# FOJO:MEDIA INSTITUTE
### Linnæus University

Toward Gender Equality

# Women and the Media in Vietnam

Study Report
2018

# Forward

On behalf of Fojo Media Institute, I welcome this gender report not just because it has important findings about women in media in Vietnam but also because it points a way forward for the training of journalists in Vietnam. That is necessary everywhere in the region and beyond.

I hope this report will act as a driver for an eventual change in the way we portray women in the media and in the way we talk about gender issues in all walks of life.

Kersti Forsberg
Director
Fojo Media Institute

# Executive Summary

The Gender-in-Media Landscape Study (Vietnam) aims to inform the activities of the Southeast Asia Media Training Network by exploring gender equity in the media workplace. Towards this end, data was gathered through a broad survey and multiple focus group discussions.

The survey found:

More women worked in the media than men, including in recent years increasing numbers in management positions. Balancing work demands with family pressures – which by far fall disproportionately upon women – was a significant challenge to many careers.

Women and men worked across a wide range of roles and beats within the industry, with the main exception being relative dominance of male journalists in sport and science and technology reporting.

Media institutions followed legally-mandated leave requirements, including maternity leave. However, any further policies and operations in support of gender equity – such as some flexibility in hours, or carer's leave – were inconsistent, and generally ad-hoc or dependent on personal arrangements where they exist. They often don't adequately meet staffing needs.

The great majority of respondents received at least some training in the past two years which was valued; the main complaint was the limited number of training sessions. Men had greater general access, although majorities of both genders received trainin

Experiences of sexual harassment among female journalists were high at over 27%. Perpetrators include in many cases journalist sources, as well as workplace colleagues and superiors. There was a wide variation in the understanding of what constituted sexual harassment, and few consistent policies (or industry advocacy) against it.

There were many cases of ad-hoc mitigation of sexual harassment by management when dealing with sources who commit harassment, for example by reassigning journalists – however mitigation is a limited response. There were few examples of management effectively responding to in-house sexual harassment. Beyond reporting to an immediate superior, almost no media institutions had complaints mechanisms, whether that be to deal with sexual harassment or any other workplace issue.

Over 11% said their workplace had complaints mechanisms or a sexual harassment policy; however almost a third did not know if such a policy existed. At least 54% were in favour of journalists receiving training in gender equity / equality for women.

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# Organisation

## Introduction

This report aims to provide Fojo and its project partners with data and perspectives on gender in the media workplace, which can help ensure gender is integrated throughout project activities. In Vietnam project partners are the formerly Media Training Centre, now Online Archive & Press Assistance Centre and the Vietnam Journalists' Training Centre (VJTC).

### Questions

The questions examined were:
What is the relative status of women with respect to their male counterparts in the profession of journalism in the three target countries?
What barriers exist in terms of career progression for women journalists?
What issues and challenges do female journalists face in their day-to-day work?
What are the implications of the findings for partner's curriculum design?
How relevant are existing curricula in our partner organisations in relation to the findings of the survey?
Are there any barriers to reporting gender and diversity issues?
The report includes a brief overview of the current political situation in Vietnam, national-level gender issues, and media industry, including the industry's scale and levels of media freedom. This provides context to interpret the findings on gender dynamics within the media sector itself.
As described under 'Methodology' below, the data are both qualitative and quantitative, combining focus group discussions and an extended survey. The researchers hope the data can meet the goal of informing and supporting curriculum design and delivery, whether in 'technical' skills or in broader gender awareness and policy; and in supporting the gender policies of both partners and Fojo.

Note: The initial terms of reference also included examining the status, barriers, and issues facing ethnic minority journalists. However initial enquiries, including of relevant authorities and others on the ground, showed an extreme lack of data on the proportion of ethnic minority journalists working in the sector, to the point where even locating them to include in the research activities – invitations to discussions or for survey dissemination – would be challenging. For practical reasons within the timeframe, this cohort was therefore dropped with the understanding that the research itself would likely reveal contacts that could be followed up in future efforts as appropriate..

# Methodology

The studies draw on parallel research conducted in Myanmar in 2014, which comprised a detailed survey, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews with media industry sources.

## Survey

The Myanmar survey was treated as a template and adapted to each country's context. Any changes were kept to a minimum to ensure maximum comparability of data. <1> Each survey was tested in-country to ensure it was appropriate and effective. The survey was shortened to facilitate a higher response rates over a relatively short period of time, with 58 questions in the Vietnam survey. Survey sections were:

- Basic personal (demographic) information
- Media career
- Training and skills development
- Gender equity / Equality for women. <2>

The last question asked respondents to rate possible means to improve gender equity in their country's media.

Surveys were disseminated both online through a weblink, <3> and as paper versions. In Vietnam, dissemination occurred through professional networks targeting in particular Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), and through broader regional networks; the great majority of responses were gathered online.

A total of 247 responses were gathered in Vietnam, with a combined 165 from Hanoi (104) and HCMC (61). This represents around 1.3% of the total number of journalists in the country. Figures for the number of journalists in Hanoi and HCMC are not readily available but if, for example, they make up around half of the national total, the sample therefore would cover around 1.7% from those cities. Completion rates were uneven however, with a minority of respondents not answering several questions, yet still completing the survey; this became more pronounced the further respondents progressed in the survey. For the major questions discussed below we have footnoted the number of survey participants who provided no response (meaning those who also did not select the option 'No answer / Prefer not to answer').

1. For example, in a survey question on 'Type of Employment Contract', Vietnam and Cambodia have some different common contract types, so the options for this question differed between the two countries.

2. 'Equality for Women' was the language used in the survey and discussions. Although the issue is gender equity, what this meant was not universally understood, meaning 'equality for women' guaranteed clearer responses at this stage.

3. Survey Monkey (surveymonkey.net) was used for online surveys; data from paper surveys were also entered into Survey Monkey for analysis.

## Focus Group Discussions

The Focus Group Discussions broadly followed similar themes to the survey. However, they also explored individual reasons for career choices; perceptions of media coverage of women; and general threats and risks journalists face.

Separate discussions took place with the following focus groups:

1. All women, mixed generation
2. Mixed gender, younger generation
3. Mixed gender, older generation
4. Provincial / district journalists, mixed gender and generation

Two rounds were held in Vietnam, one in Hanoi, and one in HCMC, with a total of 66 participants. In each case the provincial journalists were drawn from regions relatively closer to that city.

The breakdown of FGD participants was:

41 female journalists, 25 male journalists, incorporating 20 provincial journalists.

Focus group discussion participants also completed the surveys prior to discussions commencing. This allowed some triangulation – or contrast – between survey responses and discussion content. Given discussion group participants were selected using similar methods to overall survey dissemination, this did not materially alter any selection bias involved in the survey itself.

