



# COVID-19'S IMPACT ON JOURNALISM IN THE CARIBBEAN



NOVEMBER 2020

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The COVID-19 pandemic has left an indelible mark on most if not all persons across the globe. At the forefront of these unprecedented times are journalists who have been tasked with keeping their public informed with accurate and timely information. During the pandemic there has been a dangerous trend of misinformation permeating social media (UNESCO) and journalists are facing the daunting tasks of combatting this “fake news”. The Media Institute of the Caribbean (MIC) commissioned this survey to get an understanding of the challenges and issues that journalists face in general and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This report highlights the findings of the survey.





# METHODOLOGY

The survey was developed under the guidance of the MIC and a link to an online survey was created and sent to the MIC who disseminated the link to journalists located across the region. The survey remained active for one month between September 25th and October 25th, 2020. The questionnaire sought to assess the issues that impact journalists in the region and is attached in Appendix III.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This research project was commissioned to identify the issues and challenges that affect those working in the journalism field in general and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research also reveals the changes journalists believe will improve their ability to carry out their work. This study was undertaken over the course of a month and the questionnaire was completed by sixty-three (63) journalists across the region.

Most journalists were based in Trinidad and Tobago, followed by Guyana and Jamaica. Most journalists' careers spanned between five and ten years and most worked in the television media. The majority of journalists were employed by their media outlets and undertook pieces that peaked their personal interest.

Most journalists believed that their role in society was to provide information to the public although most believed that the current reports being produced are sensationalized. Consistent with this finding half of the journalists shared that they believed that the public perceived journalistic output as only somewhat trustworthy. About two thirds of journalists shared that they have never had to subsidize their investigative reports with about one quarter sharing that they have never been commissioned for an assignment without the media outlet covering their expenses.

More than half of the journalists believed that the level of safety of journalists in the past few years was dependent on the journalist's location. Although, about two thirds of journalists revealed that they have experienced issues with safety while performing their job with half of the journalists stating that they have experienced verbal abuse. Almost half of the journalists believed that they were somewhat supported by their editorial team although they had to provide some of their own tools and or materials. Most journalists reported that government officials are hesitant to share information with the media although most reported that journalists are able to openly investigate and report on government wrongdoings in their country.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The journalists shared that the biggest challenge they faced during the course of their work was the lack of income to undertake reports while remaining financially solvent followed by the lack of benefits and the lack of access to training.

The journalists were given the opportunity to express their views on the reporting of COVID-19 and COVID-19 related issues in their country and the region on a whole. These views ranged from journalists who believed that the reporting has been positive to those who believed that the reporting has been poor. The majority of journalists reported that their journalistic outputs were somewhat impacted by the pandemic. Almost all of the journalists were willing to work during the pandemic although most felt that reporting was somewhat worse during this period.

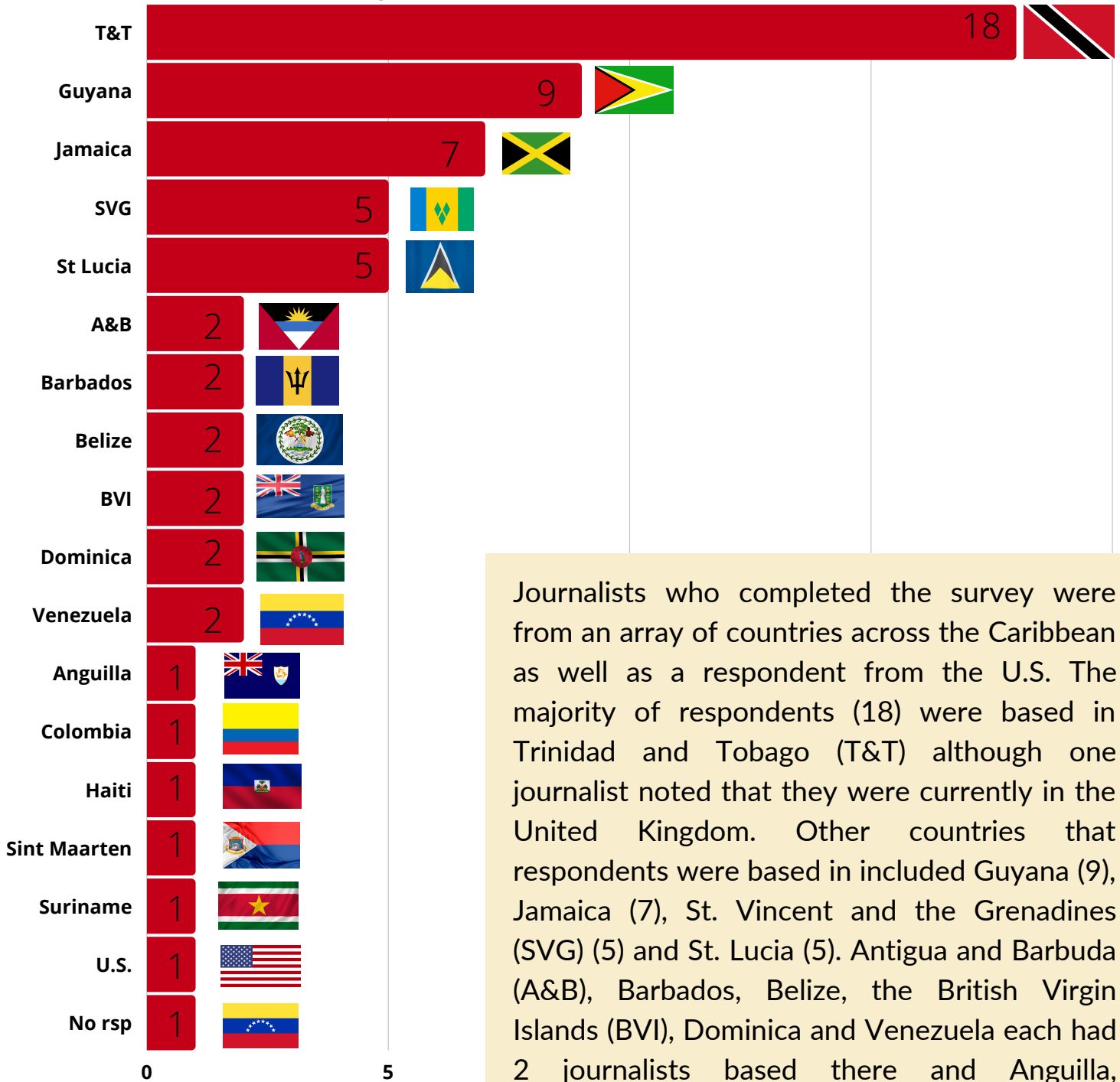
About four in ten journalists reported that the pandemic did not have a financial impact on their ability to undertake assignments. To adapt to the pandemic about two thirds of journalists shared that they had implemented workarounds to continue their assignments. Most journalists had not or are not currently producing any COVID-19 related pieces. More than one third of journalists feared contracting COVID-19 during the course of their work which was also the biggest challenge journalists faced during the pandemic.

The journalists were asked to describe their view of their government's relationship with the media. Responses ranged from journalists who characterized the relationship as very good to those who believe that the relationship was contentious. The journalists believed that to improve their field in general and during the pandemic there was a need for better access to information, training, resources, regional COVID-19 information and more financial and personal security support.



# COUNTRIES REPRESENTED

Chart 1: Countries Represented



Base: 63

Journalists who completed the survey were from an array of countries across the Caribbean as well as a respondent from the U.S. The majority of respondents (18) were based in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) although one journalist noted that they were currently in the United Kingdom. Other countries that respondents were based in included Guyana (9), Jamaica (7), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) (5) and St. Lucia (5). Antigua and Barbuda (A&B), Barbados, Belize, the British Virgin Islands (BVI), Dominica and Venezuela each had 2 journalists based there and Anguilla, Colombia, Haiti, Sint Maarten, Suriname and the U.S. each had 1 respondent based there.

# JOURNALISTIC CAREER

## LENGTH OF CAREER

Journalists reported the length of their journalistic careers. Most respondents stated that their career spanned between five to ten years (30.6%). This was followed by respondents who have been working as journalists for more than 16 years (29%), respondents who have been working as journalists for less than five years (21%), and respondents who have been working as journalists between eleven and sixteen years (19.4%). For respondents who indicated that they have been journalists for more than sixteen years, they were asked to specify the length of their journalistic career. These respondents reported career lengths that spanned between eighteen (18) and forty-eight (48) years.

