

Safety of Journalists Country Report

South Africa

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Report Authors

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Section 16 of the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, including freedom of the media. Nevertheless, threats against the media – especially in the form of online misogyny – are of increasing concern. Female journalists are often the targets of such attacks, as evident from a 2024 report by the International Foundation of Journalists, titled: “The women journalists of South Africa’s Daily Maverick: Sexualized, silenced and labeled Satan”. While physical attacks on journalists are less common, there are instances – especially involving the police force and politicians – where journalists have been manhandled. The South African National Editors’ Forum (Sanef) has released several press releases in this regard over the past few years. Almost two-thirds of South African respondents in the third Wave of the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS) “agree” (36.6%) or “strongly agree” (27.1%) that they are concerned about their emotional and mental wellbeing. The influence of reporting on traumatic news events, as well as the increasing precarity of newswork, have prompted Sanef to enter into an agreement with the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) to enable free mental wellness resources and support to journalists. When the WJS survey was conducted at the end of 2023, more than 80% of respondents (81.2%) were in full-time employment. Yet, more than 40% of respondents “agreed” (21.3%) or “strongly agreed” (21.3%) that they were worried about losing their jobs in the next 12 months. This is an indication that even full-time employment does not guarantee job security in the South African journalistic context.

Safety Index Scores

Overall Safety Score

79.06

Safety Dimensions

Physical Safety

88.05

Psychological Safety

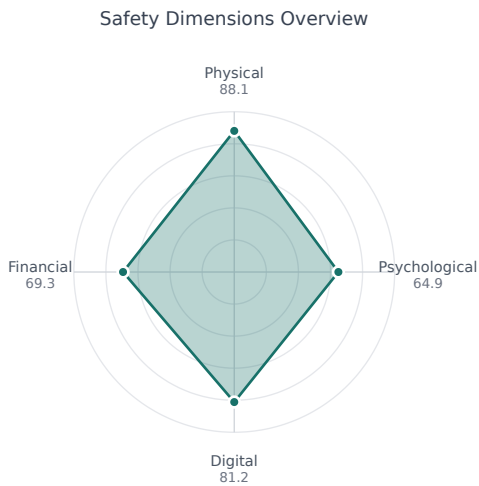
64.93

Digital Safety

Financial Safety

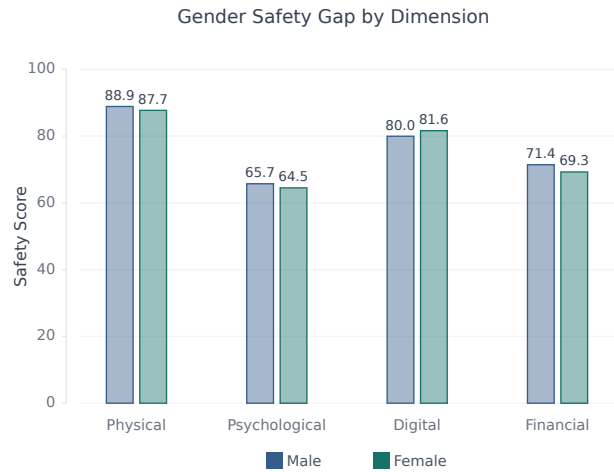
Overview

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



Safety Dimensions

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



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

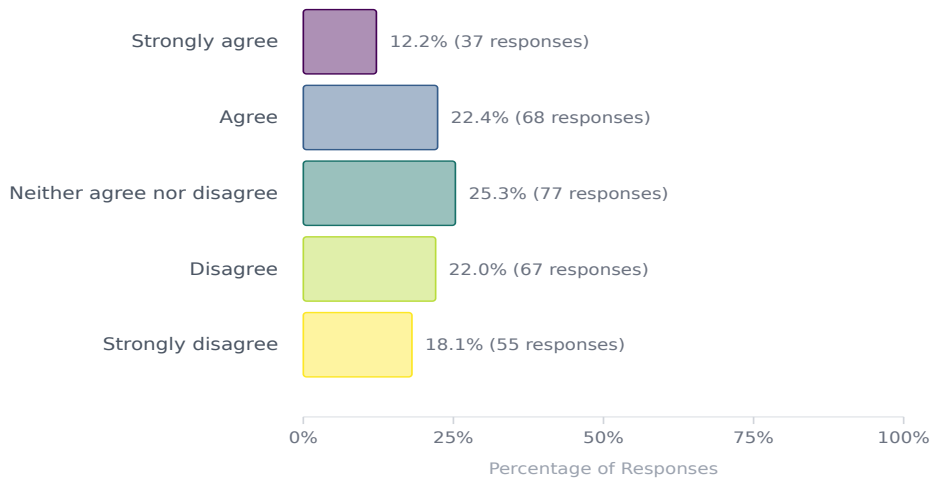
2016-2024

No journalist killings have been recorded in South Africa 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.

