



A REPORT ON MENTAL HEALTH, WELL-BEING & TRAUMA
AMONG CANADIAN MEDIA WORKERS

TAKING CARE

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Foreword

For 15 years, the Canadian Journalism Forum on Violence and Trauma has been working to help journalists recognize, talk about and manage their mental health issues. We have used a variety of approaches, including creating our widely-accepted **Mindset** and **En-Tête** guides to mental health reporting. When you are more knowledgeable and thoughtful about the mental health of others, it's hard not to think more critically about your own and that of your co-workers.

The Taking Care survey, led by Matthew Pearson and Dave Seglins, now gives us unprecedented, nation-wide data showing the current state of the mental health challenges across the media industry. It reveals the kinds of situations we normally write stories about when we uncover them elsewhere. It gives us solid, ethically gathered facts that confirm the significance and scope of the problem.

Considering the answers gathered by the Taking Care survey, the questions become: What are all of us — journalists, media companies, unions and educators — going to do about it? Will we, in the public interest, set an example to other industries? Or will we still act as though journalists are somehow different from the rest of humanity, immune to the effects of what we do and what we witness?

Good mental health and good journalism go hand-in-hand. Canada, and indeed the world, has never been in greater need of good journalism. Assailed by technological changes that erode both financial support and respect for factual reporting, journalism has been under mounting pressure. We can watch it continue to be marginalized, with all that entails. Or, we can come together with the goal of creating a better environment in which journalism can flourish. Doing so not only depends on finding and implementing best practices to strengthen journalists' abilities to do their jobs as democracy's first responders; it also critically depends on improving journalists' well-being.

We have the data. What's needed now is a more concerted effort to address the harms and risks the Taking Care survey has so extensively documented.

Cliff Lonsdale
President, Canadian Journalism Forum
on Violence and Trauma
May 2022

Executive summary

“The most effective journalist is one who understands the risks of his or her work, has been trained well for that work, and is confident of the support of employers or others during and after the coverage of violent events.”

The line above, from **Covering Violence: A Guide to Ethical Reporting About Victims and Trauma**, is as true today as it was when Roger Simpson and William Coté published their book more than 15 years ago.

Over the years, researchers have studied journalists in Australia, Finland, Iran, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Mexico, Sweden and the United States, among other places. In Canada, a 2013 study highlighted the effects of witnessing trauma for 31 Canadian journalists and photojournalists working on national and international conflicts and disasters.

We set out to expand our collective understanding of trauma among journalists. Our goal was to investigate and document the current reality of Canadian media workers’ mental health and well-being through a national survey. Whether respondents were regular employees, contract workers or freelancers, whether they produce content for national, provincial or local audiences, whether they work primarily for print, broadcast and digital outlets in Canada, we wanted to know:

- How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected media workers?
- How frequently are they being assigned to cover stories that expose them to trauma?
- How does that coverage affect their mental health and well-being, both in short-term and long-term?
- How often do they consume alcohol or other substances? Do they get enough sleep or exercise?
- How are journalists affected by harassment and violence encountered online, in the field and in their own newsrooms?
- What kind of training on trauma reporting have media workers received at journalism school or in the newsroom?
- How can Canada’s broader journalism ecosystem — from major national media outlets, to smaller digital startups, to labour unions, j-schools, professional associations and other stakeholders — do a better job of prioritizing and protecting media workers’ health and well-being in this competitive, fast-paced industry?

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We are grateful that more than 1,200 people took time out of their busy lives to answer our call. More than 900 media workers answered every single question of our 20-minute survey and more than 300 offered additional comments, some of which are included in this report. The credit for the richness of the data belongs to them.

From them, we learned:

- There is an alarming amount of stress in virtually all corners of the industry.
- While exposure to trauma is a part of the job, many media workers suffer harm as a consequence of repeatedly covering these stories, and the effects of those harms are often not met with appropriate support.
- Media workers are at much higher risks for anxiety and depression than average Canadians.
- Many told us that their colleagues and supervisors care about their well-being, but that their employers lack expertise or simply don't care.
- Media workers report patterns of higher risk drinking (alcohol) at rates double those of average Canadians.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a diminished sense of well-being and heightened feelings of isolation, while also exposing people to more harassment and creating real fears about financial stability and job security.
- A surprisingly high rate of people — more than half — have sought medical help to deal with work-related stress and trauma.
- One in 10 media workers surveyed have thought about suicide after covering difficult stories.

