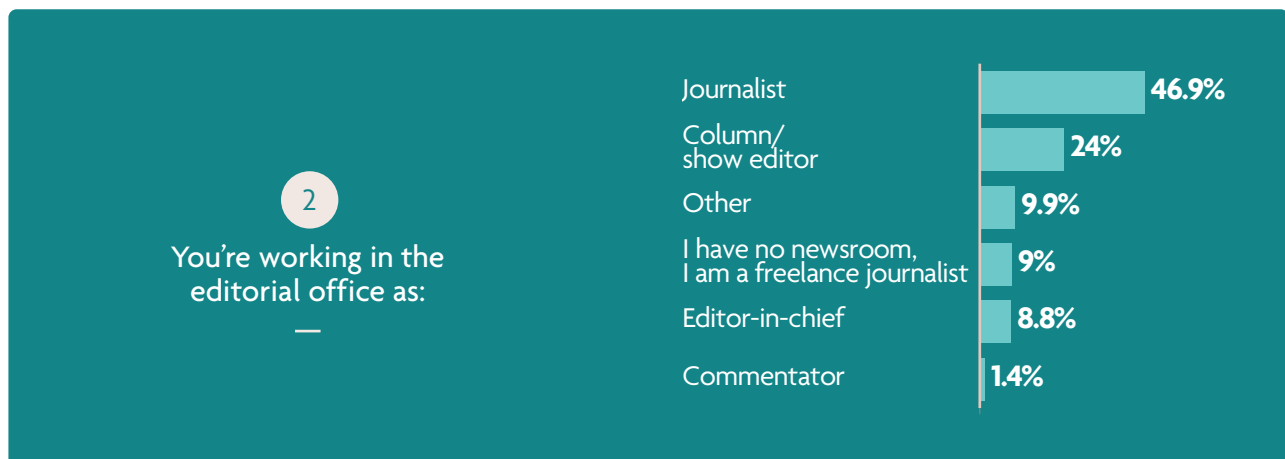
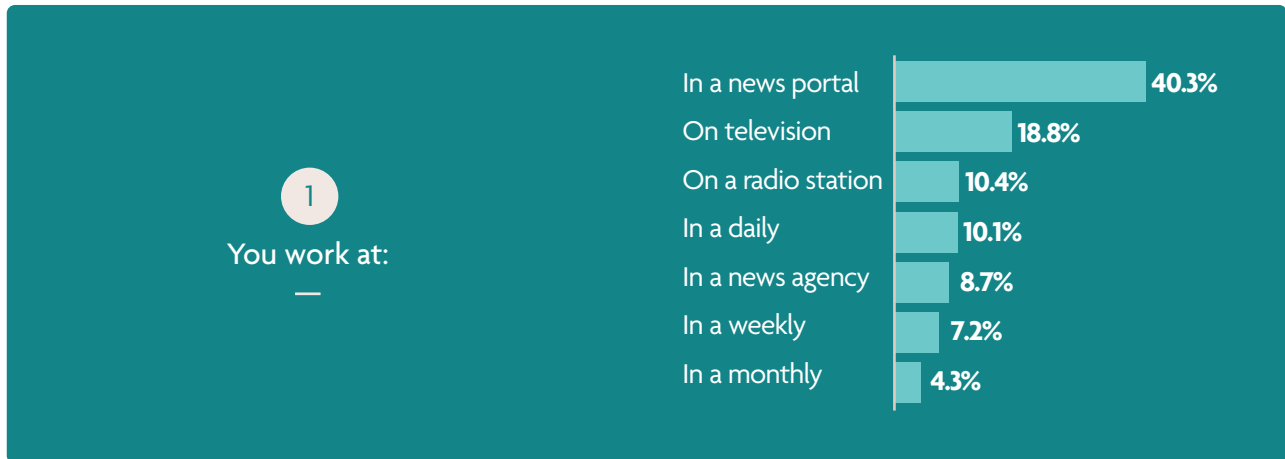
Perhaps the best illustration is a finding that 41.2 percent of respondents sometimes and 27.8 percent often **think about changing their job** – this actually implies that for one reason or another, almost 70 percent of women employed in newsrooms are dissatisfied with their profession or the job they do.



All these findings are generally in line with periodic global researches on the status of women in the media, pointing to their unequal representation in leadership positions and in media content, failure to harmonize their private life and career, discrimination. What however gives a special “colour” to this research escapes the statistics - shocking testimonies about sexual abuse, dissatisfaction, feeling of not being fulfilled in one area or another, which we partially share and convey here.

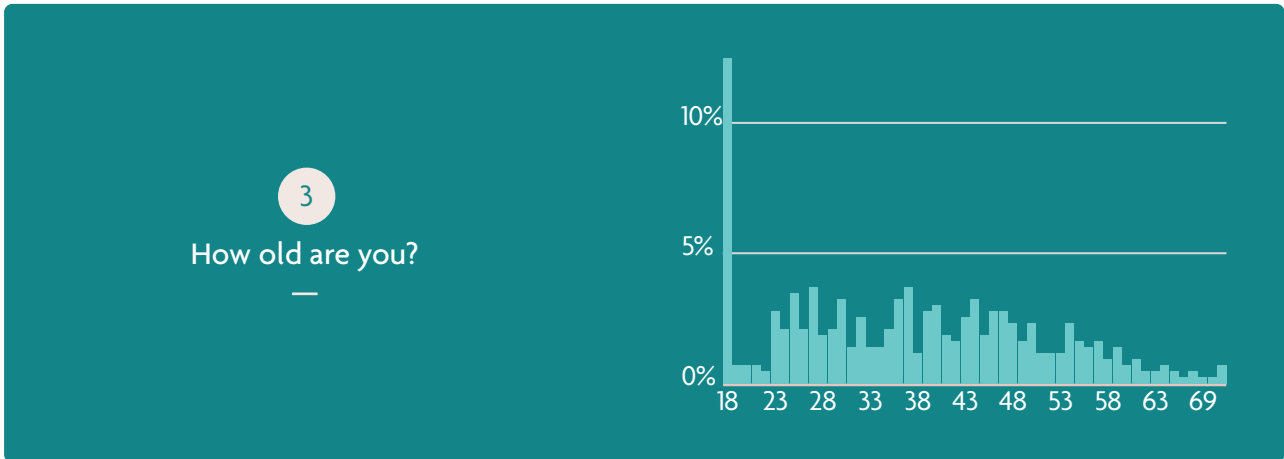
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Respondents included women journalists, photo reporters, proof-readers, editors, editors in chief, directors, and managers employed in all types of media outlets.