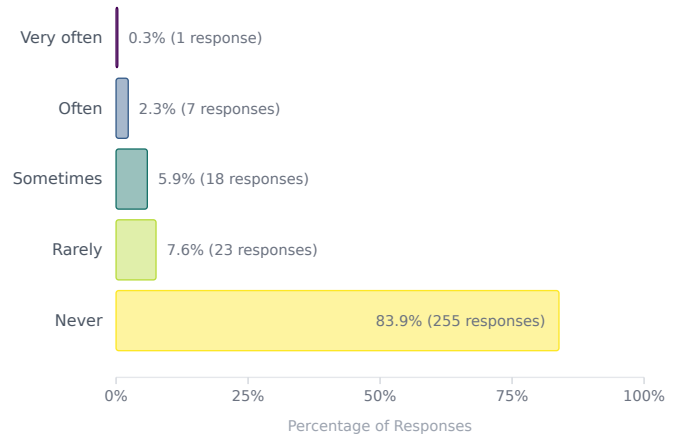
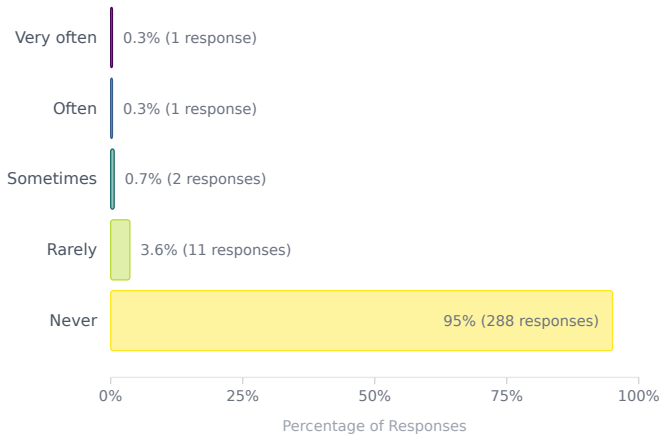
Responses to: "I am concerned about my physical wellbeing" (20% weight in physical dimension)



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

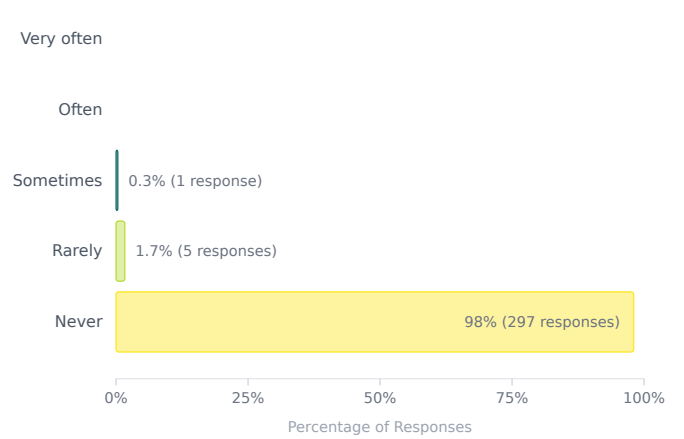
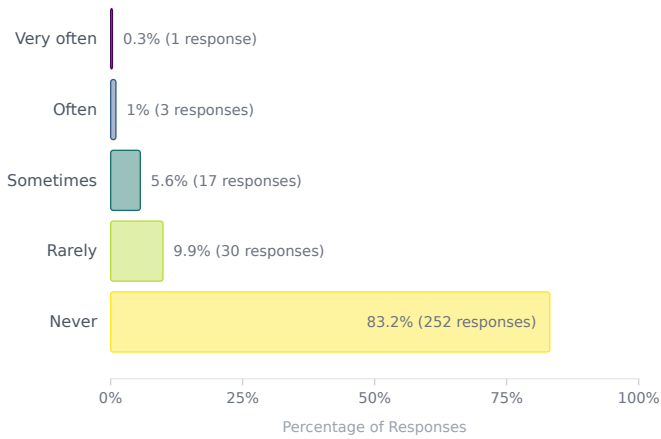
Arrests, detentions or imprisonment (15% weight in physical dimension)