# National Context

The country has had rapid economic growth with many associated social changes since the early 2000s, with GDP increasing at an average of over 6%. The number living below the poverty line dropped to around 13.5% in 2014 from around 60% in the 1990s. <4> However the rate of growth has been slowing and inequality between the rich and poor increasing in recent years. <5>

The Government assiduously polices and prevents dissent, with some rights groups, bloggers, and minorities singled out, including in subversion trials and imprisonment. <6> The 2013 constitution puts the Communist Party at the centre of all organs of government, politics, and society. <7> The National Congress is the supreme authority of the Party and meets every five years, with the last occurring in January 2016. <8>

4. For more detail, see: http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/vietnam/overviewand http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16567834 [Both accessed 20 September, 2017]

5. For more detail, see: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16567834, and https://vietnam.oxfam.org/sites/vietnam-.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/Vietnam%20Inequality%20Report_ENG.pdf[Both accessed 20 September, 2017]

## Gender Profile in Brief

According to the United Nations agency UN Women, in recent years Vietnam has established several laws that promote gender equality, including in labour rights, domestic violence prevention, and other areas. The country also has one of the highest labour force participation rates for women in the region. However, women tend to be in more vulnerable employment, with half in agriculture. In waged labour gender segregation is high, and women cluster in export-oriented manufacturing (especially garments and footwear); and services, including hotels and domestic work – areas with limited opportunities for skills development and promotion. <9> Just over 26% of the National Assembly of Vietnam's representatives are women. <10>

The gender pay gap has widened in the last decade, with individual female earnings dropping from 87% that of male earnings in 2004, to 80% in 2012. As well as the fact that more women are in lower-paying sectors, this also reflects "a decline in the share of employed women with technical qualifications (relative to an increase in the share for men); [more lucrative] fields of study that remain strongly gender-stratified; persistent employers' stereotypes reflected, for instance, in that job advertisements for senior positions often indicate a gender preference for males despite this being against the law." <11>

Violence against women is high, with nearly 60% of women reportedly experiencing domestic violence at some point in their lives, according to a 2010 survey. A 2014 survey reportedly shows that women experience high levels of violence in public places, and 16% reportedly experience sexual harassment daily. <12>

6. For more detail and cases, see for example: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21815&LangID=Ehttps://www.theguardian.com/media/greenslade/2015/jul/22/the-little-presidents-who-deny-press-freedom-by-attacking-journalists; http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/18session/A.HRC.18.51_en.pdf and http://www.dw.com/en/its-not-just-cambodia-vietnam-southeast-asia-struggles-with-internet-freedom/a-17638244 [All accessed 10 October 2017]

7. For more detail, see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam#Politics [Accessed 20 September, 2017]

8. For more detail, see: http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-01-28/vietnam-communist-party-unveils-new-politburo/7122444[Accessed 20 September, 2017]

9. For more detail, see: http://www.un.org.vn/en/publications/doc_details/504-the-study-towards-gender-equality-in-viet-nam-making-inclusive-growth-work-for-women.html [Accessed 20 September, 2017]

10. For more detail, see: https://beta.ipu.org/resources/publications/infographics/2017-03/women-in-politics-2017 [Accessed 20 September, 2017]

11. For more detail, see: http://www.un.org.vn/en/publications/doc_details/504-the-study-towaequality-in-viet-nam-making-inclusive-growth-work-l[Accessed 20 September, 2017]

## Media and Violence Against Women (VAW)

There is little available research on the role media coverage plays in VAW in Vietnam. One study from 2009, on media coverage of rape, concluded that media is in some ways a double-edged sword in tackling the problem, with "One-sided and insensitive ways of reporting unwittingly exacerbate[ing] the suffering of victims, turning them into objects of criticism in local opinion"; but with some media activism also encouraging families to "air grievances and seek justice by working within and sometimes around institutional structures." <13> However much more investigation is needed to understand this dynamic in detail.

## Media Industry Profile in Brief

The country's media sector is large, with 1,277 outlets; <14> while varied, none are independent of government (see more detail in the media platform-specific sections below). In recent years however outlets have lost government subsidies, which has introduced competition to raise funds commercially – including by sensationalist coverage, and high public interest coverage such as corruption reporting.

12. For more detail, see: http://vietnam.unfpa.org/en/news/launch-national-action-month-gender-equality-and-prevention-violence-against-women-and-girls?page=0%2C1, and http://vietnamnews.vn/opinion/in-the-spotlight/345733/violence-against-women-persistent-in-public-spaces.html#WMG2fMLuZMWHi6Gi.97[Both accessed 20 September, 2017]. Also see http://vietnam.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UN%20Discussion%20Paper_ENG.pdf[Accessed 10 October, 2017]

13. See 'Whose Weapons? Representations of Rape in the Print Media of Modern Vietnam', available at http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/vs.2012.7.2.29?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents[Accessed 10 October, 2017]

14. Sourced from the Ministry of Information. For more detail, see also: http://www.newmandala.org/vietnams-draft-media-law/[Accessed 20 September, 2017]

# Key findings

## Respondent Demographics

Over 62% of survey respondents were female, with over 36% male (around 1% identified as 'other'). This parallels all anecdotal evidence that much of the media has greater female than male participation. Over 40% of respondents were between 26 and 35 years old, and more than 40% again were between 36 and 45 years of age; around 12% were between 18 and 25; this was spread roughly evenly between both genders, and constitutes a strong focus on early and especially mid-career journalists. Almost 82% had college degrees and over 17% held post-graduate degrees, constituting a highly-educated workforce; a higher percentage of men (22%) than women (16%) held post-graduate qualifications.

104 respondents were based in Hanoi, 61 in HCMC, and 79 the rest unevenly spread across seven more provinces across the country, but only two of those in another major city. This means the survey covers the two main cities, and provides a generalized snapshot of regional media outside of that. <15> There were no significant differences in location by gender.

Over 27% identified as Buddhist; over 26% as atheist; almost 3% as Christian; and marginally over 16% as 'other', likely local or 'animist' religions. 18% of women chose 'other' compared to 10% of men; apart from this there were no significant differences by gender. Over 27% chose to not answer this question. 14 respondents identified as an ethnic minority, with 11 of those women. 31 respondents spoke a language other than Vietnamese at home, with 21 of those women.

27% of respondents worked in print, 39% in TV and just under 18% in radio. 33% of the total also worked in online media – which included other media that had an online presence. There were no statistically-significant differences in the percentage of both genders working in each medium.

## Workforce Participation by Gender

Both the discussion groups and the survey showed women's participation in media was greater than that of men. In many cases this included at mid-management and executive levels, which anecdotally is a change that has taken place in recent years. Discussion groups indicated that while strong, this is likely an uneven phenomenon across institutions, with survey data offering some reflection of this: while over 67% of women indicated that more than half of their work colleagues were women, this was true for 47% of men. <16>

15. Regional media potentially holds significant variety. These provincial data are therefore best taken as a means of confirming which major features in the two main cities also hold across the country; and illustrating – but not capturing in fine detail – any features that may diverge from the two main cities.)
16. This is the perception of participants. It is not an absolute or empirically objective measurement of the proportions of women and men working in the sector, but is the best proxy for this that the research tools and timeframe allowed.
17. 41 survey participants provided no response.