Despite these findings, journalists and media workers — terms we use interchangeably throughout this report to describe frontline storytellers and those working in a variety of other news-gathering and production capacities — tended to express high rates of job satisfaction. What that tells us is that many media workers love their jobs, but their jobs don't always love them.

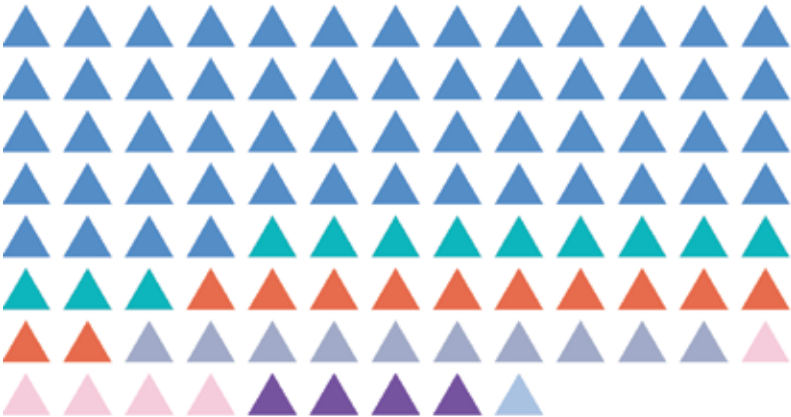
As you're about to read, the Taking Care survey confirms some of our worst fears and suspicions about our industry. The onus is now on all of us — from the frontlines to newsroom leaders, executives and journalism educators — to grasp the gravity of this situation and meaningfully address it to stop the harms Canadian media workers are suffering on the job.

Matthew Pearson and Dave Seglins
May 2022

Demographics

Between Nov. 1 and Dec. 18, 2021, Taking Care received a total of 1,444 survey responses, some of which were not completed (participants were allowed to skip questions). We excluded invalid surveys and those with a less than 10% completion rate, relying on a total of 1,251 unique responses as the basis for our study. A total of 916 respondents answered every single survey question. We used most of the data collected, including partially completed surveys, and adjusted the analysis based on the numbers of individual responses to each question.

