



Working Conditions of Women Journalists in Pakistan



Survey Report

Working Conditions of Women Journalists in Pakistan

Solidarity Centre/Civic Action Resources



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Introduction

In countries like Pakistan, all journalists have to be conflict reporters, used to being in the frontline of conflict and continuously facing difficult and even dangerous situations. However, very often frontline is not only the dangerous places they go to report or report from. Their houses, offices or computers are just as exposed to security threats and hazards. Over 100 journalists and media workers have been killed in the line of duty in Pakistan since 2000 and over 2,000 injured, kidnapped, arrested or harassed and intimidated in the same period. The year 2014 was the worst ever in the history of Pakistan for media with the highest number of casualties as 14 journalists, media assistants and a blogger were killed for their work and dozens injured, kidnapped and intimidated.

For a number of years now, Pakistan has had the dubious distinction of being among the most “dangerous countries” for journalists in the world, according to national and international watchdogs monitoring freedom of expression. According to Bob Dietz, the Asia Coordinator of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ): “Even though (the situation in Pakistan) is much better than countries such as Iraq, Syria or Somalia that are torn apart by civil war and internal strife, Pakistan’s numbers of violence against journalists are comparable to these countries.” Though male journalists have faced much of the brunt of violence, little is known or heard from women journalists who also work in the same environment and suffer the same insecurities and threats. Every year, women journalists are assaulted, threatened and defamed – all in pursuit of the truth. Apart from the law and order situation, women are also vulnerable to numerous psychological and physical harms due to their gender. They are experiencing what Irina Bokova, director-general of UNESCO, has described as a “double attack”: they are being targeted for being both a journalist and a woman.

Violence against women journalists is an important issue that is rarely openly confronted and part of the problem is that for women journalists in Pakistan, there hardly exists any support system – social or professional. They may be part of press clubs and unions but socio-cultural and gender segregation deeply entrenched in the Pakistani society abandons them to their own fate or devices. Women journalists not only face violence during the course of reporting dangerous events, much like a male journalist because they find themselves in a dangerous context, but they also face sexual harassment. Social taboos, segregation and stigmas keep them from speaking openly about them and seeking support. Since Pakistan is an honour based society, any attack on woman’s reputation, physically or using the internet, can have serious repercussions for her, both professionally and personally.

Women journalists are a small fraction of journalist community in the country, mainly concentrated in large cities. While more secure professions like medicine and teaching have attracted large number of women, journalism remains out of bounds for most women due to the harsh working conditions and challenging security environment. However, they have made their

mark as leading reporters and editors in news publications and outlets. But they still face enormous odds like the glass ceiling in media jobs, working conditions, physical, structural and cultural violence, lack of equal opportunity, society's attitudes towards working women, a media landscape dominated by men beholden to the society baggage of biases and stereotypes. Promoting the work and advancing the role of women in the news media across the globe is critical to media pluralisms, women rights, transparency and the diversity of voices. Women journalists are not just that alone, they are the voice and representatives of the nearly 50 percent of the country's population comprised of women – including those who, like them, work in a male-dominated milieu that tends to look at the world and issues from the male lens. This survey provides an insight into the world of women journalists and sets a baseline for future efforts to support them. This survey is an effort to take stock of the threats and vulnerabilities faced by women journalists, the policy environment surrounding their work and avenues of support available to them. It is hoped that it will help non-government organizations and the government of Pakistan in outlining evidence based policy interventions.

Summary of Key Findings

- Demographics of respondents show that a large percentage of journalists are young; 74 percent women journalists are less than 40 years of age while the largest age group is 30-39.
- A large majority of women journalists (65 percent) are members of their local press clubs. However, more than one third remain non-members.
- Though a majority of women journalists are members of Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) or Regional Union of Journalists (RIUJs), still no less than 42 percent women journalists are non-members.
- While 61 percent journalists have received a contract for their job, 39 percent women journalists are working without a contract.
- More than one third of women journalists who took this survey receive less salary than their male counterparts.
- A very large majority (80 percent) of women journalists said they were not paid any over time for working after their duty hours.
- Only 18 percent women journalists, mainly belonging to elite media groups, said that the facility of medical insurance was available to them while 82 percent said this facility was unavailable to them.
- Half of women journalists (51 percent) said their organization was not mindful of special needs of women journalists.
- A large majority of women journalists felt that they were provided conducive working hours by their organization. However, one third (33 percent) felt that this was not the case.
- The results of the survey show that paid maternity is available to 63 percent women journalists while 37 percent women journalists are denied this right.
- While 67 percent women journalists said that sufficient supplies and equipment were available to them, 33 percent said sufficient supplies and equipment were not made available to them to perform their work.
- Only 29 percent women journalists felt that relevant training and professional development opportunities were available to them at their organizations while 71 percent felt such opportunities were not provided by them.
- A majority of women workers (58 percent) said women journalists did not enjoy promotion opportunities equal to men.
- More than one third of women workers (38 percent) fear for their physical security.
- A large minority (35 percent) of women journalists said they had experienced intimidation, threats or abuse in relation to their work, while 65 percent respondents said they did not experience such a situation in relation to their work.
- Women journalists face a range of threats related to their work. Name calling, insults and innuendos top the list followed by attempts to damage their reputation and honour. Other major threats include insults or criticism published online, trolling on social media, public humiliation and threats to humiliate and threats of violence.
- Sexual harassment in the newsroom does not appear to be all that rampant but it is still

present as 8 percent women journalists said they had faced sexual harassment while doing their job or at work place.