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



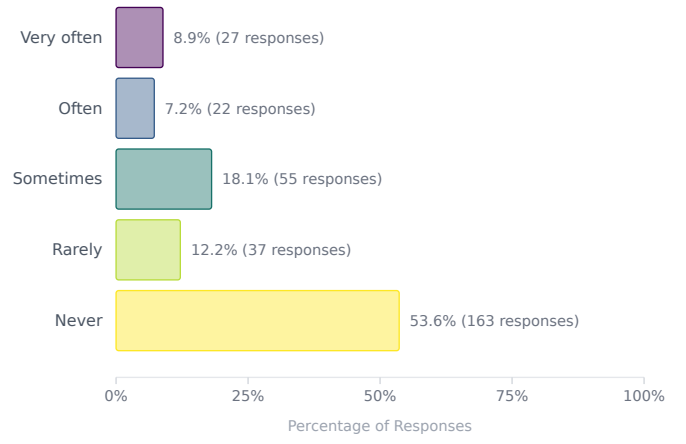
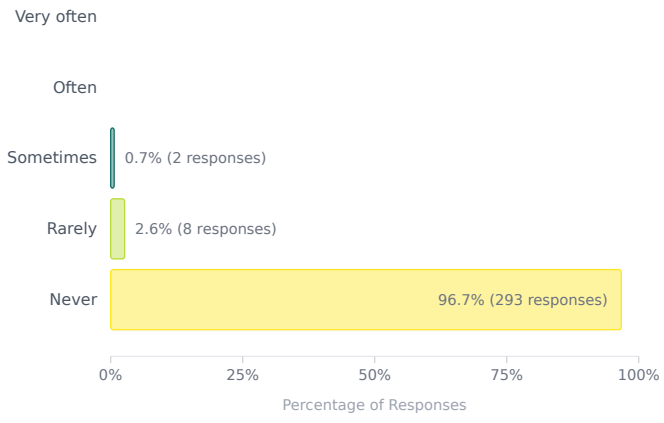
Other physical attacks (15% weight in physical dimension)

Abductions (did not contribute to calculation)



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

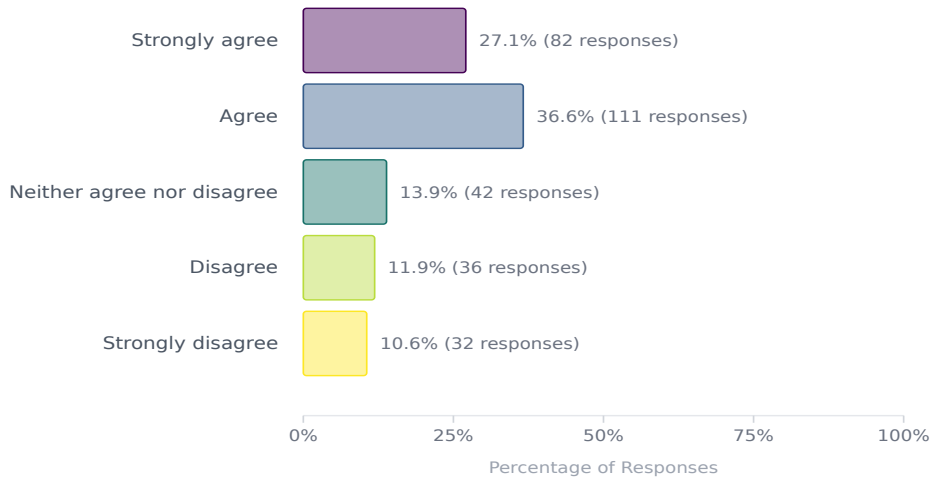
Being required to work in an environment where COVID-19 had easily spread (did not contribute to calculation)



Psychological Safety

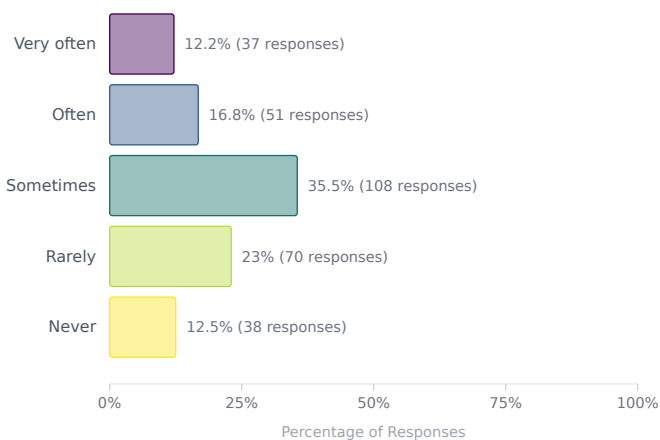
The psychological dimension carries **25% weight in the safety index**.

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

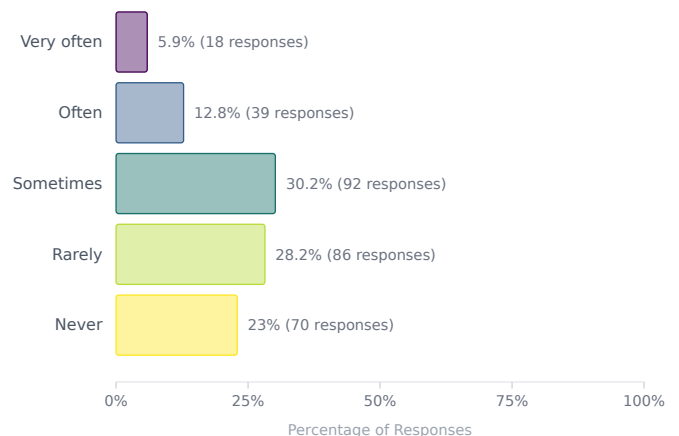


Responses to: "In the last five years, how often have you experienced any of the following actions related to your work as a journalist?"