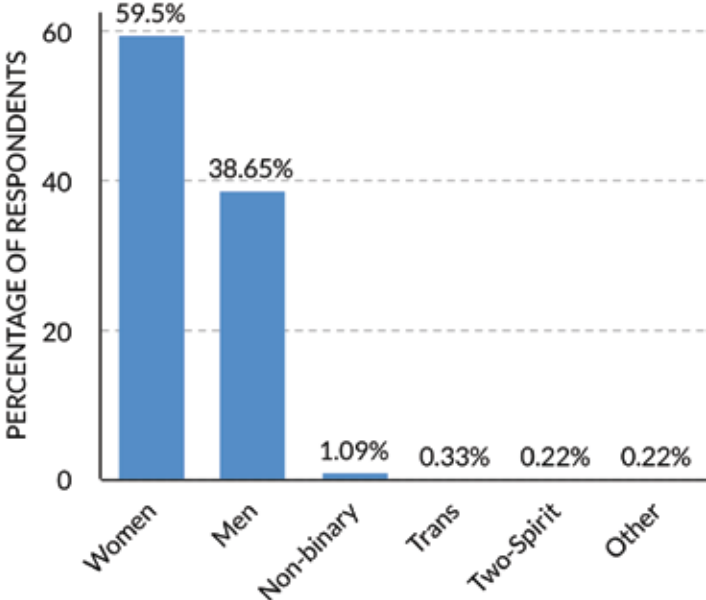
LOCATION



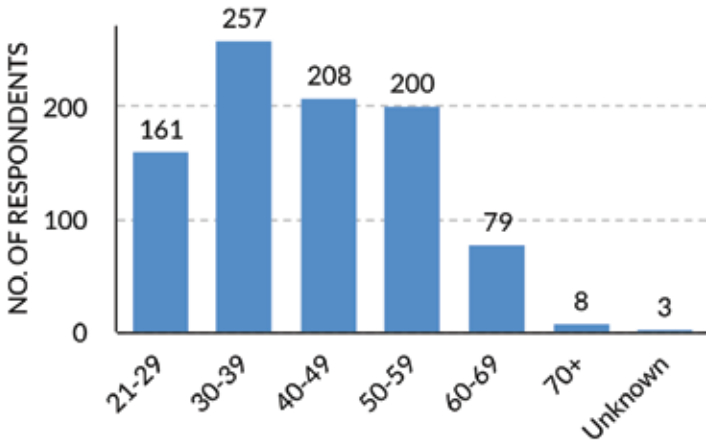
- Ontario (55.84%)
- Quebec (11.69%)
- British Columbia (11.69%)
- Alberta (10.39%)
- Manitoba (5.19%)
- Nova Scotia (3.9%)
- New Brunswick (1.3%)

We had respondents from every province and territory. However, Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Saskatchewan and Yukon each represented less than 1% of respondents. Nineteen percent of respondents did not tell us their location.

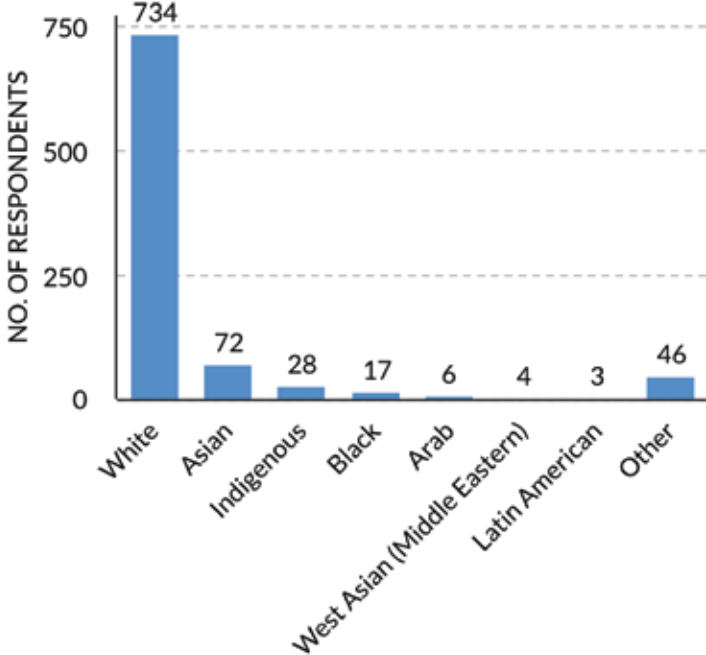
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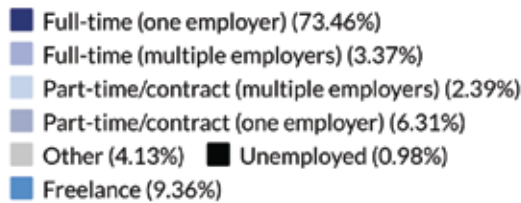
AGE



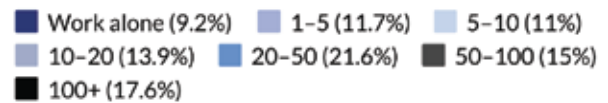
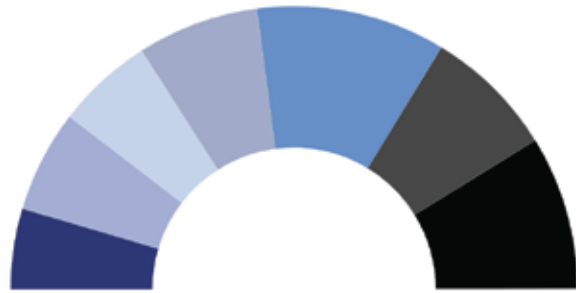
RACE/ETHNICITY