What is the approximate percentage of women working in your section? Please provide your best estimate. <17>
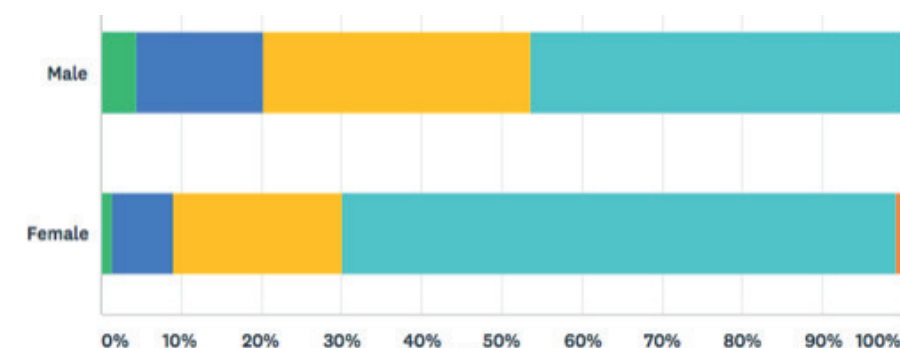


At a structural level, this dominant participation by women is likely due to the study choices men and women take at university level. Men are understood to be predominantly enrolled in 'STEM' (Science Technology Engineering Maths) subjects and women in humanities and related areas, which in a highly-educated workforce translates more directly to work in journalism and communication. <18> Both women and men had varied reasons for choosing journalism, including early inspiration and selecting the career as a vocation; not succeeding in other fields (such as medicine) and shifting to journalism; or beginning by circumstance deciding to follow it further.

Women were well-represented in all areas of work in both percentage and absolute numbers, including mid-level and senior management. The main roles with a statistically-significant higher percentage of male respondents were: Investigative Reporter, Camera Operator; Photographer; Feature Writer. Those with a significantly higher percentage of women were: Beat Reporter; Sub-Editor; and Mid-Level Management (although the sample size of 16 women to four men is small. Executive Managers were four men to two women, but this is too small a sample to draw significant conclusions.)
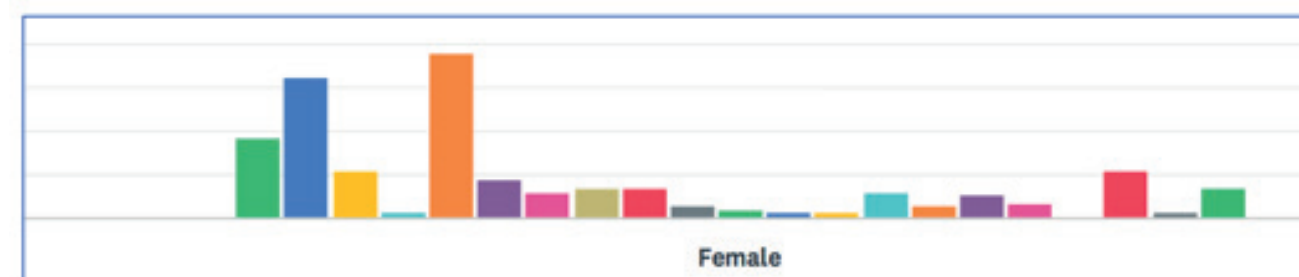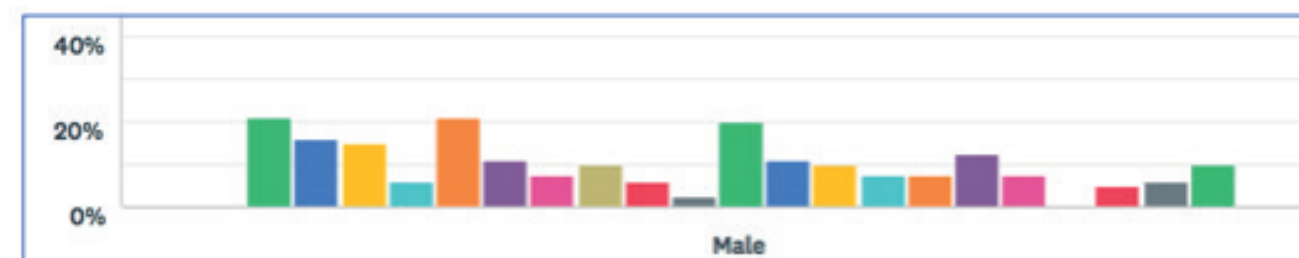
What is your current role within the profession? (Please select all relevant answers) <19>



Daily Reporter (print, TV, radio, online)   Beat reporter
Senior Reporter (print, TV, radio, online)
Investigative Reporter (print, TV, radio, online)   Sub editor   Desk editor
Online editor   Producer (TV or radio)   Anchor/news reader
Senior Editor / Senior Producer   Camera Operator   Photographer
Feature writer   Columnist / Opinion writer / Guest Commentator
Sound engineer   Video editor   Design/layout/graphics   Cartoonist
Mid-level management   Executive Management   Other



Male



Female

There were no significant differences by gender in the topics or beats covered, including Lifestyle or Women's Lifestyle which were each covered by both genders – except for Science and Technology and Sports, both dominated by men (in a small sample, no women respondents covered sports). <20>
However in discussions several women stated that men often receive preference for field trips, especially those that last an extended period or involved overseas travel – however several also stated that they could receive field assignments if they insisted. This was a greater factor, however, for female journalists in the provinces where travel was a more common demand, and who identified this as onerous and / or entailing greater risk. Male journalists tended to travel to more distant locations and more independently, while female journalists tended to travel to closer locations and often together for safety reasons (see 'Sexual Harassment' below).

# Key findings

If you are a beat reporter now, which beat or beats are you currently covering?
(Please select all relevant answers) <21>

All reported equal pay for equal work, with contracts and remuneration closely regulated by law. While there were no statistically-significant differences in overall salaries earned, men tended toward marginally-greater representation by percentage in the higher salary ranges, and women in the lower ranges, reflecting a marginally (but anecdotally decreasing) greater representation in higher positions.