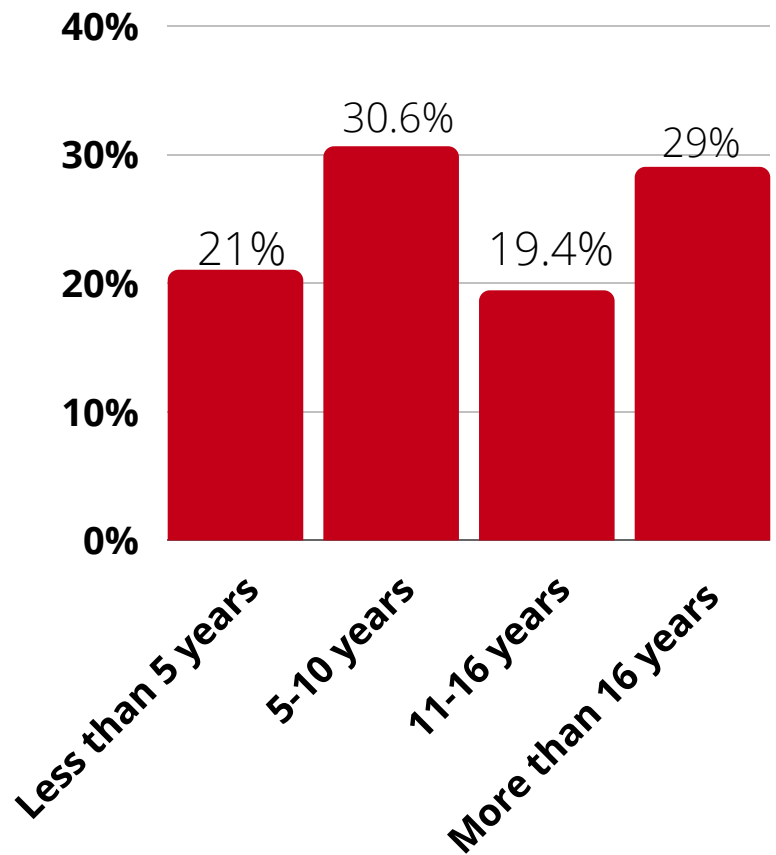


Chart 2: Length of Career

Base: 62

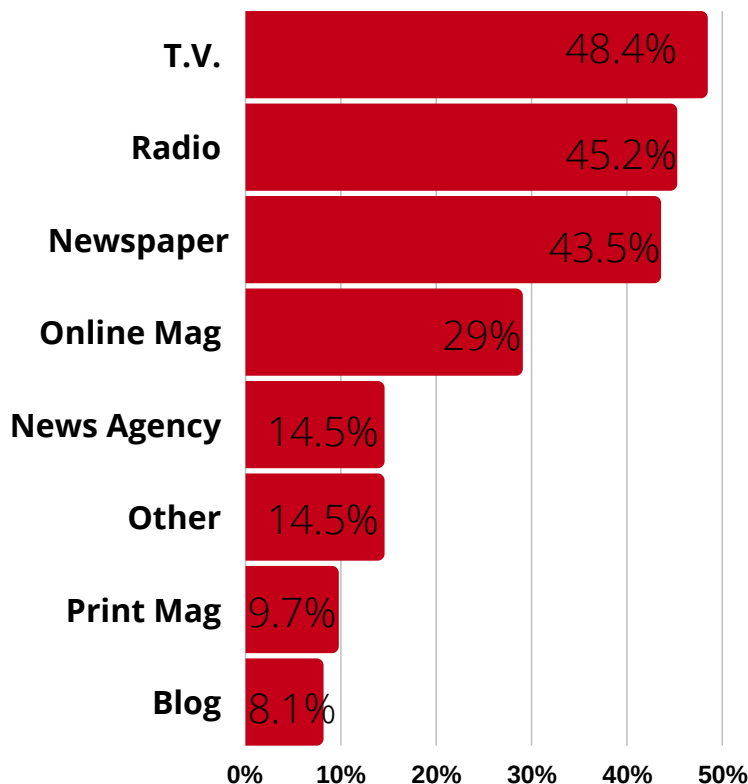


Chart 3: Media Journalists work in

Base: 62

## MEDIA JOURNALISTS WORK IN

The journalists stated the type of media that they work in; 48.4% of journalists worked in the television media, 45.2% reported that they work as radio journalists, 43.5% worked as newspaper journalists and 29% work for an online magazine. Other types of media that journalists worked in included news agencies (14.5%), print magazines (9.7%) and blogs (8.1%). 14.5% of journalists stated that they worked in another media not listed. These media included corporate communications, broadcast regulations, podcasts, social media and digital news.

# JOURNALISTIC CAREER

## TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT

Journalists shared their type of employment, with the majority of journalists (38.7%) reporting that they worked as employees of their organizations. Other types of employment included working as both an employee and as a freelancer (19.4%), journalists who only did freelance work (19.4%) and journalists who worked on contract (14.5%). There were a few journalists (8.1%) whose type of employment was not included in the survey. Some types of employment that these journalists listed included journalists who owned the media house, a journalist who is not currently working in the field and a respondent whose role is as a broadcast monitoring and compliance officer.

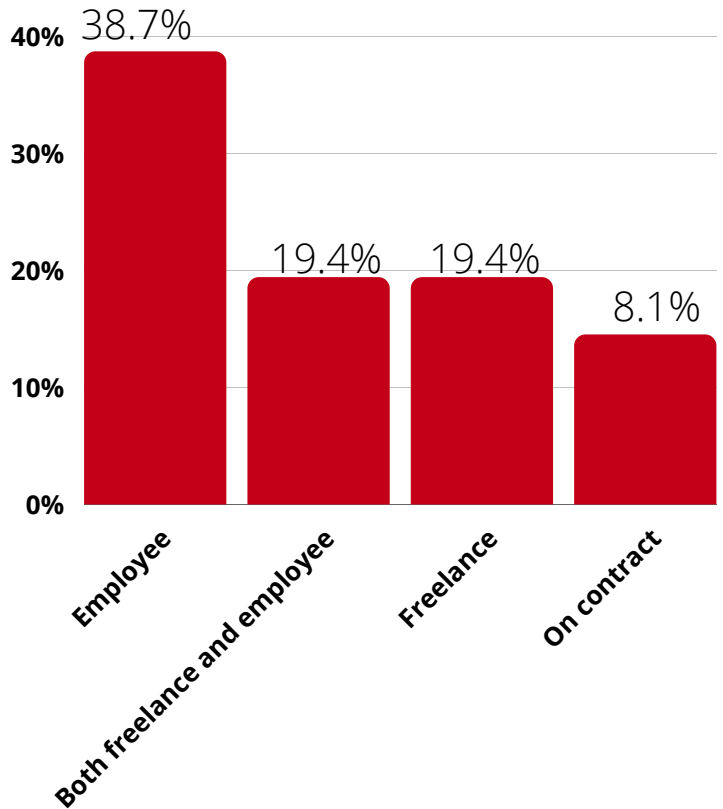
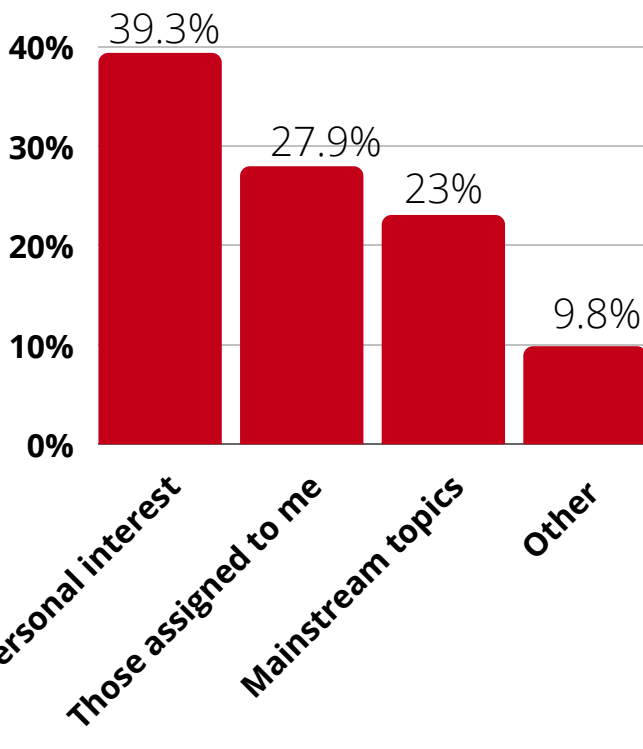


Chart 4: Type of employment Base: 62

Chart 5: Types of Investigative pieces undertaken



Base: 61

## TYPES OF INVESTIGATIVE PIECES UNDERTAKEN

The journalists shared the types of investigative pieces they cover. The majority of journalists (39.3%) stated that they undertake pieces that peak their personal interests, followed by journalists who cover pieces assigned to them (27.9%) and journalists who cover mainstream topics (23%). A few journalists (9.8%) reported other types of pieces they undertake including two who stated that they cover all the types of pieces stated above and one journalist who stated that their work involved the regulation and monitoring of the media.

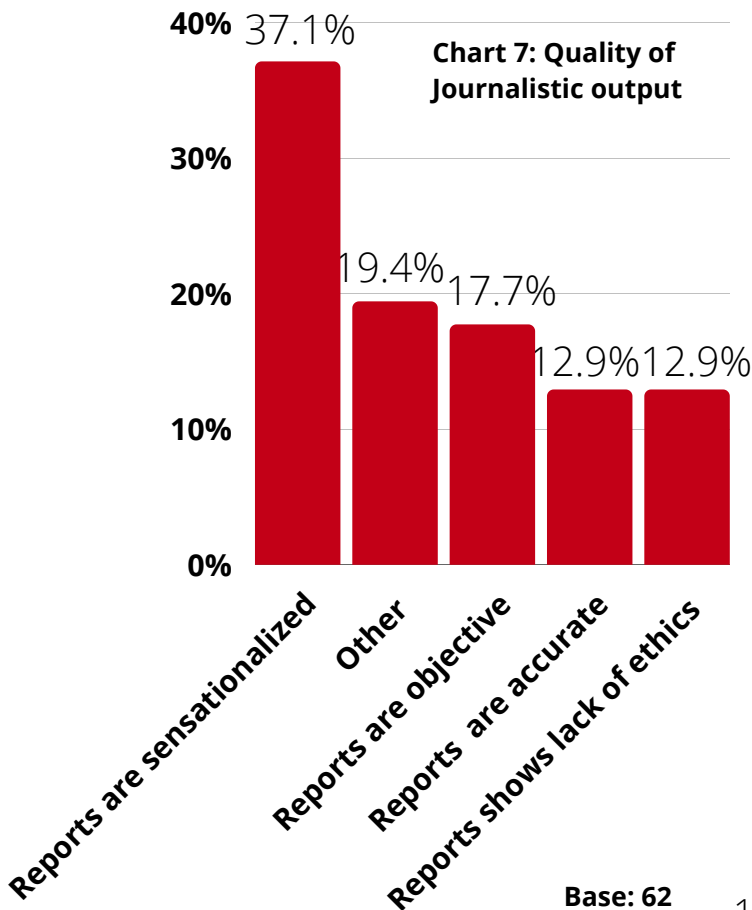
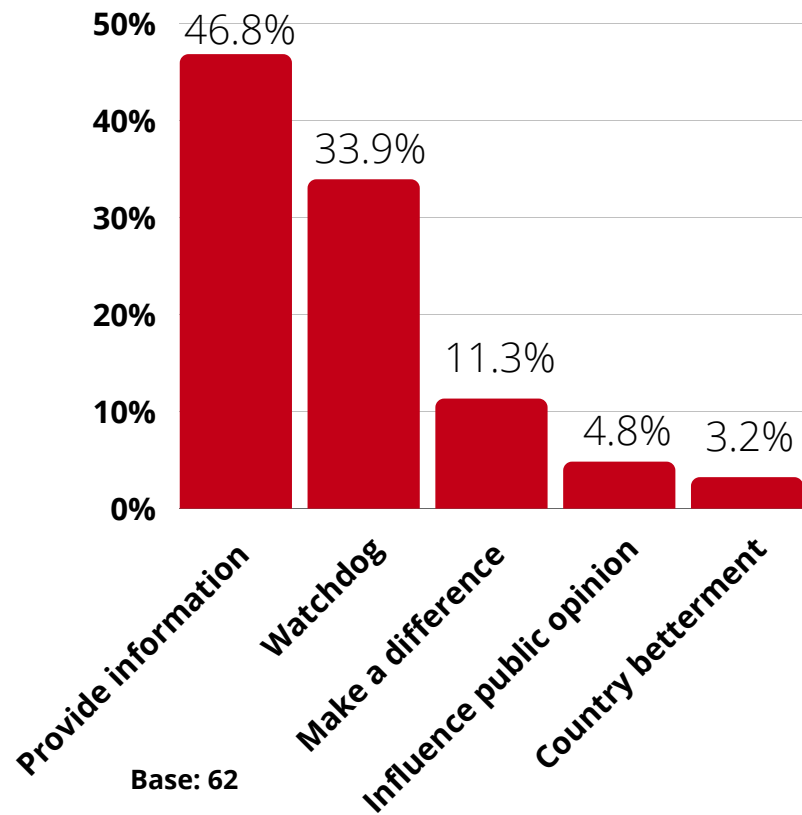
# JOURNALISM'S IMPACT



## MAIN IMPACT OF JOURNALISTS ON SOCIETY

Most journalists (46.8%) believed that their main impact on society was to provide information to the public. Other impacts included journalists acting as watchdogs (33.9%), journalism making a difference in people's lives (11.3%), journalism influencing public opinion (4.8%) and journalists making their country better (3.2%).