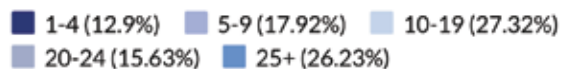
EMPLOYMENT STATUS



NEWSROOM SIZE



YEARS IN MEDIA



RELATIONSHIP STATUS



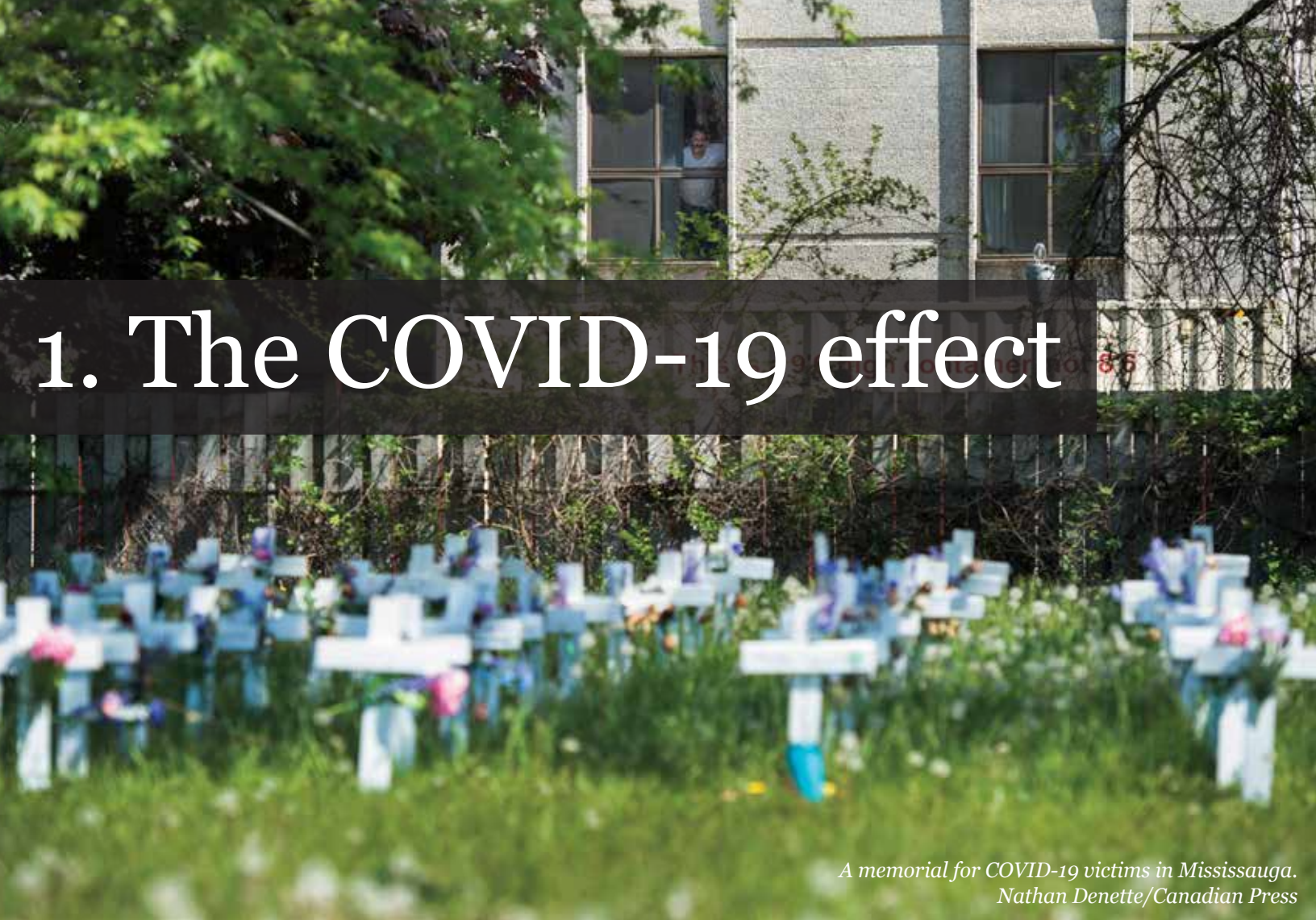
Disability

When it came to disability, the majority declined to answer the question. However, 86 people told us they had a disability. Of those, 66 had invisible disabilities and 20 had both visible and invisible disabilities.

Invisible disabilities can include PTSD, chronic pain, autoimmune diseases and many other serious condi-

tions. The term “visible disability” typically refers to people who use wheelchairs or walking aids, or those with conditions such as Tourette’s or cerebral palsy.

However, we acknowledge some disabilities may not be part of a visible/invisible binary; for instance, being hard-of-hearing or having low vision.