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21. 58 survey participants provided no response.
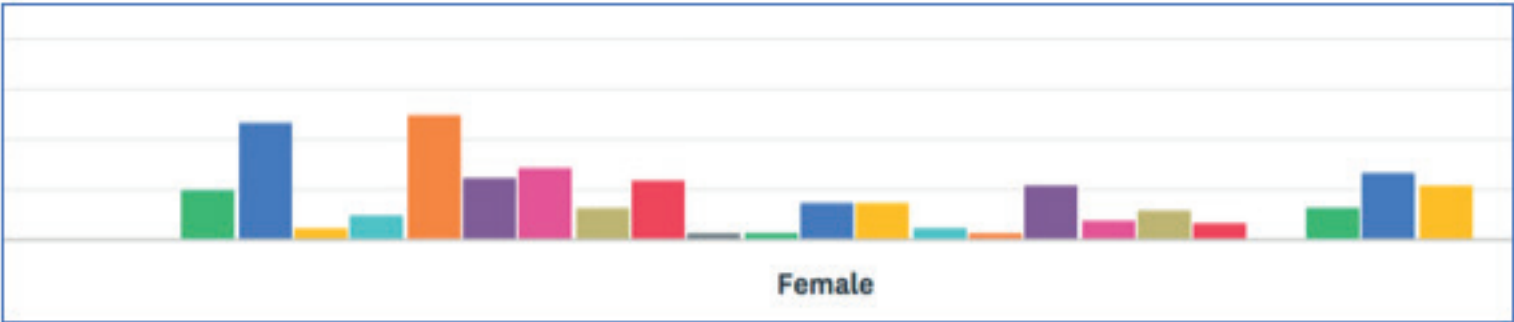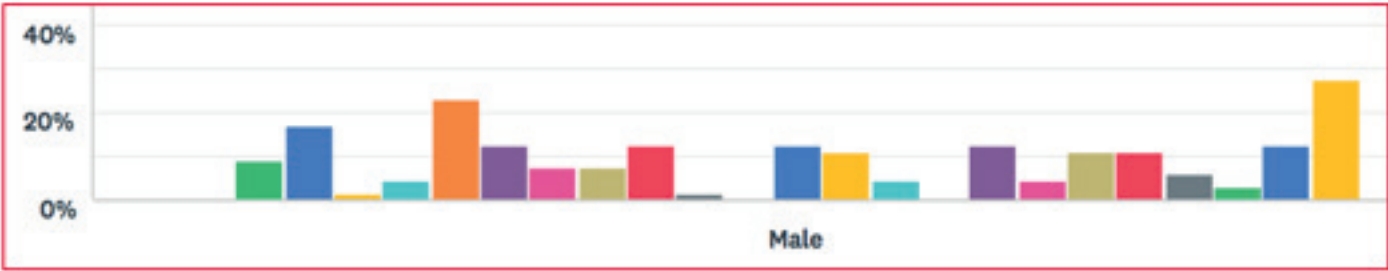
## Family and Work balance

The study finds that men did not suffer any particular or notable restrictions on their media career due to gender. However women frequently encountered challenges balancing career demands with family roles as the one primarily responsible for domestic duties including child-care. <22> Many stated that women preferred desk-based work because it made fulfilling family duties easier, while others said they were pushed towards these jobs because of stereotyped expectations on their family role. In extreme cases, this pressure led some to either quit their careers or divorce their husband. Although this appears to be a small minority, such stories occurred in several discussion groups, with one participant saying balancing being a journalist and a single parent was easier than fulfilling both work and domestic duties when she was married. At the same time social pressure to marry is very high, including among colleagues in the office.

Workplaces are obliged to provide state-mandated maternity leave (six months for women, one week for men.) Again, experiences across institutions are uneven, with some extremely positive. However several discussion group participants related challenges in accessing or balancing leave for pregnancy or family care, often required to still work from home and to limit the period they were out of the office. This included an anecdote of a colleague who was nearly fired for reducing office hours to deal with her ill infant. Several stated that other staff would cover a colleague who takes maternity leave – but that supervisors would urge 'consideration' for the office for those potentially planning a family; some participants said that the chance of taking maternity leave for women can be a negative consideration at the point of job recruitment. Nobody described crèche or similar workplace facilities.

## Threats and Risks

Journalists recounted many threats and risks faced in different areas of reporting, from combined business and political interests, criminal gangs, and management. These were particularly prevalent when conducting investigative reporting on corruption, including of companies, a topic with a lot of public interest and for which media outlets have strong incentives to follow – but which often become a grey area with competing interests potentially making it unclear how far coverage can go. <23> Professional risks included sensitive stories produced and paid for, but not published; and the danger of losing employment if a story affected established interests too seriously, or came to the attention of the Central Propaganda and Training Commission.

Several journalists mentioned pressure from bribes offered for their silence, as a first step, or to place favourable stories (one stated that companies risk losing government project money if they become the subject of critical stories). Examples of physical intimidation included gang members threatening a journalist who was reporting on child abuse with knives and acid; another was of regional gang members smashing a journalist's car window and threatening his wife and children. Risks were particularly high for undercover investigative pieces, an oft-mentioned form of reporting in this context.

22. Women may be expected not only to take care of their immediate family, but also the extended family of their in-laws.
23. For detailed research on this dynamic at the provincial level, see for other illustrative commentary, see http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/news/journalism-vietnam-challenges-and-opportunities [Both accessed 20 September, 2017]

# Training and Skills Development

Men had meaningfully-greater access to training opportunities, with only around 9% having received no training in the past two years, compared to over 17% of women; for those who did receive training, male journalists tended to receive the greater number over that period. All respondents who had received training reported it as useful, with the most common comment being that there were not enough training sessions, or that some needed skills which were not covered.

When identifying current training needs, those most indicated were reporting skills (broken down as research, interviewing, and fact-checking); written presentation skills; and editing (text, video, and audio), with women indicating greater preference for text editing and men for video and audio. A greater percentage of women tended to identify on-air presentation skills as a need, while more men identified management skills (newsroom or other). However, these differences were not dramatic; identified skills needs broadly tracked the same for either gender. <24>

Over 24% of men and over 29% of women respondents said they had received training on equality for women in the workplace; <25> over 60% of women and 53% of men had not, with the rest unsure or preferring to not answer. This was delivered by several means, ranging from in-house through to specialist training institutes, government bodies, and so on; no one or two means dominated. However, this training did not come up in group discussions, and its nature is unclear – it does not, for example, appear to be in the curricula of project partners, who deliver a large proportion of the external journalism training in the country but focus heavily on technical skills such as writing, research, or operating equipment.

131 respondents, or 54% of the total stated that training on equality for women should be delivered to journalists and others in their institution, whether exclusively for men or for both genders. The reasons selected ranged from trainees gaining a better understanding of the issues involved, to improving media coverage. (40 respondents thought such training was not necessary or not a priority; the rest either didn't know or preferred not to answer.)