Chart 6: Main impact of journalists on society



## CURRENT QUALITY OF JOURNALISTIC OUTPUT

Journalists were asked to share their views on the current quality of journalistic output. The majority of journalists (37.1%) believed that current reports produced are sensationalized, 17.7% believed that reports are objective, 12.9% of journalists believed that reports produced are accurate and 12.9% of journalists believed that reports produced show a lack of ethics on the part of investigative journalists. 19% of journalists had other views on the quality of outputs. These views include journalists who believe that the outputs have been both sensationalized and accurate, journalists who believe that there is the need for additional resources and one respondent who feels that their colleagues have not done enough to oppose current restrictions placed on the media as a result of the pandemic.



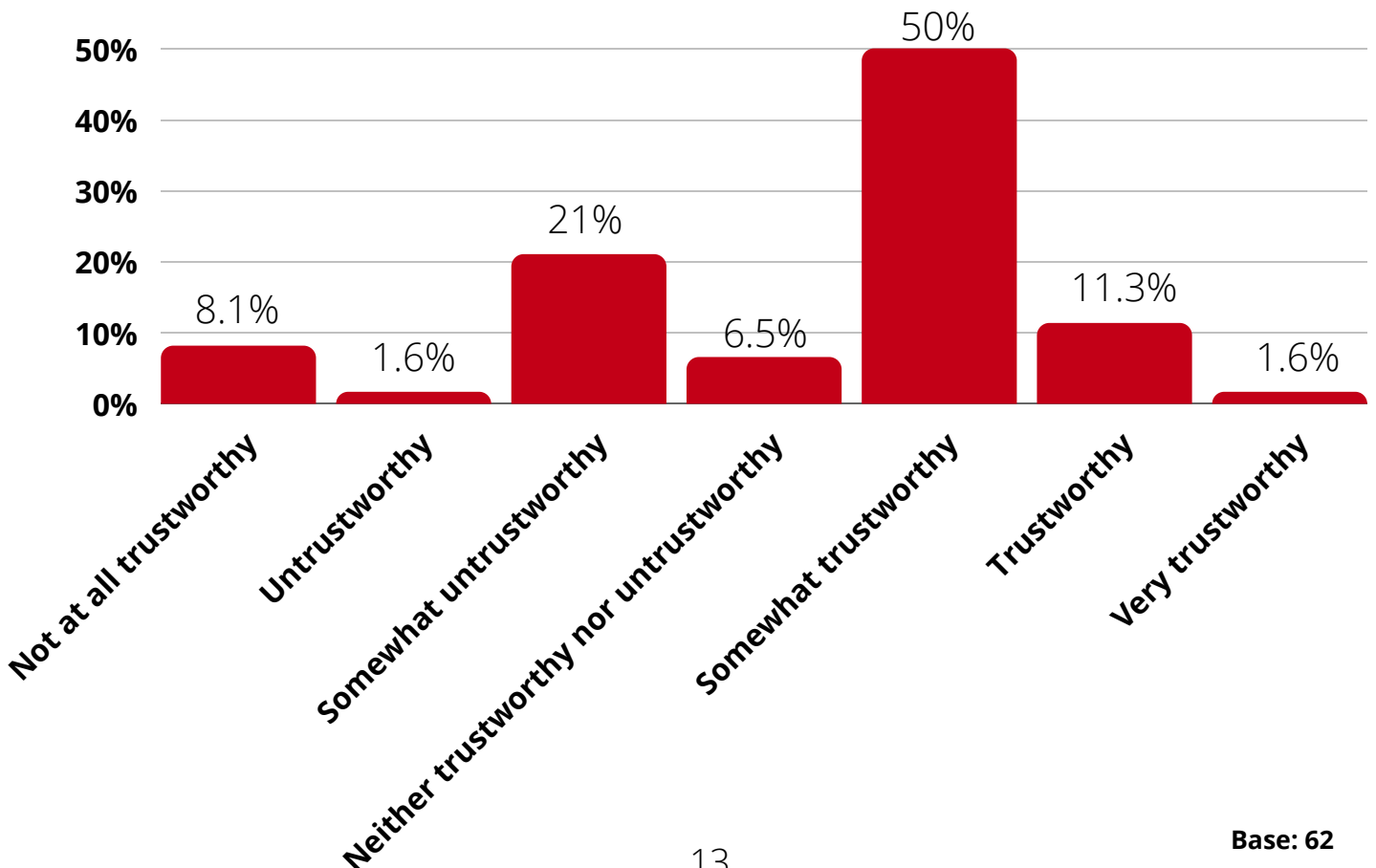
# TRUSTWORTHINESS OF JOURNALISM TODAY



## PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

The journalists shared what they believed was the public's perception of trustworthiness of current journalistic outputs. Using a scale between one and seven, with one being not at all trustworthy and seven being very trustworthy, the journalists gave the public's perception of trustworthiness a 61.3% rating. Half of the journalists (50%) believed that the public perceived outputs as somewhat trustworthy, 21% gave the rating of somewhat untrustworthy, 11.3% rated the public's perception as trustworthy, 8.1% reported that they believed the public perceived that outputs were not at all trustworthy and 6.5% believed that the public perceived outputs as neither trustworthy nor untrustworthy. Untrustworthy and very trustworthy were each selected by 1.6% of journalist

Chart 8: Public's perception of trustworthiness



# FINANCIAL ISSUES IN JOURNALISM



## JOURNALISTS SUBSIDIZING INVESTIGATIVE REPORTS

The majority of journalists (64.5%) reported that they have never had to personally subsidize their investigative reports. The remaining 35.5% have had to reports. For those who have subsidized their reports, 77.3% were never reimbursed, with 22% reimbursed

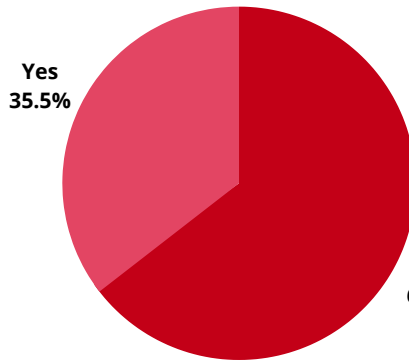


Chart 9: Journalists subsidizing investigative reports

Base: 62

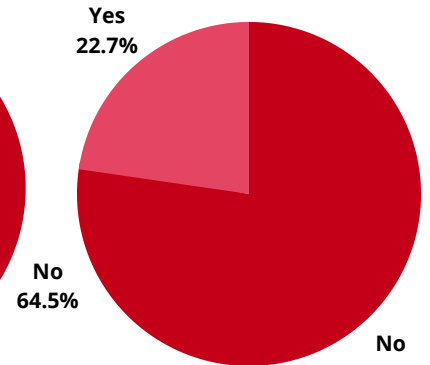


Chart 10: Journalists reimbursed for reports

Base: 22

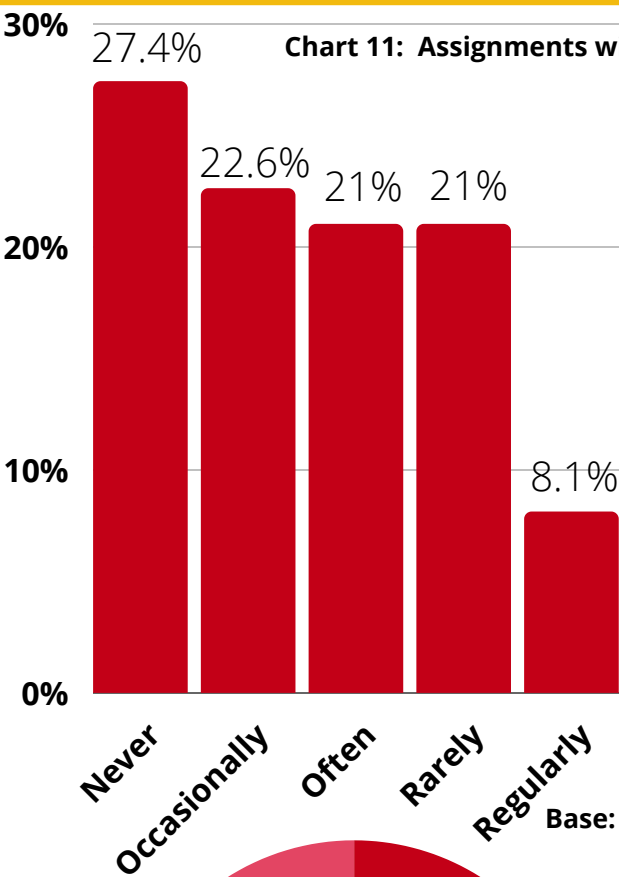


Chart 11: Assignments without expense accounts

Base: 62

## ASSIGNMENT WITHOUT EXPENSE ACCOUNTS

The journalists shared whether they have ever been commissioned for an assignment by a media outlet and not have their expenses covered. Most journalists (27.4%) reported that they have never experienced this and 22.6% stated that they have occasionally been commissioned without having their expenses covered. 21% of journalists stated that this has happened often, another 21% said this has happened rarely and 8.1% of journalists said that they are regularly commissioned without having their expenses covered. The journalists were then asked if this has ever impacted their motivation to pursue investigative pieces with the majority (62.9%) stating that this has not impacted their motivation. The remaining 37.1% stated that being commissioned without having their expenses covered did impact their motivation to pursue their assignment.

