

Safety of Journalists Country Report

Serbia

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Report Authors

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Serbia's ranking in the latest journalists' safety index underscores persistent threats to press freedom against the backdrop of the weak rule of law, media capture and hostility towards critical reporting perpetuated by elected officials. While there were no killed journalists in recent years, this five-year scope excludes the three unresolved murders dating back to 1994, 1999, and 2008 - Dada Vujasinovic, Slavko Curuvija, Milan Pantic respectively. In February 2024 the Appellate Court acquitted the four suspects for the Curuvija murder, marking another step in the backslide of journalist safety. This continued impunity has to date a profound chilling effect: journalists report that this lack of justice—not just physical or financial insecurity—is their greatest concern.

In 2024, prosecutors opened 62 cases related to journalist safety, yet only one conviction followed. In over half of these cases, police failed to respond to requests for information, a pattern also seen in previous years. Out of 587 cases opened in the past eight years, 40% remain unresolved. Courts have allowed suspects to await trial under house arrest, and in at least two cases, those individuals escaped. Verbal attacks by top political leaders and pro-government media—branding critical journalists as “imbeciles” or “enemies of the people”—add further intimidation. Such generalised targeting often goes unreported as personal abuse, yet contributes significantly to the overall climate of fear. The rise in SLAPP lawsuits is straining media outlets' resources, posing an indirect yet powerful financial threat.

Attacks against journalists are documented in databases kept by journalist and media associations, as well as by the Standing Working Group for the Safety of Journalists, a pioneering approach taken in 2017, comprising prosecution, police and journalists' representatives. However, reflecting the gravity of the situation, in 2025 all associations (Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS), Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS), Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina (NDNV), Association of Media Outlets (AM), Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM) and Association of Online Media (AOM) withdrew from the body citing institutional inefficiency and police inaction. ANEM emphasized that failure to investigate or prosecute even high-profile assaults sends a dangerous message of tolerance for violence. Journalists' associations documented 184 attacks in 2023 and 166 in 2024. Serbia's poor rankings in the WJS Global Index on Journalists' Safety reflect not isolated incidents, but a pattern of impunity, intimidation, and institutional failure.

Safety Index Scores

Overall Safety Score

77.58

Safety Dimensions

Physical Safety

80.12

Psychological Safety

76.18

Digital Safety

82

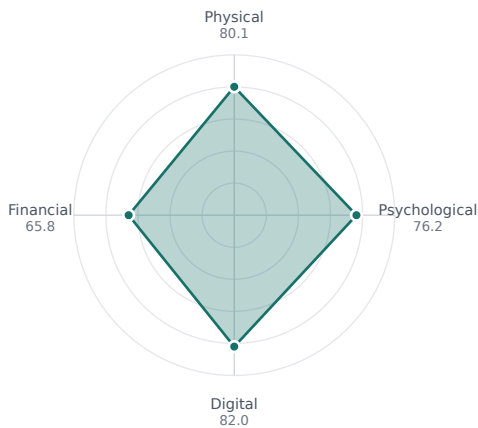
Financial Safety

65.84

Overview

The Safety of Journalists Index provides a comprehensive measurement of journalist safety across four dimensions. The charts below show how Serbia performs across each dimension and highlight any gender-based disparities.

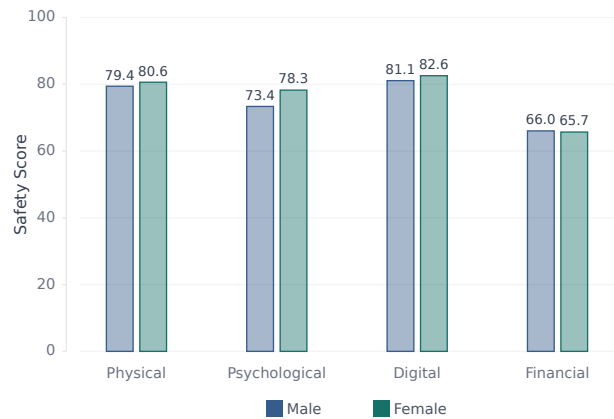
Safety Dimensions Overview



Safety Dimensions

This radar chart displays how the country performs across all four safety dimensions, revealing areas of strength and concern.

Gender Safety Gap by Dimension



Gender Safety Gap

This comparison highlights differences in safety experiences between male and female journalists, revealing potential gender-based disparities.

Physical Safety

The physical dimension carries **50% weight in the safety index**.

