ONLINE HARM IN JOURNALISM

Research Report

November 8, 2021

Ipsos

Contents

Introduction

Survey Objective

The primary objective of the survey is to measure and understand the online harm journalists and others working in the media sector are experiencing in doing their jobs.

Methodology

The survey was hosted by Ipsos between September 27th and October 13th 2021, and was conducted online in English and French. Invitations were distributed widely via 12 journalism associations and Canadian media organizations.

A total of 1,093 journalists and media workers participated in the survey.

The data for the survey are unweighted given that the age, gender and regional distribution of respondents closely resembles the composition of the targeted occupations based on Statistics Canada data.

Note: The responding sample over-represents journalists relative to other occupations within the media industry. But this is reasonable for this study given that journalists are more at risk to experience online harm. It was determined that the data should remain unweighted by occupation.

The average survey length was 15 minutes.

Key Findings

Prevalence of harassment

Harassment is prevalent and pervasive – 72% of respondents say they have experienced some form of harassment in the past 12 months. Online harassment is the most common form (65% in the past year) – one in three journalists and media workers experience an incidence of online harassment once a month or more frequently. One in ten of these had a death threat made against them in the course of their work within the past 12 months.

Impact of harassment

The impact of harassment experienced on the job has personal effects and industry-wide consequences. Many have experienced mental health challenges as a result of the harassment (one in four). And many (one in three) have thought about leaving the profession in the past 12 months.

Recourse and resources

Much of the harassment goes unreported either because the target of the harassment questions the seriousness of the offence or doubts anything will be done about it.

Prevalence of harassment

Prevalence of harassment

Impact of harassment

Recourse and resources

- The largest share of journalists and media workers have been subjected to harassment that takes place online (65%). However, many also report experiencing in-person harassment (38%) or receiving threatening phone calls (28%). One in ten have been physically attacked. Two in ten (20%) indicate experiencing online harassment on a weekly or even daily basis.

- Most (84%) of those who have experienced online harassment believe occurrences are rising rather than declining. A wide variety of online harassment is being experienced including receiving vulgar and sexualized messages or images, physical threats, harassing comments targeting their gender identity, using their name or image without permission and harassing comments targeting their ethnicity or nationality.

- Women, younger journalists/media workers and members of BIPOC or LGBTQ2+ face more online harassment than others, and greater severity of harassment.

- Factors leading to harassment are more commonly linked to the negativity surrounding the profession, the industry, the stories covered and the employer. Harassment is not necessarily caused by the personal identity of the journalist or media worker (gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, etc.), but the attacks themselves are often very personal. Accusations of purporting 'fake news' is the most common factor leading to online harassment, followed closely by objections to the media organization the target works for. LGBTQ2+ journalists and media workers are more likely to be targeted specifically because of their gender or sexual identity.

Impact of harassment

Prevalence of harassment

Impact of harassment

Recourse and resources

- The impact of harassment experienced on the job ha personal effects and industry-wide consequences. More than one in three of those targeted (37%) felt the need to take a break from social media or delete their accounts and/or thought about leaving journalism altogether (33%). Others started avoiding certain stories (26%), considered requesting (11%), or requested re-assignment (6%).

- One-third faced negative emotions fear/shame/anger, one-fourth had trouble sleeping and/or struggled with mental health issues as a result of the harassment. The impact on mental health increases with the frequency of harassment – 42% receiving weekly or daily harassment say it has left them struggling with their mental health compared with 13% of those who experience harassment less often.

- A higher proportion of younger journalists/media workers, women and LGBTQ2+ experience post-trauma symptoms - indicating that not only are these groups facing the greatest prevalence of online harassment, but also the greatest psychological impact.

- The impacts of frequent harassment are pushing half (50%) of journalists and media workers off social media or to consider leaving the profession.
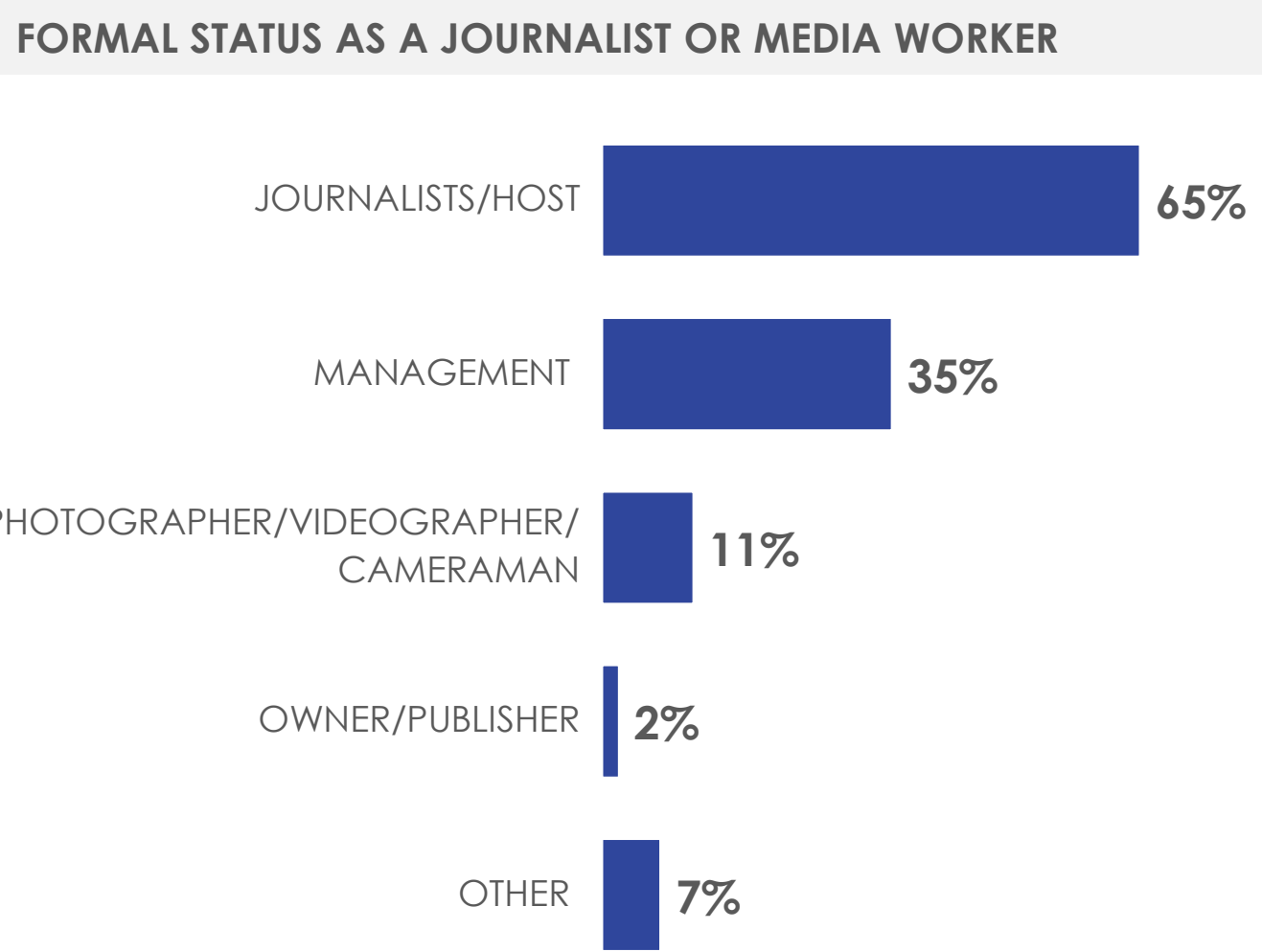
Recourse and recourse

Prevalence of harassment

Impact of harassment

Recourse and resources

- Nearly half (46%) of those who have been the target of harassment did not report the incident to anyone. Four in ten (39%) of those who have faced harassment as often as weekly or more frequently chose not to take any action.

- Four in ten (40%) have informed their employer of the incident.

- Professional Twitter accounts is where harassment is most common among those who experience daily attacks. However, the most common platform for harassment across all incidences is the target's professional email account. Personal accounts are used less often. Attacks are about as common on personal Facebook accounts as personal Twitter accounts with Instagram used least often.

- Even though the harassment led to mental health and safety concerns, a majority of those who did not report the incident did not see the incident as serious enough to report.

- Others express a lack of confidence that anything would come from filing a report or that the reporting process is perceived to take too much effort and time.

- Some also worry about further negative ramifications after reporting the incident – be it fear of fueling the harasser to double-down, or the impact on their career advancement if they develop a reputation of being the 'troublemaker'.

- A large majority of those targeted have not accessed any resources. Those who did, found them less than adequate.

- Most journalists and media workers believe the onus for protecting journalists from potential online harm rests with employers or with social media platforms.

PROFILE AND ROLE IN MEDIA

Role in the Media

FORMAL STATUS AS A JOURNALIST OR MEDIA WORKER

JOURNALISTS/HOST **65%**

MANAGEMENT **35%**

PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER/CAMERAMAN **11%**

OWNER/PUBLISHER **2%**

OTHER **7%**

- Journalists/Hosts form the largest group responding to the survey (65%) with journalists, reporters, and correspondents representing the largest proportion of the group at 54% vs. 11% for media hosts.

- One-third of those surveyed have a management function including production, editorial or management of a team of journalists or media workers.

- Photographers, videographers, and cameramen form one-tenth of the group, followed by other members of the industry including owners/publishers or media/journalism students or those who are officially retired but still working occasionally in the industry.

- Note: students not working in the industry and those fully retired from the industry and not currently working in the industry were asked to share their thoughts on how online harassment has affected them and their work, but otherwise excluded from questions measuring prevalence within the industry.

Base: All respondents (n=1,093)
Q1. What is your formal status as a journalist or media worker? Please select all that apply.

Industry Experience and Languages of Work

- Seven in ten have been a part of the industry for more than a decade, while 17% started working less than five years ago. Those who identify as BIPOC or LGBTQ2+ are more likely to have joined the industry less than five years ago (22% and 41% respectively).

- While English is the most often used language of work by most (75%), French is the primary language of work for more than one-third.

YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY
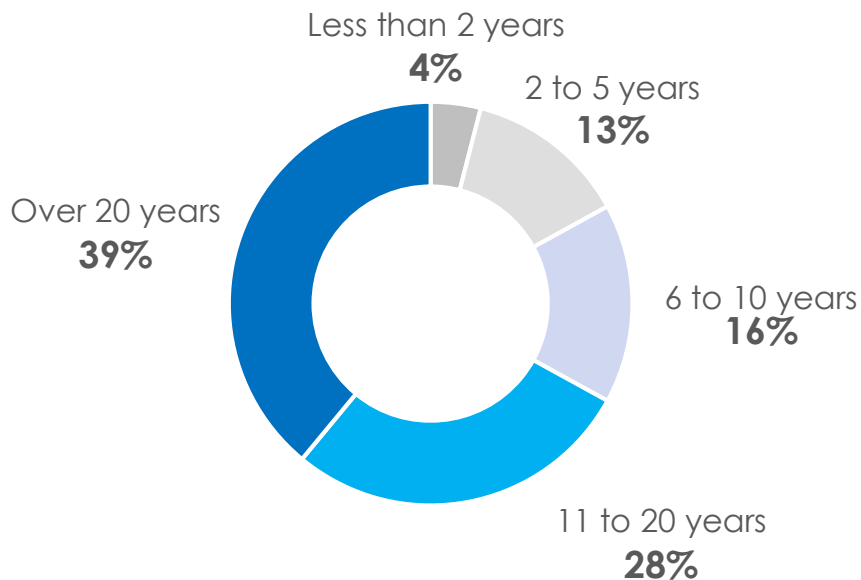
Less than 2 years
4%

2 to 5 years
13%

6 to 10 years
16%

11 to 20 years
28%

Over 20 years
39%

LANGUAGES OF WORK

English **75%**

French **37%**

Indigenous languages/ other **3%**

Base: All respondents excluding students and those fully retired from the media sector (n=1082)
Q2. How long have you worked in the field of journalism or media?
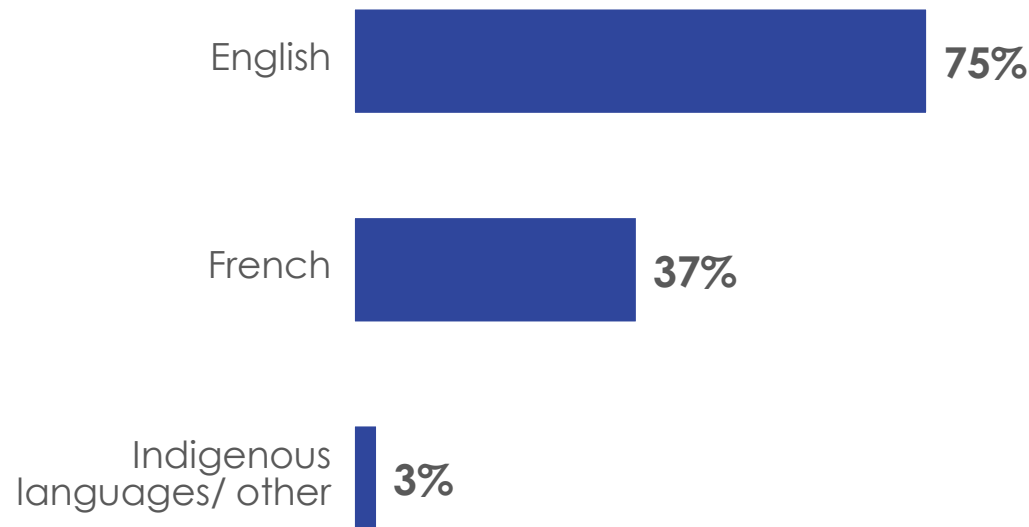
Base: All respondents excluding students and those fully retired from the media sector (n=1082)
Q3. In which language(s) do you work? Please select all that apply.