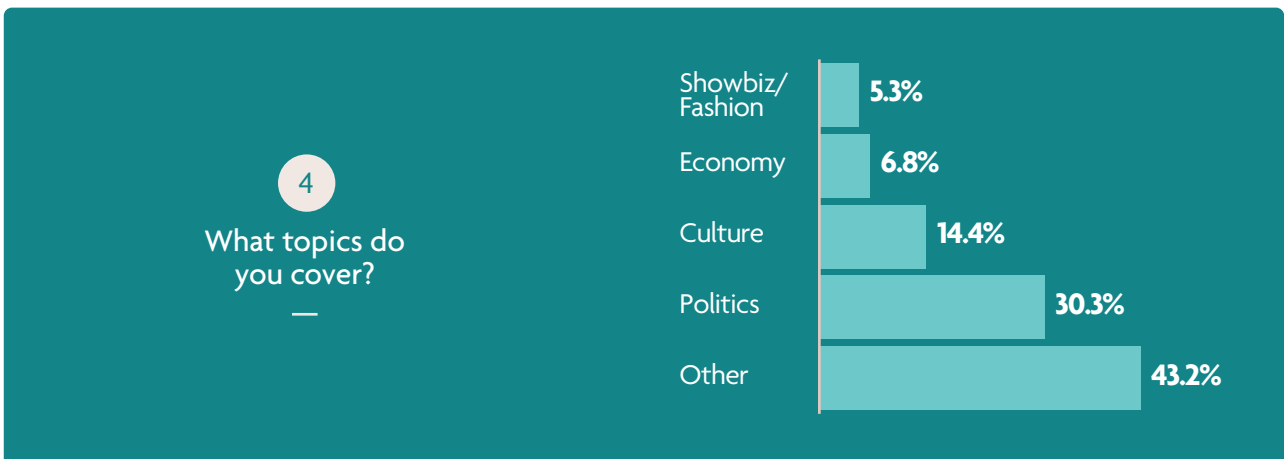
AGE OF WOMEN RESPONDENTS

Age distribution of respondents is equally representative - most of them were between 18 and 21, but there were also middle-aged women and pensioners.



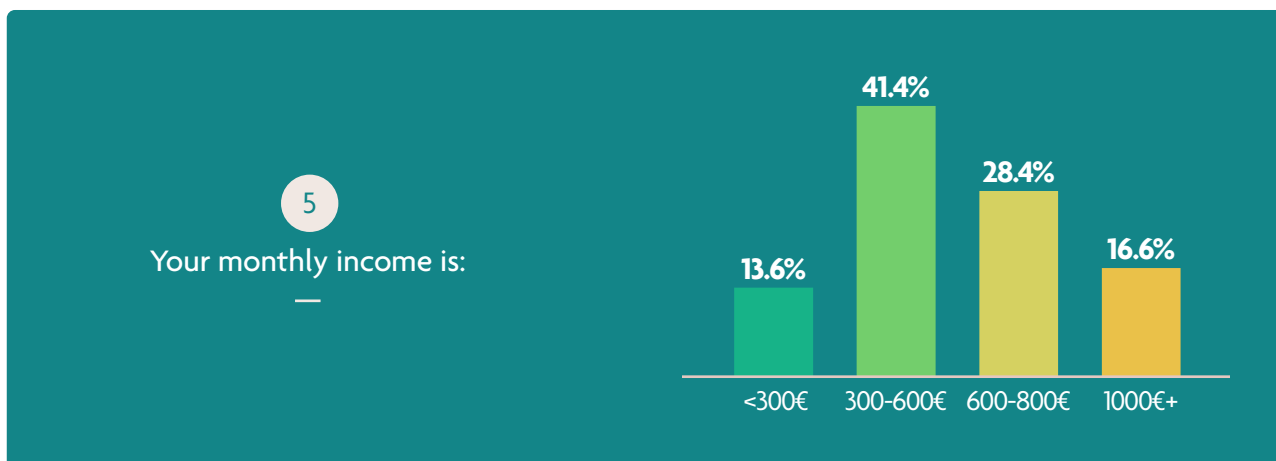
Women respondents include equally women with only 5 to 10 years of work experience in the media, as well as those more experienced ones.

Almost one third of respondents cover politics, 14.4 percent follow culture, 6.8 economy, and only 5.3 cover stories related to showbiz and fashion - once the usual “safe haven” of women in the media. This goes on to show an already obvious tendency of women shifting towards more lucrative and visible media segments.

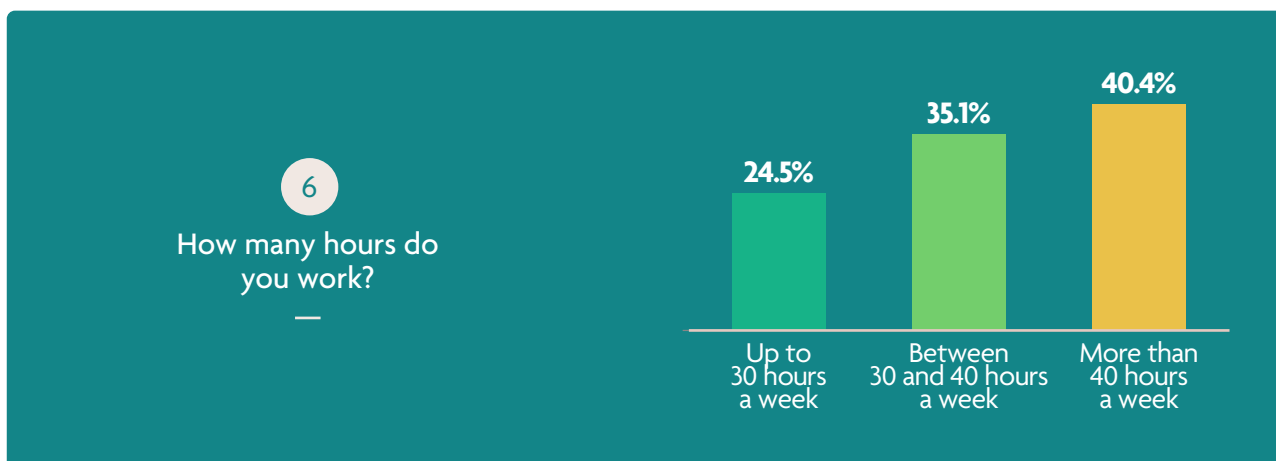


EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES

In 41.4 percent of cases, salary of respondents is lower than the average for the Republic of Serbia, amounting officially to 75282 RSD - or 627 Euro at the time of research. As many as 13.6 percent of respondents have incomes half the amount of the national average, while a total of 45 percent of respondents earn above the average salary.

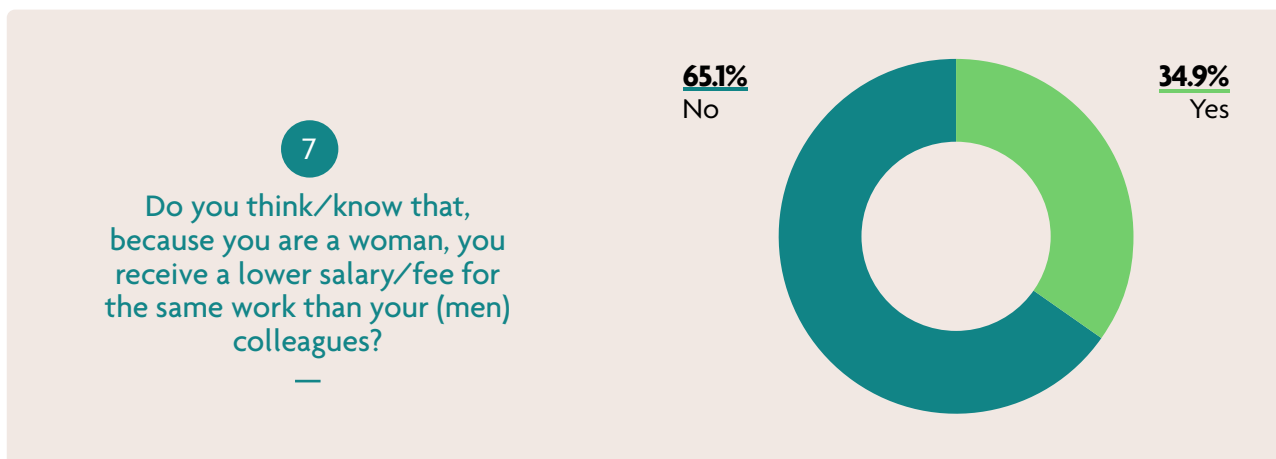


Income gap stems primarily from the different positions of media outlets on the market, but probably also from the difference in the number of working hours, corresponding to the income gap.