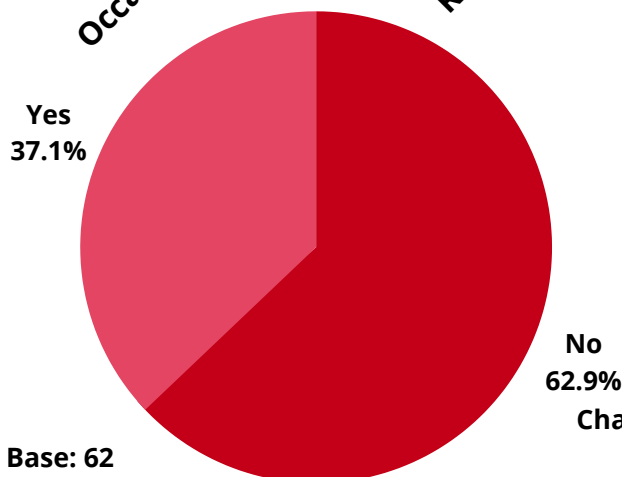


Chart 12: Lack of expense account impacting motivations

Base: 62

# SAFETY ISSUES IN JOURNALISM

## SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS TODAY

The journalists shared whether they believed investigative journalism has become more or less safe in the past few years. A little more than half of the journalists (53.2%) reported that the level of safety of journalists varied depending on the journalist's location. One third of journalists (33.9%) stated that they believe that journalism has become less safe, 9.7% were unsure as to whether there have been any changes in the safety of journalists and 3.2% believed that journalism has become more safe in the past few years.

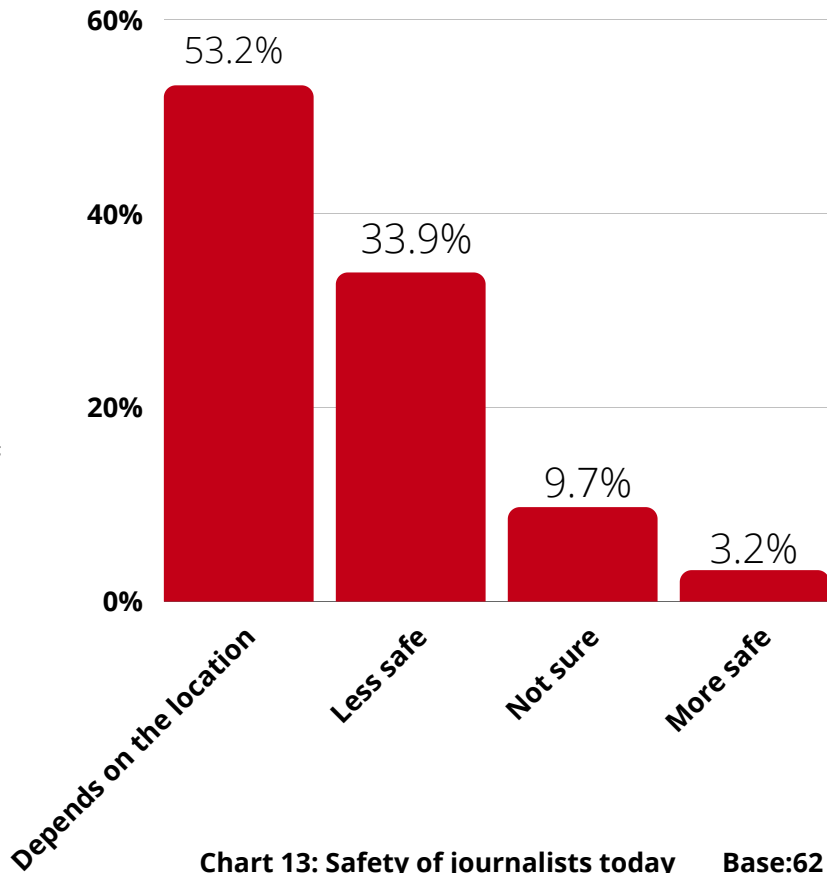


Chart 13: Safety of journalists today Base:62

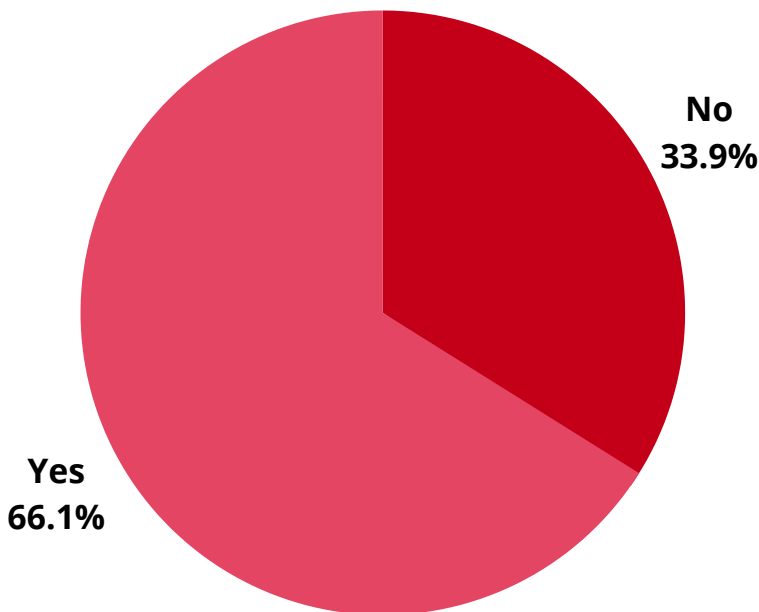


Chart 14: Safety Issues while undertaking assignments Base:62

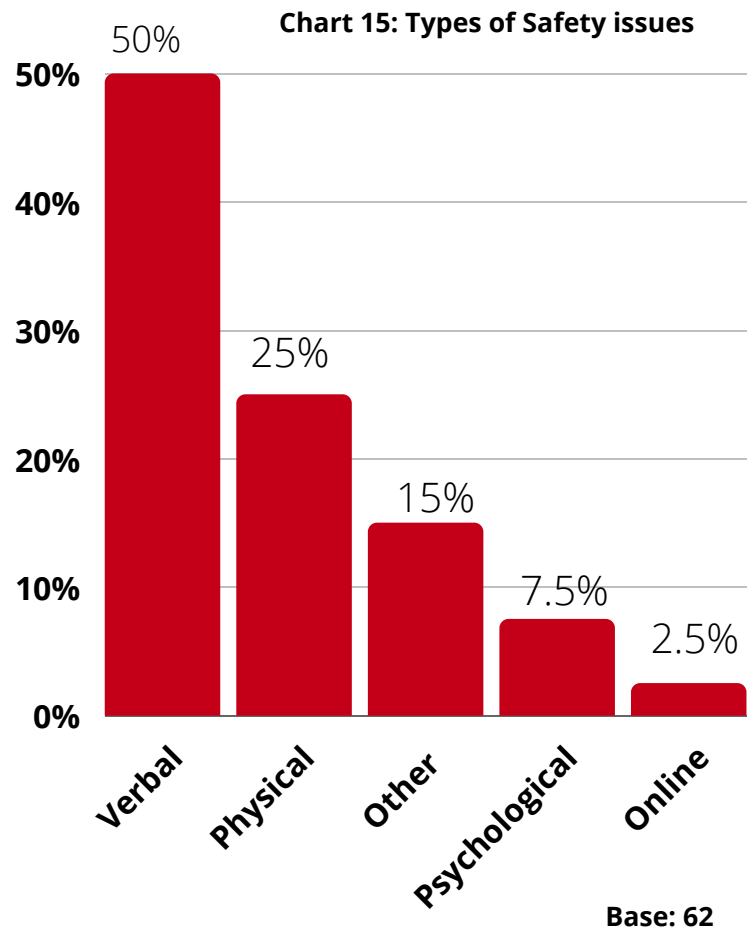
## SAFETY ISSUES WHILE UNDERTAKING ASSIGNMENTS

About two thirds of journalists (66.1%) reported that they have faced safety whilst working, with about one third (33.9%) of journalists stating that they have never faced safety issues

# SAFETY ISSUES IN JOURNALISM

## TYPE OF SAFETY ISSUE

The journalists who reported that they had faced safety issues in the course of their work shared the types of safety issues they have faced with half of the journalists (50%) indicating that they have experienced verbal issues. One quarter of journalists (25%) have experienced physical issues, 7.5% psychological issues, 2.5% experienced issues online and 15% stated that they have experienced issues not listed. Some of the journalists who indicated that they have experiences not listed above shared that they have experienced all of the issues mentioned above, other issues included Hurricane Irma, personal risks and attacks by politicians.



*"When I write investigative stories about politics and politicians they attack me personally and their supporters usually start smear campaigns about me online."*

*"Physical and verbal attacks."*

*"Threatened over the phone."*

*"Management acting in ways to undermine one's work, and actively trying to cause harm to my professional reputation."*

*"My physical safety was threatened by an interviewee."*

*"Minister took me to task during a news conference about the actions of my company."*

*"My life was threatened and I had to flee the country for several months."*

*"Overt threats when covering court cases, such as a defendant staring at me and motioning slicing his (my) neck."*