24. 30 survey participants provided no response.
25. This was defined as 'training about policies on equality for women, possible discrimination or harassment against women, and what changes might be needed for women to play a bigger role in the workplace or in management.'
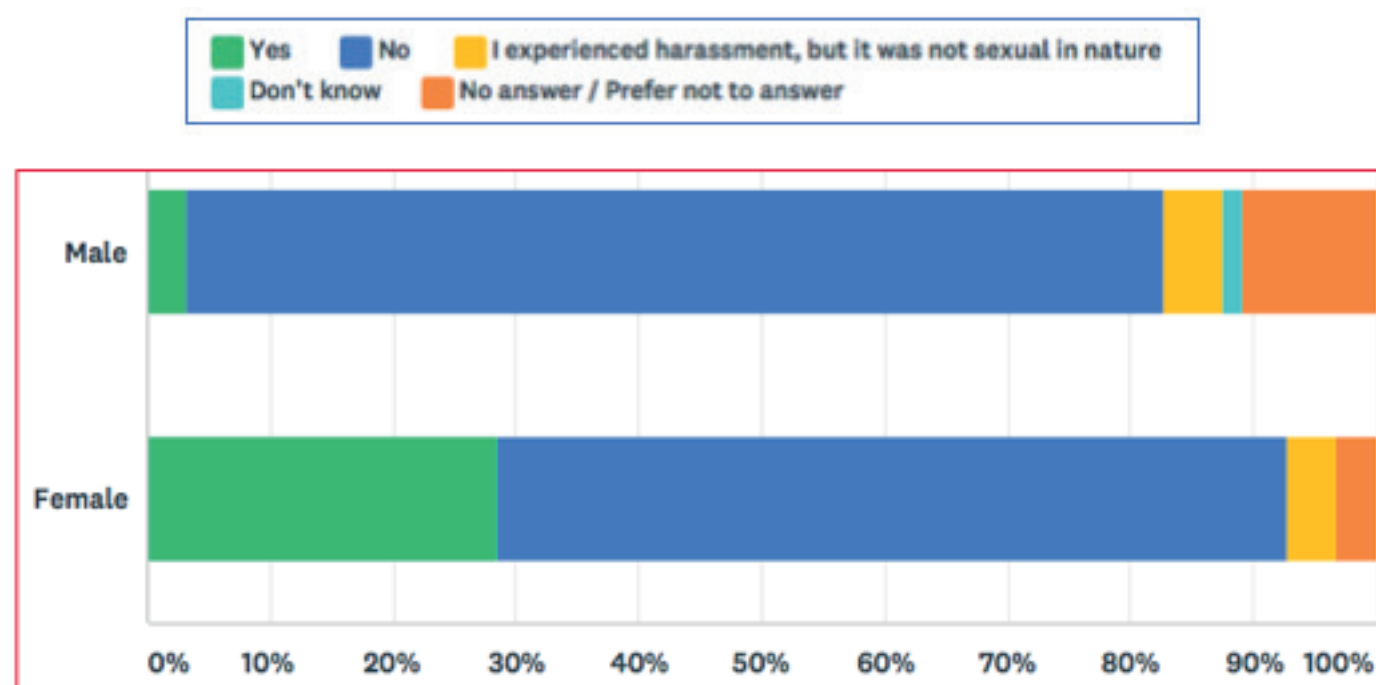
# Sexual Harassment

Prevalence

Sexual harassment was a significant concern for many women with over 27% saying they had been harassed, although the number may well be higher; <26> men also said they'd suffered sexual harassment. In discussion groups, high-placed regular journalist sources were often cited as perpetrators, with examples ranging from indecent or unwanted propositions to groping and rape. This is exacerbated by demands to drink together – men as well as women – to maintain the social relationships journalists need with their sources, with incidents occurring during or after drinking sessions. In some cases, management provided support in avoiding risky sources, either by sending a male colleague instead, or as accompaniment. However most female colleagues managed these situations alone or with small, informal support groups and exchanges of information.

Have you ever personally experienced sexual harassment while working? <27>

26. 44 survey participants provided no response.
27. 53 survey participants provided no response.

# Sexual Harassment

In discussion groups, no media institution had complaint mechanisms for sexual harassment. In the surveys 17 men – but only ten women, out of a sample almost twice the size – said their workplace had complaints mechanisms or a sexual harassment policy; almost a third did not know if one existed. <28> This suggests an uneven and perhaps not fully-functional systems of complaint or redress – particularly because only two respondents said they'd used an office complaints mechanism for a case of harassment, with another 14 informing either their supervisor or the Human Resources section of their office. (The great majority informed a friend or colleague; nearly 57% informed nobody, or preferred not to answer this question.)

Discussion groups also raised examples of workplace sexual harassment by colleagues or superiors, but to a lesser degree. However in the surveys, 54% of those respondents who nominated perpetrators, nominated colleagues or superiors, compared with 46% who nominated interviewees, public figures, or others in the field.

Group discussions around sexual harassment and sexual assault were frequently animated. In several cases, women participants said that they had not experienced harassment – but in the course of the discussion changed their perspective – for example, from having thought sexual harassment could not only be verbal – or recalled incidents that they then shared. (This suggests that, while around 30% of female survey respondents said they had been harassed, the figure could well be higher.)

Participants frequently brought up the difficulty they found in defining harassment. This included the perception that this could not rest upon 'Western definitions' but must relate to national mores – notwithstanding that, in the survey's sexual harassment scenarios, there was often broad coherence between many participants' perceptions and international definitions of what harassment constitutes. (In both survey and discussion groups, the research explored understandings of harassment but at no point did it offer a set definition.)

## Scenarios and Perceptions

Beyond the discussion groups, the survey included five scenarios and asked respondents to decide whether these were examples of sexual harassment or otherwise. <29> There was significant overlap in perspectives across genders, with sometimes women, and sometimes men, rating a scenario as more serious. For example, this scenario: <30>

"A male supervisor locks himself in his office with a female staff member and tells her she knows what to do to get a promotion."

Over 48% of women said this was sexual harassment, compared to over 44% of men. However marginally more men (over 38%) said it was assault, compared to just over 35% of women.

"A female staff member goes to her supervisor with a problem. While telling her story she begins to cry, and he puts his hand on her knee."

"Two male staff members tell jokes about sex in front of female staff members, even though it's clear it makes the women uncomfortable."

For both of these scenarios, a higher percentage of women than men said these actions were not sexual harassment, or they were, they were not serious; a higher percentage of men said each was sexual harassment. In the case of sexual jokes, more than twice the percentage of men than women said this was harassment. However for the following –

"Every time a female employee talks to one of her male coworkers, he looks at her chest. She thought she was imagining it until another female coworker mentioned it to her."

– more women thought this was 'serious' sexual harassment than men. The results show that while there is divergence among both genders in clearly defining the issue, there is also a significant cohort of each gender who see these behaviors as serious, and enough shared opinion to support a meaningful and fruitful exploration of the issue that does not immediately have to 'break down all barriers' in perception.

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28. 54 survey participants provided no response.

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29.  45 to 49 participants across the five scenarios provided no response.
30.  See Annex One for the detailed results and graphics from these questions.

### Countermeasures

Survey respondents were asked which of the following options to combat sexual harassment would be most effective, if at all: <31>

1. Stronger laws
2. Awareness raising among women
3. Awareness raising among men
4. An effective complaints mechanism
5. Punishing perpetrators as a deterrent

A strong majority of both genders ranked all measures as 'Very Effective' or 'Effective'. <32> A simple majority also ranked all measures as 'Very Effective', with one exception: men ranked 'An effective complaints mechanism' at 38%; another 38% ranked it as 'Effective'.

Women consistently rated each measure as more effective, compared to their male peers – both in the 'Very Effective' choice, and the combined 'Very Effective' and 'Effective' choices.