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



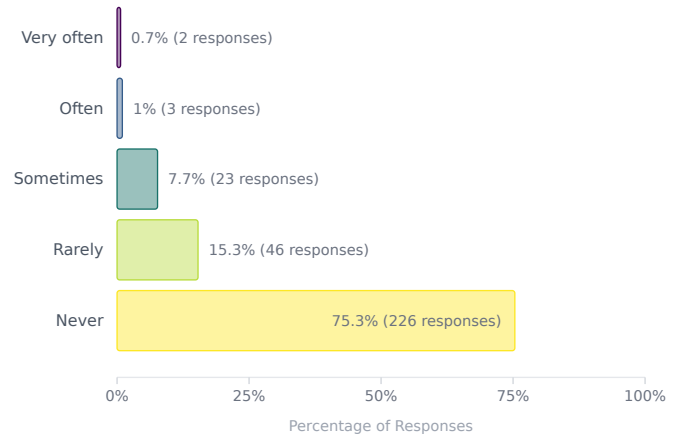
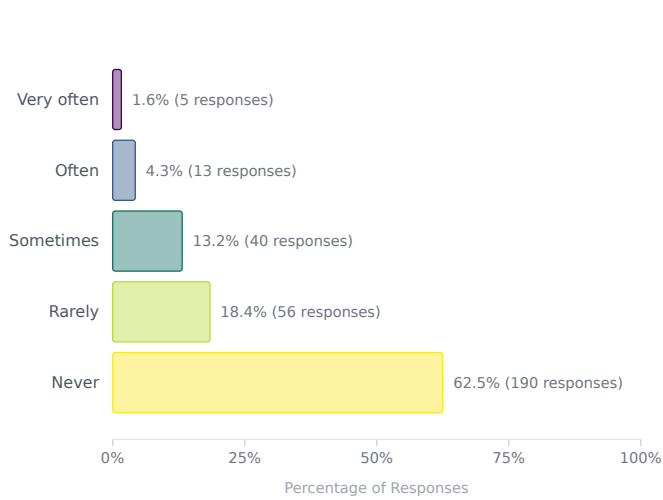
Public discrediting of your work (16% weight in psychological dimension)



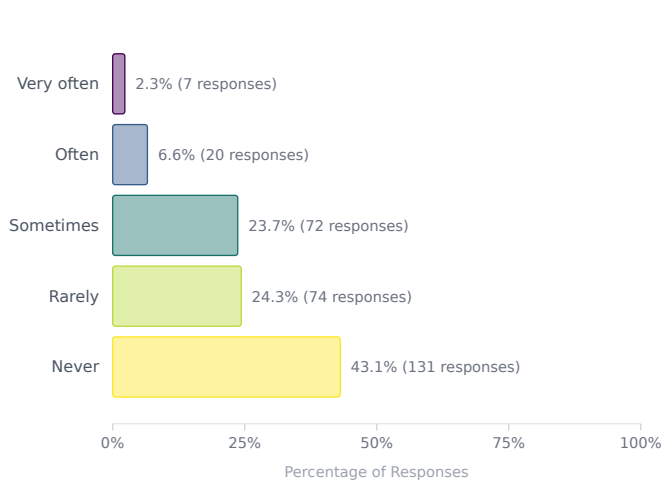
Legal actions against you because of your work (16% weight in psychological dimension)

Stalking (16% weight in psychological dimension)

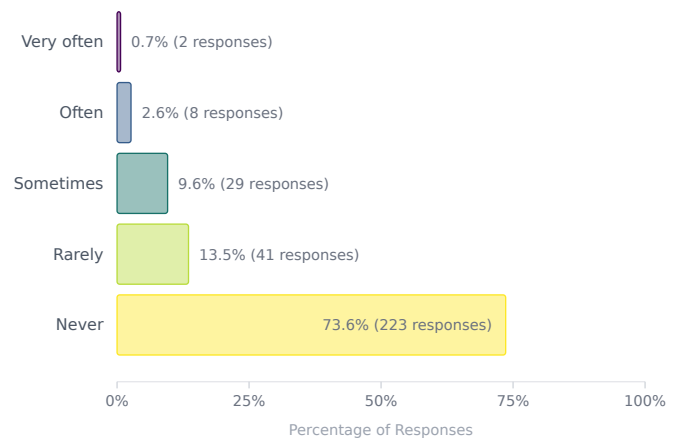
dimension)