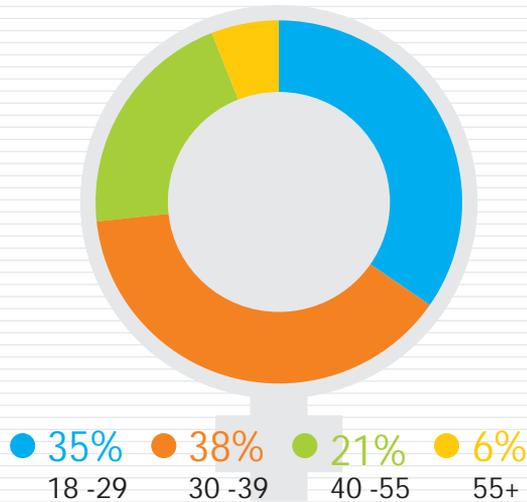
- Less than one fourth of women journalists who reported sexual harassment at workplace bothered to report it. Women journalist who chose to report an incident of sexual harassment mostly (45 percent) reported it to their colleagues, probably to win moral support to stop recurrence of such incidents. 33 percent reported these incidents to someone in authority while 22 percent reported it to the employer.
- More than a quarter women journalists (27 percent) said they had experienced some kind of digital security threat.
- The most serious digital security threat faced by women journalists pertains to their emails (55 percent). Other threats included account hacking (20 percent), digital/online trolling (15 percent) and account surveillance (10 percent).
- Despite omnipresence of such threats, 71 percent respondents said that women journalists were not aware of digital dangers and protection measures. Only 29 percent felt that women journalists had an understanding of such threats and the right protection needed to guard against them.
- Only 27 percent women journalists use safety measures to ensure digital security while 73 percent said they did not take any precautionary measures or use any software for the purpose.
- The survey shows that only 25 percent of women journalists have received any digital safety training while 75 percent have not received any.
- Only 18 percent of the respondents said that they had received some kind of security training or resources through their organization; 8 percent women journalists said they had received training for physical security, 5 percent for digital security and 5 percent for source protection.
- Only 23 percent women journalist said their employers recognize specific risks faced by women and undertake specific mitigation strategies.
- Only 16 percent of women journalists said that their media house provided software and equipment to enable its journalists to protect their communications.
- A majority of women journalists (62 percent) are not aware of the major legislations that protect women from harassment. Only 38 percent women journalists said they were aware of the Protection against Sexual Harassment Act 2010. Similarly, only 46 percent women journalists said they were aware of the Section 509 of the Pakistan Penal Code.
- Women journalists appear keen on learning about the laws that protect women from sexual harassment. 65 percent respondents said they would like to receive training on Protection against Sexual Harassment law.

3. Methodology

The research methodology used in this survey is quantitative. The population sample consists of Pakistani women journalists working with electronic and print media, who according to some estimates number around 750. A sample of 250 women journalists was drawn, out of which 214 responded to the survey. The survey questionnaire was administered face to face where possible, while telephonic interviews were conducted where it was not convenient. The data collection period lasted twelve weeks (May 1 to July 30, 2015). The survey aimed to reach out to women journalists working with different media and outlets. Responses were verified by contacting every 20th response to validate answers. All participants were assured complete confidentiality and anonymity.

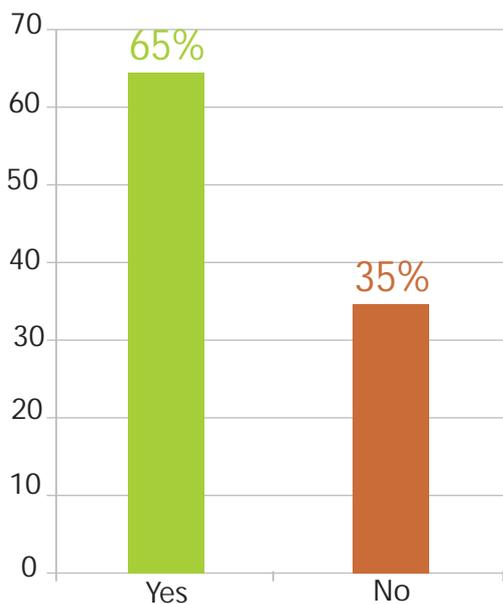
4. Findings

1. Age of women Journalists



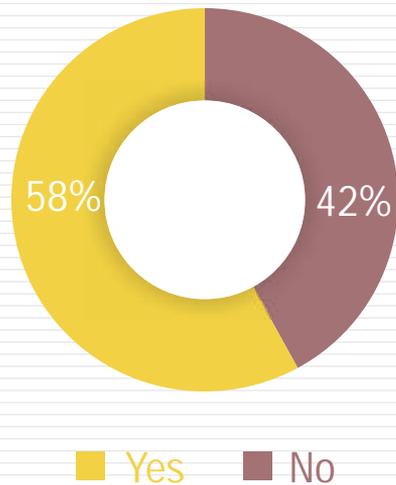
Demographics of respondents show that a large percentage of journalists are young; 74 percent women journalists are less than 40 years of age while the largest age group is 30-39. This may be ascribed to the fact that media expansion in Pakistan happened only a decade ago and a large majority of journalists joined the profession during the last decade.

2. Are you a member of the local press club?



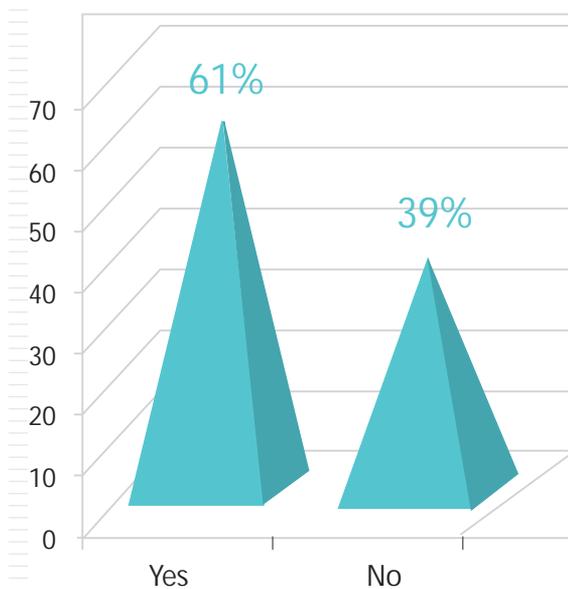
Press clubs are unique institutions owned and managed by working journalists. They provide journalists with a space to interact socially and professionally, learn from their peers and seniors and participate in activism irrespective of their affiliation with any particular media group. Press clubs also serve as a base for many journalists who work as freelancers or who work for a media house that has not set up their office in the city. Press clubs are even more important for women as they help them overcome their isolation and become part of the larger journalist community. A large majority of women journalists (65 percent) are members of their local press clubs. However, more than one third remain non-members. This data outlines the need for the press clubs to adopt a lenient attitude while granting membership to women journalists.