WAGE INEQUALITY: “ALWAYS THERE”

When asked whether they had lower incomes compared to their male colleagues as they were women, more than one third of respondents answered positively. Although far more respondents hold a different view, this still deviates from the usual perception that women in Serbia - despite various forms of discrimination, are still not unequal in terms of their wages.

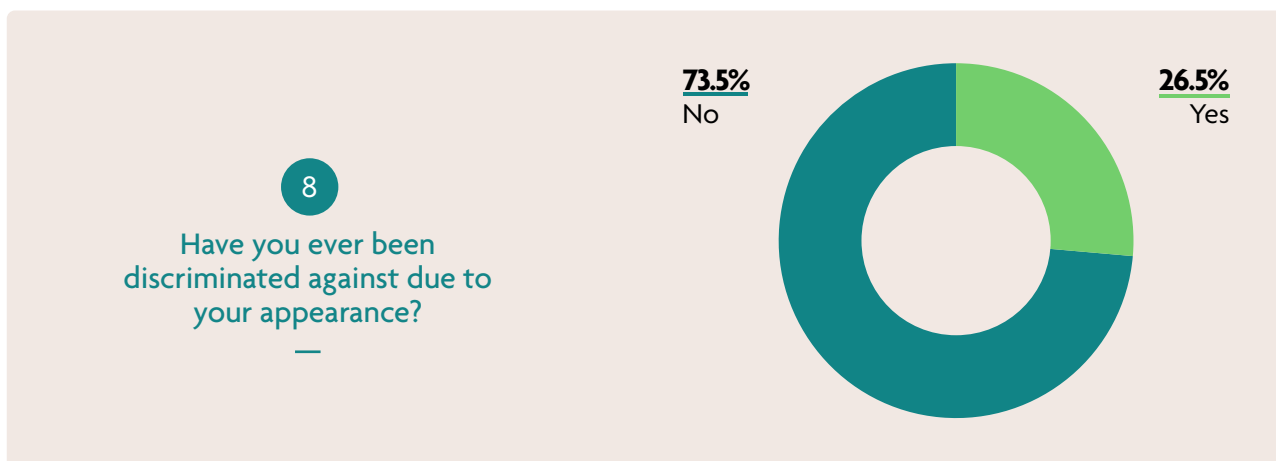


Testimonies

When it comes to the relationship between men and women in the newsroom, my experience says that they ALWAYS had higher salaries for the same job. I will never understand why this is the case! In addition, when new associates are recruited, men are always more welcome...

APPEARANCE AS A CRITERION: “WEARING TIGHT JEANS”

In 26.5 percent of cases, respondents state that they were discriminated against during their career due to their appearance. The testimonies are different, some are even quite dramatic – they practically “overlap” with sexual harassment, but the common view is that appearance has an impact on media career.



Testimonies

I often heard comments about my looks and age. Even though they were supposed to be “incidental” compliments or jokes, I always felt uncomfortable. I once had a woman editor who insisted that I look at her nude photos from a private album that she had brought to the newsroom. I felt terrible because I knew she was doing that as I was uncomfortable and she wanted to humiliate me. Two other female colleagues had to watch it.

In my current newsroom, I have never noticed a tendency of certain tasks being assigned based on gender. However, in the television outlet I used to work for years, a good example of this would be that you would never see a man doing, for instance, the weather forecast, as that assignment is usually given to young, nice-looking girls, again, regardless of their expertise and experience.

A colleague of mine, cameraman, told me that at my age I should be in tight jeans.

I find inappropriate all compliments about my appearance that I get at work. In the media sphere, especially on TV, it is often the case that (young) female journalists are objectified and it is considered perfectly fine for an editor or colleague to comment on you in that sense. Specifically, I had an invitation from the editor to accompany him on a project only he had been invited to. I refused, which is why I ended up getting punished with extra work and mobbing.

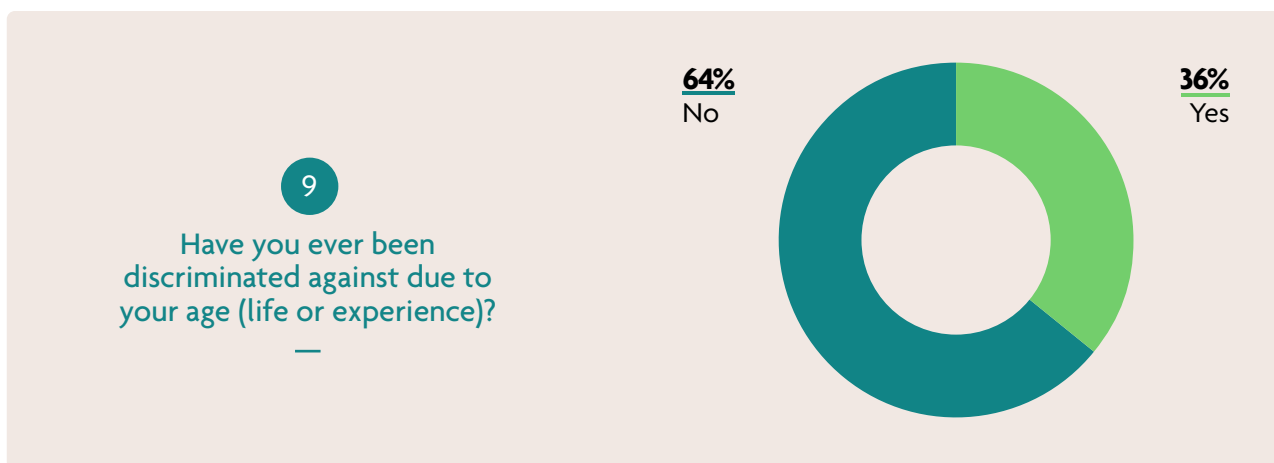
Unfortunately, the external appearance often counts the most. More than education, expertise...

There are “media” in which female journalists and anchors need to look like showbiz personalities, to get a chance.

AGEISM: “I SEEM YOUNGER”

More than one third of respondents notice age discrimination, often associating it to discrimination based on appearance. In this sense, an observation of one respondent stands out that “ageism is mutual, both towards young and older women”. As the interlocutors point out, younger female journalists are not perceived as smart and serious enough, while audience is not fond of watching the older ones on television.

From the comments on other questions, it seems that ageism has somehow “normalized” and implies that certain jobs in the media are reserved for younger, while some other for older women.



Testimonies

A major issue for young women who want to pursue journalism seriously, is that their interlocutors/men do not take them seriously, that is, they do not want to dig deeper and respond to questions in the same fashion, as they would when talking to men. This is especially noticeable when it comes to directors of public companies, lawyers, officials and the like.