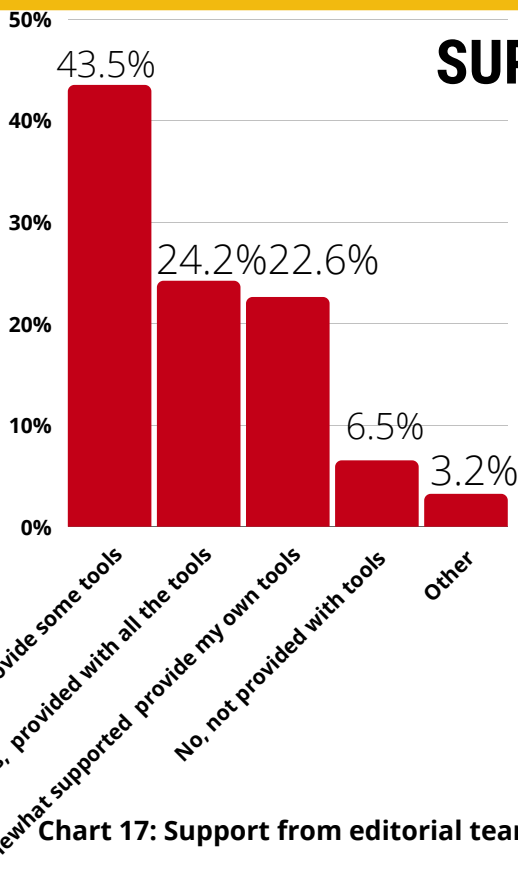
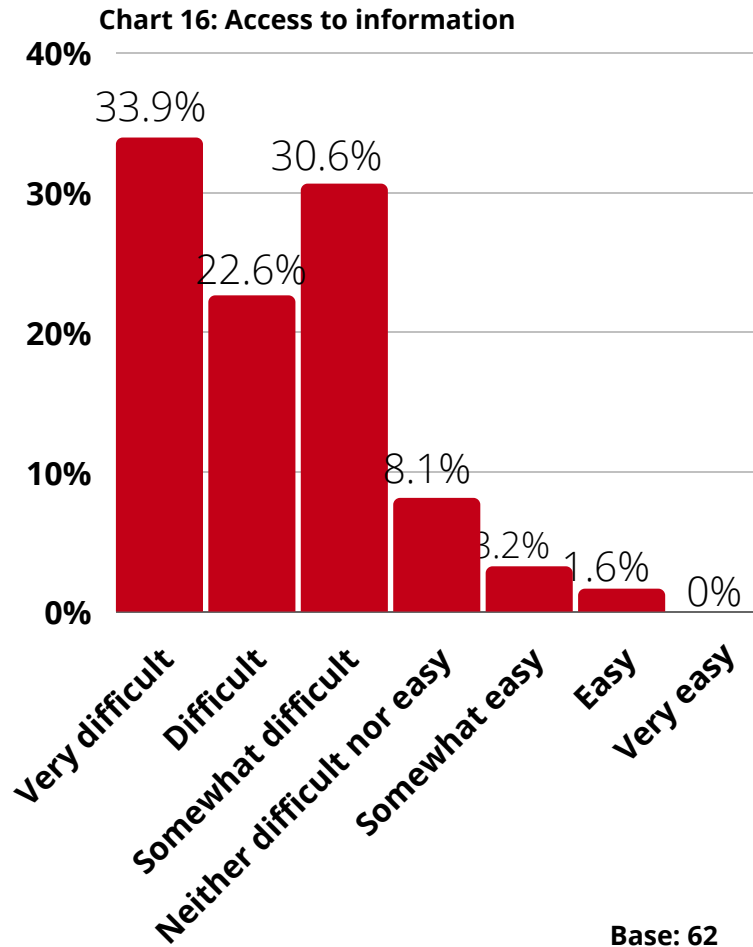
*"It's too complicated to describe here. In my country you need to accept the work under pressure. If not, you won't do this kind of profession. Because you get pressured for everything, more for investigative reports."*



# INFORMATION ISSUES IN JOURNALISM

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The journalists were asked to assess the ease of their access to information. On a scale of one to seven, with one being information is very difficult to access and seven being information is very easy to access, journalists on average gave the ease of access to information a negative rating (32.8%). Most journalists (33.9%) believed that information is very difficult to access, 30.6% believed that information is somewhat difficult to access, 22.6% believed that information is difficult to access and 8.1% believed that information was neither easy nor difficult to access. 3.2% of journalists believed that information is somewhat easy to access, 1.6% of journalists believed that information was easy to access and no journalist reported that information was very easy to access.



## SUPPORT FROM EDITORIAL TEAM

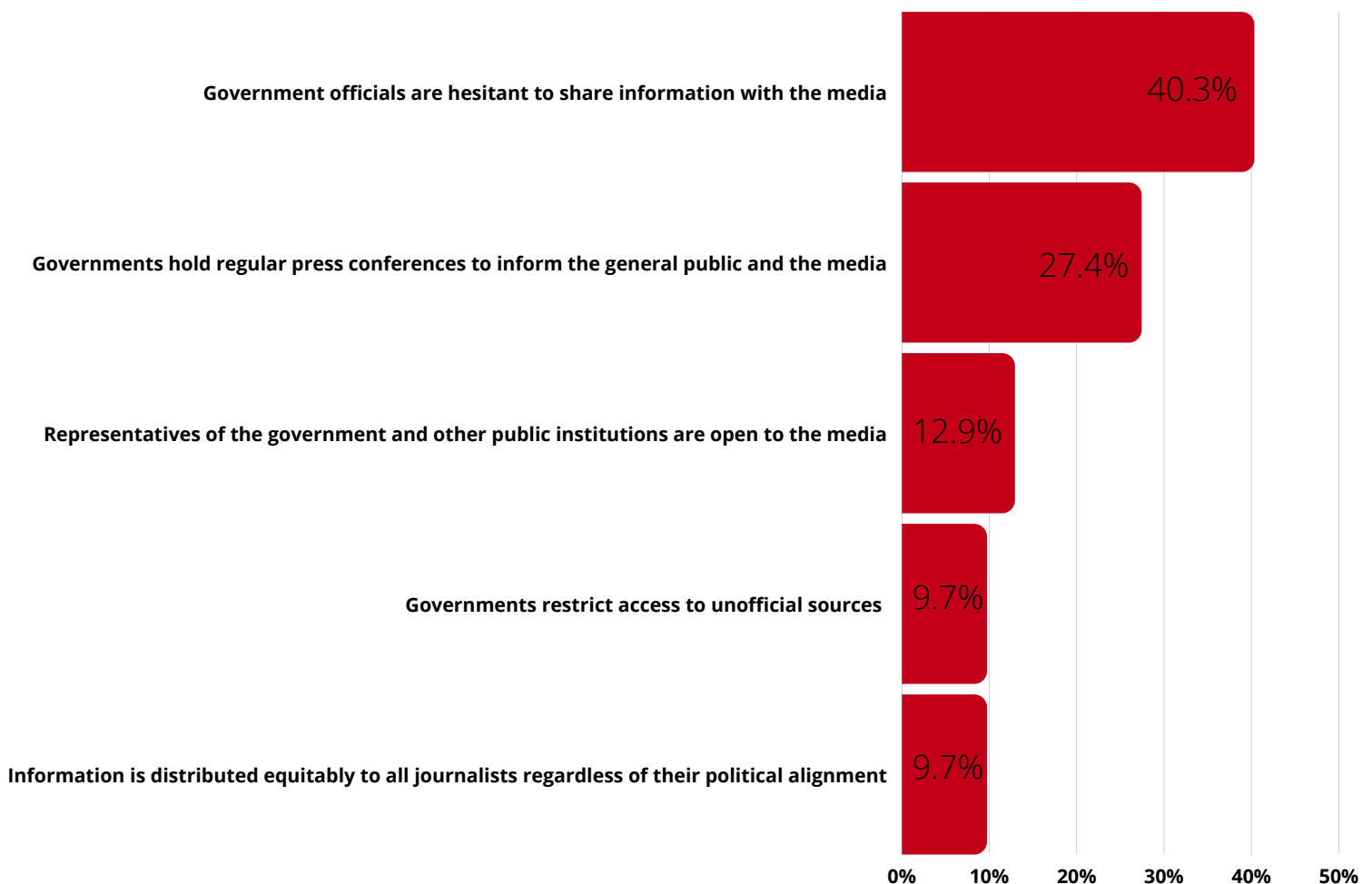
The journalists assessed whether they believed that they received adequate support from their editorial staff while undertaking investigative reports. The majority of journalists (43.5%) believed that they were somewhat supported by their editorial team although they had to provide some of their own tools and or materials. 24.2% reported that they are provided with the necessary tools and or materials to undertake their report, 22.6% felt that they were somewhat supported despite having to provide their own tools and or materials and 6.5% reported that they were not provided with the tools and materials needed to undertake their reports. Of the remaining 3.2% of journalists, one stated that they were the editor and did not have staff and the other stated that they did not have editorial staff.

# INFORMATION ISSUES IN JOURNALISM

## ACCESS TO SOURCES

The journalists described their access to sources whether official or unofficial, with the majority of journalists (40.3%) reporting that government officials are hesitant to share information with the media. 27.4% reported that their governments hold regular press conferences to inform the general public and the media. 12.9% of journalists stated that representatives of the government and other public institutions are open to the media, 9.7% of journalists stated that their governments restrict access to unofficial sources especially those who may have opposite views and another 9.7% reported that information is distributed equitably to all journalists regardless of their political alignment.

Chart 18: Access to sources



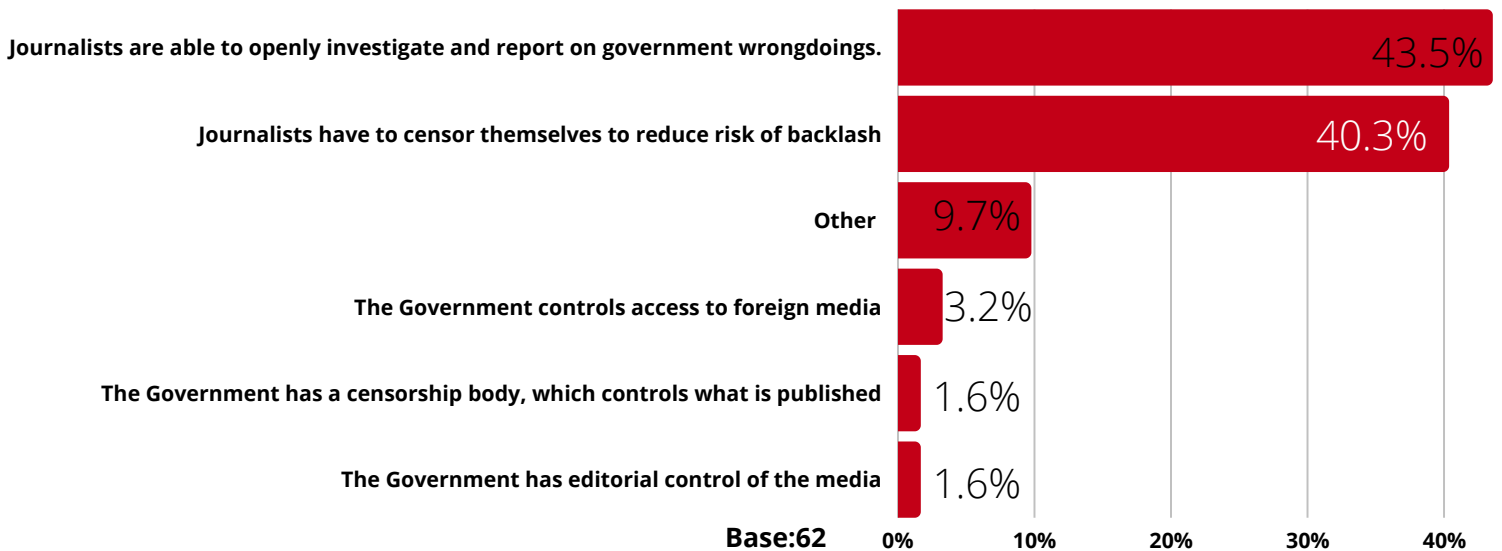
Base: 62

# INFORMATION ISSUES IN JOURNALISM

## FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

The majority of journalists (43.5%) reported that journalists are able to openly investigate and report on government wrongdoings in their country, followed by journalists who believe that journalists have to censor themselves to reduce risk of backlash (40.3%). 3.2% of journalists believed their government controls access to foreign media, 1.6% stated that their government has a censorship body, which controls what is published and another 1.6% believed that their government has editorial control of the media. The remaining 9.7% journalists shared other views not listed above.