Areas of Employment in Media

TV — 51%
PRINT — 35%
RADIO — 32%
DIGITAL FIRST ORGANIZATION (online only, digital general, blog, etc.) — 23%
FREELANCE/INDEPENDENT — 9%
NEWSWIRE/WIRE/NEWS AGENCY — 3%
OTHER — 1%
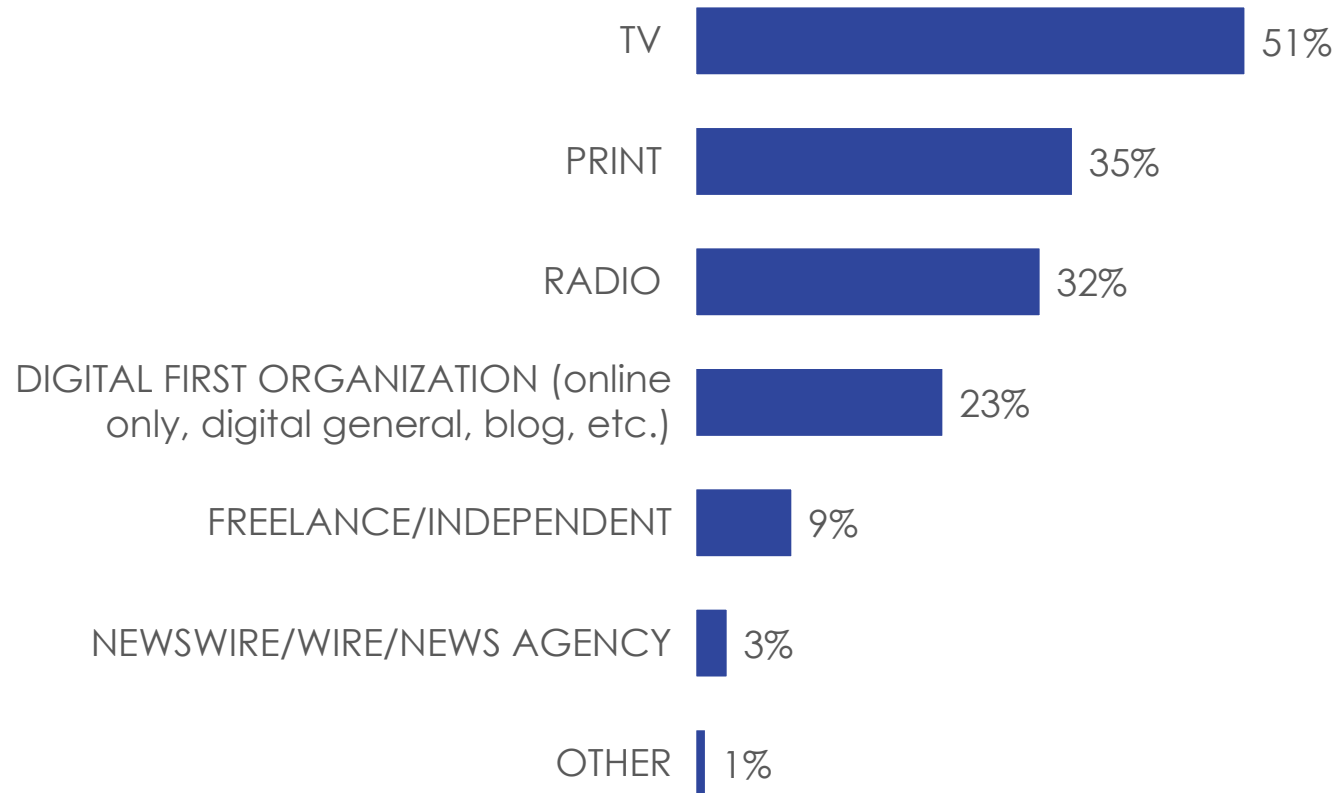
- Half of the respondents (51%) represent TV media (Public Broadcasting, Commercial TV or Community TV), followed by one-third each representing Print (35%) and Radio (32%).

- Nearly one-quarter are part of a 'Digital-first organization'. They are younger professionals (32% of them are under age 30), women (26%), and those who identify as LGBTQ2+ (40%) or BIPOC (28%).

Base: All respondents excluding students and those fully retired from the media sector (n=1082)
Q4. In which area(s) of the media do you work? Please select all that apply.

Employment and Industry Membership

- A majority (93%) of respondents are employed by a media organization with less than one in ten identifying as self-employed or freelancing. Younger professionals (13% of those under age 30) or those who identify as LGBTQ2+ (13%) are more likely to be working both for a media organization and freelancing while a higher proportion of BIPOC members indicate being self-employed (10%).

- Half of the respondents are members of a journalism association.

EMPLOYMENT TYPE
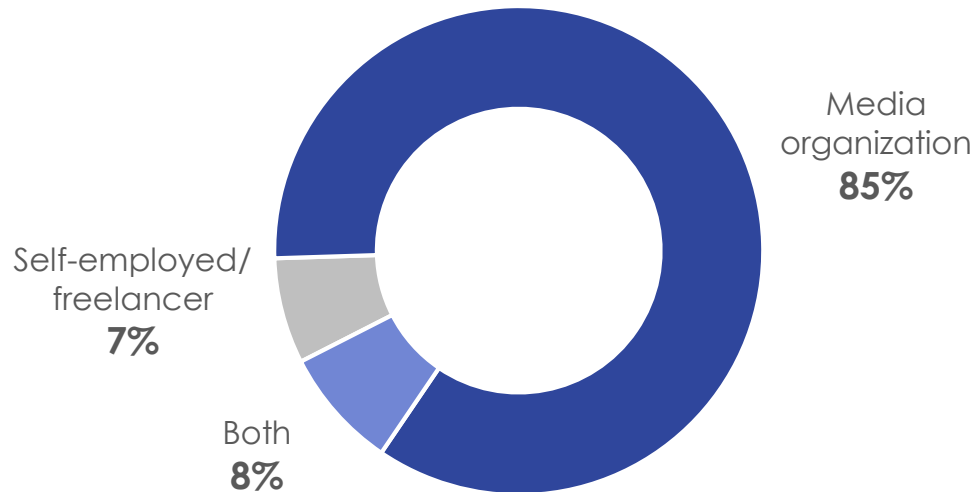
Media organization
85%

Self-employed/ freelancer
7%

Both
8%

MEMBERSHIP WITH MEDIA/JOURNALISM ASSOCIATION

Member of one or more associations
51%

I am not a member of any associations
49%

Base: All respondents excluding students and those fully retired from the media sector (n=1082)
Q5. Are you self-employed/freelancer or employed by a media organization?
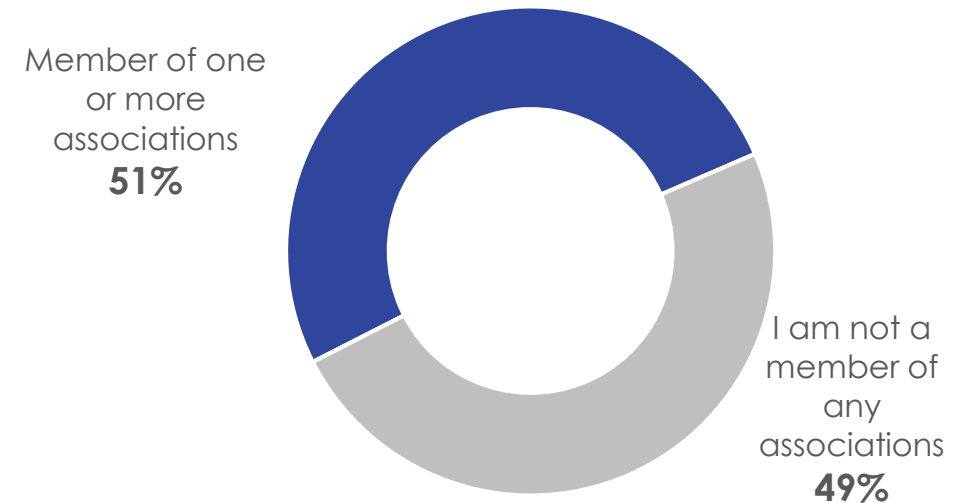
Base: All respondents (n=1,093)
Q1a. Are you a member of any of the following media and journalism associations? Please select all that apply.

Topics Typically Covered in Role

- Respondents to the survey cover a wide range of topics in their work. Local/Regional News, Politics and National News are the top three most often reported topics. In line with this, a subject that encompasses all these three themes - the recent Federal Election 2021 was covered by seven in ten professionals surveyed.

- Other commonly reported topics include Health, Environment, Business/Finance etc.

Topic	%
Local/Regional News	56%
Politics	50%
National News	38%
Health	36%
Environment	31%
Business/Finance	22%
Arts	21%
Science	21%
Sports	20%
World	20%

Topic	%
Entertainment	17%
Technology	16%
Weather	13%
Music	11%
Opinion	11%
Food	10%
Traffic	6%
Crime/courts/justice	4%
Fashion	3%
All of the Above	10%
Other	4%

COVERED THE 2021 FEDERAL ELECTION

68%

PREVALENCE OF HARASSMENT IN THE INDUSTRY

Prevalence of Harassment in the Course of Work

- More than seven in ten respondents report having experienced any type of harassment in the course of their work over the last year - not surprisingly, most often online (65%). Two in ten (20%) indicate experiencing online harassment on a weekly or even daily basis.

- Many also reported in-person harassment (38%) or receiving threatening phone calls (28%). One in ten have been physically attacked.

Legend: EVERY OR ALMOST EVERY DAY | ON A WEEKLY BASIS | ON A MONTHLY BASIS | ONCE EVERY 2 OR 3 MONTHS | LESS OFTEN | NEVER

MONTHLY OR MORE FREQUENTLY (T3B)

	Every/Almost daily	Weekly	Monthly	Once every 2-3 months	Less often	Never	T3B
Threats or harassment online (social media, emails, websites, etc) — 65%	6%	14%	14%	13%	17%	35%	34%
Threats or harassment in person — 38%		4%	7%		21%	62%	9%
Threats or harassment by phone — 28%			6%		16%	72%	6%
Physically attacked — 9%					7%	91%	-

<4% Labels are not shown

LGBTQ2+ report the highest prevalence of online harm of any group (78% in the past year vs 65% for all respondents).

EXPERIENCED ANY TYPE OF HARASSMENT

72%

Base: All respondents excluding students and those fully retired from the media sector (n=1082)
Q7a. In the past 12 months, how often have you experienced any of the following as a result of the work you do in the field of journalism or media? Please select all that apply.