0

Journalist Killings

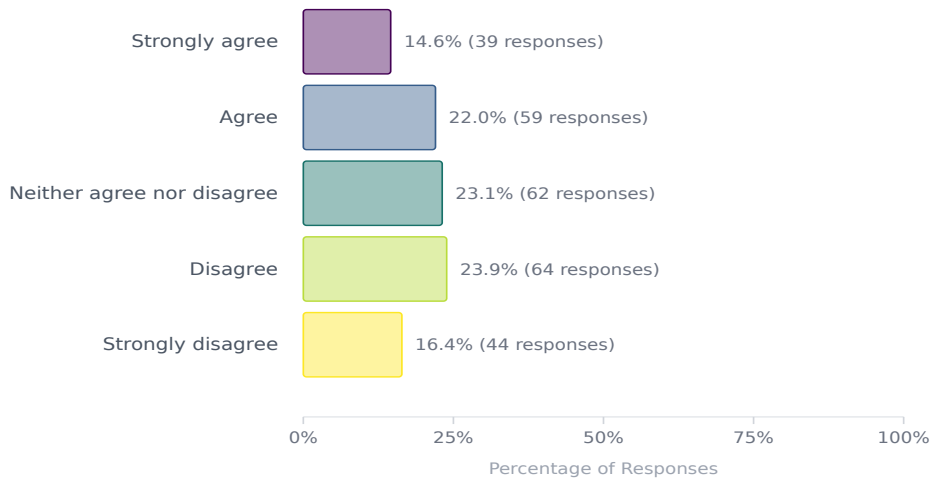
2016-2024

No journalist killings have been recorded in Serbia between 2016 and 2024.

Note: This indicator carries 35% of the weight within the physical dimension of the Safety Index, making it the most significant factor in this category.

Data sourced from UNESCO Observatory of Killed Journalists.

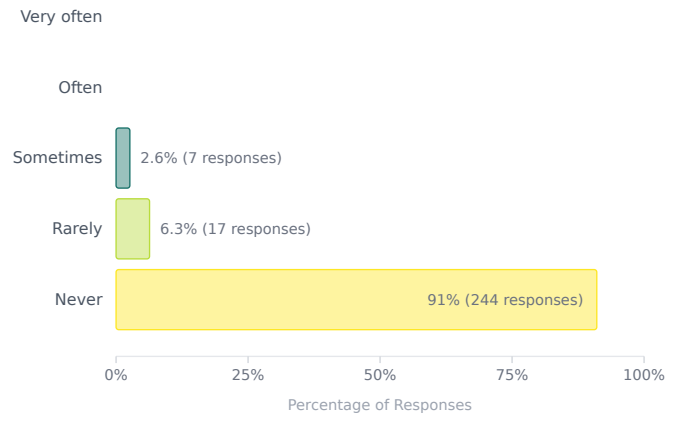
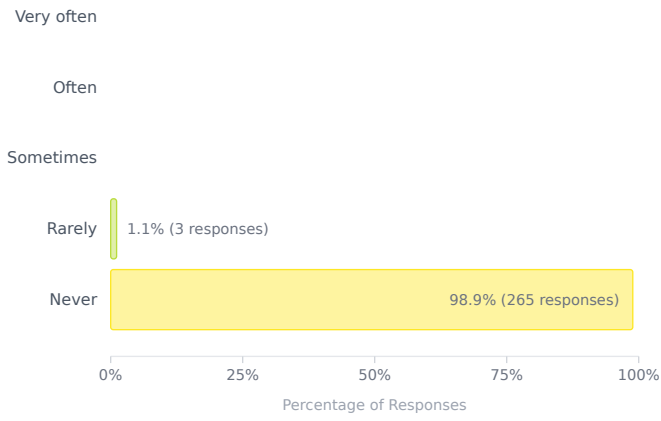
Responses to: "I am concerned about my physical wellbeing" (20% weight in physical dimension)



Responses to: "In the last five years, how often have you experienced any of the following actions related to your work as a journalist?"

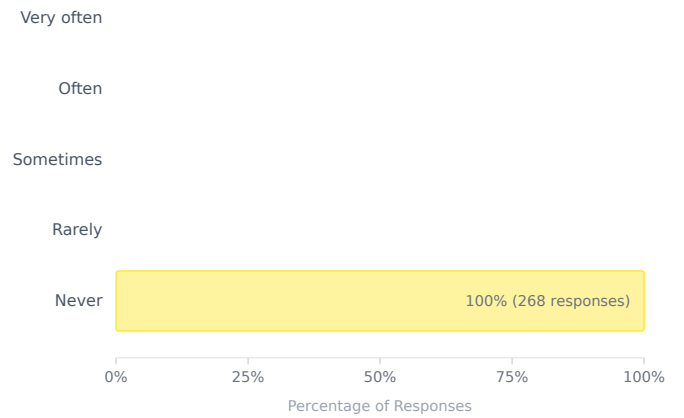
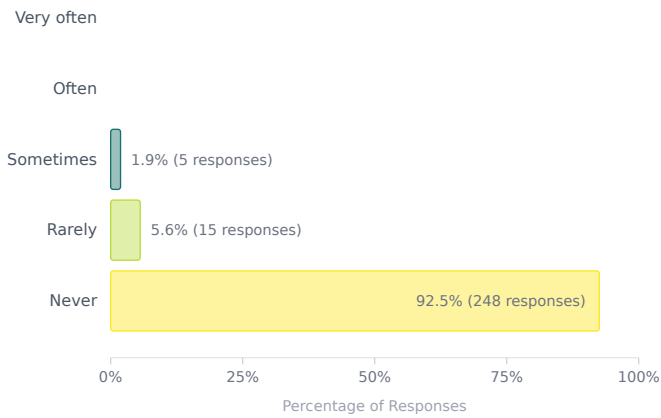
Arrests, detentions or imprisonment (15% weight in physical dimension)