# Media Coverage of Women

Discussion groups explored perceptions of media coverage on women, with many saying portrayals often confirmed to the 'long legs – big boss' dichotomy of gender relations which focused on the sexualized appearance of women and the power and prestige of men. Women make up a lot of entertainment coverage; they are also presented as victims (especially of rape or violence) was commonly highlighted. However, some participants said coverage has improved in recent years, with more stories about women's achievements and abilities. <33>

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31. 52 survey participants provided no response.
32. See Annex Two for full data on this question.
33 This reflects participants' perceptions of coverage; no content analysis was undertaken during the research, and so these notes should not be taken as such analysis. See the previous 'Gender Profile' and 'Media Profile' sections for further notes and context.

Although issues such as lack of adequate maternity / paternity leave and other policy issues were brought up in different discussions, the main gender-related concerns reflected by discussion groups were on sexual harassment. Many proposed changes therefore reflected this, and included: training or sharing techniques to avoid or manage sexual harassment scenarios; office codes of conduct on sexual harassment, publicly promoted and with appropriate punishments; and awareness campaigns within the sector, as well as broader public campaigns.

# Conclusions

Vietnam's media shows strong gender equity on a number of levels, including meaningful representation and strong role models in all areas of work and management by both genders. Although not uniform across all institutions, in general on this front the country is well ahead of many others in the region.

On available figures, the greater proportion of female compared to male points to a level of 'feminisation' within the industry. Yet this is driven by broader social dynamics, and it would not be correct to describe the situation as 'gender inequity against male journalists', as there were no examples or anecdotes indicating bias against recruiting, training, or promoting men. <34> (In fact there were a few individual examples of men receiving some hiring preferences – all indications are that they are simply not applying to enter the industry in the same numbers.)

Despite the proportional dominance of women among staff, many policies and operations in the industry have not responded to issues faced by women journalists. One of the greatest issues cited in discussions was the difficulty in balancing domestic family demands with work. However beyond managers generally following the law in providing maternity leave, only a limited number of institutions provided ad-hoc flexibility towards this end in assigning reporting projects or desk work. Indeed, some individuals instead took a punitive approach, and pressured or threatened the employment of female journalists caught in this bind.

Nearly a third of respondents said sexual harassment had affected them. Yet the research revealed no examples of clear policies or mechanisms to deal with this within the industry. As noted, the broad spread of perspectives around definitions of sexual harassment, while leading to dynamic discussion, also suggests a broad lack of shared understanding around what such harassment entails.

# Conclusions

Nearly a third of respondents said sexual harassment had affected them. Yet the research revealed no examples of clear policies or mechanisms to deal with this within the industry. As noted, the broad spread of perspectives around definitions of sexual harassment, while leading to dynamic discussion, also suggests a broad lack of shared understanding around what such harassment entails.

Despite many women journalists having strong careers, overarching gendered social roles still disproportionately affect and restrict the work experience of women journalists; industry policies have broadly not specifically responded to or mitigated gender issues at work. Although many gender issues are perceived by several within the industry, in the eyes of many gender stereotypes still dominate media coverage – meaning this awareness has not apparently led to a strong or sustained public debate on gender issues, despite such debates being one of the key roles of the media.

Vietnam's media sector shows strong measures of gender equity in the employment and careers of several female journalists. Yet while the capacity is undoubtedly present, this has not led to pro-actively engagement with gender policy issues that impact female journalists at an industry level, or resulted in significantly more equitable gender coverage and debate within overall media coverage.

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34. Political and economic forces not further discussed here, only in specific terms on gender in media sector. See 'Industry Profile' for further references.

# Recommendations

Reflecting the purpose of this research in the context of the project, these recommendations are intended by the study's author as points for discussion among Fojo and project partners VJTC and MTC.

### Further research.
The data, and the tools used (focus group discussions and survey), indicate a few directions for potential future research. Some of these directions would complement the baseline data in this report; others apply lessons these data have indicated.

### Objective data on staffing levels by gender and position.
As noted in the Key Findings discussion, data on staffing levels by gender and position relies on the survey respondents' own perceptions and experiences. However, this holds the risk of distortion, in Vietnam because the sample is a very small percentage of the total journalist population. If comprehensive objective data don't exist – for example from a relevant government department or journalist association – then alternative methods may include purposively choosing a small selection of representative institutions, and approaching them for their own (anonymised) staffing data; the selection itself could draw on known features of media institutions, and cross-check with those institutions for which survey respondents indicate they work. This can then be used to weight the actual survey results, and test the validity of the observations and conclusions drawn.

### Objective data on institutional policies.
Again, feedback on institutional policies – on leave entitlements, work flexibility, and so on – is anecdotal from individual respondents. Purposive selection of media institutions, questioning them directly on their policies, and triangulating that with survey responses from staff about whether those policies are applied or understood, would provide greater data validity.

Beyond the understanding or perceptions of respondents, objective data on the existence and nature of complaints mechanisms is also important, as this would clarify whether the lack of recourse to such mechanisms is due to the fact that they are not present; or that they do not operate effectively when used; or that staff are unaware of them or do not trust them. This would then inform the precise nature any training needs.

# Recommendations

**Confirmation of existing Gender Equity / Equality for Women Training.**
Several survey respondents said they had received training on equality for women. Follow-up contact with a number of these respondents, confirming the details of this training – including what it covered, who delivered it, and why they received it – would provide a better understanding of what is already being delivered. These respondents may be selected across a sample of the different provider types who delivered this training.

**Gender Content Analysis; Media and Gender Violence**
The perceptions of respondents clearly point to concerns about gender stereotypes in media coverage; the high level of gender based violence means the media's impact on this also deserves interrogation. Objective data on this does not exist in Vietnam (apart from one study on rape coverage noted in the country profile section). Such data can confirm this is the case and to what degree, to inform any specific gender-sensitive reporting training. However, if the prima facie case that stereotypes dominate, partners may decide this is a sufficient basis to design and deliver such training.

**Ethnic Minority Journalists.**
As described under 'Methodology', this cohort was cut from the original research target for practical reasons. Surveys managed to reach a small number of minority journalists. These could be contacted directly, for one-on-one discussion about the situation of ethnic minority journalists, and whether networks or contacts exist through which they can be approached for further surveys, discussion groups, and so on.