Chart 19: Freedom of the press



*"Even though freedom of the press is enshrined in the constitution in Trinidad, transparency is severely lacking."*

*"Openly able to investigate but with difficult access to public records. You have to use what they want you to know. There is no (Freedom of information act) FOIA request."*

*Journalists are able to openly probe and report on government wrongdoings, though a recently passed cybercrime law, which criminalizes electronic defamation and levies outlandish penalties that could hit journalists, poses a grave danger to press freedom in the BVI."*

*"Journalists are often unsupported by management and censor for political or commercial reasons."*

*"The press self-censors due to lack of legal support, as well as editorial and ownership pressures."*

*"The press is generally free in TT. The challenge comes from the commercial aspect of media as an enterprise. Given the downturn in the economy and media houses' inability to transform and adapt quickly and efficiently to technological advances, media houses through the region are struggling and the need to balance reporting with ensuring advertisers aren't too mad can sometimes constrain coverage and lead to a type of economic censorship."*

# CHALLENGES IN JOURNALISM

## CHALLENGES IN JOURNALISM

The journalists ranked the challenges they believe journalists face during the course of their work. The biggest challenge that the journalists believed they faced was the lack of income to undertake reports while remaining financially solvent. The lack of benefits for example health insurance and the lack of access to training to hone their investigative skills were ranked second and third respectively. Other challenges included unfavorable contracts with media outlets (ranked fourth), retaining intellectual property (ranked fifth), communication with editors (ranked sixth) and the general public losing interest in investigative pieces (ranked seventh). The journalists were then asked if they believed there were any challenges or obstacles not listed above, the majority of journalists reported that they did not believe there were any additional challenges or obstacles. The remaining journalists (27.4%) believed there were additional challenges and some of these challenges are listed below:

Chart 20 Challenges in journalism

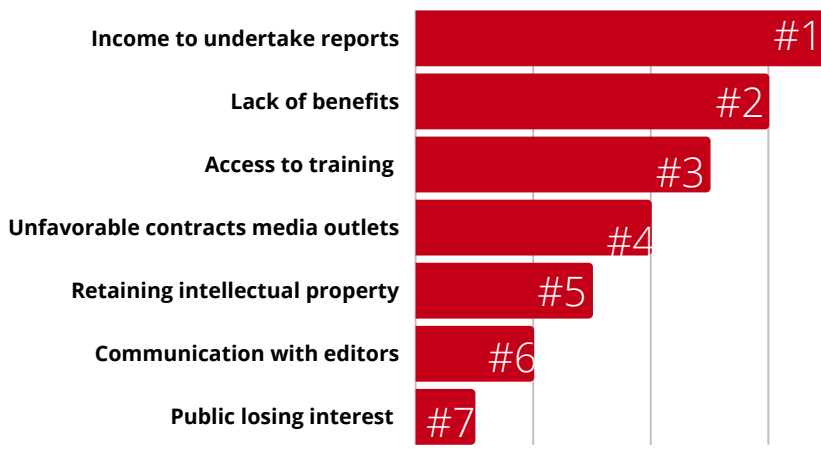
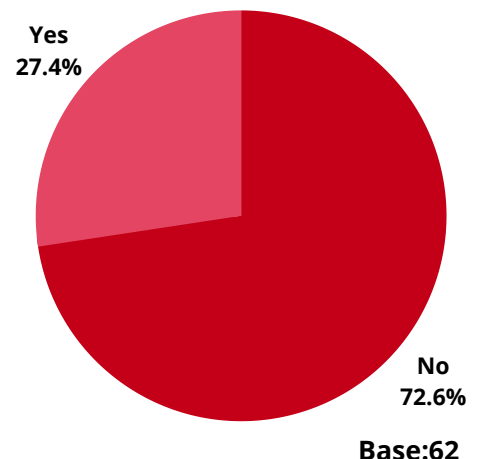


Chart 21: Challenges not listed



"A well-resourced organization with editors who are proactive in coordinating journalists to work together on stories."

"Safety measures if threatened to be jailed."

"A lack of data, and inability to access data that does exist. Geography also poses a problem to much needed regional stories in the Caribbean: It is expensive to visit other islands because travel and accommodation costs tend to be very high."

"Quality Editorial Support"

"Availability of sources, especially given the insular nature of Trinidad."

"Funding to work on specific investigative pieces."

"Media companies not willing to pay an honest price."

The fundamental shift in journalism and how it is supported by revenue has had a dramatic impact on what gets covered and to what extent. Journalism is now inextricably linked to income and there can be no successful media house that does not consider the importance of both."



# JOURNALISM IN THE TIME OF COVID-19



## JOURNALISTS' VIEWS OF IN COUNTRY REPORTING OF COVID-19 AND COVID-19 RELATED ISSUES.

*"Above fair"*

*"I believe the reporting remains at a surface level and investigative pieces are not being pursued."*

*"The media did fairly well with what they had to work with, the government tried to provide information but in such an ad hoc way that it was hard to hold them accountable efficiently. The public however, did not seem to like the line of questioning by journalists to officials, mainly because it was the first time many of them actually tuned in to pressers to have an idea of what an actual press conference is like. I personally didn't appreciate the "the media are idiots" refrain that echoed through social media."*

*"It could be better. I think COVID-19 is being placed on the backburners."*

*"The COVID-19 reporting was timely, and accurate, no issues"*

*"Mediocre. Need more investigative pieces that follow up on patients etc"*

*"Low. All the information related to COVID-19 is centralized by the government. Any voice contradicting their information is silenced."*

*"It ranges widely, from excellent to poor."*

## JOURNALISTS' VIEWS OF REGIONAL REPORTING OF COVID-19 AND COVID-19 RELATED ISSUES.

*"Superb"*

*"Could be better. Need collaboration between countries to have the virus handled better in countries that are having spikes."*

*"The region remains critically under covered internationally but domestically the coverage and management was pretty good."*

*"I feel COVID-19 has been politicized in most countries. So there is a lot of censorship in the subject. The governments are not giving the right numbers, people are scared. There is uncertainty and a lot of misinformation."*

*"Much more information is revealed with other countries and real figures are given."*

*"Needs more in depth coverage."*

*"I interviewed journalists throughout the region and some said that they had good access to information while others said they did not. Without access to information, they cannot report accurately."*

*"Difficult to access information"*

*"Excellent"*

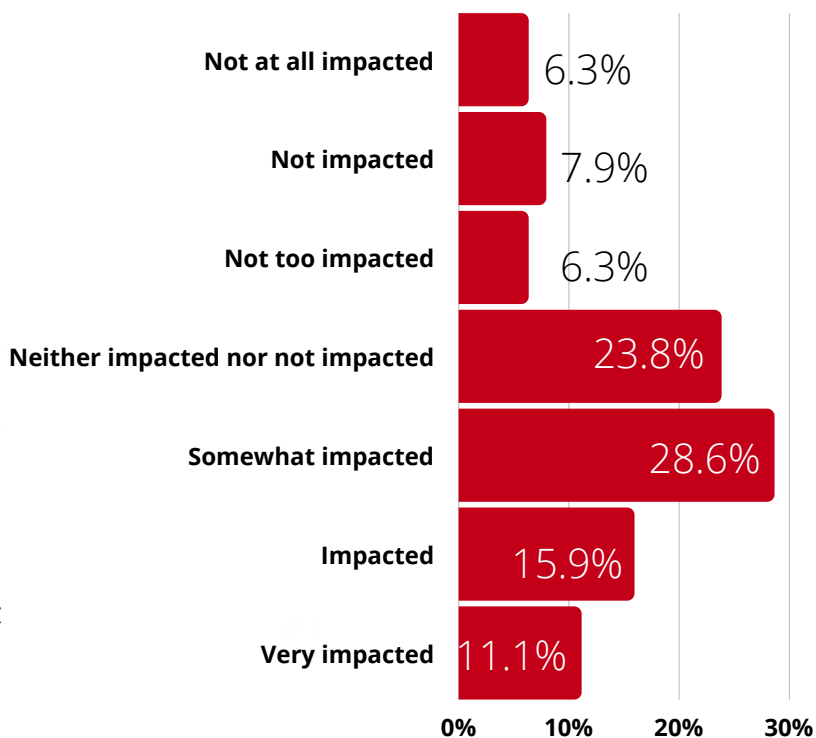
*"Mediocre"*

# JOURNALISM IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON JOURNALISTIC OUTPUTS

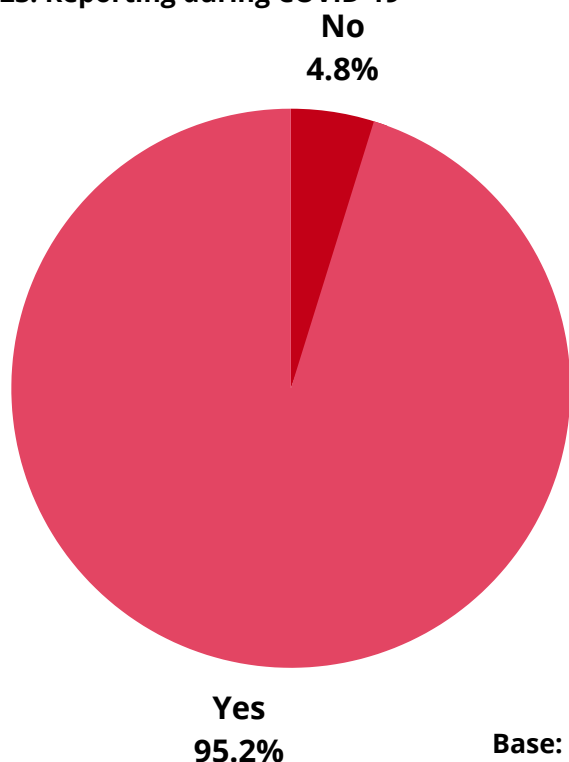
The journalists shared the size of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on their ability to carry out their work. On a scale of one to seven, where one is not at all impacted and seven is highly impacted, on average journalists rated the impact of COVID-19 on their ability to do their job as 64.6%. Most journalists (28.6%) reported that they were somewhat impacted, 23.8% reported that they were neither impacted nor not impacted, 15.9% reported that they were impacted and 11.1% were very impacted. 7.9% stated that they were not impacted 6.3% stated that they were not impacted at all and another 6.3% stated that they were not too impacted.