3. Are you a member of the PFUJ/RIJJs?



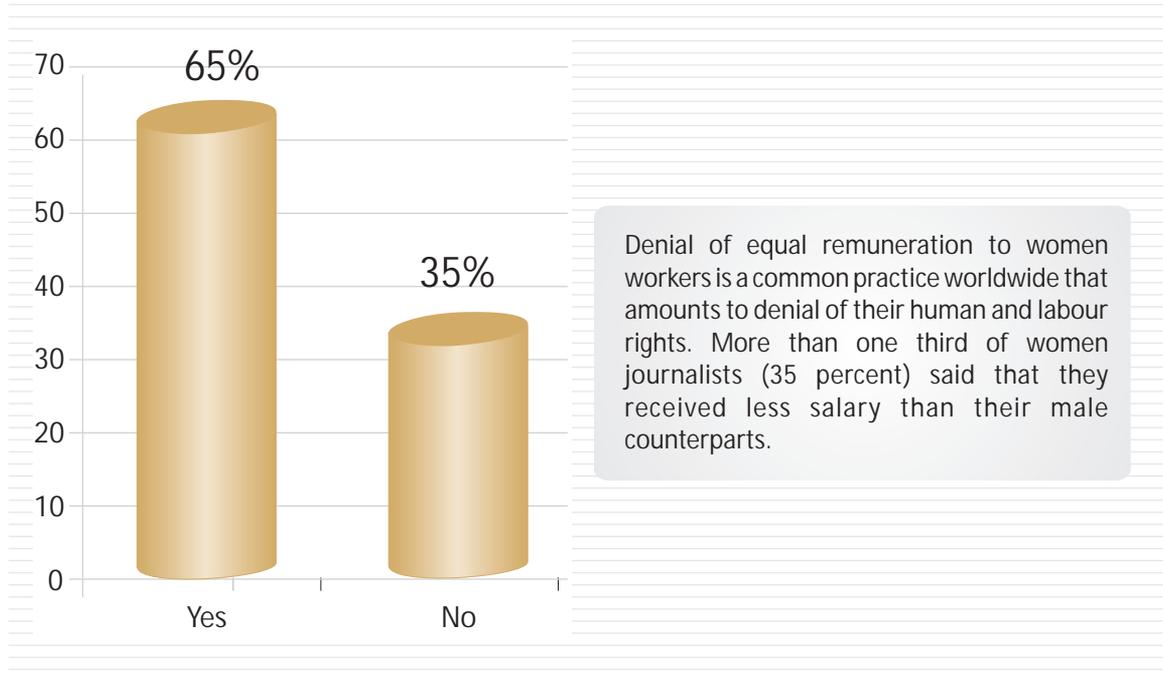
Journalist unions play an important role on the national media scene, organizing journalists as a community to struggle for their rights and to work for freedom of expression. Membership of these organizations gives journalists a chance to participate in labour rights and media rights activism and to make their mark as leaders of the community. Though a majority of women journalists are members of these bodies, still no less than 42 percent women journalists are not members of PFUJ or RIJJs. These figures highlight the need for the unions to make proactive efforts to enlist more women journalists as their members if they are to improve the working conditions for women in media.

4. Have you received a contract from your organization?

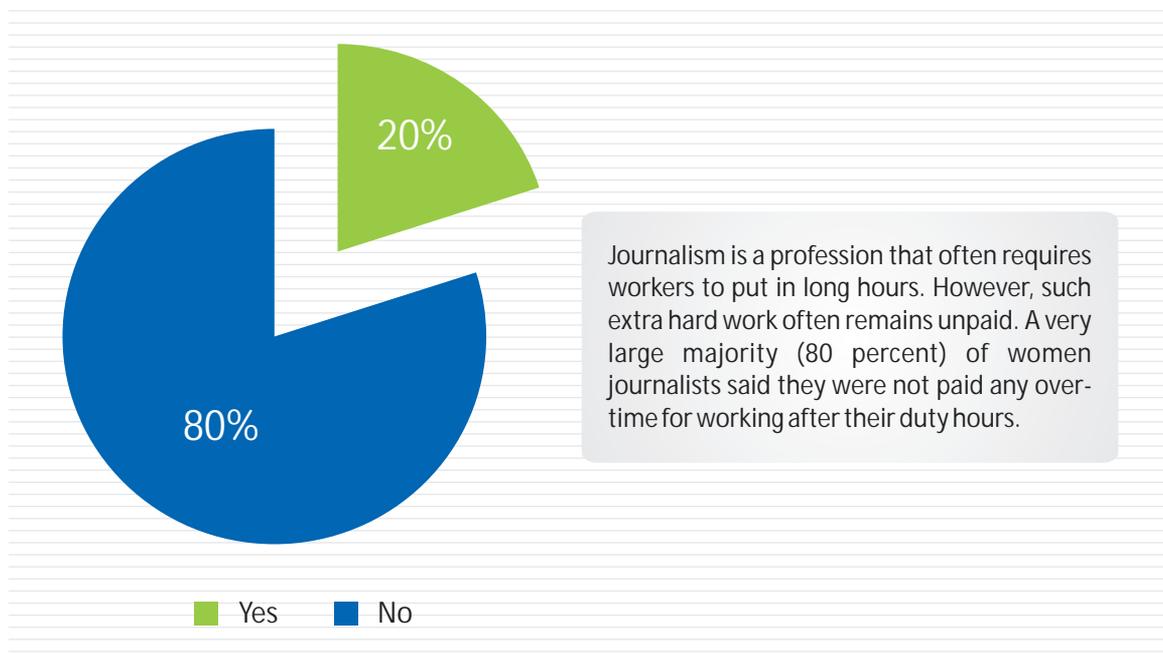


In absence of a contract, a worker remains deprived of most legal rights and cannot take steps for grievance redress in case of a conflict with the employer. While 61 percent women journalists have received a contract for their job, 39 percent are working without it.