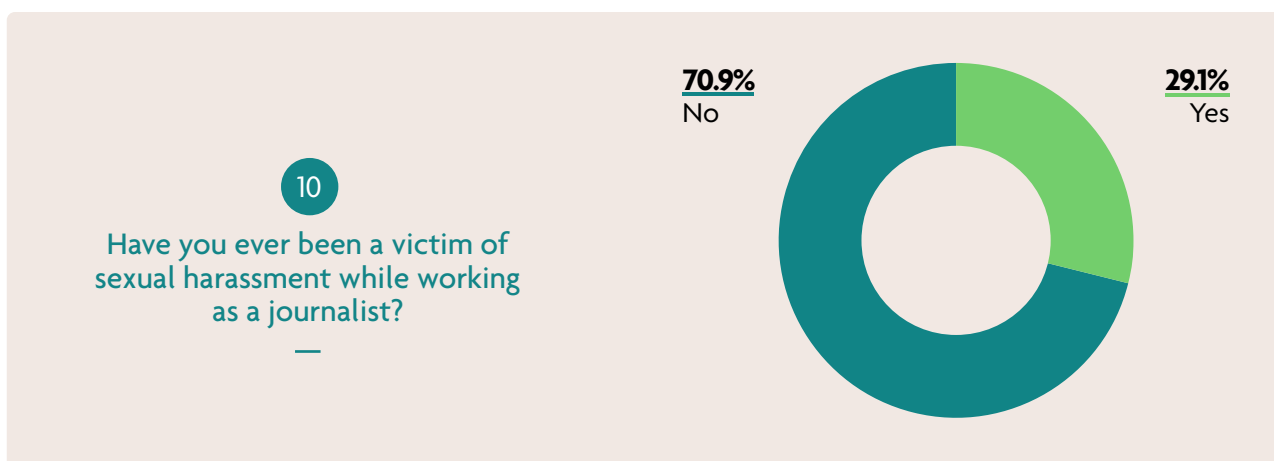
Your interlocutor will always prefer to talk to a younger woman than to an older one, as he thinks he can manipulate her as “she has no clue”. After a woman builds her own career, she no longer faces this issue.

I started working when I was very young and I am among those women who are “typically” attractive, I also seem younger than women of my age, so my interlocutors often underestimated me, which was useful to me for a long time in the sense that they “opened up” more easily to me and often did not pay any attention to what they were saying in front of me.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT: “CERTAIN EXPECTATIONS”

When responding to the question about sexual harassment, 29.1 percent of women respondents stated that they had experienced it. Although 70.9 percent answered negatively, the fact that almost a third of all respondents personally experienced this form of violence is very disturbing and leads to the conclusion that journalism is a dangerous profession for women.

Judging by the testimonies, women are equally harassed on the field, while working, and in the newsroom - where violence is committed by their male colleagues, and even while studying journalism. The fact that these cases are not processed institutionally, nor reported in most cases, is particularly problematic. The respondents usually quit their jobs, waited “for it to pass”, or - as stated in one testimony, found a “mutual friend thanks to whom the verbal harassment stopped”.



Testimonies

My interlocutor commented on how I was dressed, he told me that I looked sexy. He kissed my hand. Then he used to call me, ending conversations with “Kiss”...

Verbal harassment in the newsroom I used to work in, was part of the fun and joke. I saw it as ill-treatment to the extent that I didn't feel like going to the newsroom any more.

Once the organizer chased me around the newsroom and said he would kill himself if he weren't with me.

A man with whom I did the interview sent me obscene messages and persistently tried to “hook up with me” and take me out on a date. The other man with whom I also did an interview persistently offered me a drink, and the whole situation was unpleasant because he was trying to “hit on me”.

Any inappropriate comment from a senior colleague, undressing you with his eyes, unnecessary hugging and other allegedly spontaneous touches, may be interpreted as a form of abuse. There were several such situations and I felt very uncomfortable.

A sudden physical restraint by the deputy editor-in-chief, so that I could not move an inch, and an attempt to do a “deep kiss”, until in a couple of seconds I realized what was happening and started to physically defend myself... I managed somehow.

The editor gave me inappropriate comments, and it escalated when he sent me a photo of his sex organ. After I drew attention to his behaviour, I got the answer “But, he is like that”, and the female editor who was supposed to protect me, told him that I had reported him.

The director whom I refused insulted me, hit me and fired me.

For months, a colleague practically harassed me, mostly verbally, claiming to have fallen in love with me. This happened by the end of 90s, when there were even fewer mechanisms for solving such problems.

A colleague of mine slapped me on my behind, while I was taking recording tapes, saying he was tempted by my skirt. Another colleague of mine took my palm and, based on his interpretation, said that I must be good at sex, in the room full of other co-workers.

My superiors blackmailed me that I would not get permanent employment unless I fulfilled their demands.

An editor ignored my ideas and humiliated my work after I refused to have an intimate relationship with him.

In 1997, the head of the correspondence office tried to drag me in bed, I had to quit my job.

My editor had certain expectations, the need to “chat” and hang around after working hours, and when I refused something like that, at the collegium, he found reasons to criticize me in front of everyone...

It was sexual harassment by a colleague. It was not continuous. It remained at the level of constant, unpleasant glares. It culminated when he hugged me from behind and kissed my neck, explaining that he somehow understood that I wanted it.

Inappropriate touching, sexual allusions, twice even very unpleasant conversations (he doesn't understand what “I'm not interested” means) in the editor's office after everyone went home.

A colleague of mine from the newsroom gave me inappropriate sexual comments and acted improperly. When I made it clear to him that he could not behave like that, he started publishing texts in which he insulted and discredited my associates and me.

A public invitation to come to the office to see how special the acting director is, so that I could write better about him.

A colleague commented on my breasts in the middle of the newsroom.

My editor threatened to kick me out of the profession if I did not have sex with him.

A jerk, back then an editor at the radio station I used to work at as a freelancer as a high school graduate, pushed me into an empty office and tried to throw me on the table. I defended myself.

I was much younger, director and the editor in chief – all- in- one - who first hit on me vulgarly, then insulted me, hit me and fired me.

The owner of the media threw all sorts of sexual comments to the new young journalists in the newsroom, until it got to the point that in the middle of summer people started coming in to work in trousers and long shirts.

An elderly male colleague, organizer of a study trip, first started touching me inappropriately and then entered my room during the evening. I barely managed to throw him out and in the end, I could not do my story.

Some interlocutors (politicians) were pushy.

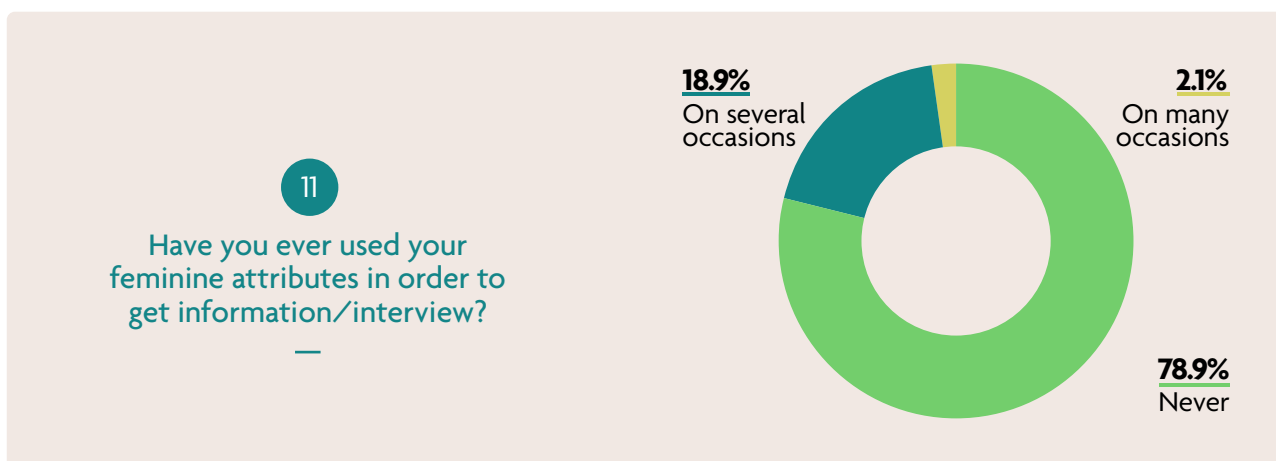
On one occasion, someone took a photo of me on the field and my picture was published on Instagram page where people search for one another, so some of them shared my personal information.