Sexual assault or sexual harassment (15% weight in physical dimension)



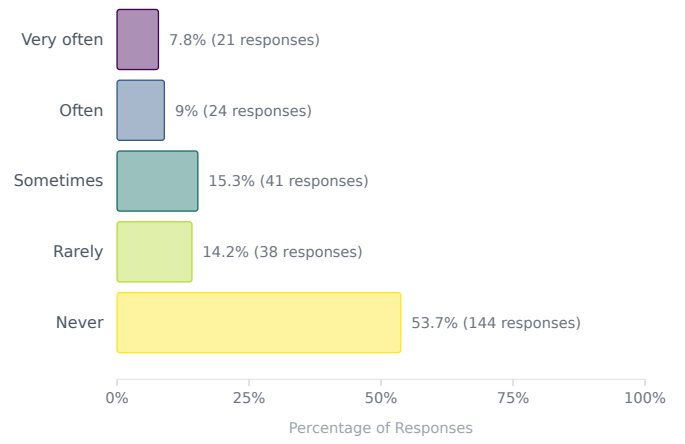
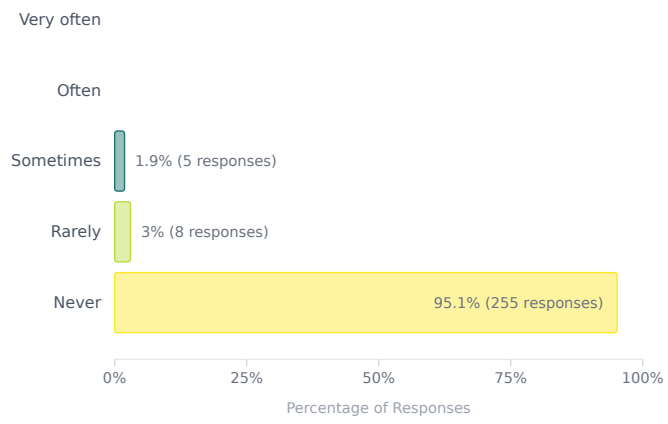
Other physical attacks (15% weight in physical dimension)

Abductions (did not contribute to calculation)



Office raids or seizures or damage of equipment (did not contribute to calculation)

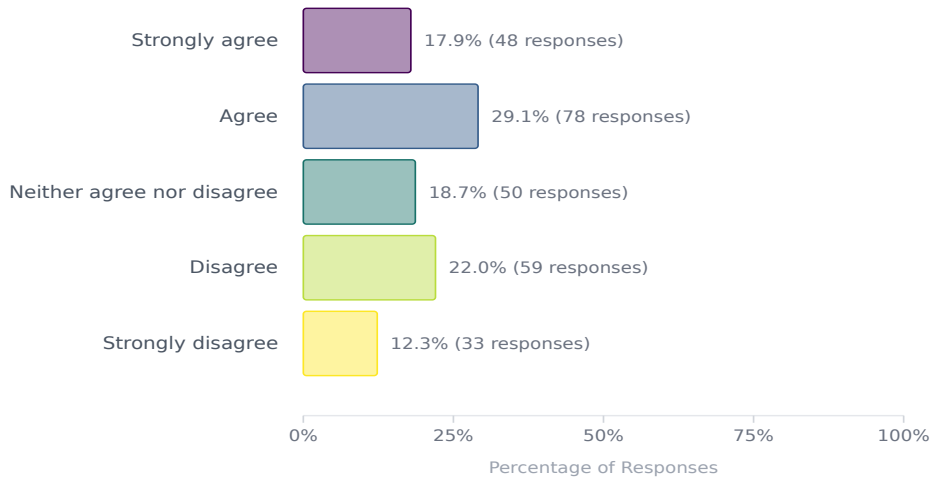
Being required to work in an environment where COVID-19 had easily spread (did not contribute to calculation)



Psychological Safety

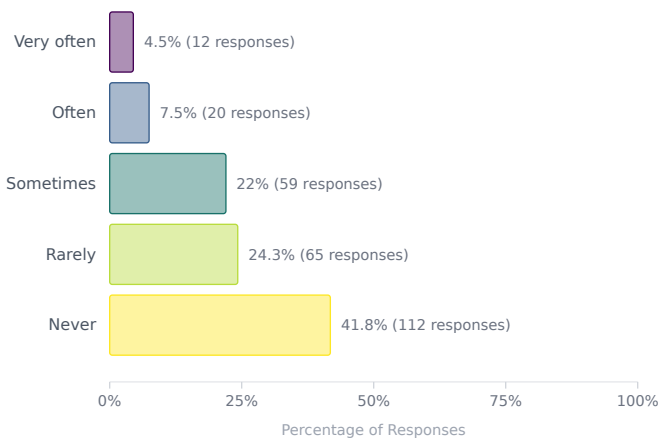
The psychological dimension carries **25% weight in the safety index**.