Frequency of Harassment

- A large majority of respondents (73%) believe that the frequency of online harassment has increased over the last 2 years; only 1% believe it has decreased. Fully 84% of those who have experienced online harassment believe occurrences are rising.

- Consistent with relatively lower proportions who have experienced harassment in person, over the phone, or been physically attacked, many respondents do not have a sense of whether the frequency of these incidents is rising or declining. However, importantly, a majority of those who have experienced in-person harassment or been physically attacked believe these forms of harassment are increasing.
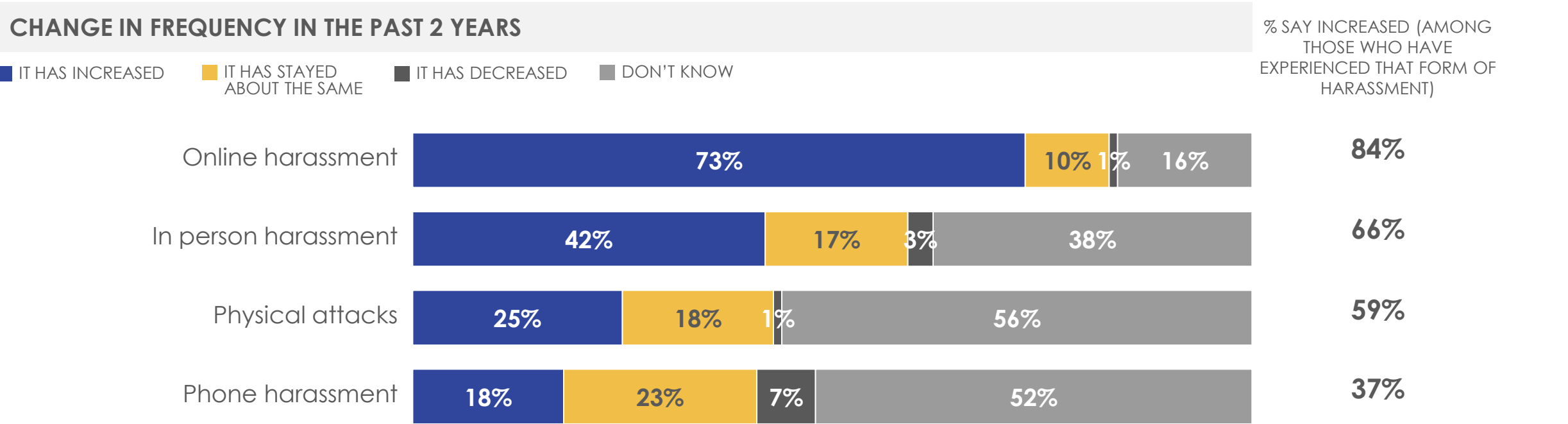
CHANGE IN FREQUENCY IN THE PAST 2 YEARS

% SAY INCREASED (AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED THAT FORM OF HARASSMENT)

- IT HAS INCREASED
- IT HAS STAYED ABOUT THE SAME
- IT HAS DECREASED
- DON'T KNOW

	IT HAS INCREASED	IT HAS STAYED ABOUT THE SAME	IT HAS DECREASED	DON'T KNOW	% SAY INCREASED
Online harassment	73%	10%	1%	16%	**84%**
In person harassment	42%	17%	3%	38%	**66%**
Physical attacks	25%	18%	1%	56%	**59%**
Phone harassment	18%	23%	7%	52%	**37%**

Base: All respondents excluding students and those fully retired from the media sector (n=1082)
Q7b. Do you feel that the frequency of harassment has changed over the past 2 years?

Online harassment frequency by sub-groups

- Looking specifically at online harassment, one-third report being harassed online as frequently as daily/weekly or monthly, the occurrence being even higher for journalists/hosts, women, those aged 49 years or younger or those who live out west. Those working with a media organization and in the English language are also more likely to have been a target of such harm.

- Consequently, these are also the groups more likely to believe that the situation has only worsened in recent years.

IF EXPERIENCED ONLINE HARASSMENT IN PAST 12 MONTHS

34% **MONTHLY OR MORE FREQUENTLY**

- Women (39%) vs. Men (32%)
- < 50 (38%) vs. 50+ (26%)
- BC (47%), AB (46%), MB/SK (48%) vs ON (35%), QC (27%), ATL (23%)
- Journalists/hosts (41%) vs. Management (32%), Photographer/Cameraman (28%)
- Language of work: English (38%) vs. French (23%)
- Employed by a media organization(36%) vs. freelancer/self-employed (21%)

CHANGE IN FREQUENCY OF ONLINE HARASSMENT IN THE PAST 2 YEARS

73% **IT HAS INCREASED**

- Women (78%) vs. Men (70%)
- < 40 (77%) vs. 50+ (68%)
- AB (83%), MB/SK (83%) vs BC (72%), ON (75%), QC (70%), ATL (62%)
- Employed by media organizations (75%) vs. freelancer/self-employed (69%)

Forms of Online Harassment

Form of harassment	Percentage
Sexualized messages or images	33%
Physical threats	30%
Comments related to gender identity	23%
Comments related to ethnicity or nationality	18%
Using name or image without permission	17%
Death threats	13%
Identity or private information exposed	10%
Personal image was altered or manipulated	10%
Impersonated my social media account	10%
Threats were made towards my family	9%
Someone tried to blackmail me	7%
I received threats of rape or sexual assault	7%
Verbal threats/Negative comments in general	6%
Accusations/Defamation/questioning integrity	5%
Name calling/personal attacks	4%
Virus/spyware planted on my computer	3%
Negative comments about my work/profession	3%
Emails were intercepted	2%
Data was stolen	2%
Other	5%

LEGEND:	
IDENTITY & REPUTATION HARM	53%
COERCION AND HARRASSMENT	45%
SEXUAL HARM	34%
PRIVACY AND SECURITY BASED HARM	25%

- Survey respondents report experiencing a wide variety of online harassment including receiving vulgar and sexualized messages or images, physical threats, harassing comments targeting their gender identity, using their name or image without permission and harassing comments targeting their ethnicity or nationality.

- One in ten have received a death threat in the past year. Nearly as many have received threats made toward their family, were threatened with blackmail, with rape or sexual assault.

Base: If experienced online harassment/threats in past year (n=703)
Q8. As a journalist or media worker, have you personally experienced any of the following forms of online harassment in the past 12 months? Please select all that apply

Forms of Online Harassment

ONLINE HARASSMENT EXPERIENCED IN PAST 12 MONTHS

Form of Harassment	%
Sexualized messages or images	33%
Physical threats	30%
Comments related to gender identity	23%
Comments related to ethnicity or nationality	18%
Using name or image without permission	17%
Death threats	13%
Identity or private information exposed	10%
Personal image was altered or manipulated	10%
Impersonated my social media account	10%
Threats were made towards my family	9%
Someone tried to blackmail me	7%
I received threats of rape or sexual assault	7%
Verbal threats/Negative comments in general	6%
Accusations/Defamation/questioning integrity	5%
Name calling/personal attacks	4%
Virus/spyware planted on my computer	3%
Negative comments about my work/profession	3%
Emails were intercepted	2%
Data was stolen	2%
Other	5%

Sexualized messages or images: <40 (41%) vs. >40 (26%), Women (44%) vs. Men (23%)

Physical threats: <40 (38%) vs. >40 (24%), LGBTQ2+ (42%)

Comments related to gender identity: <40 (30%) vs. >40 (17%), Women (33%) vs. Men (12%), LGBTQ2+ (51%)

Comments related to ethnicity or nationality: Those who identify as BIPOC (43%) vs. White (8%)

Death threats: <40 (18%) vs. >40 (8%), LGBTQ2+ (19%)

I received threats of rape or sexual assault: <40 (11%) vs. >40 (3%), Women (12%) vs. Men (2%), LGBTQ2+ (14%)

LEGEND:	
IDENTITY & REPUTATION HARM	53%
COERCION AND HARRASSMENT	45%
SEXUAL HARM	34%
PRIVACY AND SECURITY BASED HARM	25%

- Not only do LGBTQ2+ face more online harassment than others, as many as half (51%) report being targeted and harassed specifically about their gender identity/sexuality - this is the highest percentage of any form of harassment reported by any group of workers.

- Journalists are more likely to have been the target of sexual and identity/ reputation-based harm than others.

- Journalists and media workers working in English face more occurrences of sexual harm (37% vs. 24%), while those working in French are more likely to be threatened with blackmail (11% vs. 5%).

Base: If experienced online harassment/threats in past year (n=703)
Q8. As a journalist or media worker, have you personally experienced any of the following forms of online harassment in the past 12 months? Please select all that apply

Factors Leading to Online Harassment

FACTORS LEADING TO BEING A TARGET FOR HARASSMENT

Factor	Percentage
Media climate/accusations of 'fake news'	77%
The media organization for which I work	72%
The angle I took or the way I reported a story	64%
The stories I cover	57%
The changing reputation of journalists	57%
COVID-19/position on vaccination	55%
My political position or ideology	27%
My gender identity	17% — Women (28%) vs. Men (5%), LGBTQ2+ (34%)
My ethnic or cultural background	13%
My age	11%
My nationality	8% — BIPOC (22%) vs. White (2%)
The geographic area where I work	8%
My sexual identity	8% — LGBTQ2+ (29%)
My religion	4%
A previous occupation	3%
I don't know which factor was targeted	2%
Other	6%

Base: If experienced online harassment/threats in past year (n=703)
Q10. Please identify which of the following factors have been targeted as part of the online harassment you experienced. Select all that apply.
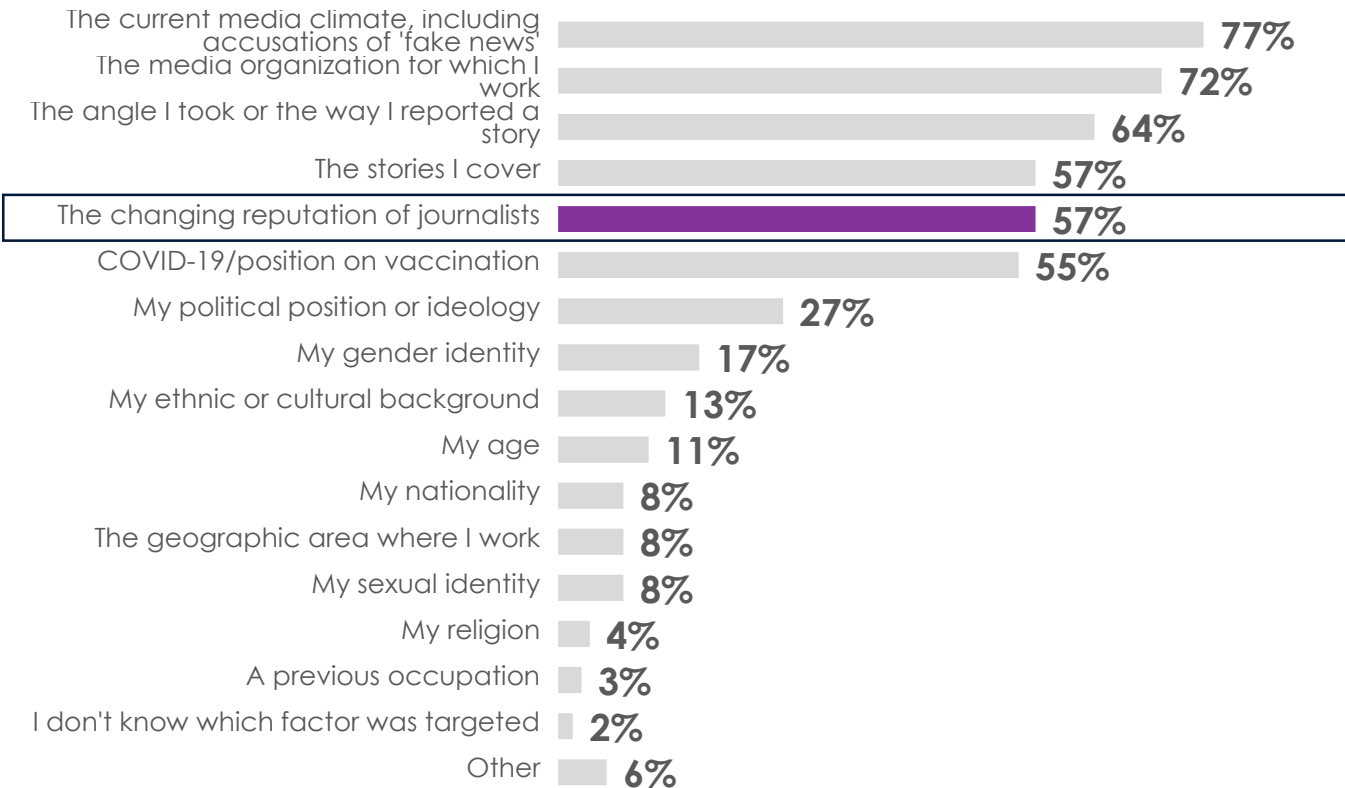
- The top factors leading to harassment have more to do with the profession or media organizations than personal factors. Accusations of purporting 'fake news' is the most common factor leading to online harassment – an issue more pronounced among younger journalists and media workers and women. This is followed closely by objections to the media organization the target works for. Similarly, 57% of those who have experienced online harassment say criticism of the reputation of journalists was a factor.