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

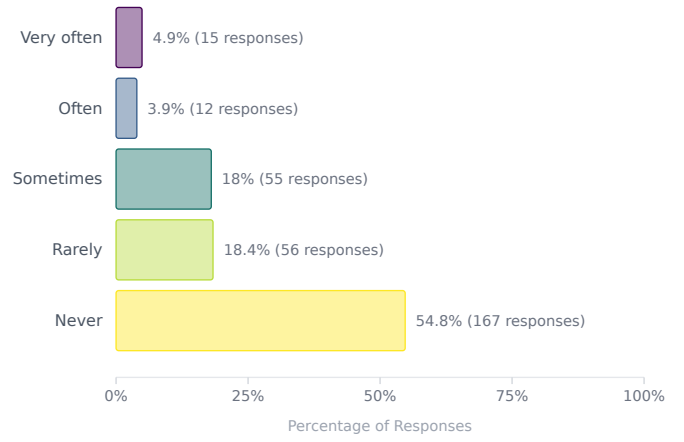
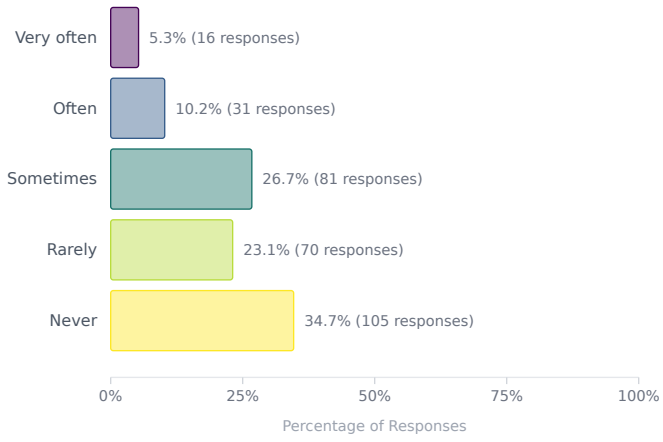


Coercion (did not contribute to calculation)

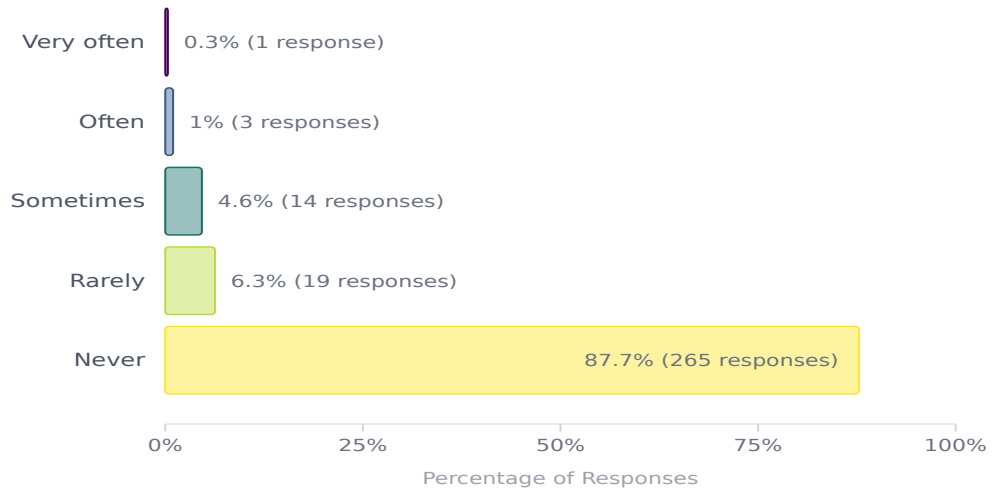


Questioning of your personal morality (did not contribute to calculation)

Workplace bullying (did not contribute to calculation)