Responses to: "I am concerned about my emotional wellbeing" (20% weight in psychological dimension)

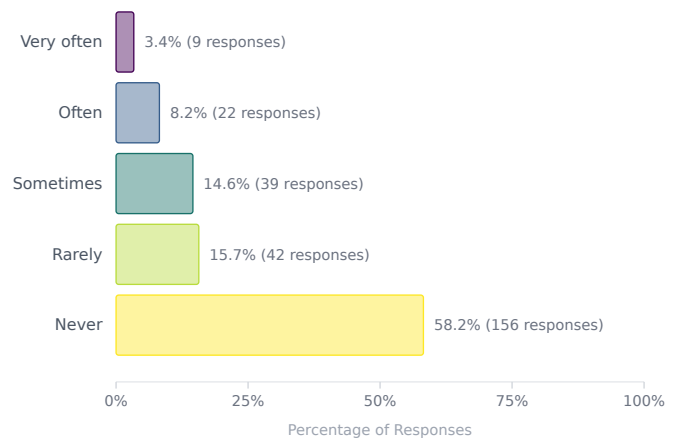


Responses to: "In the last five years, how often have you experienced any of the following actions related to your work as a journalist?"

Demeaning or hateful speech directed at you (16% weight in psychological dimension)



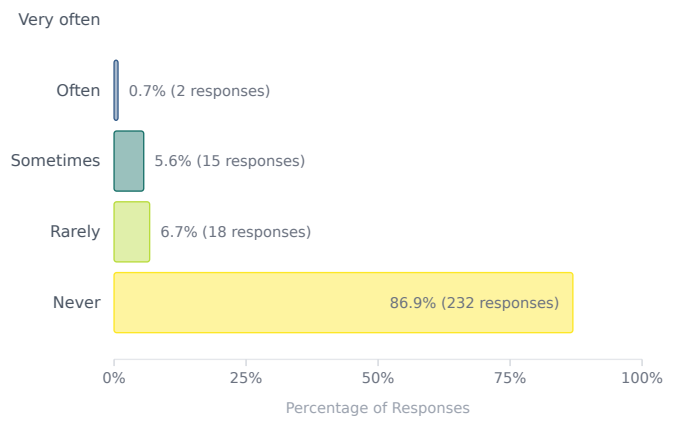
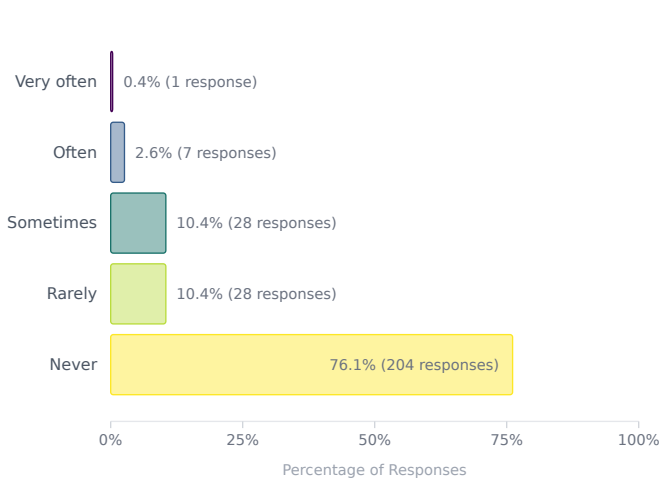
Public discrediting of your work (16% weight in psychological dimension)



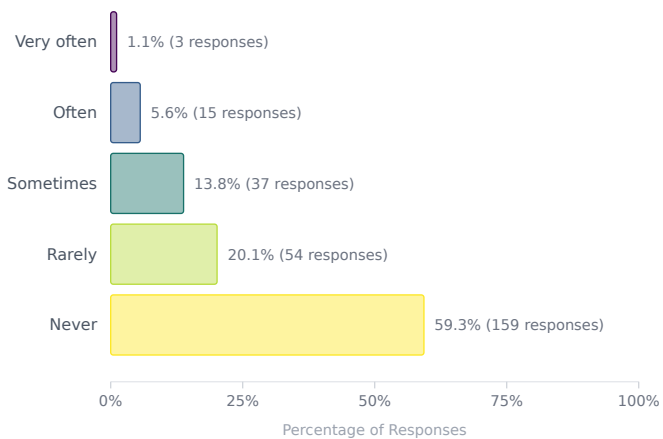
Legal actions against you because of your work (16% weight in psychological dimension)

Stalking (16% weight in psychological dimension)

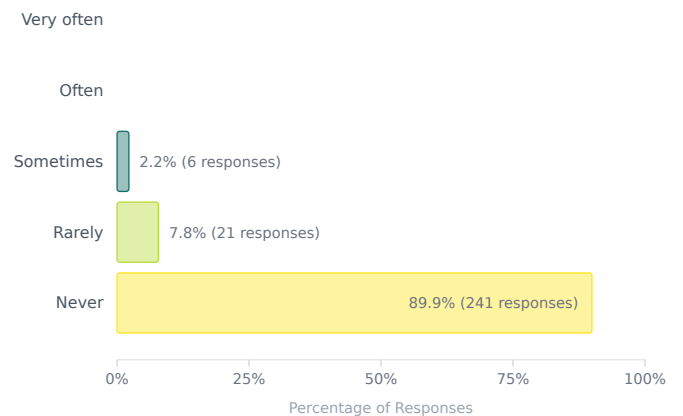
dimension)