I experienced an elderly colleague being pushy towards me, first he offered me a job and was polite, and later, when we all went out, he touched my head and kissed me on the face without my consent and despite the fact that I tried to hide.

I think that sexist comments by interlocutors are unfortunately a part of every female journalist's everyday life.

FLIRT AND THE REST: “ACTUALLY, NOTHING SPECIAL”

Two-thirds of respondents state that they have never used any seduction or flirting methods in their work, while only 2.1 percent of them used these methods on several occasions. However, the testimonies that “journalists are encouraged to cultivate contacts outside of working hours by going out for coffee and the like” is concerning. This is not only a direct threat to the safety of female journalists (“... a local official misinterpreted it and attacked me when we saw each other. I did not report the incident, since he was also a high-ranking police officer”), but it is contrary to the principle of media objectivity and independence.



Testimonies

I would say charm and eloquence rather than attributes, I've never used that.

A smile, nothing more than that.

Unfortunately, with women, kindness is often misused and misinterpreted. Therefore, I believe that I got some interviews just for being a woman, which is a kind of positive discrimination, as long as it doesn't involve being hit on.

I went out to dinners.

Completely innocent, but I knew that that someone liked me and that's it. I got a statement, others didn't.

Flirting to get an interview

A colleague was supposed to do an interview. He knew that the interlocutor would not refuse me, so he made me schedule that interview instead.

I dress nicely, neatly, I like to look modern.

I used to be more polite than I would normally be, because I wanted to get an interview. Nothing more than that.

Often, this is the only way to communicate with a certain type of members of the opposite gender.

If it is really important to you, not to embarrass the media outlet, you are too good to the guest, just for the sake of the media outlet.

In the most painless way possible, with a smile or more kindness.

Well, not directly, but if I noticed that a man showed some kind of interest, I would be very kind, sometimes I would have a drink with him but nothing more ever.

With words and charm, I persuaded the interlocutor to agree to the interview, knowing that he did not have time.

Several times I had to “soften” interlocutors with a smile or a “softer” word.

Yes I did, by faking insecurity and weakness.

Nothing special really, I just took advantage of being a woman.

I was too nice, completely out of my nature.

With my negotiation skills, I made the interlocutor more approachable.

Mostly unconscious things that a woman does in everyday communication.

Mostly small flirting.

I am not a journalist, but in general, I have had instances when I had to use my charm in order to get a job done as quickly as possible, regardless of whether I asked for service/information from a woman or from a man.

Well, I am handsome, they see all the attributes right away.

It is more about getting information because of a previous acquaintance outside of this job, than for being a journalist.

Men hope for further contact from an attractive journalist.

Good communication skills, above all.

Kinder than usual in cold relations with interlocutors

I just dress more elegantly than on a normal day at work.

Both men and women use charm, so I do not think we are more specific about it

Male interlocutors often reject my male colleague, but when I call, they don't reject me, so we use that, unfortunately, to reach the interlocutor.

I don't know if that means being extra nice even when the conversation is extremely awkward. I think it is my strongest weapon, as I know how to remain calm even in very unpleasant situations and to “soften” the interlocutor. However, in terms of clothing etc. I never emphasized my femininity in order to get responses.

PERSONAL PERCEPTION: “THEY LIVE AROUND ME”

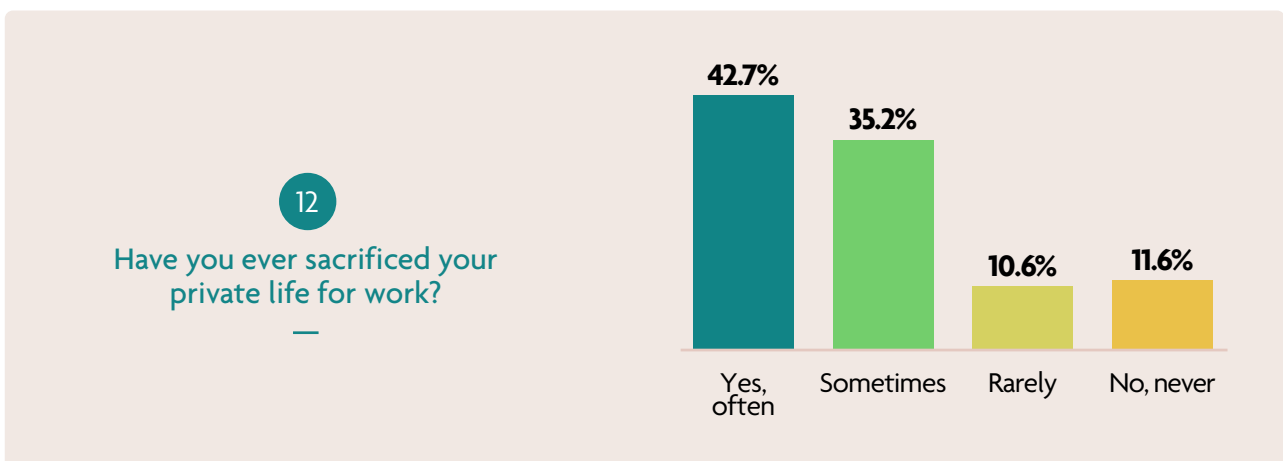
Questions about sacrifices for the sake of work, about finding a life-work balance in the media, show genuinely how complicated the position of women in the newsrooms is. In the absence of research with men answering similar questions, we cannot make claims about inequality, but this certainly illustrates the big and almost baffling problems our women interlocutors and their female colleagues face in a patriarchal environment.

Although only 12.6 percent of respondents who are mothers believe that their career suffered because of motherhood, as many as 42.7 say that their private life often suffered because of work, and 35.2 that this happened sometimes – implying that, in sum, family and private life suffered in almost 80 percent of cases due to working in the media.

Situation is somewhat similar when we ask how much professional engagement suffered due to family obligations: 45.9 percent estimate that it happened “a little”, and 24 percent that it happened “a lot”: in total, we reach practically 70 percent of female respondents who think that family obligations affect their career to some extent.

The answer to the question about the possibility of reduced working hours for women-mothers or leave due to child’s illness is very illustrative. While 46.7 percent of respondents answered that they have this possibility, 11.7 sat they do not, 41.7 percent show that this area is still “in grey zone” and that it depends on someone’s goodwill. Their response is: “Based on our agreement, it depends on the situation”. This means that on a daily level, a woman must take care of a possible “situation”, “should not hold grudges” and thus maintain and strengthen the already existing power relationship in the newsroom.

It is particularly indicative that in this segment precisely, the respondents “opened up” the most and told their stories: about pregnancies that had stopped their careers, about awards they did not receive as they devoted themselves to family, about taking their children to work, but also about regretting for not visiting their loved ones in hospitals because of work, for getting a divorce because of work or having an abortion...



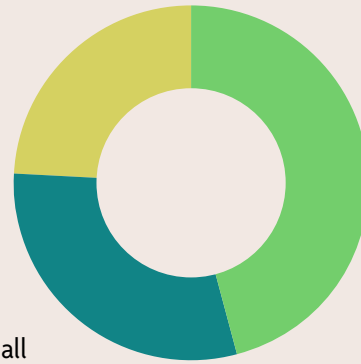
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To what extent your family obligations affect your professional engagement?