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

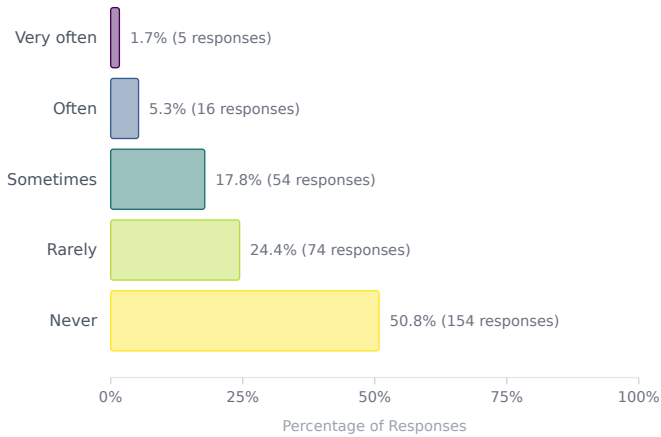


Digital Safety

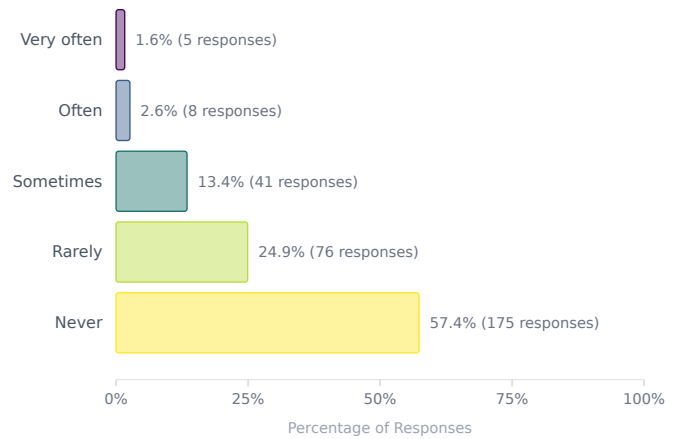
The digital dimension carries **12.5% weight in the safety index.**

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

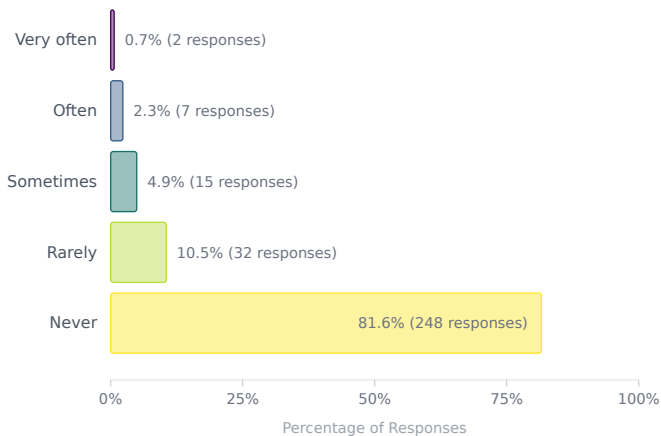
Surveillance (50% weight in digital dimension)



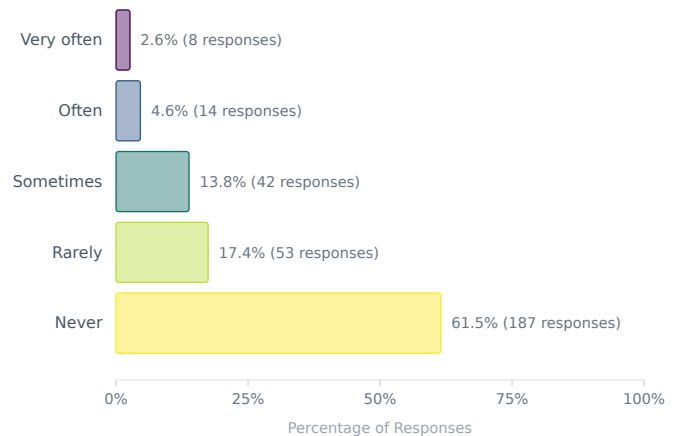
Hacking or blocking of social media accounts or websites (50% weight in digital dimension)



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



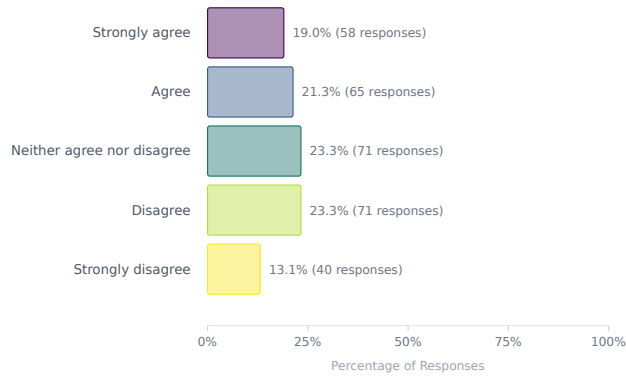
Others disseminating your personal information (did not contribute to calculation)