Other threats or intimidation directed at you (16% weight in psychological dimension)

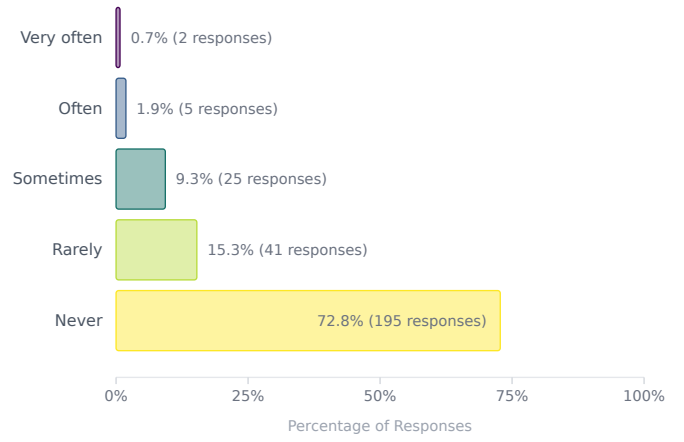
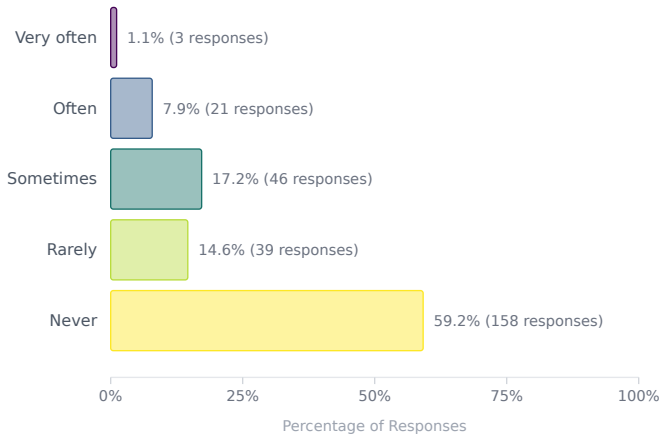


Coercion (did not contribute to calculation)

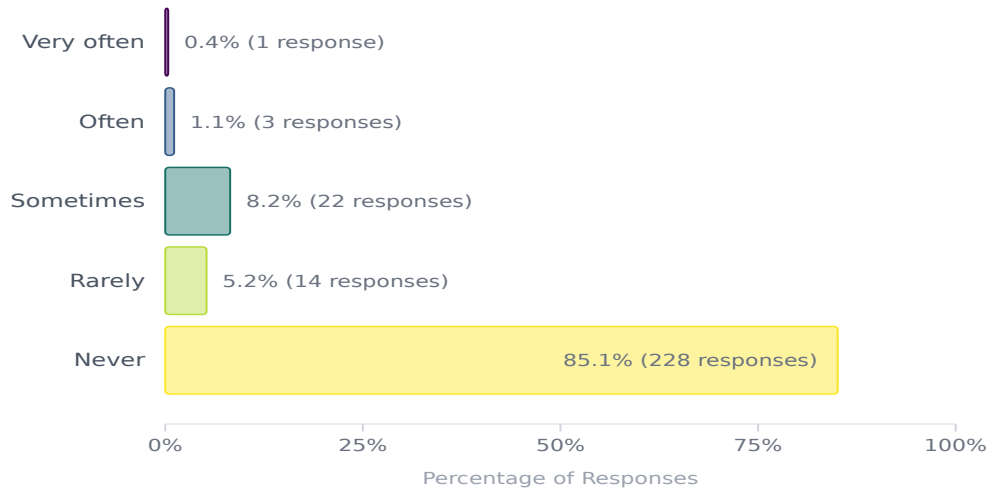


Questioning of your personal morality (did not contribute to calculation)

Workplace bullying (did not contribute to calculation)



Intimidation that targets your family or close associates (did not contribute to calculation)