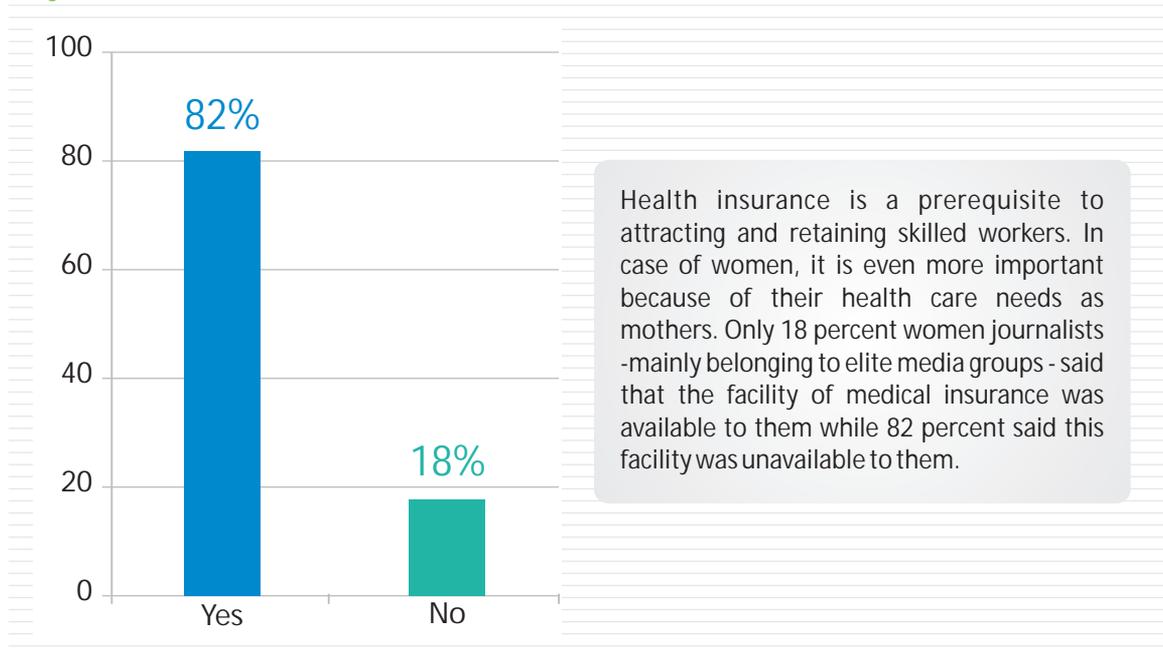
5. Do you receive an equal remuneration/salary as compared to your male counterparts/colleagues?



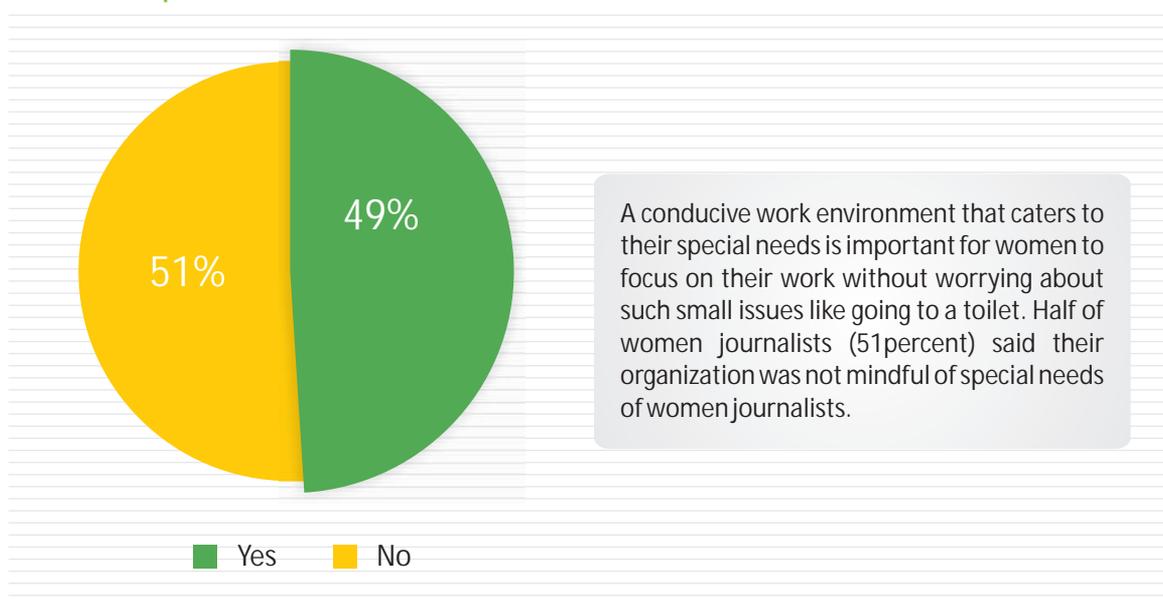
6. Do you get over-time?



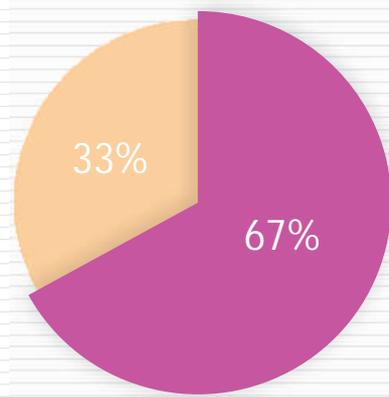
7. Does your organization provide medical insurance cover to female journalists?



8. Is your organization mindful of special needs of female journalists like separate toilets, rest rooms, etc?



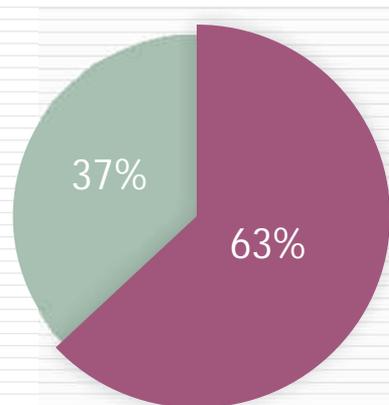
9. Does your organization provide for conducive working hours/flexible working hours?



■ Yes ■ No

Due to cultural constraints, family needs and security issues, most women workers want flexible working hours. A large majority of women journalists felt that they were provided conducive working hours by their organization. However, one third (33 percent) felt that this was not the case.

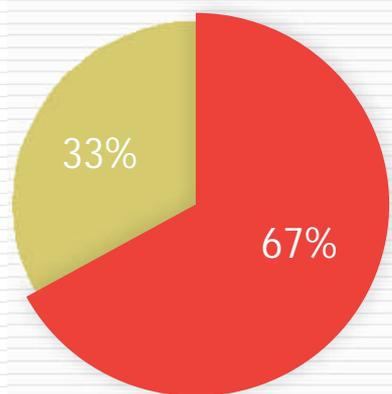
10. Does your organization provide fully paid maternity leave to female journalists?



■ Yes ■ No

Raising a family is a cherished goal for many working people. Yet pregnancy and maternity are an especially vulnerable time for working women and their families. Expectant and nursing mothers require special protection to prevent harm to their or their infants' health, and they need adequate time to give birth, to recover, and to nurse their children. At the same time, they also require protection to ensure that they will not lose their job simply because of pregnancy or maternity leave. Such protection not only ensures a woman's equal access to employment, it also ensures the continuation of often vital income which is necessary for the well-being of her entire family. The results of the survey show that paid maternity is available to 63 percent women journalists while 37 percent women journalists are denied this right.