24.0%
A lot

45.9%
Little

30.1%
Not at all

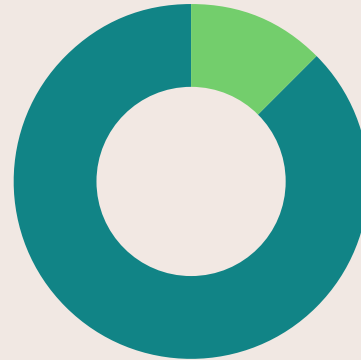


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If you are married or a mother, do you feel that your career suffered for being married or a mother?

87.4%
No

12.6%
Yes



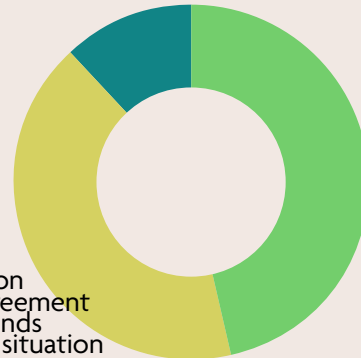
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Is there a possibility of having reduced working hours for women-mothers or leave due to child's illness in your newsroom?

11.7%
No

46.7%
Yes

41.7%
Based on our agreement it depends on the situation



Testimonies

When I was on maternity leave, my salary was not equal to the changes my other colleagues had had. I chose to work at a weekly newspaper so that at a younger age, I could be with my child more often or take him to the doctor without having to justify where I was during working hours. I made up for the lost time during the night, and I refused other business offers, as my husband's employer had no understanding for him taking sick leave to care for our child. They often chose others to go on business trips and of course, the salary of my male colleagues, especially during that period, increased while mine remained the same even though my performance was higher, but I did not have the opportunity to hang out in a bar after working hours.

You rush home from work while others get an opportunity

I could have advanced much more, but that meant longer working hours, which I could not afford with the children, because I am a mother first and foremost.

I had two C-sections and complications after them, I was forced to resign in a mainstream media and start freelancing work from home.

The time devoted to the child reduces the time I can devote to work. The result is the inability to invest time for additional engagement at work and to be available 24/7, hence it is difficult for me to advance.

Sometimes the amount of obligations at work left insufficient time for any other activity outside of work. I leave in the morning and come back in the evening

I lost many work opportunities, as there was no one to look after my child if my husband and I needed to go to the field together.

Constantly busy, children make a fuss that I don't spend more time with them, editors make a fuss for not always being available. Phew, hopefully nobody ever needs to throw up

After returning from maternity leave, my employer demoted me for two grades, reduced my salary and terminated my benefits, so from a senior managerial position, I was demoted to the position I was at when I was just beginning

My husband was against me working, on one occasion he brought in our baby and left it in the newsroom, so I took the baby with me to the field.

While other male and female colleagues were building their careers and were able to travel much more often and respond to all assignments, I took care of three children, and because of the low salary, I had to freelance.

I wanted to advance myself (workshops, study trips...), but I couldn't do it due to obligations that motherhood implies. I do not regret it, I'm just saying...

Maternity leave brought on, first of all, my lower self-esteem in my professional life. I was of the impression that I had taken too long a break, during which a lot had happened and that it was not easy for me to catch up with developments.

I could not follow certain and important events as my children, for example, were sick at that very moment.

Journalism is a profession with no shifts, no days off. A journalist is a journalist everywhere and at any time. I could not be that journalist when my children were born. I had to sleep when the child was sleeping, I left work when the child was sick... Editors keep track of all these things somewhere.

When a person is “all over the place” he/she is of no use to anyone

I could not be everywhere at the same time, as I had and still have a child. Now, she is all grown up, but for the first 10 years or so, as a single mother, you have responsibilities that other mothers don't have.

Even when I'm at home, I have to follow the news, I can't devote myself to children

I didn't have the time and strength to devote myself more to work, while my son was little. That was exactly the period when my colleagues (of the same age) advanced and made names for themselves.

Colleagues were always promoted, some with less education than me, because they had a drink with the director and were idle for days.

I got pregnant after my first professional engagement, and after maternity leave, no one wanted to hire me in the profession. I started doing online marketing and since I had a big gap, now I have many years and I would add knowledge, but little experience in newsrooms, due to lack of opportunity.

In journalism, you constantly have to prove yourself - first you are young and inexperienced, then you are experienced but you are still young and it is expected that you stay at work longer than the official working hours and to always be available for everyone. Deciding to have a child and take a year off from work, then return - all this not only slows down progress, but also sets you back a few steps.

I feel that I have to give much more than my childless male/female colleagues. When my child is sick, I sometimes work on my own initiative out of fear of being fired, so I often burn down. Sometimes I have a hard time balancing work and parenthood.

My father was in a hospital, while I was at the protests, so in agreement with a colleague, I still managed to go to the hospital for 15 minutes. I stayed working overtime and cancelled coffee with my friends.

I don't manage to devote myself to my family and friends. We hardly see or hear each other.

I spent my first wedding anniversary reporting from protests. I postponed trips and vacations because of work...

In the previous newsroom, I worked 13-14 hours which was one of the reasons for my divorce. Due to enormously low income and illegal work, I had to have an abortion, as I did not want to create a social case of my child and myself.

Sometimes I work all day locked in my room, sometimes even on weekends, and those around me have a life, but not me.

I have to do outside of working hours many things that I don't manage to finish at work, but are expected of me.

My job involves working at work but also working from home. When I work from home, I lose the time that I would otherwise devote to my child. In addition, I do the live program while at work, which is often so stressful that I don't have the energy for anything in the afternoon.

Breakup due to frequent travel. Working overtime led to issues with insulin resistance, with numerous health problems. It happened that due to overtime work, I did not see my family for weeks, my extended family for months. It affected my social and emotional life. All this happened the first two years of my career.

I don't have fixed working hours. Sometimes it would happen that I urgently had to leave a family lunch or other gathering for work. Also, sometimes I stay at work all day and late into the night. But that's how this job is, it doesn't bother me or my family

Sometimes, simply because of work, I couldn't attend some celebrations or events, but it happens. I don't think that this job is different compared to any other in that context.

I go run an errand, children, husband, boyfriend end up being furious that I am not with them

I work every weekend, I miss going out, family gatherings, parties, which by default always happen on weekends.

After returning from maternity leave, since I live 100 km away from work, I went to work in the morning, came back in the evening, and I saw my one-year-old child for only an hour a day.

I work on weekends, the job is not from 9 to 5 and our working hours often change. In addition I study, so I study after work. It is very difficult to fit in with people who have more normal schedules.

I realized that I mainly hang out with people who are in journalism, as they are the only ones who genuinely understand why you can't see each other as often.

I worked night shifts and my baby was 4 months old

Considering the topics I cover, violence against women in the first place, but also taking into account the deadlines that must be met, it happened to me that I would work for 12 hours straight and then my mental health would almost require forced hospitalization

In the long run, this way of life caused my numerous health issues, both in terms of physical and mental health.

Due to low salary, I was forced to do two or three jobs

I do the morning show, I get up at 4 in the morning, I go to bed extremely early and I can't go to a concert, a theatre play and because of that I rarely see my friends, we can't fit it.

I dedicated less time for my family. Today, I know that it should have been different, but those were rocky years. We were all chasing freedom and the desire to survive.

During the '96/97 protests, I went home only for a short time to play with children, who were little at the time. Or, let's say, from a family summer vacation, I went to report on an important post-conflict international meeting

I simply don't have the time. I never have time. Neither for myself nor for others

At every family lunch, there is a laptop next to me.

I always try to respect my children, but I neglected my friends as I cannot fit in everything.