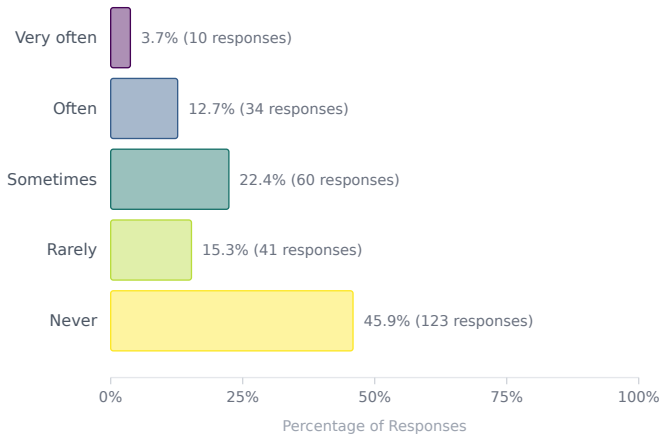


Digital Safety

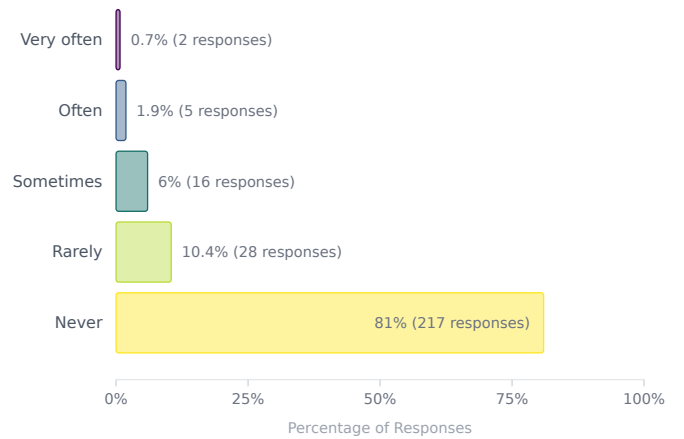
The digital dimension carries **12.5% weight in the safety index.**

Responses to: "In the last five years, how often have you experienced any of the following actions related to your work as a journalist?"

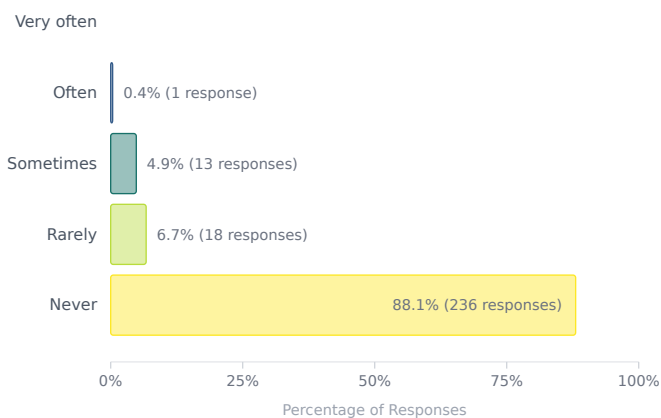
Surveillance (50% weight in digital dimension)



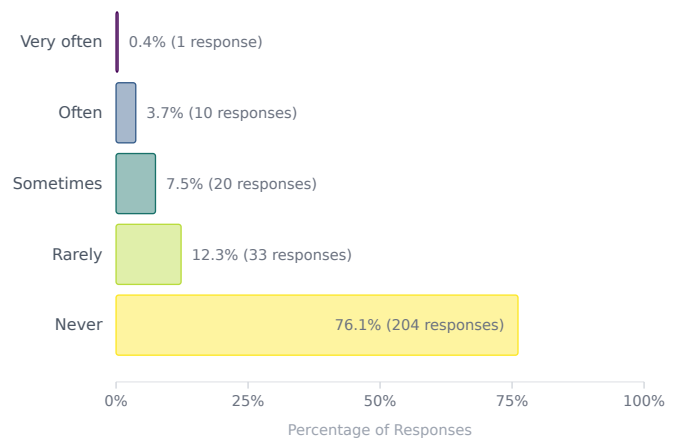
Hacking or blocking of social media accounts or websites (50% weight in digital dimension)



Others using your byline for fabricated or manipulated stories (did not contribute to calculation)



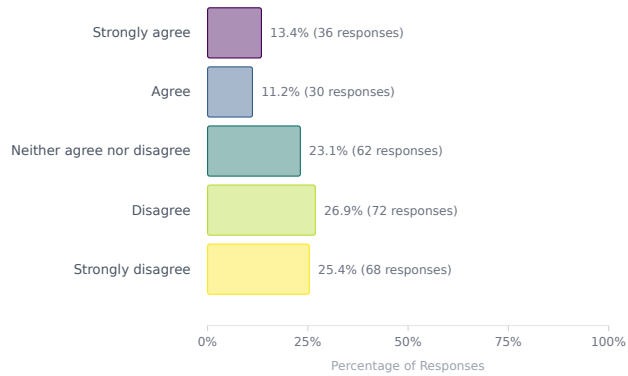
Others disseminating your personal information (did not contribute to calculation)