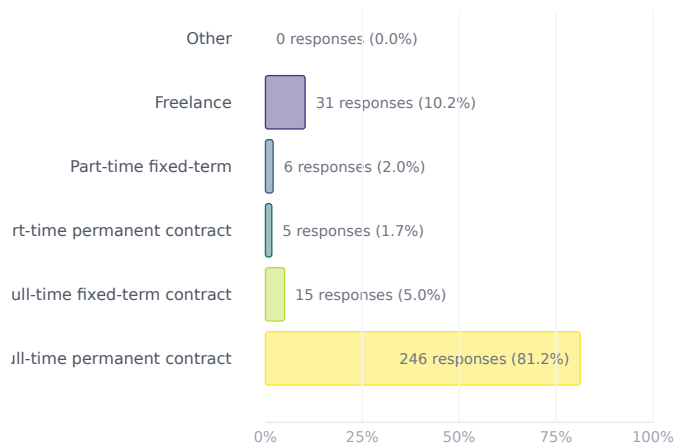
Financial Safety

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

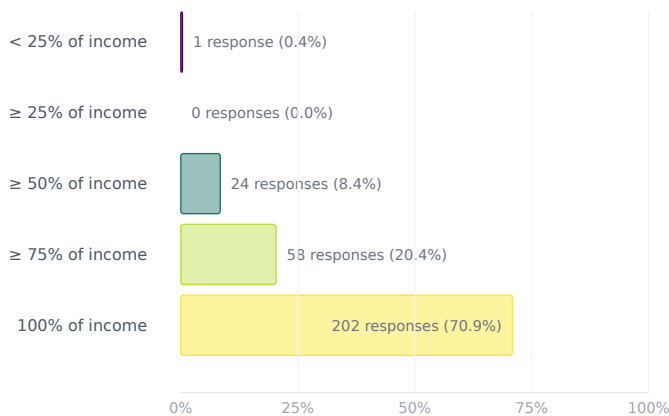
Responses to: "I am worried about losing my job in journalism within the next 12 months" (20% weight in financial dimension)



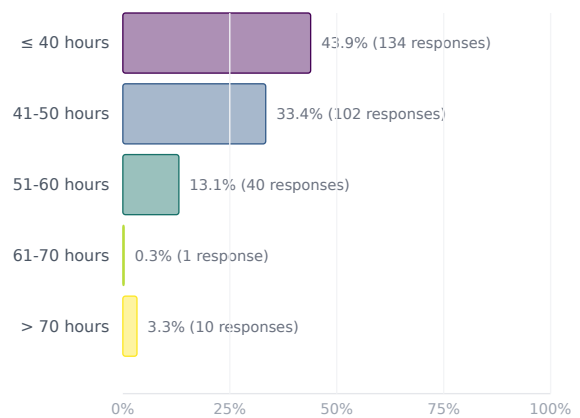
Responses to: "Which of the following categories best describes your current working situation as a journalist?" (20% weight in financial dimension)



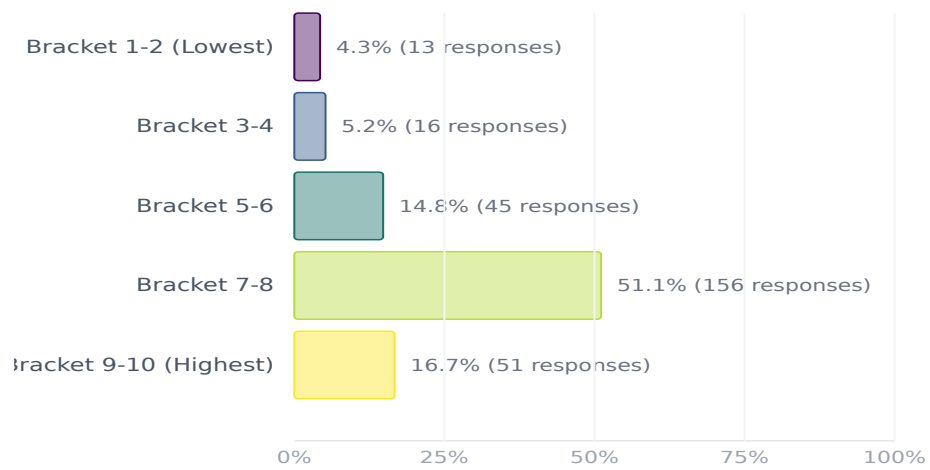
Responses to "Approximately what percentage of your overall work-related income comes from your work as a journalist?" (20% weight in financial dimension)



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)



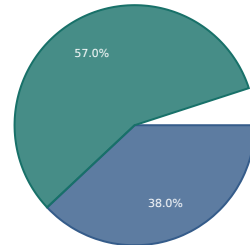
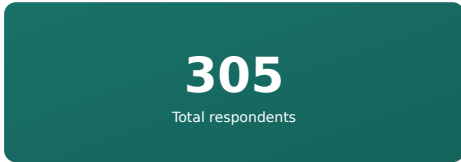
Options are given on a 10-point scale specific to each country.

Demographics

This section contains demographic information about survey respondents from South Africa.