Sometimes I don't see my parents for several days due to the job I do

We often go on vacation separately, because of work

My late brother was lying in the hospital waiting for cancer surgery, and I, a jerk, first went to the newsroom to finish my work, and then to visit my brother. Once I was in the hospital, but I asked to be released earlier as I had a scheduled interview with a regional leader.

I didn't make it to my own sister's wedding, as there were elections and riots those days.

I missed my nephew's first birthday due to a cultural event. In the end, the aunt was forgiven for missing the happening, but the aunt had no dilemma where she would be that day.

Since I became an editor, I have three times more responsibilities. I think the problems of editors are not talked about enough.

There are victims on both sides. Sometimes you miss a generation gathering, sometimes a birthday, and sometimes a chance to win an award, because you had to be a parent or go to a birthday party.

I often bring work home, and then I am absent and nervous until it's done.

I can't keep up with all my friends' plans and I rarely accept coffee/dinner invitations

For me, until recently my job was first. That's why I sacrificed creating a family. I regret it immensely.

I missed all sort of events in the life of my family and friends. Some left in the process.

My family has always held a grudge with me for putting my career first and not paying enough attention to them.

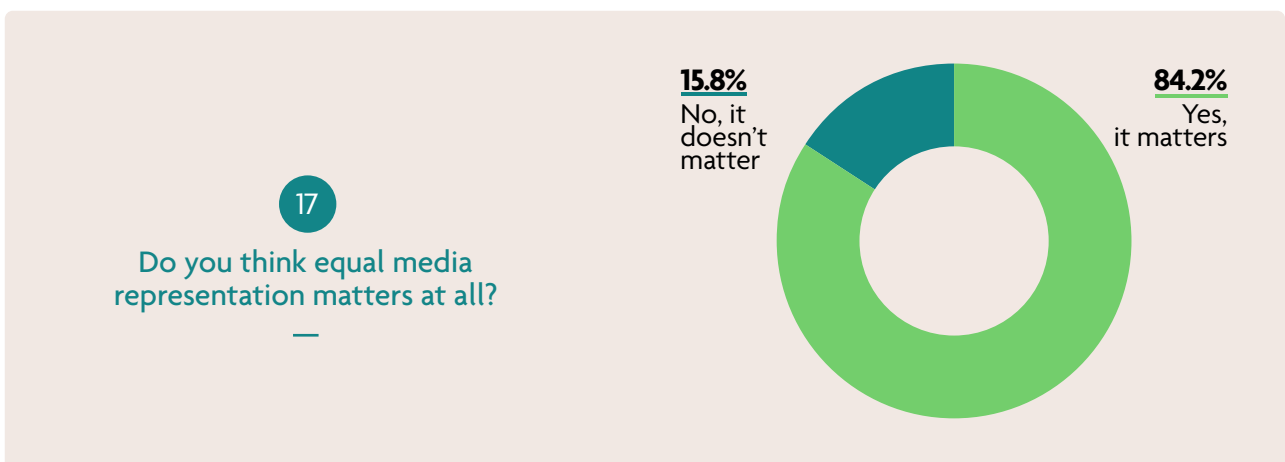
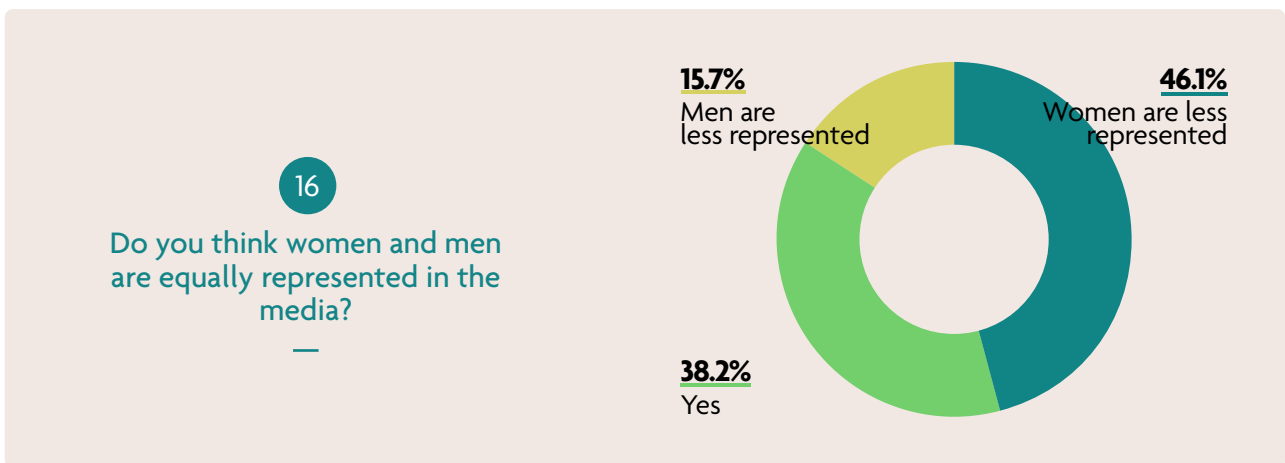
I often choose to stay at home, so that I don't have to be in the situation to think about who saw me and with whom, who are the new people coming in. I have trouble relaxing, as I often think that someone is watching me.

I don't remember when was the last time I went out with my friends and family. I almost never have a summer vacation with my family. I am constantly tired.

Often, due to lack of money and adequate earnings, as well as due to a huge workload, I could not afford to live independently, outside of my family home, or to set aside some time for myself and my social life, etc.

PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIA: “THEY DON’T EVEN NOTICE THEY ARE NOT THERE”

When it comes to representation of women in the media, statistics completely correspond to the global findings: almost half of women respondents estimate that women are less represented than men, 38.2 think that women and men are equally represented, and there are a surprising 15.7 percent of those who believe that men are less represented than women. Three quarters of respondents say that equal media representation is important, while record 66 percent take this into account in their own work - when choosing interlocutors, for example. In this sense, somewhat unexpectedly, almost half of respondents do not see a mutual correlation between the status of women in newsrooms and media portrayal and representation of women.



18

Do you ensure equal representation in your work (for instance when choosing your interlocutors)?

33.7%
No



66.3%
Yes

19

Does the status of women in newsrooms affect the way and how much they are present in the media?

45.4%
No



54.6%
Yes

Testimonies

Newsrooms are generally just as patriarchal as a society in whole. Most see the role of men/women through stereotypes

It is not the same who and how will cover a certain topic, as in this society, men still do not admit that women are in a disadvantageous position in every sense, and they cannot be expected to objectively report on something they do not believe in.

Poor treatment of women in newsrooms comes from the same people who make decisions about editorial policies

If there are more women in the media and on senior positions, the “ordinary” woman gets a signal that she too can succeed in her profession and that there is room for women in all areas...

There are female colleagues who absolutely have no awareness related to certain topics and do not see the sexist and discriminatory comments of male colleagues as an issue, nor do they strive to balance when it comes to interlocutors. If there were female journalists in the newsroom with more awareness in this regard, that balance would have been reflected in the broadcast; it does not matter if they are female editors or just female journalists without any managerial position.

If there is no awareness on gender equality in the media, the content of that media outlet will reflect that. If gender equality does not enjoy the support of the newsroom and management, it will affect the status of women in the newsroom, as well as their portrayal in the media. In addition, the subsistence issues of female journalists (insecure contract, low income, hostile work environment etc.) affect their involvement when it comes to gender equality topics. It takes a lot of courage to fight for topics that are considered insignificant in the newsroom and may even be ridiculed.