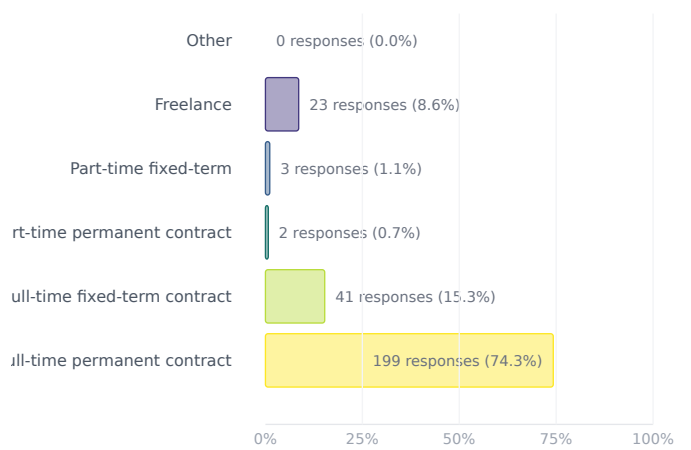
Financial Safety

The financial dimension carries **12.5% weight in the safety index.**

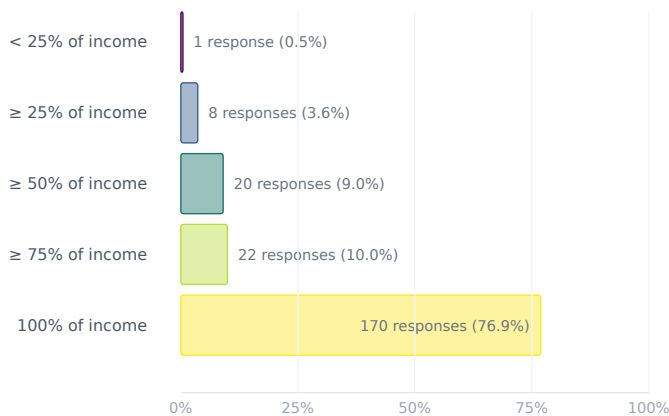
Responses to: "I am worried about losing my job in journalism within the next 12 months" (20% weight in financial dimension)



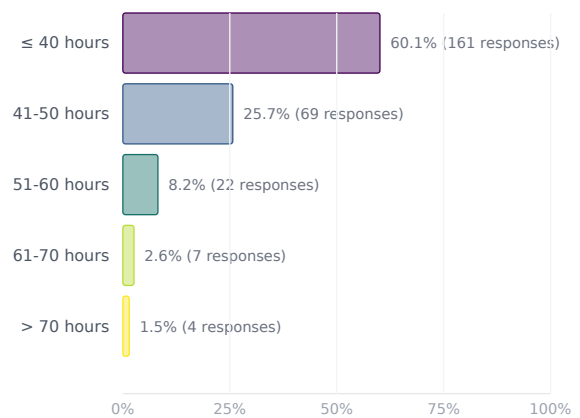
Responses to: "Which of the following categories best describes your current working situation as a journalist?" (20% weight in financial dimension)



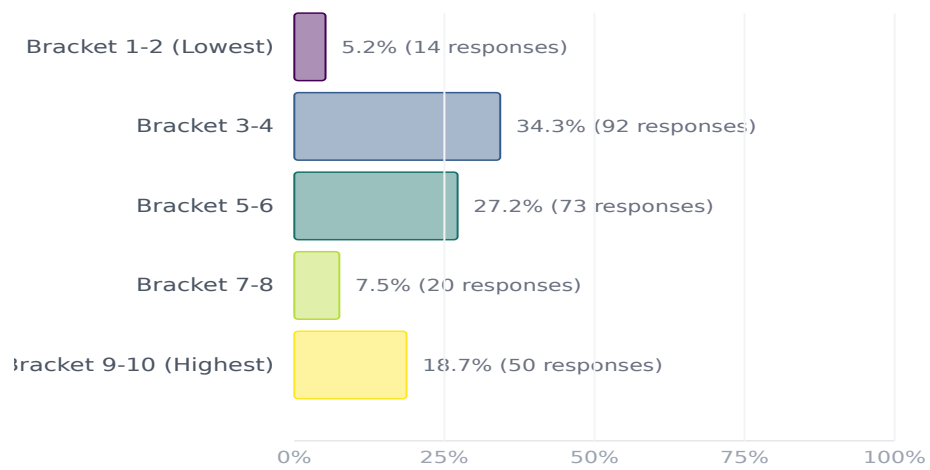
Responses to "Approximately what percentage of your overall work-related income comes from your work as a journalist?" (20% weight in financial dimension)



Responses to: "How many hours a week on average do you work as a journalist?" (20% weight in financial dimension)



Responses to: "In which of the following categories does your salary as a journalist fall?" (20% weight in financial dimension)



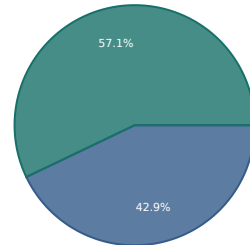
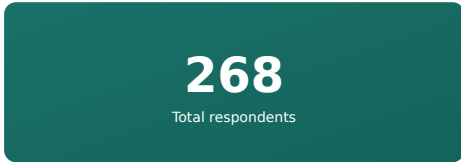
Options are given on a 10-point scale specific to each country.

Demographics

This section contains demographic information about survey respondents from Serbia.