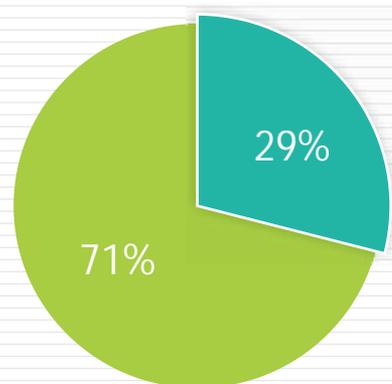
12. Does your organization provide sufficient equipment and supplies to perform your duties?



■ Yes ■ No

In a networked world, a journalist requires electronic gadgets and modern equipment to undertake her work efficiently. While 67 percent women journalists said that such supplies were available to them, 33 percent said sufficient supplies and equipment were not made available to them to perform their work.

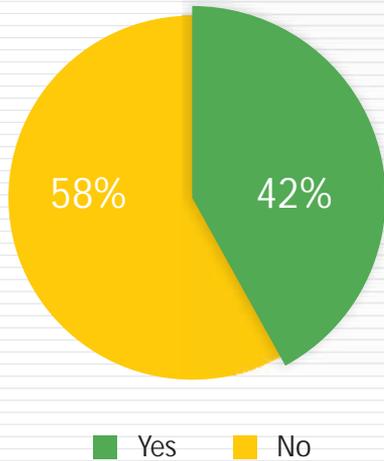
12. Does your organization provide you with relevant training and professional development opportunities?



■ Yes ■ No

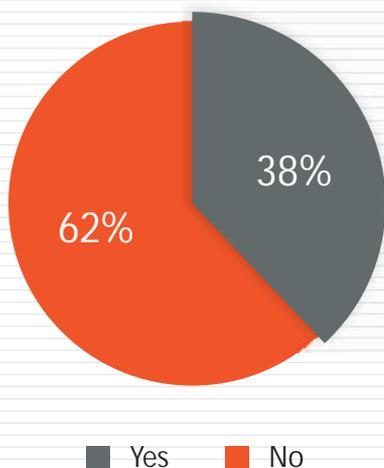
Opportunity for personal and professional growth is a very important job satisfaction component. Training and professional development opportunities help employees hone their skills and move up the career ladder. Only 29 percent women journalists felt that such opportunities were available to them at their organization while 71 percent felt such opportunities were not provided by their organization.

13. Do you think women in this field are provided with equal promotion opportunities as men?



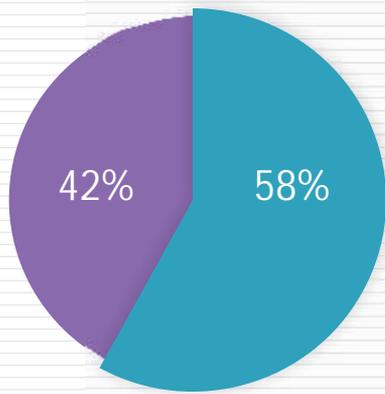
A majority of women workers feel that a glass ceiling exists in newsrooms that hinders them from rising to the upper rungs of the ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements. A majority of women workers (58 percent) said women journalists did not enjoy equal promotion opportunities with men. This is in line with other evidence of existence of the glass ceiling in Pakistan. It may be mentioned here that according to the Pakistan Council of Science and Technology, the current ratio of female contribution to the boardrooms of Pakistan is just 4.6% and despite improvements over the last decades, Pakistan remains a primarily male-dominated economy.

14. Do you fear for your physical security?



More than one third of women workers (38 percent) fear for their physical security though all of it cannot be ascribed to their profession. Nevertheless, it shows that a large number of women journalists do work under a sense of physical insecurity, either due to a general environment of lack of security in the country or due to reasons related to the profession. These figures show that some serious initiatives are needed to ensure a better environment of security for them.

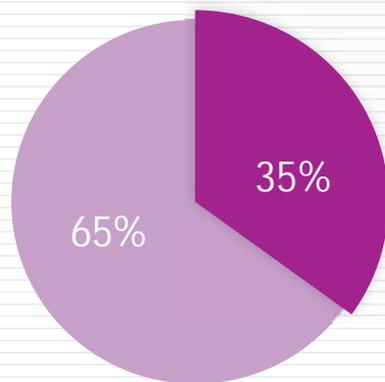
15. Do you fear for your digital security?



■ Yes ■ No

Digital security is the internet equivalent of the physical security and it relates to a person's well-being and safety online. Indeed lack of digital security often has implications for real, physical security – more so for women in our honour-bound society. The survey shows that a majority of women journalists (58 percent) worry about their digital security.

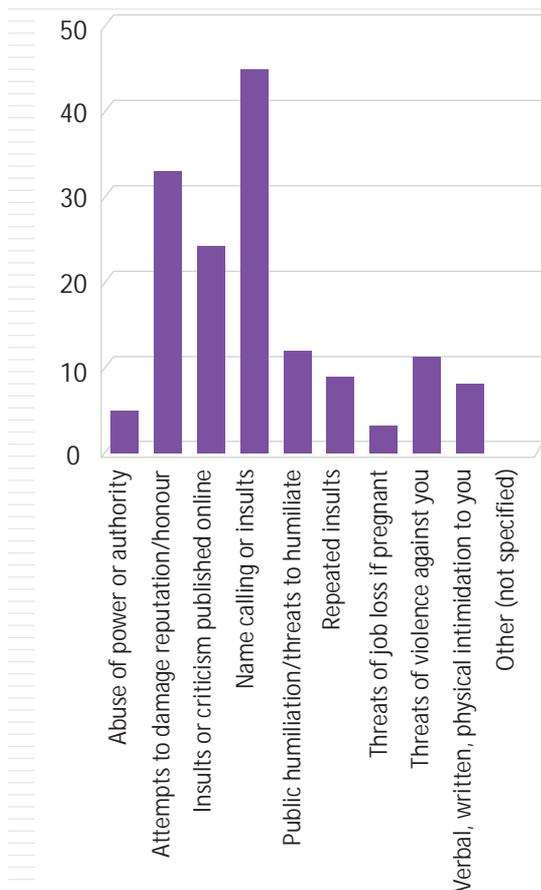
16. Have you experienced intimidation, threats or abuse in relation to your work?