- Younger journalists and media workers report facing greater backlash not only due to their age but also on the stories covered, the angle of reporting as well as their gender and sexual identity.

- Journalists and media workers working in English are more likely to be targeted for the stories they cover and political position or ideology.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has also furthered the fault lines – 55% of all workers harassed online feel that the COVID-19 and that the different positions on the vaccination have contributed to the harassment received, more than double those targeted due to their political ideology.

- Those working in French are more likely to say that COVID is a contributing factor to the harassment received.

Factors Leading to Online Harassment

Ipsos' Global Trustworthiness Index conducted in the Spring of 2021 reinforces the precariousness of the public's trust in journalists. Only one-fourth of the Canadian general public rates journalists as "trustworthy" down 2 points from 2019. This places journalists behind the police and well behind ordinary people as well.

Factor	%
The current media climate, including accusations of 'fake news'	77%
The media organization for which I work	72%
The angle I took or the way I reported a story	64%
The stories I cover	57%
The changing reputation of journalists	57%
COVID-19/position on vaccination	55%
My political position or ideology	27%
My gender identity	17%
My ethnic or cultural background	13%
My age	11%
My nationality	8%
The geographic area where I work	8%
My sexual identity	8%
My religion	4%
A previous occupation	3%
I don't know which factor was targeted	2%
Other	6%

CANADA TRUSTWORTHINESS TRENDS 2019-2021

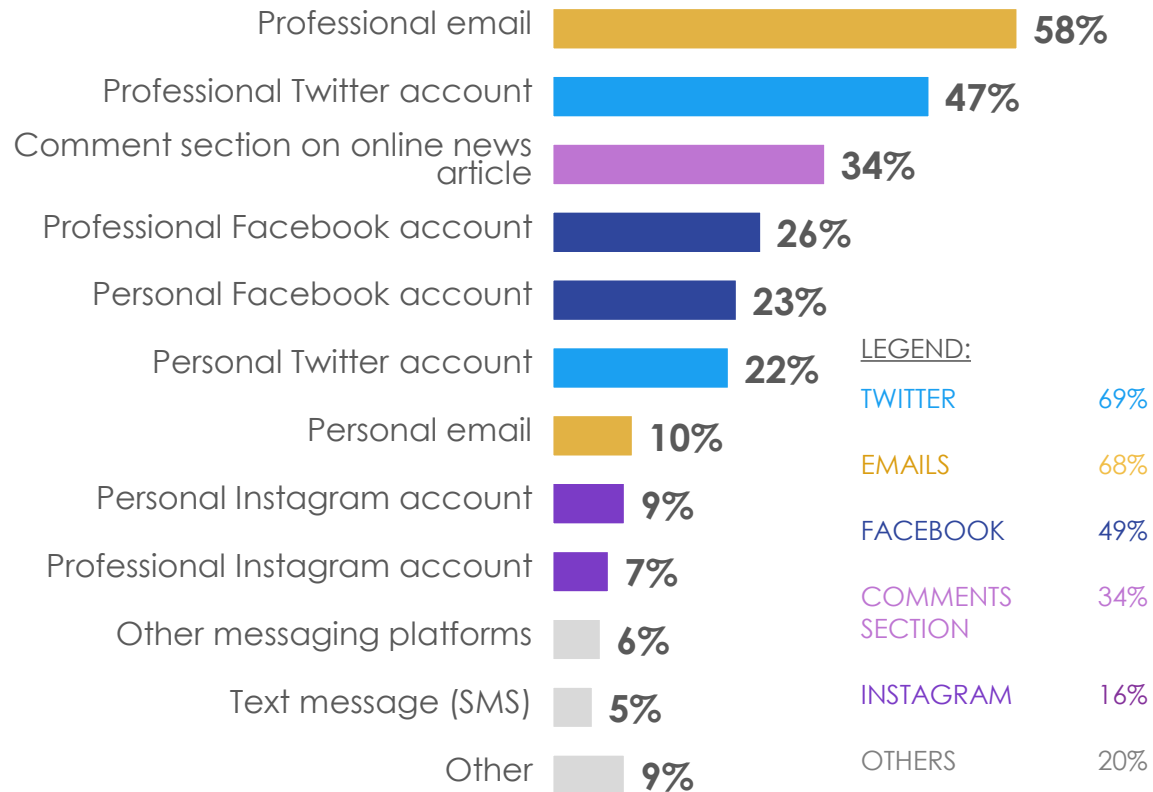| Trustworthiness Index Scores	2021	2019	Vs 2019
Doctors	70%	64%	6%
Scientists	64%	56%	8%
Teachers	62%	58%	4%
Judges	49%	45%	4%
Armed Forces	45%	51%	-6%
The Police	44%	47%	-3%
Ordinary men/women	42%	41%	1%
Clergy/Priests	29%	29%	0%
Bankers	29%	27%	2%
Television news readers	26%	26%	0%
Journalists	26%	28%	-2%
Civil Servants	26%	28%	-2%
Lawyers	23%	24%	-1%
Pollsters	17%	16%	1%
Business Leaders	17%	19%	-2%
Government ministers	17%	16%	1%
Politicians generally	13%	11%	2%
Advertising executives	9%	11%	-2%

Source: Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Index

Base: If experienced online harassment/threats in past year (n=703)
Q10. Please identify which of the following factors have been targeted as part of the online harassment you experienced. Select all that apply.

Platforms Being Used for Harassment

PLATFORMS WHERE ONLINE HARASSMENT OCCURRED

Platform	%
Professional email	**58%**
Professional Twitter account	**47%**
Comment section on online news article	**34%**
Professional Facebook account	**26%**
Personal Facebook account	**23%**
Personal Twitter account	**22%**
Personal email	**10%**
Personal Instagram account	**9%**
Professional Instagram account	**7%**
Other messaging platforms	**6%**
Text message (SMS)	**5%**
Other	**9%**

LEGEND:

TWITTER	69%
EMAILS	68%
FACEBOOK	49%
COMMENTS SECTION	34%
INSTAGRAM	16%
OTHERS	20%

- While most report receiving harassing comments or threats over their work emails or professional Twitter accounts, the comment section of online news articles, Facebook accounts (both personal and professional) as well as personal Twitter account are also platforms where harassing comments or threats are commonly posted.

- Younger journalists and media workers are more likely to face harassment over emails as well as Twitter and Instagram; Women face a greater extent of harassment over their professional Twitter account as well as Instagram accounts (both professional and personal).

- When it comes to the language of work, those who report in English are more likely to have faced online harassment over Twitter, while those who work in French report a higher level of harassment over Facebook.

- Those experiencing daily harassment are more likely to say it comes through their professional Twitter account (66%).
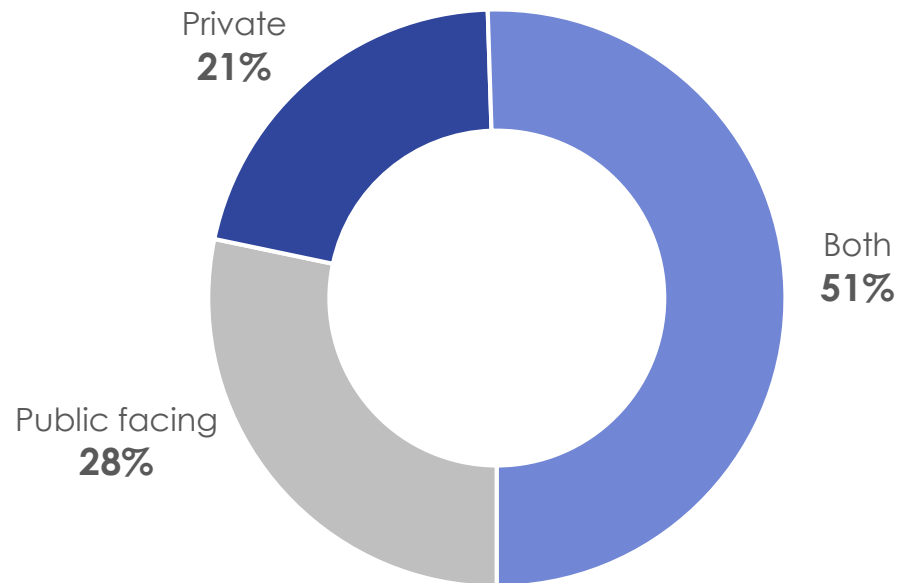
Base: If experienced online harassment/threats in past year (n=703)
Q9a. Did the online harassment you experienced in the past 12 months occur on any of the following platforms? Please select all that apply.
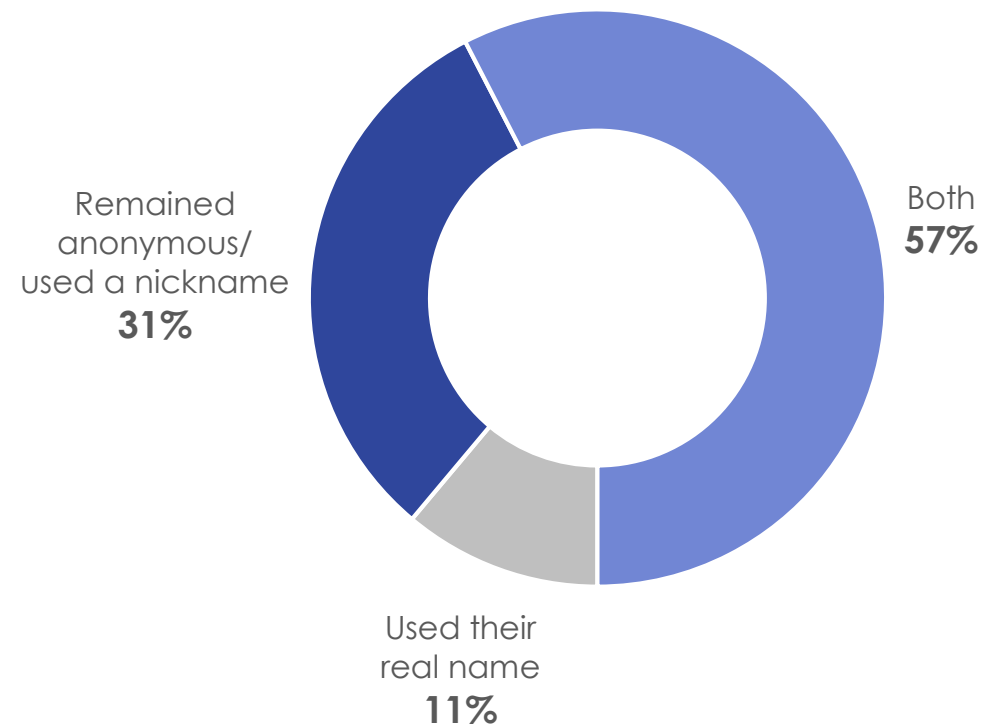
Public / Private Nature of Harassing Comments

- For a majority, such messages are both public and private facing and come from both those who chose to use their real names or someone under a disguise.

- Women and younger workers, the cohorts who bear a higher frequency of harassment, also report being harassed more often at the hands of both anonymous and known sources as well as through a mix of both public & private facing messages.