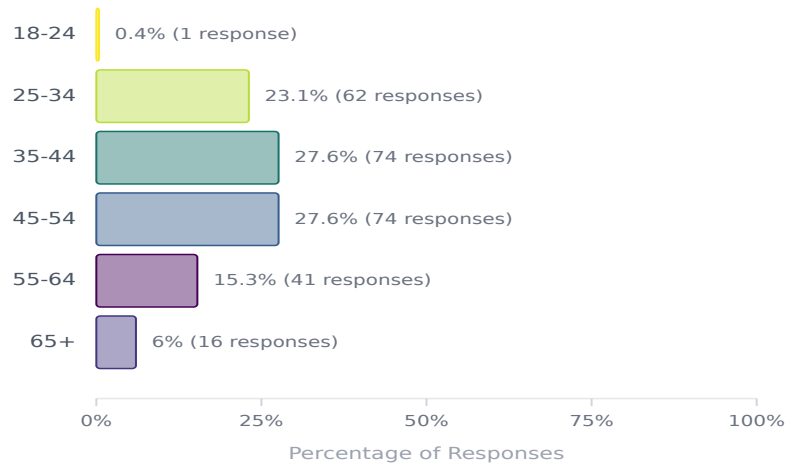
Gender Breakdown of Respondents

Survey Participation



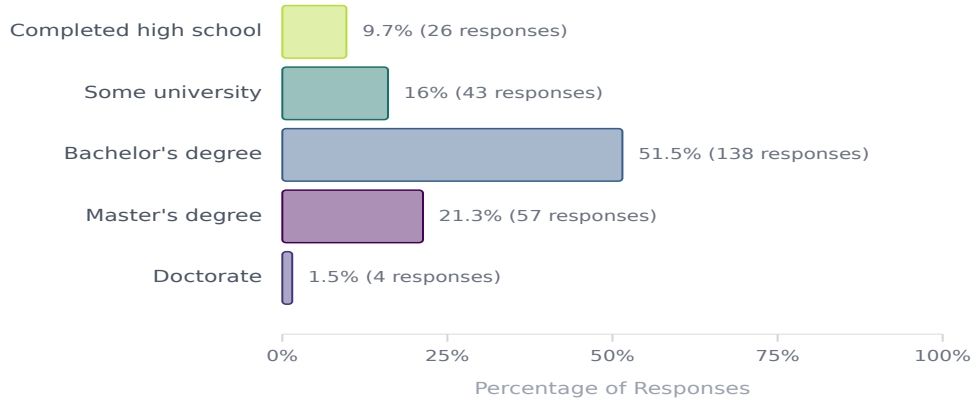
Male (115, 42.9%) Female (153, 57.1%) Other (0, 0.0%)

Age Distribution of Respondents

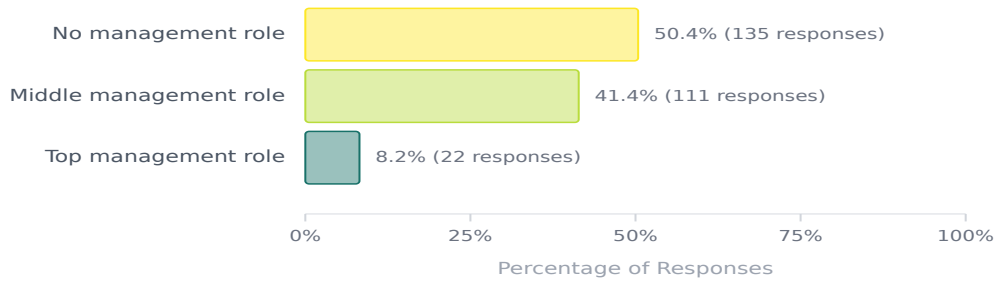


Education Level of Respondents

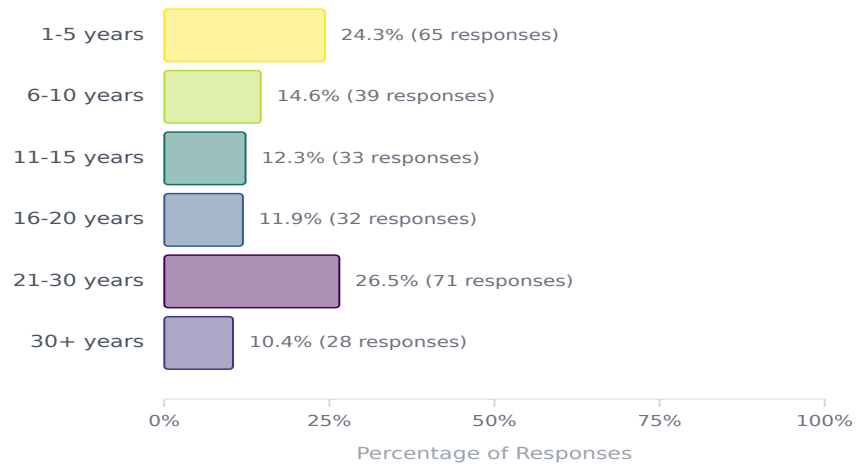
ot completed high school



Workplace Position of Respondents



Years of Experience as Journalist



For more detailed information about the methodology and complete findings, please visit the full country page at: <https://safetyofjournalists.org/index/country/serbia>

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For more information, visit safetyofjournalists.org

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