■ Yes ■ No

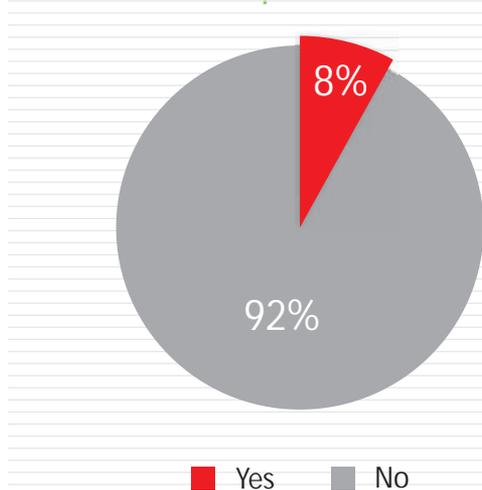
A large minority of 35 percent women journalists said they had experienced intimidation, threats or abuse in relation to their work, while 65 percent respondents said they did not experience such a situation in relation to their work.

17. If yes, kindly specify the type of threats you have faced?



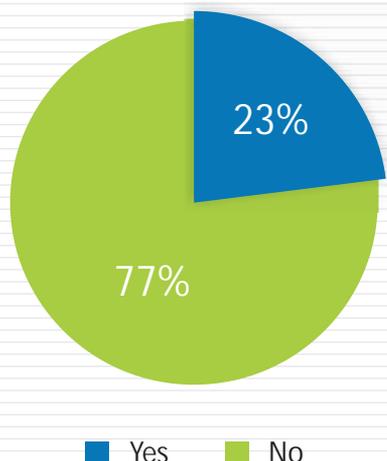
As the chart above shows, women journalists face a range of threats related to their work. Name calling or insults tops the list followed by attempts to damage reputation and honour. Other major threats include insults or criticism published online, public humiliation and threats to humiliate and threats of violence.

18. Have you ever faced sexual harassment while doing your job or at the workplace?



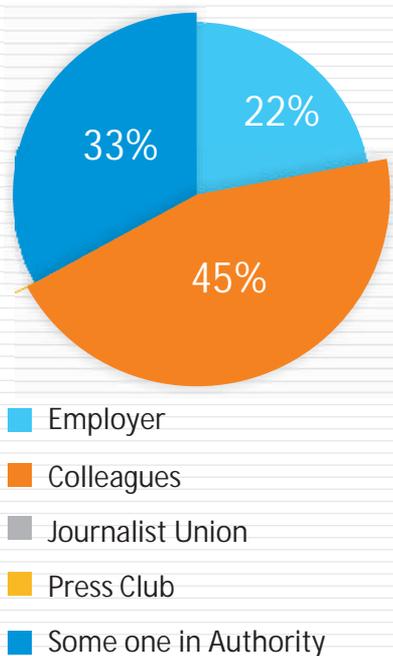
Sexual harassment in the newsroom does not appear rampant but it is still present as 8 percent women journalists said they had faced sexual harassment while doing their job or at work place. Sexual attitudes and fear of sexual harassment are often cited as the leading cause of women not choosing media, or for that matter other professions requiring them to leave the safety of their homes, in the largely conservative, honour-bound Pakistani society.

A. Did you report the sexual harassment/to whom?



Less than one fourth of women journalists who reported sexual harassment at workplace bothered to report it. A large majority found it more convenient to keep quiet. This may be ascribed to the fact that grievance redressal mechanism is absent or ineffective and women workers feel that by reporting such incidents they may have to face negative repercussions or social stigma.

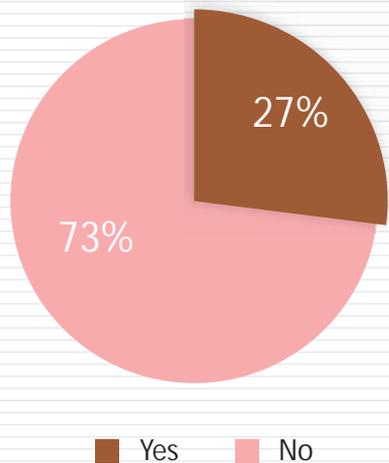
B. To whom were incidents of sexual harassment reported?



Among the women journalist who chose to report incidents of sexual harassment, most of them (45 percent) reported to their colleagues, probably to win moral support to stop recurrence of such incidents. 33 percent reported these incidents to someone in authority while 22 percent reported it to the employer.

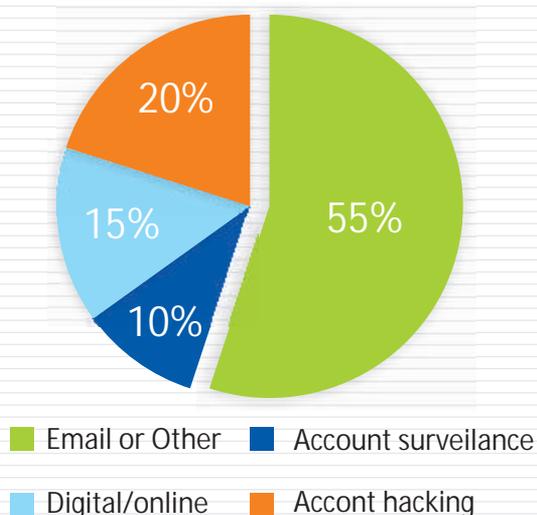
Tapping, Hacking and Digital Security Threats

19. A Have you ever experienced tapping, hacking and/or digital security threats?



In an increasingly digital world where journalists literally have to live and work online, digital security threats not only compromise professional work of a journalist but also pose serious risks for personal security to women journalists. More than a quarter women journalists (27 percent) said they had experienced some kind of digital security threat.

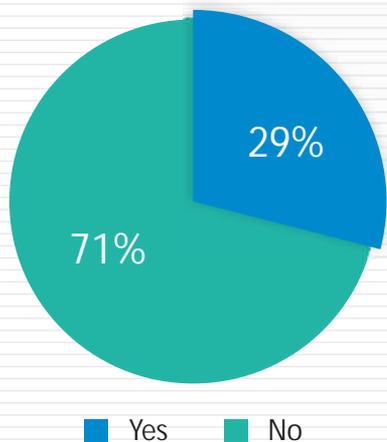
A. If yes, kindly specify



The most serious digital security threat faced by women journalists pertains to their emails (55 percent). Emails are vulnerable to such threats because different phishing sites and international surveillance and hacking concerns prey upon email accounts. Spy softwares installed on public computers that many journalists use also makes them vulnerable to such threats. Other threats include account hacking (20 percent), digital/online (15 percent) and account surveillance (10 percent).