Chart 22: Impact of COVID-19 on journalistic output



Base: 63

Chart 23: Reporting during COVID-19



Base: 63

## REPORTING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Almost all of the journalists (95.2%) reported that they were willing to report during the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 4.8% stated that they have been unwilling to report during the pandemic. Two journalists reported that they were unwilling to work due to their health and the possible risk of infection. Another journalist reported that there is a lack of information being given to the media for public dissemination.

# JOURNALISM IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

## ABILITY TO REPORT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The journalists compared their experiences of reporting during the pandemic with their experiences of reporting before the onset of the pandemic. Almost half of the journalists (41.3%) believed that reporting was somewhat worse during the pandemic, 39.7% believed that reporting was about the same, 14.3% believed that reporting was somewhat better, 3.2% believed that reporting was much worse and 1.6% of journalists believed that reporting was much better during the pandemic.

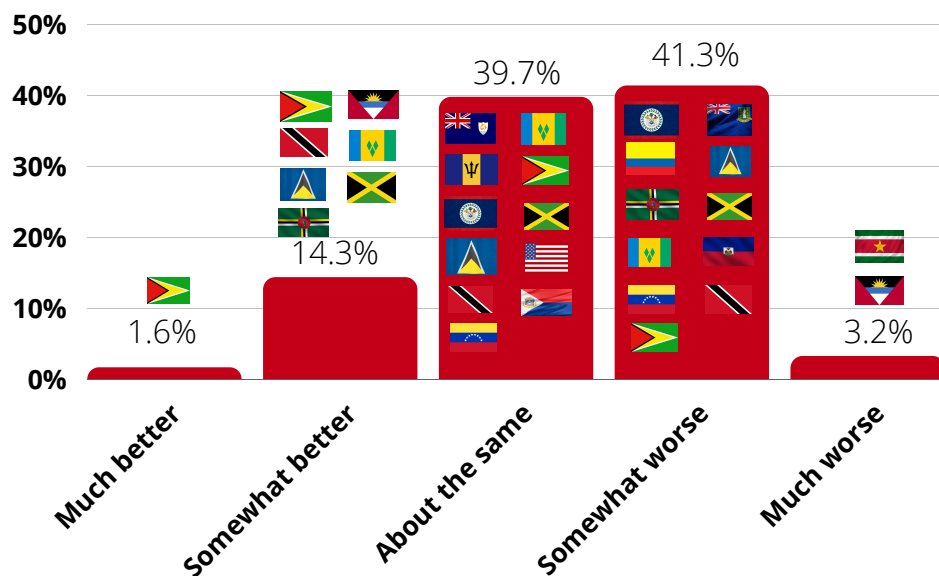


Chart 24: Ability to report during the COVID-19 pandemic Base:63

### Much Worse

"No PPE"

"Lack of movement for fear of contracting disease."

### Much Better

"Because I was able to improve my reporting skills"

### Somewhat Worse

"Unable to go to some areas and do face to face interviews."

"Less able to go to events or have face to face interviews.."

"Public officials have used the pandemic to create distance between themselves and the press. Travel restrictions make it difficult to go on location to report on a story."

### Somewhat Better

"I am able to operate from home in some cases while caring for my children."

"There was much more access to hardware for complete interaction for interviews and person to person interface."

"I have learnt to overcome a number of daily challenges, reporting is easier since it is now not an option but rather a requirement to get the story."

### About the same

"The only difference is being more cognizant regarding safety."

"With this particular job, I can use databases, reports and interviews over a video conferencing tool to get information"

"There are always tools to access information."

"The only thing that has changed is the lack of face to face communication"

# JOURNALISM IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

## FINANCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

The journalists reported the financial impact that the pandemic has had on their ability to undertake their assignments. About four in ten journalists (44.4%) reported that the pandemic did not have a financial impact on their ability to undertake assignments, 30.2% reported having to take on alternative activities to provide for their families, 11.1% reported having to stop a report because of a lack of financial resources to conduct it and 1.6% reported that their outlet has closed down due to COVID-19. 12.7% reported having been impacted by a way not listed above.

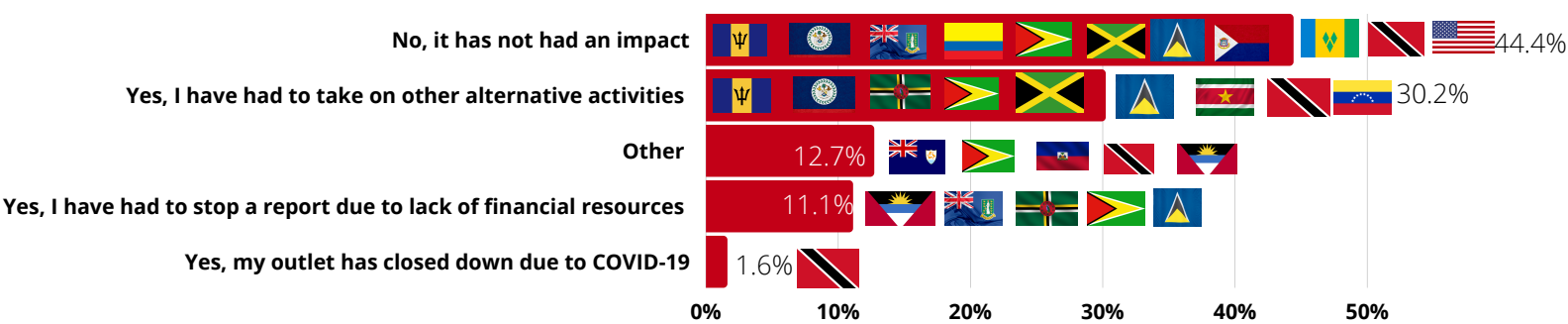


Chart 25: Financial Impact of COVID-19

Base:63

## FINANCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

*"Family safety requested, I had to wait and stop traveling. I do work but online with longtime source."*

*"I am now working less days because of my company's inability to pay me a full salary."*

*"It costs more to pay high amounts of phone credit to make calls. It also costs to take private transportation instead of public which is more costly."*

*"Restrictions on travel to scenes of crimes and other events."*

*"To be solvent, any media outlet has to inform on the top level topic of today, COVID-19. That consuming thrust, driven by customer demand, is having a strong impact on the quality of coverage in non-COVID-19 reporting."*

*"The financial impact was on advertising that dropped sharply"*

# JOURNALISM IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

## WORKAROUNDS DURING COVID-19

With COVID-19 having had an impact on their ability to undertake reports, the journalists shared whether or not they had implemented workarounds to continue their assignments. About two thirds of journalists (66.1%) stated that they have implemented workarounds with the remaining one third (33.9%) indicating that they had not implemented workarounds to enable them to continue their assignments.

Chart 26: Workarounds during COVID-19

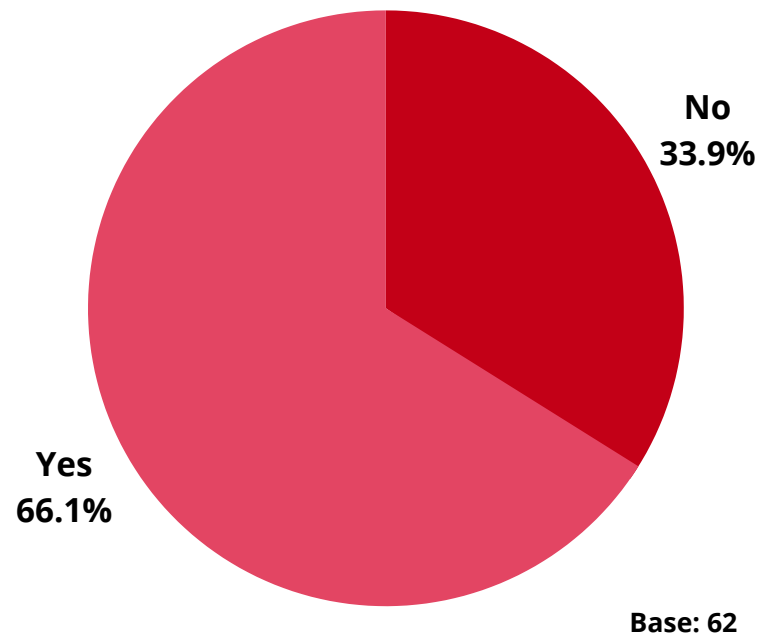
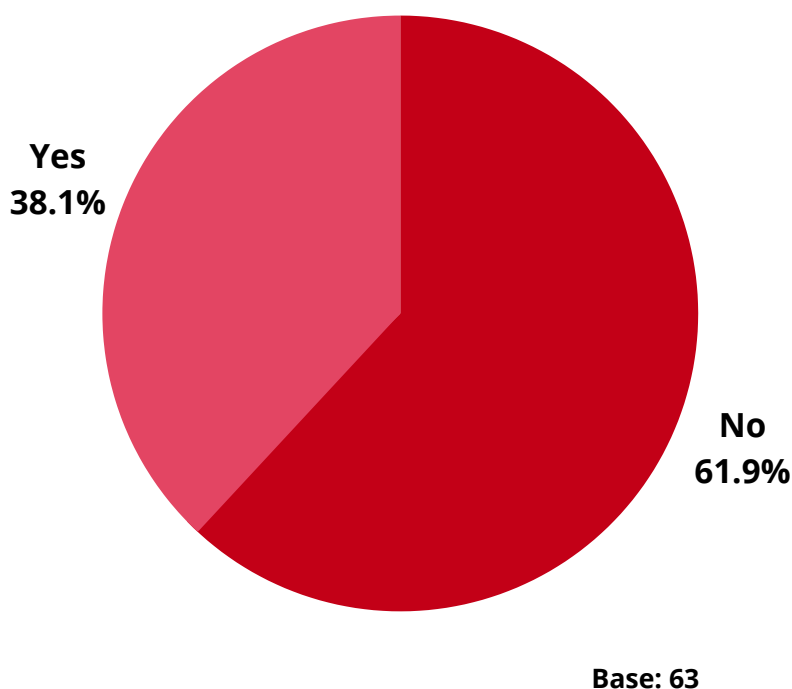


Chart 27: COVID-19 related investigative pieces

## COVID-19 RELATED INVESTIGATIVE PIECES

The journalists indicated whether they have produced or are in the process of producing any investigative pieces related to COVID-19. Most journalists (61.9%) reported that they have not produced or are not currently producing any COVID-19 related pieces. 38.1% of journalists indicated that they had produced or were in the process of producing reports covering COVID-19.