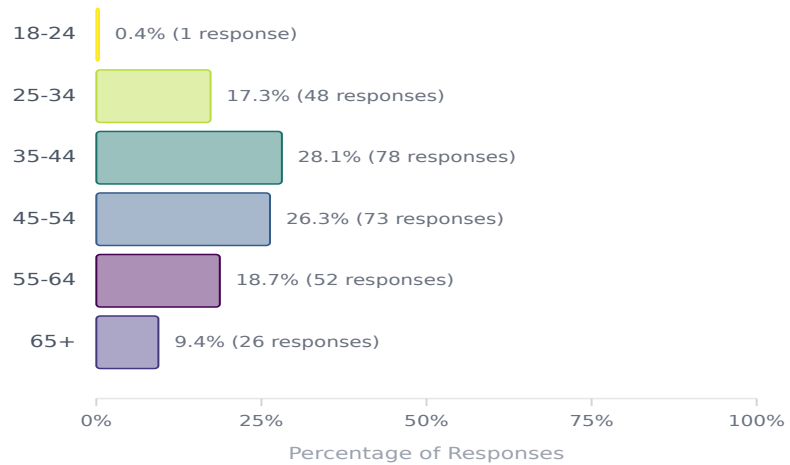
Gender Breakdown of Respondents

Survey Participation



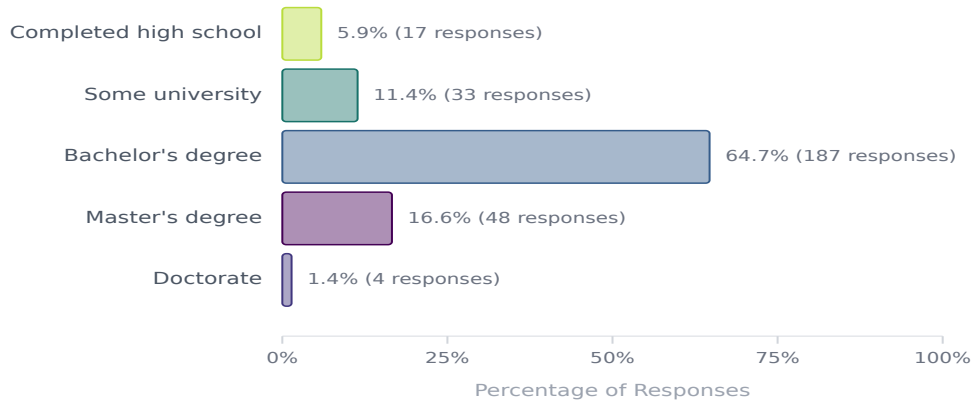
Male (116, 38.0%) Female (174, 57.0%) Other (0, 0.0%)

Age Distribution of Respondents

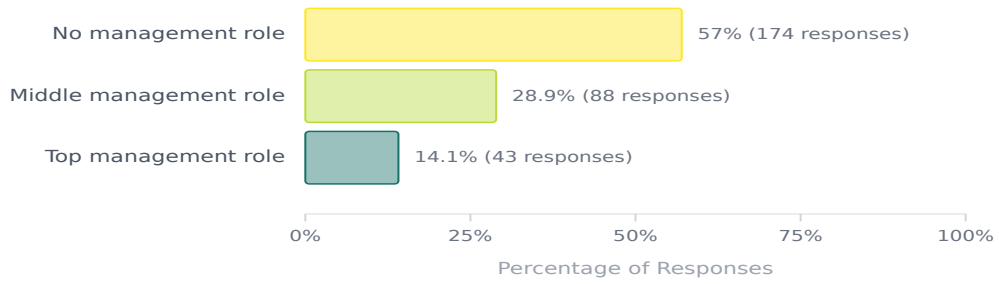


Education Level of Respondents

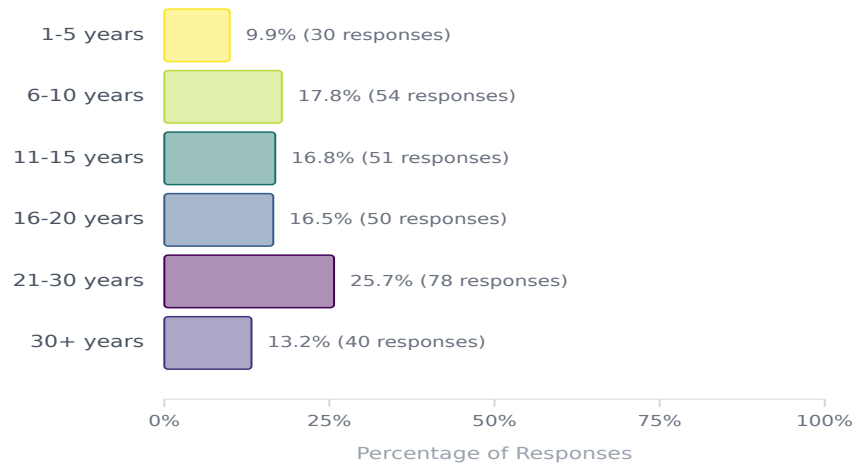
ot completed high school



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/south-africa>

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For more information, visit safetyofjournalists.org

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