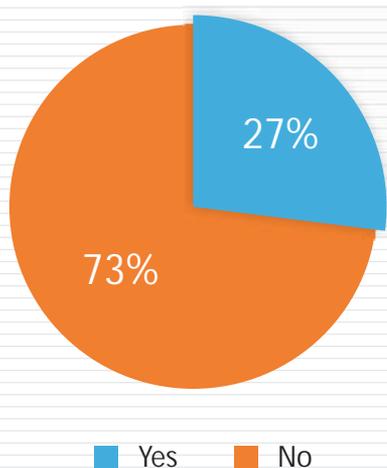
Preparedness, Prevention and Protection

20. Are female journalists in Pakistan aware of digital dangers and protection measures?



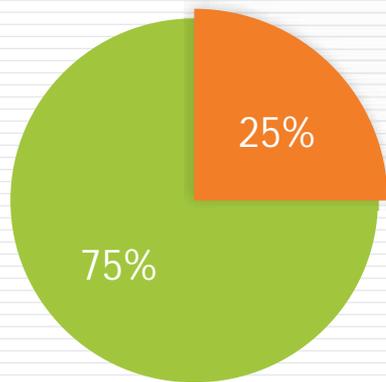
Unlike physical security where external environment has a huge bearing, it is easier to take appropriate precautions to guard from possible dangers on the internet. Despite omnipresence of such threats, 71 percent respondents said that women journalists were not aware of digital dangers and protection measures. Only 29 percent felt that women journalists had an understanding of such threats and the protection needed to guard against them.

21. Do you use protection in digital communication including appropriate software and other precautionary measures?



A range of online platforms and strategies, many of them free, are available to increase the security of information. However, only 27 percent women journalists use such safety measures to ensure their digital security while 73 percent said they did not take any precautionary measures or use any software for the purpose.

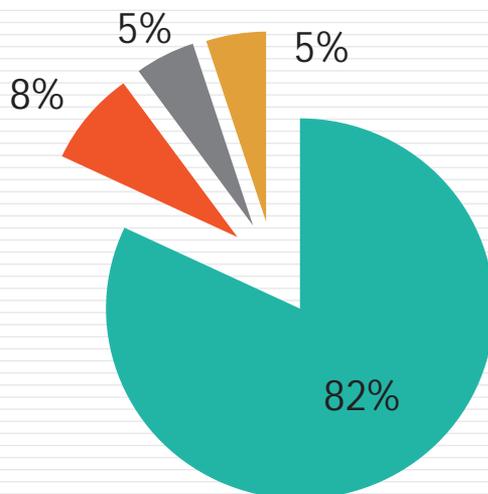
22. Have you taken any digital safety training to keep your data safe?



Yes No

Digital safety trainings can play an important role in raising awareness regarding threats to digital security and arm women journalists with the tools to protect themselves online. The survey shows that only 25 percent women journalists have received such training while 75 percent have not received any digital safety training.

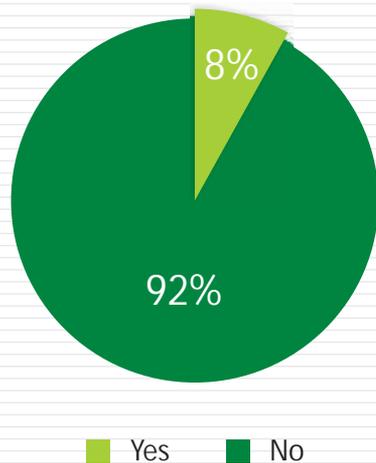
23. Does your organization provide training and/or resources for any of the following?



No Training
Personal security
Digital/online security
Source protection

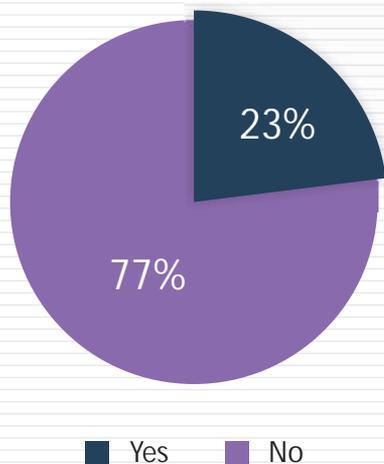
The first responsibility for protecting women journalists and training them to care for their physical and digital security lies with the employer. Only 18 percent respondents said that they had received some kind of security training or resources through their organization; 8 percent women journalists said they had received training for physical security, 5 percent for digital security and 5 percent for source protection.

24. Does your media house provide you stress counseling?



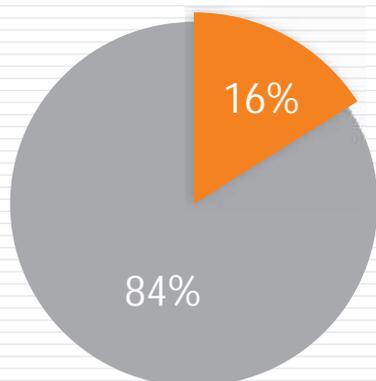
As a result of difficult and trying experiences, many media workers are exposed to events which have a psychological effect on them. The harm that this causes cannot be as easily and tangibly measured, yet the results can be just as devastating. Stress counseling can help journalists cope with such situations and guard against further psychological harm. Only 8 percent women journalists said they were provided stress counseling by their media house.

25. Does your media house recognize that women employees face specific risks and undertake specific mitigation strategies?



In situations of insecurity, women may be more vulnerable than men and the nature of risks they face may be different from the risks faced by their male colleagues. Recognition of such risks and taking mitigation measures is essential to ensure an enabling environment for women workers. While 23 percent women journalist said their employers recognized such risks and had taken mitigation measures, 77 percent replied in negative.

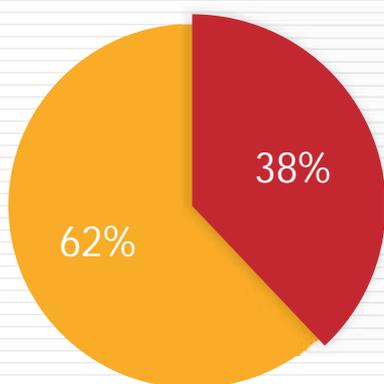
26. Does your media house provide software and equipment that enables its journalists to protect communications?



Yes No

Protection of communication is important for journalists to protect themselves and their sources and to ensure security for themselves. Only 16 percent of women journalists said that their employers bothered to provide such equipment and software.