MESSAGES: PUBLIC FACING OR PRIVATE

Private
21%

Both
51%

Public facing
28%

IF HARASSER USED REAL NAME

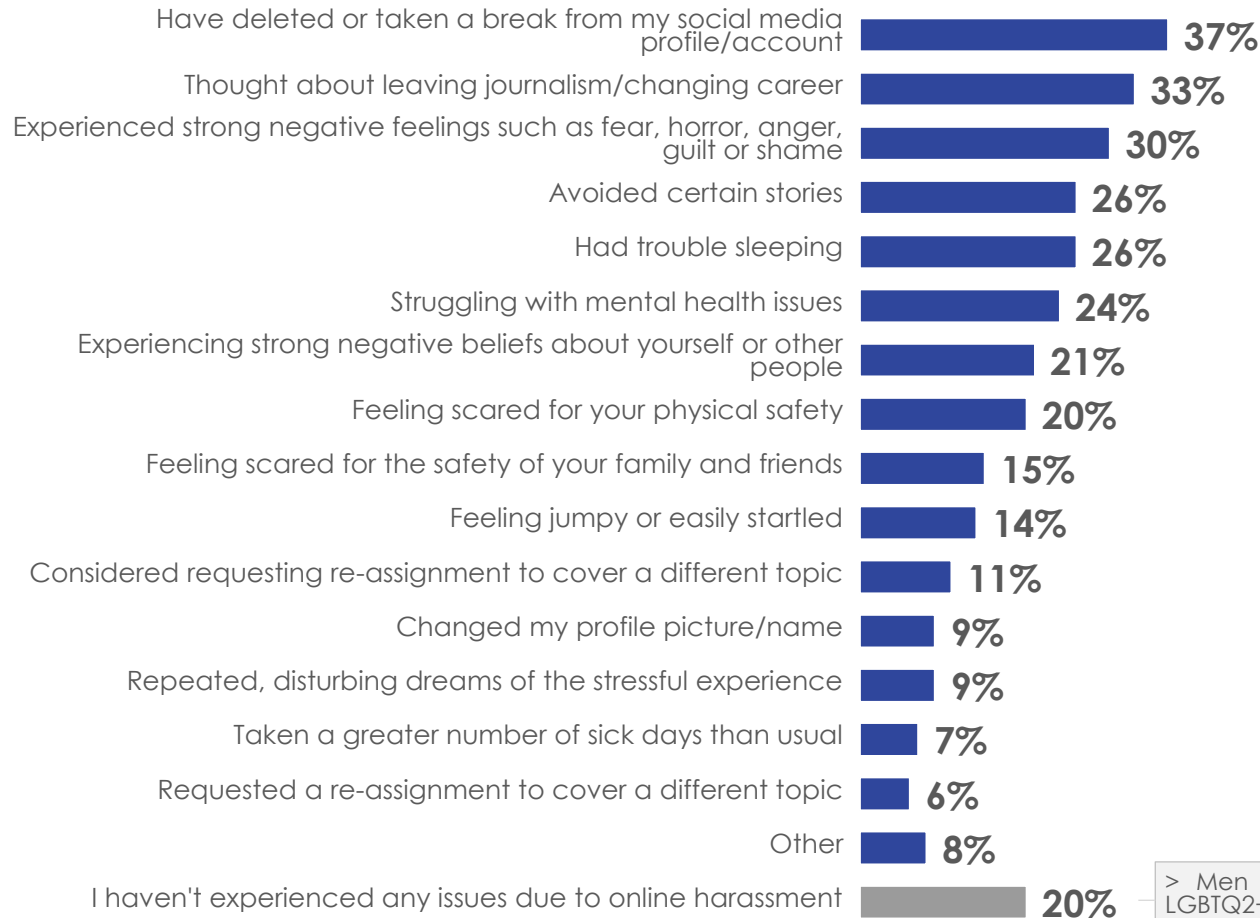Remained
anonymous/
used a nickname
31%

Both
57%

Used their
real name
11%

Base: If experienced online harassment/threats in past year (n=703)
Q9b. Were the messages you received public facing (viewable by others) or visible only to you?
Q11. In general, did the person(s) who harassed you online use their real name or do they remain anonymous?

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Impact of Online Harassment on Media Workers

EXPERIENCES OF THOSE TARGETED

Experience	%
Have deleted or taken a break from my social media profile/account	37%
Thought about leaving journalism/changing career	33%
Experienced strong negative feelings such as fear, horror, anger, guilt or shame	30%
Avoided certain stories	26%
Had trouble sleeping	26%
Struggling with mental health issues	24%
Experiencing strong negative beliefs about yourself or other people	21%
Feeling scared for your physical safety	20%
Feeling scared for the safety of your family and friends	15%
Feeling jumpy or easily startled	14%
Considered requesting re-assignment to cover a different topic	11%
Changed my profile picture/name	9%
Repeated, disturbing dreams of the stressful experience	9%
Taken a greater number of sick days than usual	7%
Requested a re-assignment to cover a different topic	6%
Other	8%
I haven't experienced any issues due to online harassment	20%

> Men (24%) vs. Women (16%), Not LGBTQ2+ (22%) vs. LGBTQ2+ (13%), White (21%) vs. BIPOC (15%)

- The gravity of the impact of online harassment comes to light when we see that 37% felt the need to take a break from social media/delete their accounts **and/or consider leaving journalism altogether (33%).** Filled with the fear of consequences, others started avoiding certain stories (26%), considered requesting (11%) or requested re-assignment (6%). All of these resultant actions point towards a greater problem of "silenced voices" as a result of the harassment they faced.

- The emotional health of those targeted is also impacted as cited by one-third who faced negative emotions fear/shame/anger, one-fourth who had trouble sleeping and struggled with mental health issues.

- A higher proportion of **younger workers, women** and **LGBTQ2+** cite experiencing most of the listed post-trauma symptoms - indicating that not only are these groups facing the greatest prevalence of online harassment, but also the greatest severity and psychological impact.
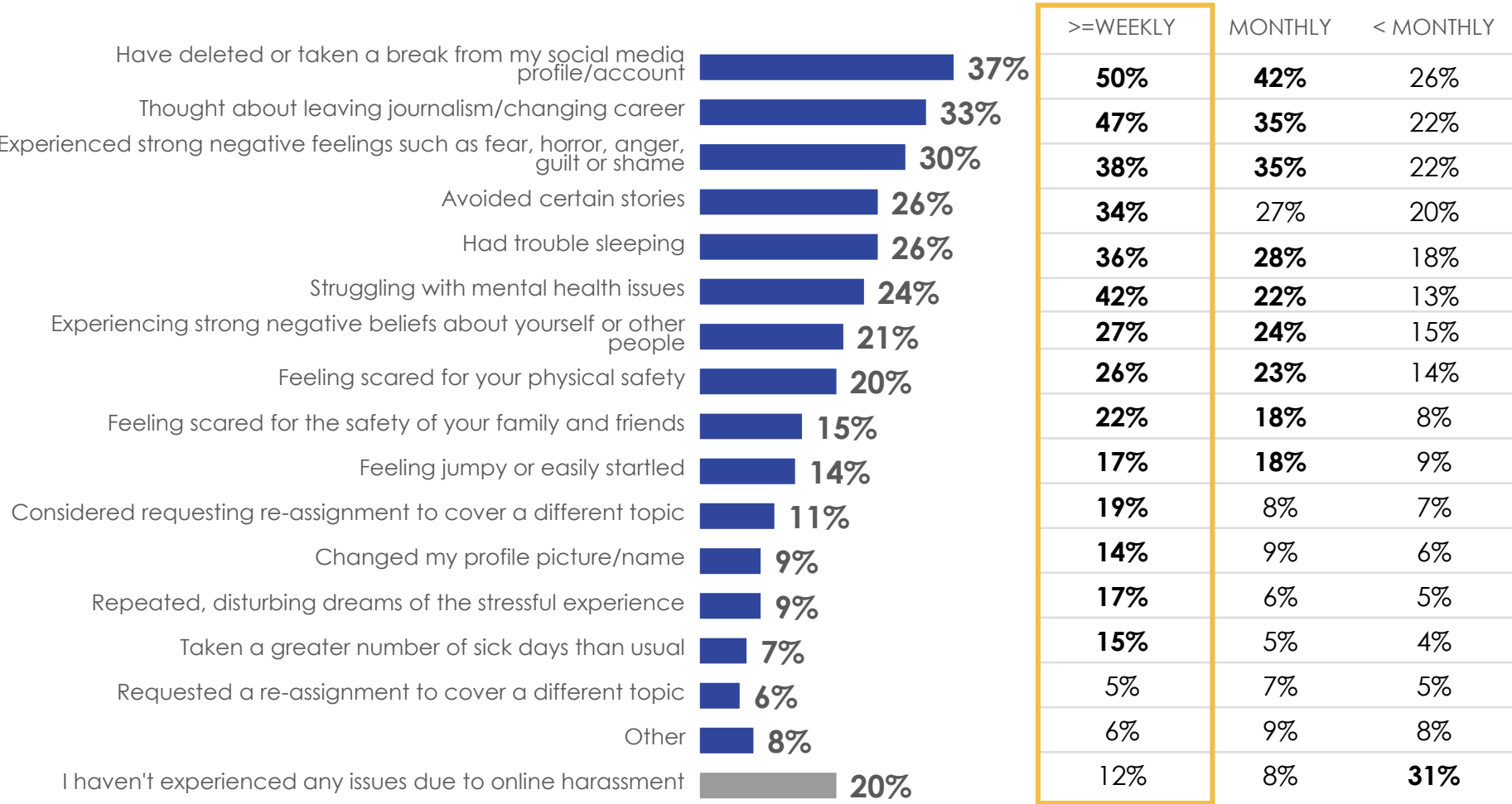
Base: If experienced online harassment/threats in past year (n=703)
Q14a. As a result of being harassed online, are you experiencing, or have you experienced, any of the following? Please select all that apply.

Impact of Online Harassment on Media Workers

EXPERIENCES OF THOSE TARGETED

	>=WEEKLY	MONTHLY	< MONTHLY
Have deleted or taken a break from my social media profile/account — 37%	**50%**	**42%**	26%
Thought about leaving journalism/changing career — 33%	**47%**	**35%**	22%
Experienced strong negative feelings such as fear, horror, anger, guilt or shame — 30%	**38%**	**35%**	22%
Avoided certain stories — 26%	**34%**	27%	20%
Had trouble sleeping — 26%	**36%**	**28%**	18%
Struggling with mental health issues — 24%	**42%**	**22%**	13%
Experiencing strong negative beliefs about yourself or other people — 21%	**27%**	**24%**	15%
Feeling scared for your physical safety — 20%	**26%**	**23%**	14%
Feeling scared for the safety of your family and friends — 15%	**22%**	**18%**	8%
Feeling jumpy or easily startled — 14%	**17%**	**18%**	9%
Considered requesting re-assignment to cover a different topic — 11%	**19%**	8%	7%
Changed my profile picture/name — 9%	**14%**	9%	6%
Repeated, disturbing dreams of the stressful experience — 9%	**17%**	6%	5%
Taken a greater number of sick days than usual — 7%	**15%**	5%	4%
Requested a re-assignment to cover a different topic — 6%	5%	7%	5%
Other — 8%	6%	9%	8%
I haven't experienced any issues due to online harassment — 20%	12%	8%	**31%**

- The impacts of frequent harassment are pushing half (50%) of journalists and media workers out of social media or out of the profession altogether!

- Even among those who have faced infrequent incidents of online harm, only one-third have not suffered the listed consequences.

- Aligned with the greater prevalence of online harm among English workers overall, a greater percentage have experienced most of these consequences.

- Notably, those working in French are more likely to have asked for reassignment whereas English workers are more likely to have considered asking for reassignment.