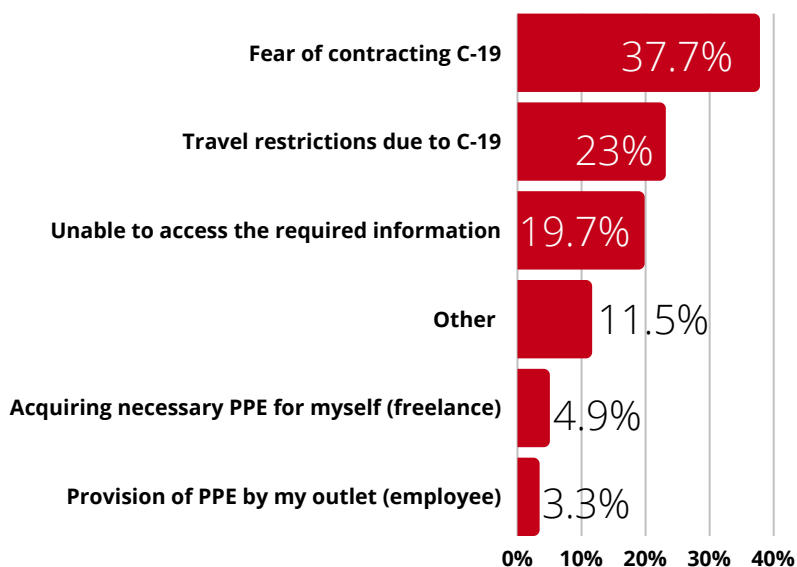


# JOURNALISM IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

## ISSUES THAT AFFECTED JOURNALISTS' ABILITY TO REPORT ON COVID-19

Most journalists (37.7%) reported that the fear of contracting COVID-19 has had an impact on their ability to report on COVID-19 issues, followed by travel restrictions due to COVID-19 (23%), the inability to access the required information (19.7%), the difficulty in acquiring the necessary PPE for themselves (freelance journalists) (4.9%) and the lack of provision of the necessary PPE by their outlets (journalists who are employees) (3.3%). 11.5% of journalists stated that there were other issues not included above, of these most stated that they were affected by more than one of the issues listed above, three journalist stated that they have no issues impacting their ability to report and one journalist reported that their family has impacted their ability to report on COVID-19.

Chart 28: Issues that affect journalism during COVID-19



Base: 61

## GOVERNMENT'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MEDIA

*"A bit distant as information is not always readily available."*

*"Antagonistic but pretending to be accessible- but that's pretty par for the course."*

*"A tricky relationship. The media is sensationalizing the problem and driving fear which accounts for misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the dangers of the virus."*

*"Informative."*

*"Cautious but relatively open."*

*"Hostile, and engaging with the media under duress."*

*"The Government has established a narrative of being the sole trusted source of information and has used the virtual press conferences to dodge questions."*

*"They are open to interviews but aren't always forthcoming with the information requested."*

*"Very collaborative"*

*"Completely censored."*

*"The Government has been in constant communication with the media since the pandemic. At this juncture, it is safe to say that the relationship is good."*

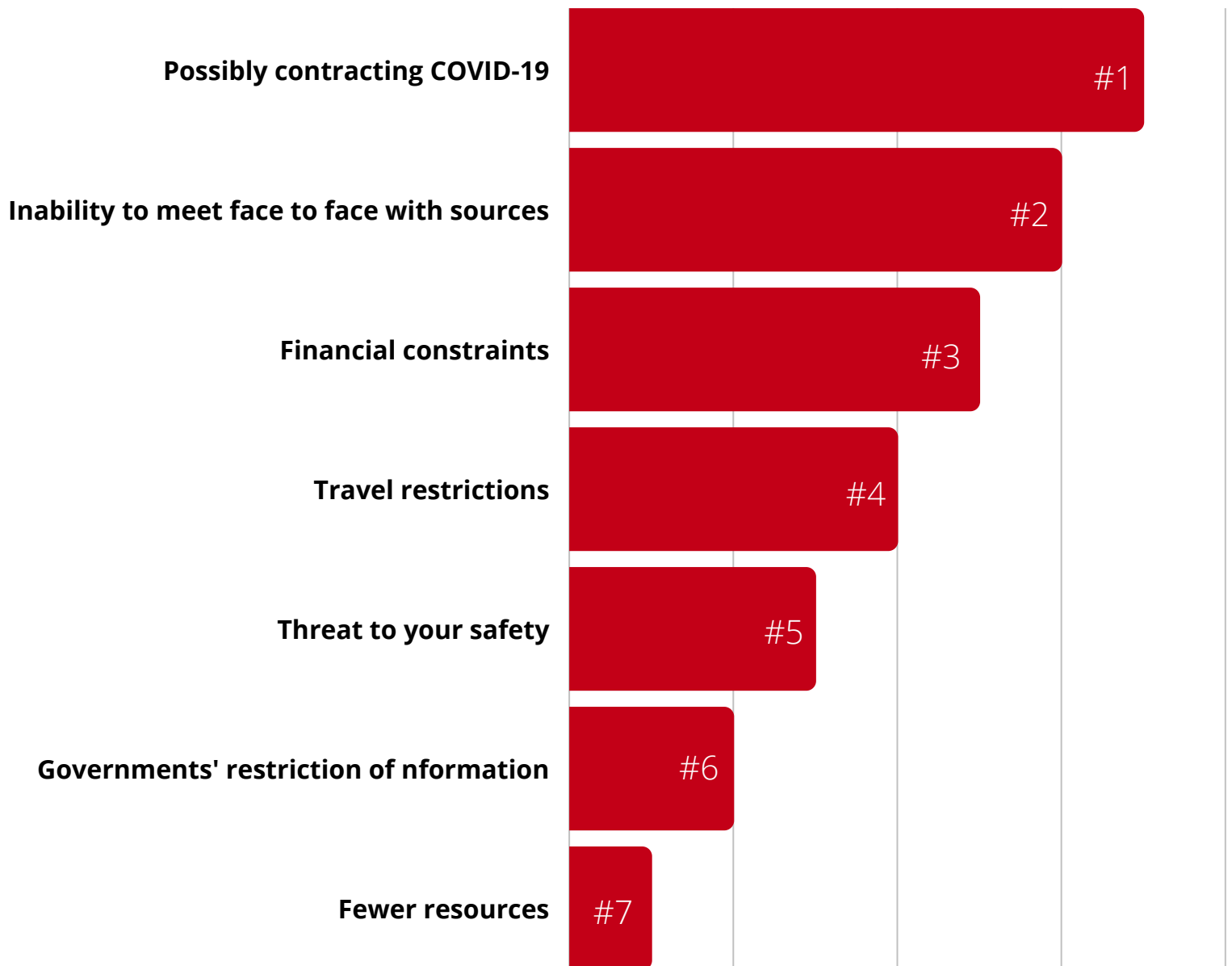


# JOURNALISM IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

## CHALLENGES FACED DURING THE PANDEMIC

The journalists ranked the challenges they believed journalists experience whilst reporting during the pandemic. The biggest challenge that the journalists believed they faced during the pandemic was the possibility of contracting COVID-19. The inability to meet face to face with sources and financial constraints during the pandemic were ranked second and third respectively. Other challenges included travel restrictions (ranked fourth), threat to their safety (ranked fifth), governments' restriction of information (ranked sixth) and fewer resources (seventh).

Chart 29: Challenges faced during COVID-19



# JOURNALISM IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE JOURNALISTS' ABILITY TO CONDUCT THEIR JOBS

*"Better access to information - More financial resources."*

*"Better access to training and workshops across the world."*

*"Better equipment to record at home, financial support for newsrooms facing dwindling ad revenue."*

*"Do regular mental-health check-ins and more days off."*

*"I think newsroom manager's need to be clear with reporters and producers how they will be compensated for instances of overtime, especially as several media houses have implemented pay cuts."*

*"The issue is not so much the resources to cover a particular story but the ongoing refusal of owners, private or public, to improve pay and conditions overall for journalists. Unless journalists can earn a living wage, considerations of the quality of stories are moot."*

*"Respect and good salaries."*

*"There needs to be a fundamental rethinking of the relative roles of journalists, media managers and advertising and marketing executives in the interest of creating a sustainable journalism model that embraces the reality of digital consumptions."*

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE JOURNALISTS' ABILITY TO CONDUCT BETTER REPORTING ON COVID-19 AND COVID-19 RELATED ISSUES IN THE REGION.

*"Training on the do's and don'ts when reporting during a pandemic. 2) Improve channel of communication between regional journalists."*

*Better inter-island communication is needed."*

*"Easier access to data sources e.g. CARPHA contacts, PAHO and WHO representatives, up to date data. More access to COVID-19 help grants for journalists. More access to legal advice for journalists."*

*"Continued training."*

*"Special consideration should be given to journalists allowing them to access authorities or officials with needed information."*

*"Have a fund/ Bursary to do in-depth reporting. This will ensure that journalists, especially freelance, do not have to depend on when the story is produced to get paid. In-depth stories require in-depth resources and time. National Geographic had a similar fund for about \$15 thousand.."*

*"Access to comparative data and regional sources."*

*"Access to comparative data and regional sources."*

*"I believe journalists should be introduced to regional experts who can analyze and give expert opinion on the responses by Governments."*



## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report was undertaken to examine the issues facing an essential but vulnerable group. Journalists are important now more than ever and it is vital that their experiences and needs are assessed. This report succeeds in its goal of exploring and revealing the main challenges and issues that journalists have faced now or before the onset of the pandemic. This research has revealed that journalists have faced issues with their personal security and are facing the prospect of contracting a deadly disease in the course of carrying out their work, which has been identified as the biggest challenge they have faced during the pandemic. Furthermore, journalists are faced with the inability to support themselves and their families financially during the pandemic heightened by the fact that some do not have access to certain benefits such as health insurance, which could help to alleviate any issues caused by the contraction of COVID-19. Moreover, in some countries journalists are hampered by governments lack transparency in their dealings with the media.

This report should be disseminated to media outlets throughout the Caribbean so that they can be exposed to the issues facing their journalists and try to take actions to improve their livelihoods. The journalists have offered their recommendations and it is owed to them as persons who risk their lives to provide accurate data that media outlets take them into consideration. These recommendations include better access to information, continued training, providing for their mental and physical well-being, the provision of the necessary tools to perform their jobs, improved pay and better editorial support overall. COVID-19 specific recommendations included training for how to work during the pandemic, easier access to data sources such as World Health Organization representatives, increased access to legal advice and the collaboration among journalists to enable the sharing of regional data and resources. Finally, perhaps media outlets and or media advocacy groups could consider banding together to lobby the government to be more transparent with the media and introduce laws to better facilitate journalists' ease of access to information.