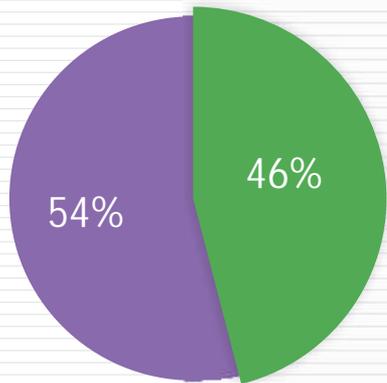
27. Are you aware of the Protection against Sexual Harassment Act 2010?



Yes No

Journalists raise awareness about issues common people face and disseminate knowledge. Women journalists are usually more aware on the issues of women rights. However, a majority of women journalists (62 percent) are not aware of the major legislation that guards women from harassment. Only 38 percent women journalists said they were aware of the Protection against Sexual Harassment Act 2010

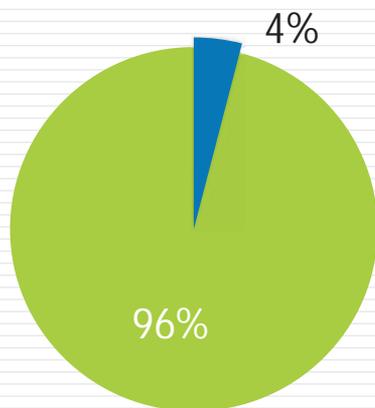
28. Are you aware of the Pakistan Penal Code Section 509?



■ Yes ■ No

A majority of women journalist (54 percent) are also unaware of the presence of a major law that protects women from harassment. Only 46 percent women journalists said they were aware of the Pakistan Penal Code Section 509.

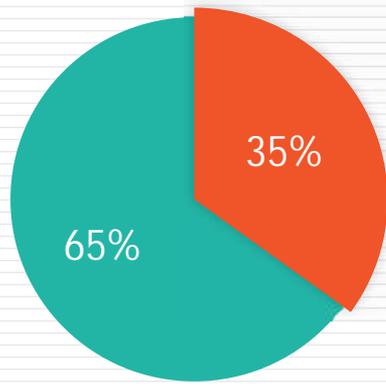
29. Would you like to receive training on physical and digital security?



■ Yes ■ No

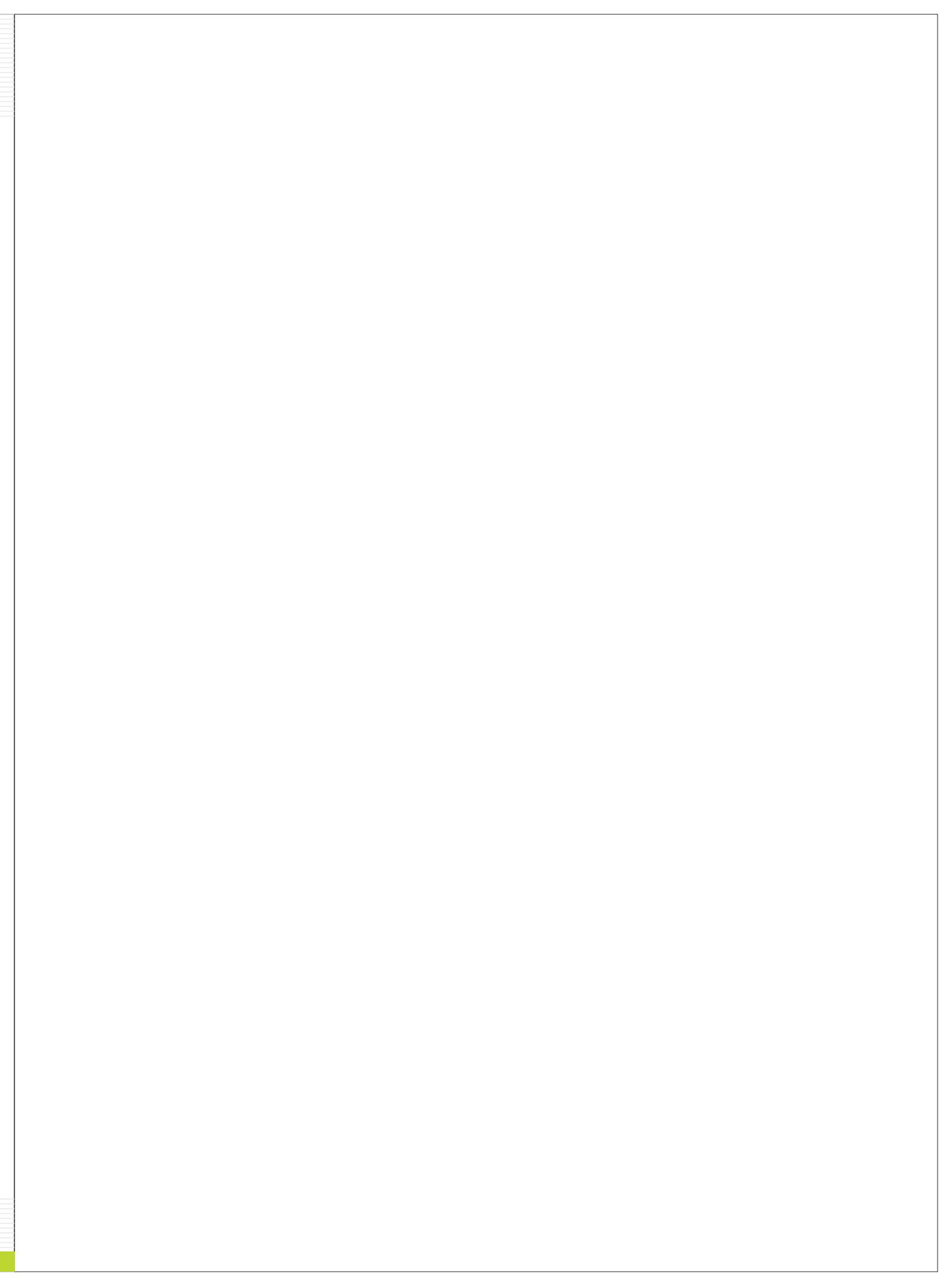
Women journalists appear fully aware of the need of their capacity building on security:96 percent respondents said they would like to receive training on physical and digital security.

30. Would you like to receive training on the above mentioned Protection against Sexual Harassment law?



■ Yes ■ No

Women journalists also appear keen on learning about the laws that protect women from sexual harassment. 65 percent respondents said they would like to receive training on protection against sexual harassment law.





<http://www.civicaction.pk/>