Men do not think this way, not because they are necessarily chauvinists, but because these topics are not on their agenda. They generally do not see gender inequality.

Topics that are considered important at the level of the editorial board, are of importance for that editorial board. If it is predominantly male or if the culture in the newsroom has been predominantly male for years, the topics are essentially those that interest men.

I don't think this has anything to do with gender, it's individual

They are not on leadership positions, and if they are, they are in the hands and under the direction of men

Recently, you can really see more women in the media than men and that, I believe, has brought upon a better position of women in general.

The poor status of female journalists in the newsroom corresponds to the poor status of women in those media

No one can be such a hypocrite as to behave in a gender-responsive manner in the media, while doing the opposite in the newsroom. It is inevitable that discrimination spills over into public messages and impacts the society negatively.

The women we see on TV, in shows, podcasts subconsciously affect all the women who watch them. Each of them says - Hey, this one did it, so can I!

Every media appearance affects the public. I think that the appearance of women and women journalists in the media subconsciously sends a message to the audience that we are here and we belong here.

It seems to me that the media in which journalists and anchors are there to serve as "decoration" present the same to their readers/viewers...

I notice the different behaviour of interlocutors towards me when they know that I am an editor and towards my colleague who is a journalist.

If women are pushed aside, they are invisible. Then, they don't have the right treatment, nor is their role adequate.

Editors are predominately men. They have more respect for each other, they tolerate things that are not forgiven to women. Women are welcome, but more as a kind of support for the male part of the newsroom, not as their leaders and proactive participants

Historically, men tended to have priority over women in the Balkans. When a newsroom is led by a man, that newsroom is treated differently compared to the one led by a woman.

When choosing an interlocutor, I look at expertise, not gender. For instance, in the field of psychology, usually my interlocutors are women, in the field of healthcare the same, but the issue is that there are only a few female interlocutors in the field of political analysis

Female workforce in the media is unbearable.

Content shown in the media often reflects on society, and our society is already discriminatory enough.

I always try to invite a woman to be my interlocutor. However, that is not key for me. I choose the best interlocutors for the topic, I do not choose them based on gender equality.

The public, not even the women themselves, do not notice that they are not there, or that there are fewer of them than men.

Journalism as a vocation allows for absolute gender equality and should not even be questioned

Men are (although it doesn't seem like it) completely irrelevant interlocutors for most topics pertaining to women. For some reason, men are used as figures of authority (figures of doctors, priests, lawyers, judges), while women are rarely in an expert role - more often their personal experience speaks for itself, they represent an institution, or stereotypical female roles - of caregivers etc. This distorts the public image.

It happens that a media delves on topics that, above all, pertain to women (e.g. abortion), and then they bring various men to talk about them. TV Prva is, for instance, one example for this. Or they bring both a woman and a man, and then a woman has significantly less time to speak than him, or he attacks/discredits her all the time.

When a little girl sees a successful woman on TV, she can look up to her in a much more significant way, than if she constantly sees men, as successful and relevant interlocutors. Worldwide, representation has shown a clear correlation with the so-called role models, showing children what they can do if they see someone similar to them on TV or in the media in general. Age is equally important. Young girls look up to persons of similar age; women who are in their 50s more often want to hear the opinions of women of a similar age. It is the same when it comes to religion, race, nationality, minority groups. The role model of an "Orthodox Serb male" is an absolutely dominant figure in the media, and a figure that cannot serve as a role-model for everyone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish or improve help lines and legal assistance systems at journalists' associations (in order to encourage women engaged in the media to report cases of violence).
2. Improve cooperation with the British Council mentoring network (so that young women have the opportunity to seek advice, consult related to working conditions and working environment).
3. Invite faculties, political parties, institutions and non-governmental organizations to forward contacts of women to the media who could be their interlocutors in various media stories.
4. Invite women engaged in media to join one of the media associations or groups like "Female journalists against violence": on one hand, this would empower them, and on the other, it would inspire them to undertake measures to improve their status.
5. Start a Women in the Media group on social networks - where female journalists, camerawomen, female editors, female photojournalists could express their grievances, inform and network.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The survey on the Position of Women engaged In Serbian Media media was accomplished with the willingness, dedication and time of 401 female journalists, editors, producers, photographers and presenters, who work across different media platforms in Serbia.

They anonymously shared their experiences and insight, giving us the opportunity to develop for the first time, a more accurate picture of their struggles, efforts and challenges within the newsroom and beyond.

Their profound and sincere contribution will serve as an important evidence from which all of us can start the discussion “What is it like to be a woman in Serbian Media?”

METHODOLOGY

We used an online survey tool for our research to gauge the representativeness of individual views, attitudes and experiences, and analyze if or how this data intersects to establish and confirm realities surrounding women journalists and implications they have in their workplace. The survey tried to examine their work circumstances from a gender perspective.

Consisting of 40 questions, the survey tried to determine these following aspects:

- Build a profile of an average Serbian female journalist
- Areas and topics of their coverage
- The financial standing
- Conditions at the workplace
- Gender discrimination at the workplace
- Sexual violence at the workplace
- The application of Law on Labour, particularly of the Maternity Leave Article
- Struggles of journalists who are family caregivers
- Personal reflections on gender equality and discrimination at the workplace
- Reflections on media portrayal of gender

This research was conducted between August and December 2022 and the survey reached 734 female media workers across Serbia. It was implemented through an online survey that was shared on social networks and mailing lists of journalist associations. Thanks to the visits to the newsrooms, women engaged in the media had the opportunity to learn about the research in person.

The Survey was completed by 401 women engaged in the media, of whom 182 respondents answered all questions, while due to the survey structure, 219 respondents responded only to closed-ended questions - requiring no additional explanations. Many respondents stated that they did not want to share details about their experiences. In any event, this difference does not impact the statistical findings - they refer to the sample composed of 401 women.

The study was conducted by Tamara Skrozza with the assistance of Miodrag Mrkšić and Katarina Tomović.

ABOUT ALVED

Amplifying local voices for equitable development (ALVED) is a 30-month project funded by the UK government's Conflict, Security and Stability Fund and implemented by a consortium of organisations comprised of Peaceful Change initiative, People in Need, Gradjanske Inicijative/Civic Initiatives (Serbia), Peer Educators Network, and Aktiv (both Kosovo). The project aims to promote, explore, develop and implement innovative practices that enable participative decision making that is successful in transcending barriers between different groups in Serbia and Kosovo and to engage the project's stakeholders in analysing the context in which this work takes place with a view to taking collaborative and strategic action in order to contribute to a more conducive environment for inclusive democracy to flourish and to have a positive impact on the lives of ordinary people.



This study has been funded by UK aid from the UK government; however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

ABOUT PCI

Peaceful Change initiative (PCI) works with societies to prevent or reduce violence that is triggered by radical and divisive change. We aim to mitigate the effects of violence on people's lives, while laying the foundations for long-term peace and stability.

We run programmes in the Middle East (Syria), North Africa (Libya), and Europe (Ukraine, Western Balkans, South Caucasus). Our work focuses on:

- Strengthening the skills of local and national leaders who are able to build relationships across conflict divides;
- Supporting local leaders and civil society activists in practical actions to reduce violence and improve the sense of security of communities;
- Fostering working partnerships between communities and local authorities, as well as between different local and national groups across conflict divides, to build confidence in a shared future;
- Supporting civil society organisations to connect, share experiences, and be part of decision-making;
- Developing and sharing practical tools and methodologies for peacebuilding;
- Advising international agencies, NGOs, governments, and companies on how to achieve greater impact.



Peaceful
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initiative

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