**Gender equity-based review of existing curricula.**
The nature of any detailed curricula review deserves attention, as it can ask a number of questions. Some possible examples are noted here:
- Does the type, and scale of delivery, of current courses in purely technical skills match those nominated by both genders in the survey?
- Does the current curriculum include training in gender equity, reflecting the issues highlighted in the current study? If so, how effectively do they engage with the realities of:
        Gender equity policies (including hiring, training; career paths; family-work balance; and sexual harassment)
        Operational procedures (including complaints mechanisms; safety protocols)
        Gender-sensitive reporting

        Gender-sensitive reporting
- Does the current individual training needs assessment capture gender equity needs in the areas noted above? This includes whether training needs assessments effectively gather the perceptions of different cohorts in the media, not only top management.; and whether it is possible to explore where those assessed want to go in their careers, and what may be holding them back – a small-scale rolling 'gender needs assessment' incorporated into the training development and delivery process, as it were. <35>
- Beyond the individual trainee, do current training needs assessments include the possibility of reviewing media institutions for gender equity (among other issues)? Is it possible to develop and use some version of a 'gender equity audit' model for institutional-level training needs? (Such an 'audit' approach is of course possible with willing participating media institutions on a range of issues, not just gender – such as physical or digital safety, newsroom systems and workflow, and so on.)
- How are different elements of gender equity best delivered in training? This may include training as stand-alone courses, or integrated into technical skills training (ranging across research, camera operations, etc.). Does gender equity training need to target specific cohorts – for example, should training in examples of gender equity policies be limited to management, to encourage adoption; or should it include all journalists, to help create an internal demand for change?
- Do current training feedback tools – satisfaction surveys, and so on – incorporate gender equity?
- Do they make the most of the opportunity to ask trainees about issues broader than the immediate training they received (which may be on purely technical skills)?
Exploring these, and / or other related questions, through a review would then inform any curriculum development. Prior to such a review and discussion it is not feasible to offer curriculum development recommendations here.
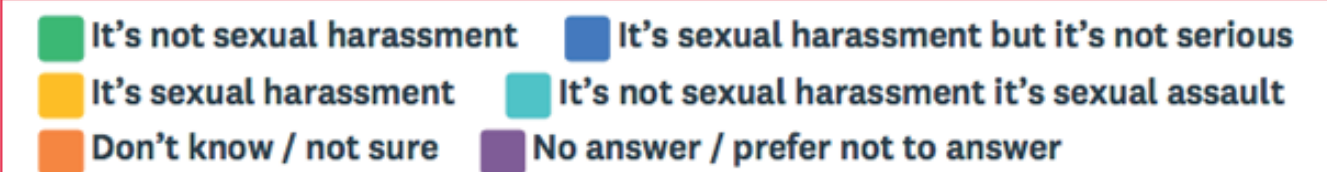
**Gender Equity Advocacy.**
A key question is whether, within the context of the project or beyond it, the material in this study, and subsequent training efforts, should be explicitly purposed towards advocacy on gender equity issues. This is beyond the immediate defined goals of the project, but is certainly a potential road towards positive change, whether through relatively public or open campaigns; or in discreet lobbying with the relevant government departments or other actors. If this is decided, these recommendations – and possibly aspects of the report, including which data are highlighted and the nature of the Executive Summary and Introduction – should be designed towards the advocacy envisaged.

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35.  If a given partner has no established training needs assessment method, discussion can explore how to design this so that it includes gender equity.
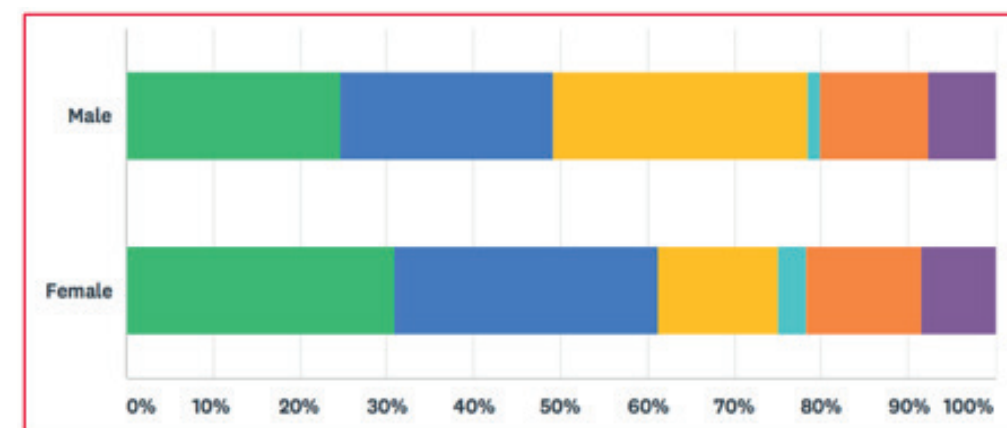
# Annexes

## Annex 1: Sexual Harassment Scenarios

Respondents were given these options to choose the following responses for the scenarios below:

- It's not sexual harassment
- It's sexual harassment but it's not serious
- It's sexual harassment
- It's not sexual harassment it's sexual assault
- Don't know / not sure
- No answer / prefer not to answer

A male supervisor asks one of his female staff members to join him for a romantic dinner.



A female staff member goes to her supervisor with a problem. While telling her story she begins to cry, and he puts his hand on her knee.

A male supervisor locks himself in his office with a female staff member and tells her she knows what to do to get a promotion.
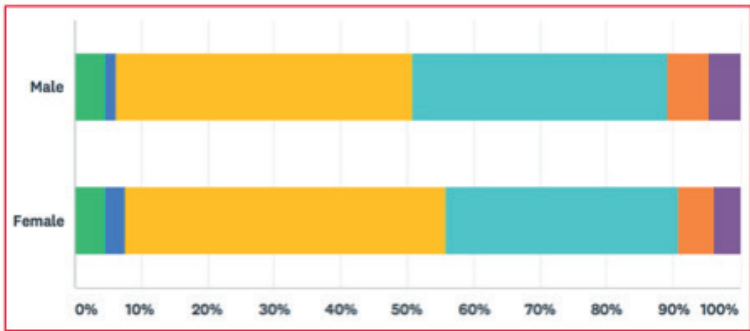


Two male staff members tell jokes about sex in front of female staff members, even though it's clear it makes the women uncomfortable.
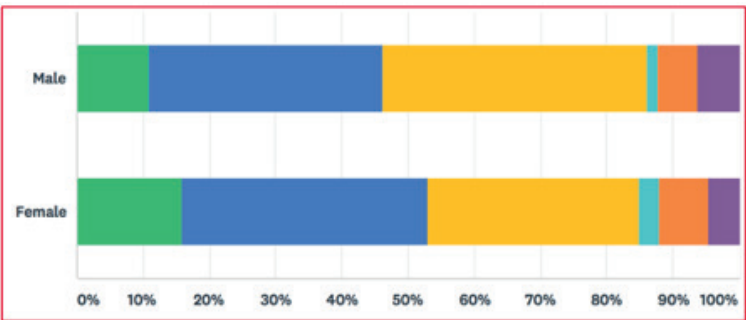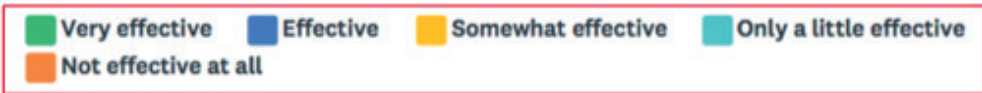