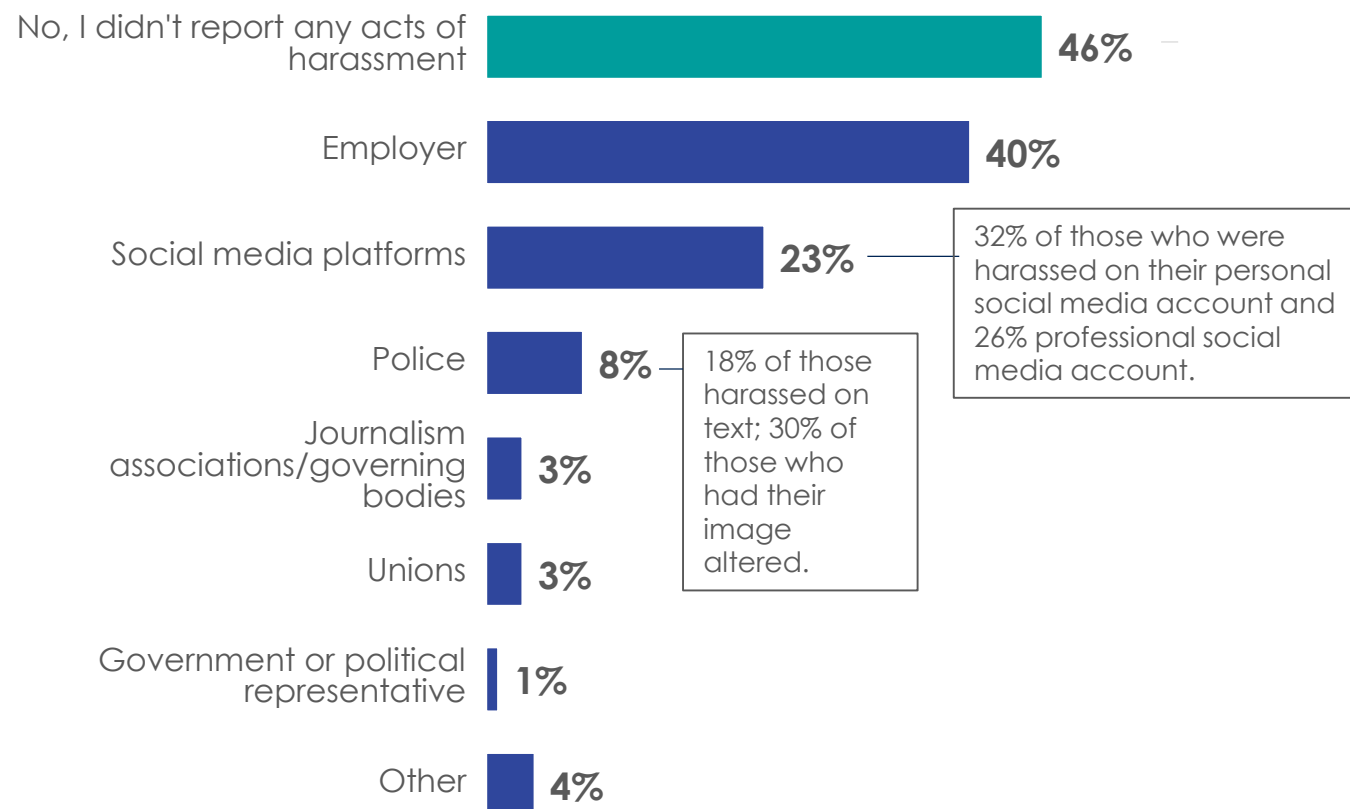Base: If experienced online harassment/threats in past year (n=703)
Q14a. As a result of being harassed online, are you experiencing, or have you experienced, any of the following? Please select all that apply.

*Data labels in **bold** represents significantly higher (than at least one other sub-group) at 95% confidence level.*

Impact of Online Harassment on Media Workers (Other Mentions)

Impact on ability to work effectively…

💬 *Mes compétences et la qualité de mon travail ont été remis en question.*

💬 *I get unfounded feelings of **self-doubt***

💬 **Feeling anxious, racing thoughts, unable to focus on work**

💬 *I've had to **change the way I cover certain stories** due to concern of being swarmed by a mob*

💬 *Managers have requested I be **reassigned to other topics** because I am a frequent harassment target, which **frustrates me** because I enjoy covering difficult topics.*

Exodus of voices…

💬 *I did **leave journalism** for a while, and often think it's **not worth my energy** anymore.*

💬 **I don't typically reveal my occupation or employer publicly anymore**

💬 **Switched to more behind the scenes roles** *(from reporting), it caused me to be **anxious** every time I filed a story*

💬 *Published work **without my byline** to avoid personal attacks via email*

Fear for safety…

💬 *Much more cautious about leaving and coming to the office. I **check for suspicious vehicles** , people, etc.*

💬 *I **moved out** of Alberta*

💬 **Diffamation m'associant à l'opposition politique** *et la mafia haïtienne parce que je suis d'origine haïtienne et que j'ai écrit sur la situation politique du pays. La diffamation venait d'un homme blanc qui affirme être proche du pouvoir en place à l'époque des faits.*

💬 *Made my social accounts private; **do not mention who my employer** is to family, friends or strangers*

💬 **J'ai échappé miraculeusement à 5 tentatives d'assassinat mais il y a 20 ans de ça.**

RECOURSE AND RESOURCES

Reporting and Recourse

REPORTING HARASSMENT AND TO WHOM

Category	Percentage
No, I didn't report any acts of harassment	46%
Employer	40%
Social media platforms	23%
Police	8%
Journalism associations/governing bodies	3%
Unions	3%
Government or political representative	1%
Other	4%

32% of those who were harassed on their personal social media account and 26% professional social media account.

18% of those harassed on text; 30% of those who had their image altered.
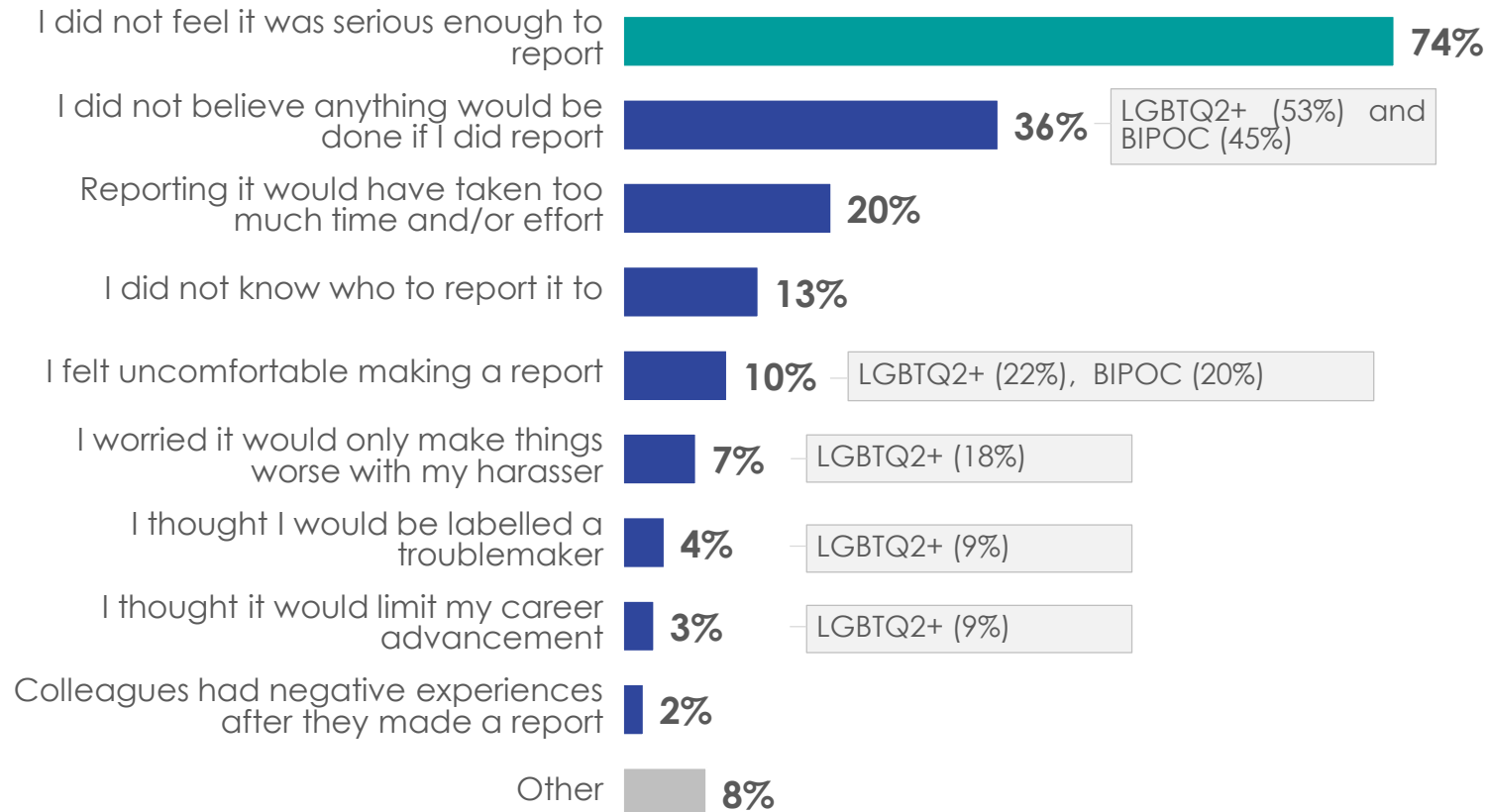
- Almost half (46%) of those who have been the target of harassment did not report the incident, be it in their professional circles or to a support organization. Four in ten (39%) of those who have faced harassment as often as weekly or more frequently chose not to take any action.

- Four in ten (40%) informed their employer of the incident – slightly higher among those harassed on their professional email account (47%).

- Those who were targeted on their personal social media account are more likely to report the incident to the social media platform (32%). Younger targets (<40) are more likely to report the harassment to the social media platform (31%). Women are also more likely to report to social media platforms (28% vs. 19% of men).

- Fewer than one in ten of those targeted took further action such as reporting to the police or taking the matter up with journalists' association/governing bodies.

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Barriers to Reporting Harassment

REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING THE ONLINE HARASSMENT

I did not feel it was serious enough to report — **74%**

I did not believe anything would be done if I did report — **36%** — LGBTQ2+ (53%) and BIPOC (45%)

Reporting it would have taken too much time and/or effort — **20%**

I did not know who to report it to — **13%**

I felt uncomfortable making a report — **10%** — LGBTQ2+ (22%), BIPOC (20%)

I worried it would only make things worse with my harasser — **7%** — LGBTQ2+ (18%)

I thought I would be labelled a troublemaker — **4%** — LGBTQ2+ (9%)

I thought it would limit my career advancement — **3%** — LGBTQ2+ (9%)

Colleagues had negative experiences after they made a report — **2%**

Other — **8%**

Base: If experienced online harassment/threats in past year and did not report it (n=322)
Q13. Thinking about the online harassment you experienced but did not report, please indicate the reason(s) for not reporting the situation(s).

- Even though the harassment led to mental health and safety concerns, a vast majority (74%) of those who did not report the incident did not see the incident as serious enough to report.

- Others express a lack of confidence that anything would come from filing a report or that the reporting process is perceived to take too much effort and time.

- Some also worry about further negative ramifications after reporting the incident – be it fear of fueling the harasser to double-down, or the impact on their career advancement if they develop a reputation of being the 'troublemaker'.

- While both LGBTQ2+ and BIPOC media workers express greater concern over feeling uncomfortable reporting the incident or lack of action even if they reported, those who identify as LGBTQ2+ are also more worried about the backlash (being labelled as a troublemaker or limiting career growth).

I've reported before and was told "we can't do anything unless they threaten physical violence."

Ça sert à rien d'alerter les autorités. Elles demeurent inertes. Meilleur de les rendre publique pour forcer les autorités à agir.

Didn't feel it was severe enough to warrant reporting. I've always been told harassment is "part of the job."