Every time a female employee talks to one of her male coworkers, he looks at her chest. She thought she was imagining it until another female coworker mentioned it to her.
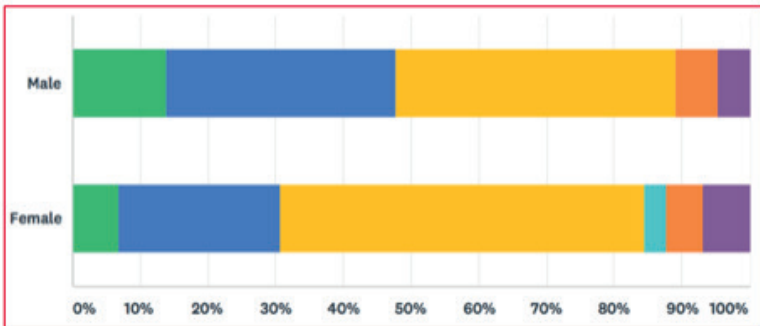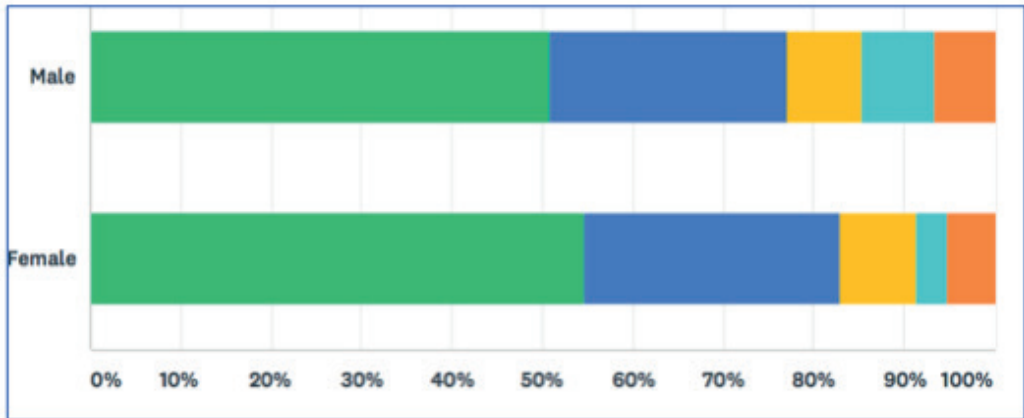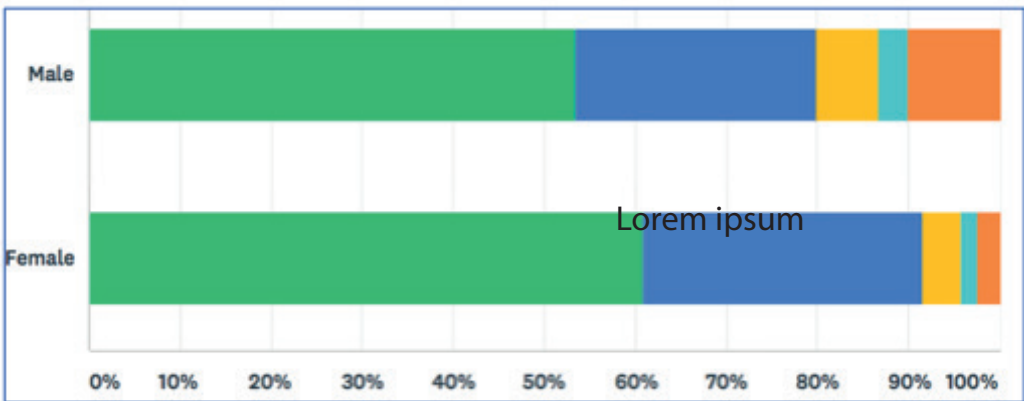


Annex 2: Countering Sexual Harassment

What measures do you believe can most effectively combat sexual harassment in the workplace?
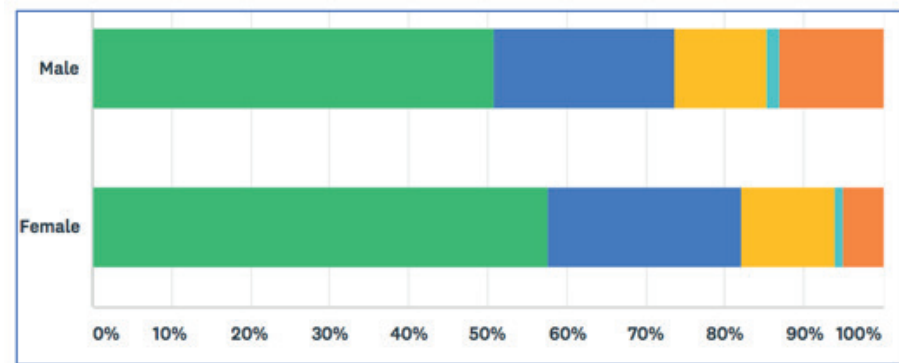


Stronger laws
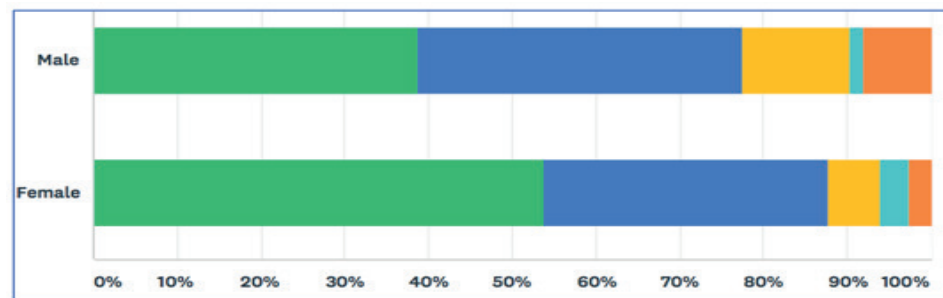


Awareness-raising among women
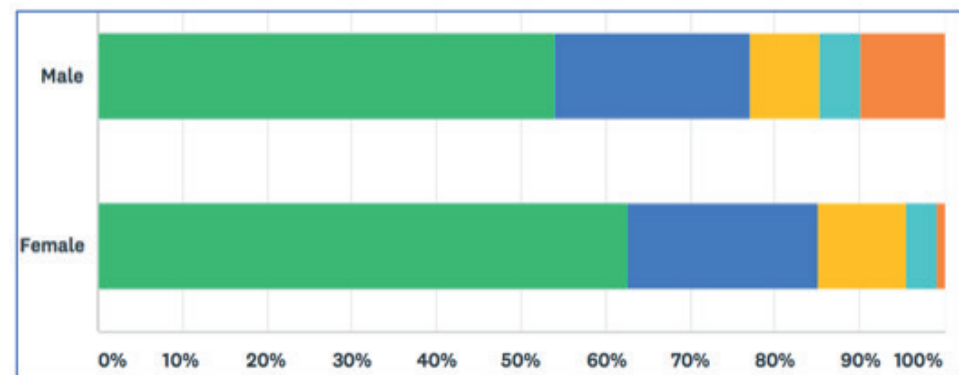


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# Annexes

Awareness raising among men



An effective complaints mechanism



Punishment of perpetrators as a deterrent



Thank You!