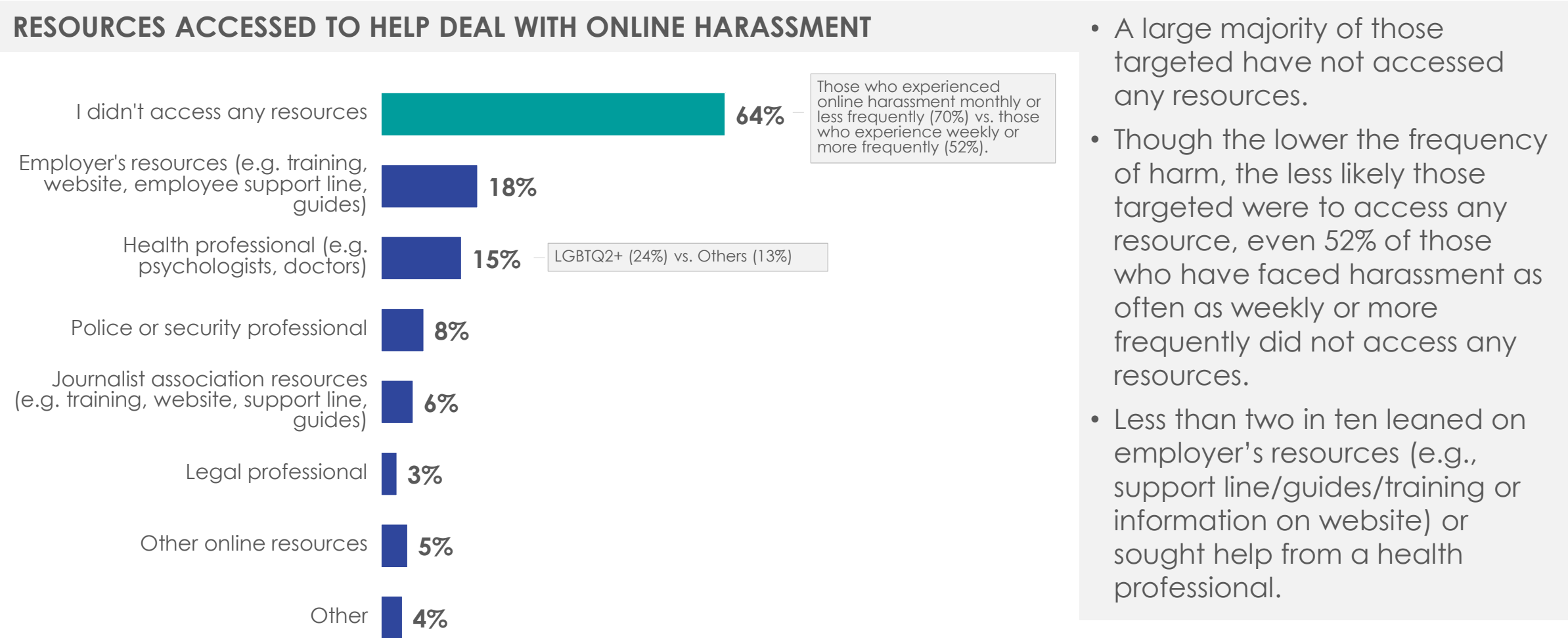If I reported every form of online harassment, I wouldn't get work done.

It's so common now, it feels like "what's the point."

It has become the norm - nothing is ever done about it.

Je ferai une plainte lorsque ce sera une menace directe et sérieuse.

Who cares?

The sheer frequency of online harassment and apathy, lack of recognition AND inaction seem to have left professionals in the lurch. This loss of hope has clearly led to listlessness and sense of "move on, what's the point."
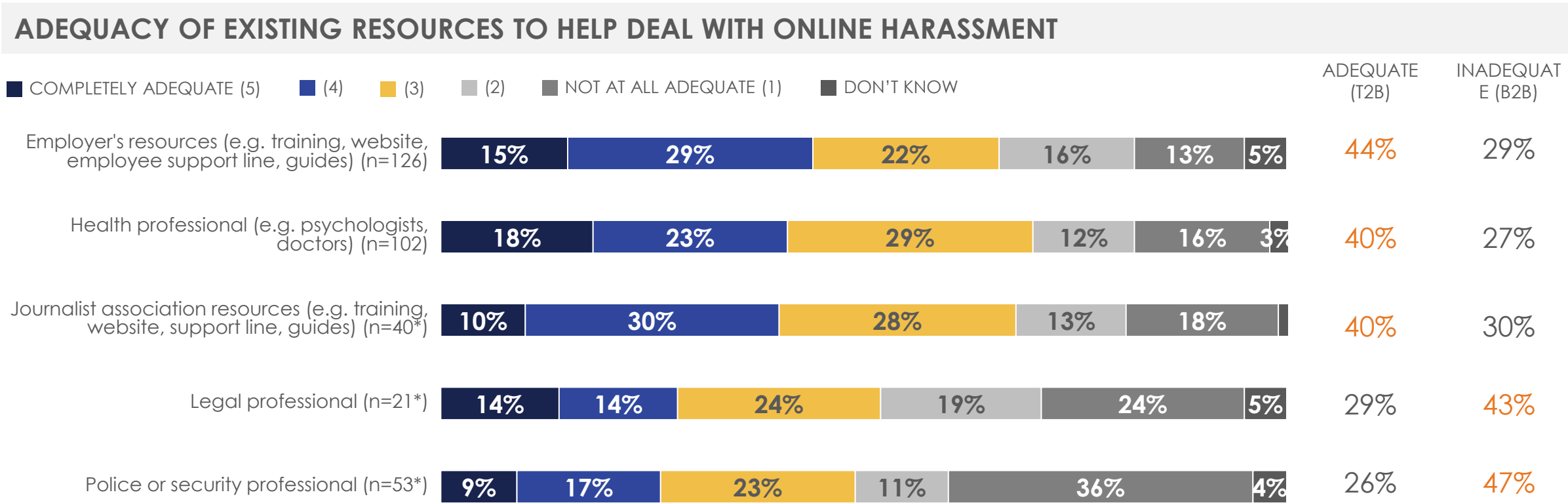
Accessing Online Harassment Resources

RESOURCES ACCESSED TO HELP DEAL WITH ONLINE HARASSMENT

I didn't access any resources — 64%

Those who experienced online harassment monthly or less frequently (70%) vs. those who experience weekly or more frequently (52%).

Employer's resources (e.g. training, website, employee support line, guides) — 18%

Health professional (e.g. psychologists, doctors) — 15%

LGBTQ2+ (24%) vs. Others (13%)

Police or security professional — 8%

Journalist association resources (e.g. training, website, support line, guides) — 6%

Legal professional — 3%

Other online resources — 5%

Other — 4%

- A large majority of those targeted have not accessed any resources.

- Though the lower the frequency of harm, the less likely those targeted were to access any resource, even 52% of those who have faced harassment as often as weekly or more frequently did not access any resources.

- Less than two in ten leaned on employer's resources (e.g., support line/guides/training or information on website) or sought help from a health professional.

Base: If experienced online harassment/threats in past year (n=703)
Q15. In the past 12 months, have you accessed any of the following resources to help deal with the issue of online harassment? Please select all that apply.

Adequacy of Resources To Deal with Online Harassment

- Across the listed resources, less than half, and for some resources less than one in three can vouch for the adequacy of support.
- Specifically, availability of legal counsel, police/security services leave much to be desired.*
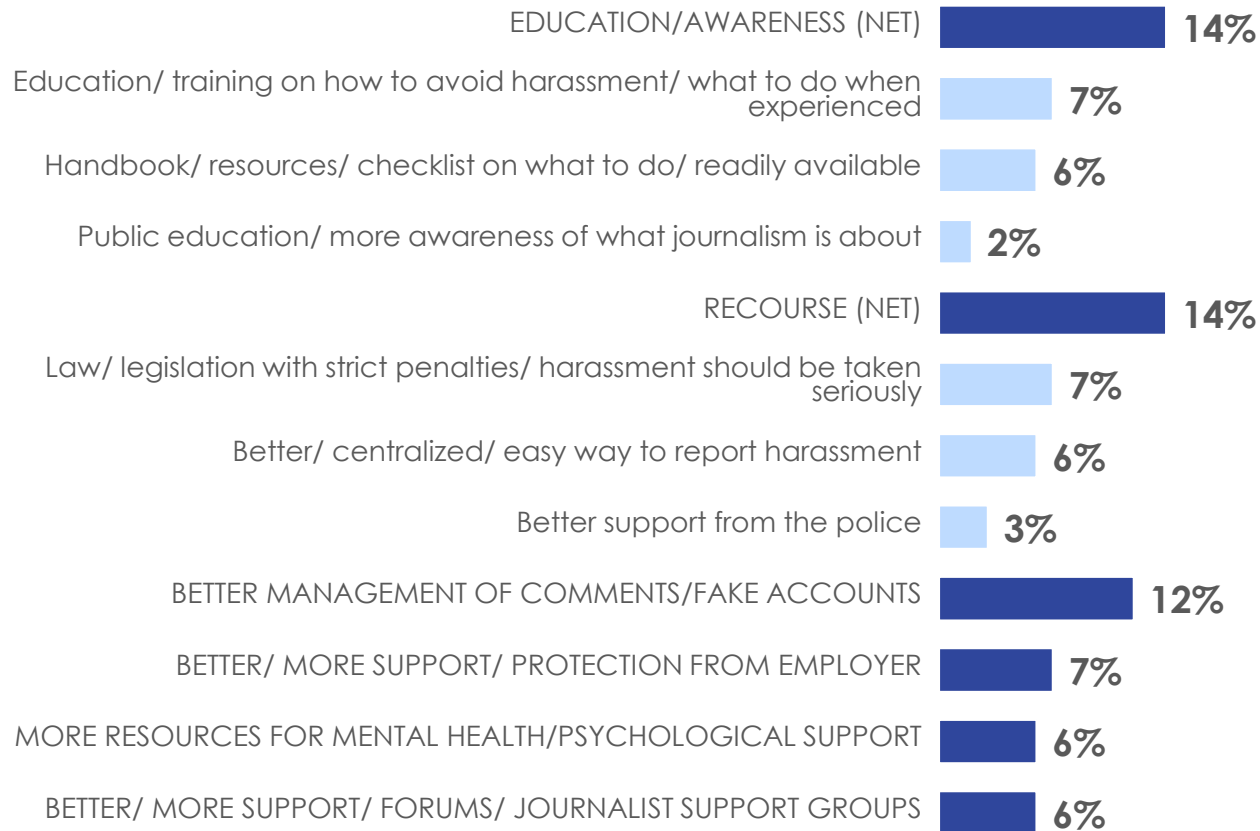
ADEQUACY OF EXISTING RESOURCES TO HELP DEAL WITH ONLINE HARASSMENT

■ COMPLETELY ADEQUATE (5) ■ (4) ■ (3) ■ (2) ■ NOT AT ALL ADEQUATE (1) ■ DON'T KNOW

	COMPLETELY ADEQUATE (5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	NOT AT ALL ADEQUATE (1)	DON'T KNOW	ADEQUATE (T2B)	INADEQUATE (B2B)
Employer's resources (e.g. training, website, employee support line, guides) (n=126)	15%	29%	22%	16%	13%	5%	44%	29%
Health professional (e.g. psychologists, doctors) (n=102)	18%	23%	29%	12%	16%	3%	40%	27%
Journalist association resources (e.g. training, website, support line, guides) (n=40*)	10%	30%	28%	13%	18%		40%	30%
Legal professional (n=21*)	14%	14%	24%	19%	24%	5%	29%	43%
Police or security professional (n=53*)	9%	17%	23%	11%	36%	4%	26%	47%

Base: If experienced online harassment/threats in past year and accessed resources to help deal (n=Varies)
Q16a. How adequate do you feel the existing resources at your disposal are when it comes to dealing with the issue of online harassment?

*Low sample size, results are directional

Online Harassment

RESOURCES TO DEVELOP TO BETTER SUPPORT JOURNALISTS

EDUCATION/AWARENESS (NET) — **14%**

Education/ training on how to avoid harassment/ what to do when experienced — **7%**

Handbook/ resources/ checklist on what to do/ readily available — **6%**

Public education/ more awareness of what journalism is about — **2%**

RECOURSE (NET) — **14%**

Law/ legislation with strict penalties/ harassment should be taken seriously — **7%**

Better/ centralized/ easy way to report harassment — **6%**

Better support from the police — **3%**

BETTER MANAGEMENT OF COMMENTS/FAKE ACCOUNTS — **12%**

BETTER/ MORE SUPPORT/ PROTECTION FROM EMPLOYER — **7%**

MORE RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH/PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT — **6%**

BETTER/ MORE SUPPORT/ FORUMS/ JOURNALIST SUPPORT GROUPS — **6%**

48%
Don't know/did not answer

- While many did not share an opinion on potentially useful resources, among those who commented, tools for education/awareness building and recourse are highlighted.

- In line with the barriers to reporting, strengthening of recourse mechanisms, such as ensuring a smooth reporting process or enforcing strict enough penalties are believed to go a long way in addressing both prevention as well as redressal.

Base: If experienced harassment/threats in past year (n=784)
Q16b. In your opinion, what resources could be developed in the future to better support journalists and media professionals who experience online harassment?

Additional Resources and Action Needed

Shared responsibility of action…

💬 Would like to see **social media platforms take harassment seriously**. I can't tell you how often I report a tweet or account only to be told that the person's harassment wasn't in violation of the platform's community guidelines.

💬 **Our employers** need to play hardball. We provide millions of dollars of profit for Facebook, Google, and Twitter. Why do we help them when they won't reciprocate and **take threats seriously**?

💬 **Social media platforms** need **stricter rules** when it comes to harassment.

💬 **I serait pertinent que les employeurs aient des positions fermes sur le harcèlement en ligne** ou par courriel, et sur les commentaires haineux, afin que les gens qui les partagent soient "réprimandés". Il pourrait y avoir un endroit où dénoncer ces comportements inacceptables. Les femmes et les personnes de couleur sont surreprésentées dans les attaques et il faudrait trouver une façon de les protéger pour qu'elles puissent faire leur travail en sécurité. Je crois que de documenter le problème est un excellent pas dans la bonne direction.

And education…

💬 **Clear protocols on what constitutes harassment, when to report it, and how.**

💬 I think some sort of **training** session might be useful on **when, how to identify when an experience of online harassment should be reported because of its severity.**

💬 We need actual training to know **how to respond or block it out**. The training I did receive was an online course that simply said "report it to your employer" my **employer did nothing.**

💬 Perhaps more audience facing **education on how journalists work,** our process, how we source and report on stories, might help.

To re-instill faith…

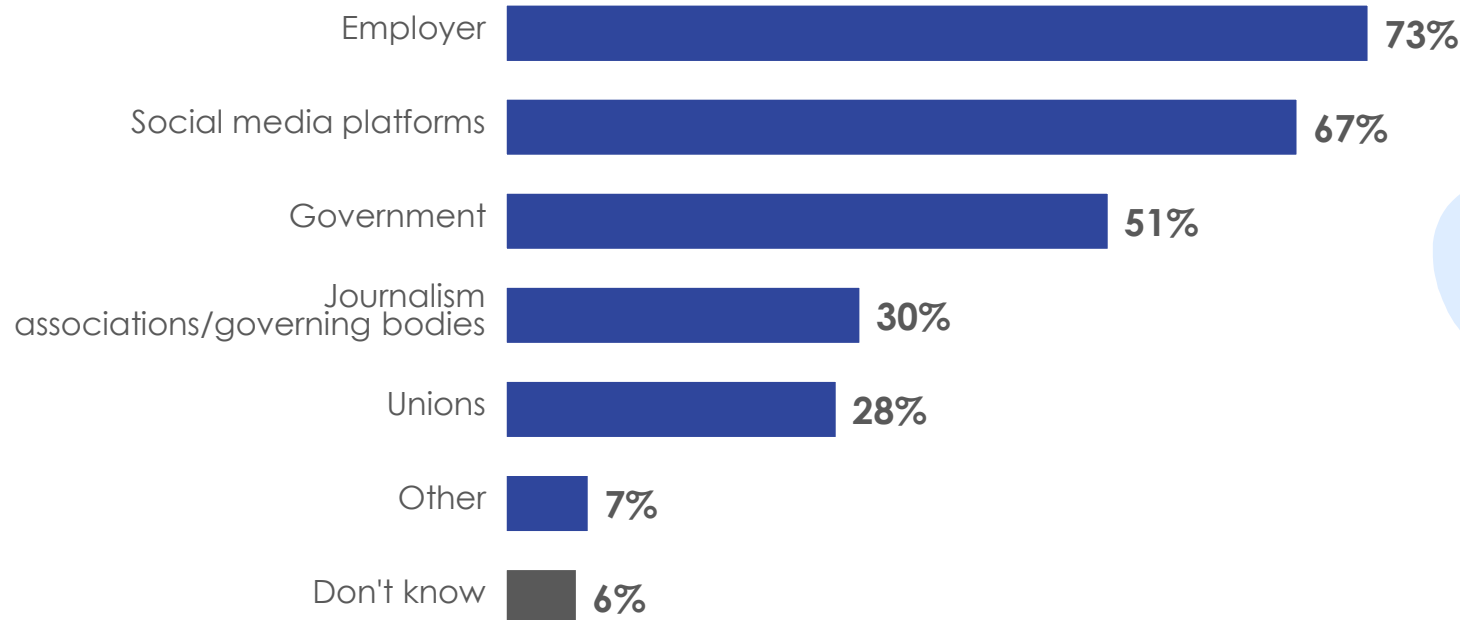💬 I think employers need to take a **more public and stronger stance** against harassment in all its forms.

💬 **Je ne sais pas.** **Un ensemble de professionnels dans ce domaine (harcèlement) pourraient proposer des mesures adaptées au milieu journalistique.**

💬 Journalists **should know that their organization is fighting hard to protect them**.

💬 There needs to be **timely reporting of the consequences.**

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Responsibility for Protecting Workers

- Most journalists and media workers believe the onus for protecting journalists from potential online harm rests with employers or with social media platforms.
- Government comes in third on the list as selected by 51% of journalists and media workers, a proportion slightly higher among BIPOC members (59%).

Category	Percentage
Employer	73%
Social media platforms	67%
Government	51%
Journalism associations/governing bodies	30%
Unions	28%
Other	7%
Don't know	6%

*I believe **employers** can do a lot more to train employees and take action to support them when a threat does come in.*

Base: All respondents excluding students and those fully retired from the media sector (n=1082)
Q17. Who should be held responsible for protecting journalists from online harm?

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

The Impact of Online Harassment in Their Own Words

I have 25 years in the industry. **It's certainly getting more frequent and more brazen. taking a toll on my younger colleagues**, *particularly my* **female colleagues** *who are often subject to disturbing* **gender specific harassment**. *I feel it's* **driving good people out of the industry**.

I feel that **women are more often the targets of harassment**, *and more targeted harassment. My male colleagues will be told the are dumb or receive death threats. Women are mocked based on their gender, their interests, receive violent rape threats.* **It's a very different kind of harassment.**

Social media companies are **running unchecked** *and with* **devastating effects to our culture, politics, and health**. *We need concrete steps against the algorithms social media companies use to foster hate. It's the algorithms.*

It's relentless. It's hurtful. It's threatening. *The answer to block someone is not the answer. I can't report what I don't see. Many complaints made to social media, Facebook in particular with* **zero action taken**. *And yet I need Facebook to reach audience members. It's* **abhorrent** *they allow bullies to rule these platforms. All because I am* **trying to do my job**?

The harassment has gotten increasingly worse and has targeted my job and my sexuality.

Il mine le moral des troupes. Il démotive. Il entraine une hausse des congés de maladie. Les gens sont fatigués parce qu'ils ne dorment plus, donc à fleur de peau. C'est désagréable.
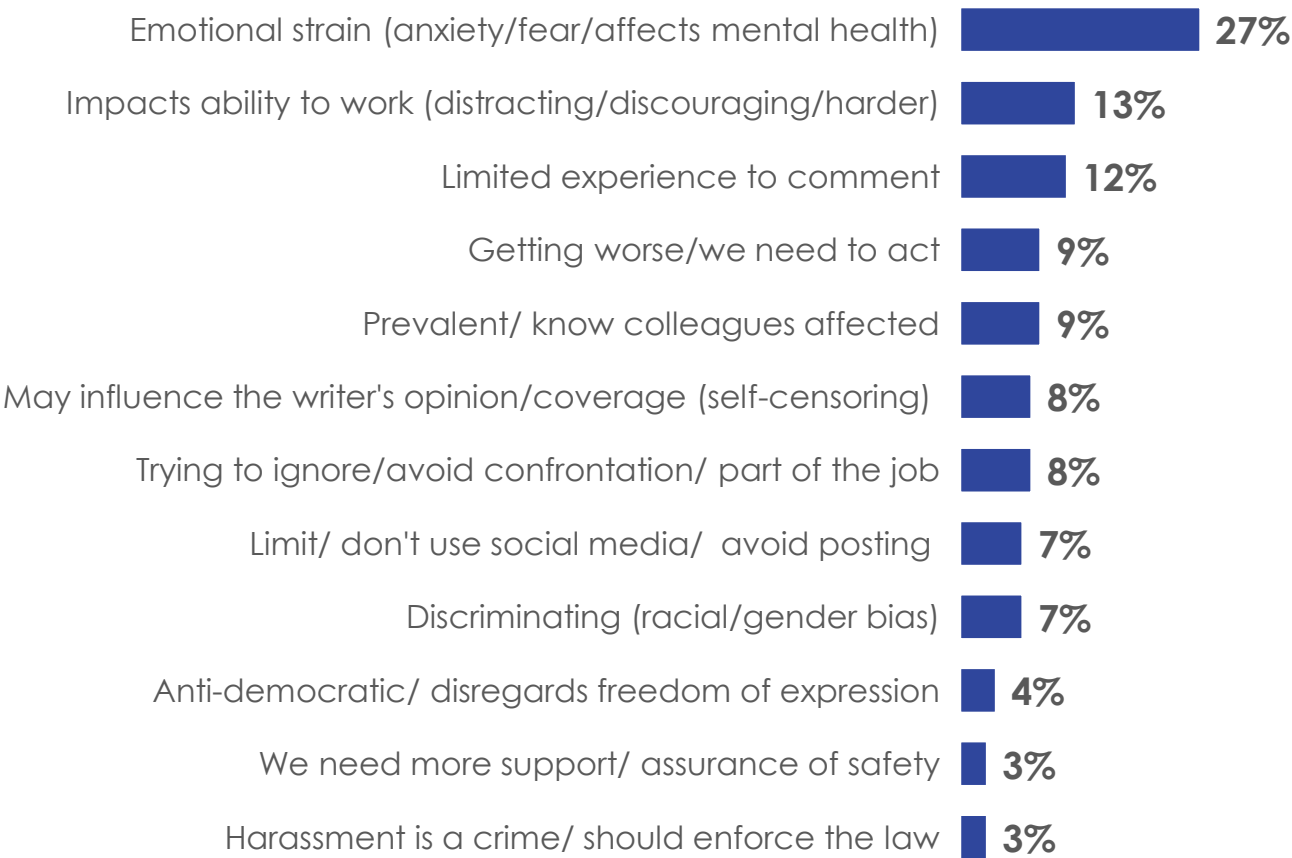
This is a job with inherent stresses, deadline pressures and workload issues. Online harassment seriously adds to that and **slowly undermines the joy and feeling of satisfaction a reporter needs to thrive in this business. I believe it's one more reason people choose to leave the profession.**

The Impact of Online Harassment in Their Own Words

THOUGHTS ON THE IMPACT OF ONLINE HARASSMENT

Category	Percentage
Emotional strain (anxiety/fear/affects mental health)	**27%**
Impacts ability to work (distracting/discouraging/harder)	**13%**
Limited experience to comment	**12%**
Getting worse/we need to act	**9%**
Prevalent/ know colleagues affected	**9%**
May influence the writer's opinion/coverage (self-censoring)	**8%**
Trying to ignore/avoid confrontation/ part of the job	**8%**
Limit/ don't use social media/ avoid posting	**7%**
Discriminating (racial/gender bias)	**7%**
Anti-democratic/ disregards freedom of expression	**4%**
We need more support/ assurance of safety	**3%**
Harassment is a crime/ should enforce the law	**3%**

- When asked to share thoughts on how the issue of online harassment has affected them and their work, most point to the emotional strain and stress it causes.

- There is recognition of how such incidents make it harder for journalists and media workers to concentrate or keep themselves motivated.

- Others highlight the need to stunt the advancement of such harassment that leads to self-censorship and harms the democratic rights of freedom of expression.

- Those who have experienced online harassment more frequently, women and younger professionals more specifically, express stronger agreement with all of the highlighted concerns.

Base: All respondents excluding those fully retired from the media sector (n=1088)
Q18. Please take a moment to share your thoughts on the issue of online harassment and how it affects your work as a journalist or media worker.

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APPENDIX

Access detailed data here:

https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/Online_Harm_in_Journalism

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