1. The COVID-19 effect

*A memorial for COVID-19 victims in Mississauga.
Nathan Denette/Canadian Press*

When the Taking Care survey was conducted, journalists had already spent two years mired in pandemic-related news coverage. They'd explained how the virus spreads and mutates, and how it has killed nearly 40,000 Canadians and six million people globally to date. They'd shed light on the shadow pandemics of anxiety and depression, domestic violence, loneliness and opioid overdoses. They entertained us with stories about kindness and coming together. They'd done their best to hold political leaders and public health officials to account, and highlight when those leaders come up short. And they'd endured the corrosive effects of misinformation and disinformation that have fuelled anti-mask and anti-vaccine demonstrations.

As essential workers, they've done all this while living the difficulties of the pandemic themselves, navigating their own fears, isolation and uncertainty while trying to protect themselves and their families from illness and death.

“Covering COVID has taken a toll. It’s been tough.”

—Manager/executive, Prince George, B.C.

“My employer prioritizes stories over the people reporting on them. The constant narrative coming from my editor throughout the pandemic has been that we need to continue pushing ourselves to do more and do it better than our competitors. Not once have we received a memo of thanks or acknowledgement that everyone in the newsroom is also living through a pandemic and experiencing the daily traumas therein. It's been so stressful and so lonely. Support has never been great when it comes to mental health and overall well-being and the last two years really highlighted just how much of an afterthought (if an at-all thought) it truly is for those in the newsroom.”

—Reporter, Winnipeg

In the Taking Care survey, media workers throughout Canada told us the pandemic has, to some degree, eroded their well-being by driving up stress and heightening social isolation, while also exposing them to more harassment and creating real fears about financial stability and job security.

People across all media job roles felt this pervasive decline in well-being. However, it's most prevalent among podcasters, editorial or production assistants, video journalists, reporters, producers/associate producers, as well as hosts/presenters.

Freelancers said the pandemic negatively affected their well-being and job security in greater numbers than their counterparts working full-time for a single outlet. On the flip side, more full-timers said the pandemic had made them more stressed than freelancers.

Across gender, age, job role and racial identity, no one appears immune from stress, as many said work-related stress became worse during the pandemic.

Stress levels worsened among:

Women. Nearly all (92%) said they felt greater stress than usual.

Workers under 50. People aged 21-29 (94%) and those aged 40 and 49 (91%) reported more stress than usual.

Certain job roles. Editorial/production assistants, podcasters, researchers, hosts/ presenters, photographers, video journalists and producers/associate producers reported higher stress levels.

Racialized people. People who identify as Asian, Black and Indigenous felt more stress, too.

From these figures, one thing is clear: the toll of the pandemic on media workers' psychological or emotional health appears to be significant across the board.

How COVID affected us

Below are some of the key life and work challenges media workers associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social isolation

Managing pandemic-driven social isolation hit some media workers harder than others:

- More women and people with disabilities reported difficulty than other respondents.
- Nearly three-quarters of people aged 20–29 said it was difficult to manage social isolation; just over half of people aged 50–59 said the same.
- More freelancers reported difficulty managing social isolation than people working full-time for a single outlet.
- Nova Scotia and Alberta respondents struggled the most with social isolation.

Work/life balance

The separation of work and home diminished early in the pandemic, when most workers (and the rest of their families) were sent home to work and study. Those who struggled most with work/life balance include:

- 63% of women and 66% of non-binary people (vs. 54% of men)
- 77% of media workers working part-time for multiple outlets (vs. 60% of full-timers)
- 66% of managers/executives
- Roughly two-thirds of people between the ages of 20–49 struggled more with work/life balance than those in other age groups

As well, Arab, Black and some Asian respondents reported increased difficulty with work/life balance during COVID-19 than their white colleagues.

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*News crew interviews
Winnipeg's first COVID-19
vaccine recipient.
John Woods/Canadian Press*

Work environment

A considerable portion of media workers (82%) worked from home for at least part of the pandemic, to mixed degrees of success.

For one Toronto-based reporter, it meant a better work/life balance: “During the pandemic, my mental and physical health has actually improved in many ways due to working at home. Less commuting, more sleep, more time with family, more time for hobbies and exercise.”

However, not everyone got to work from home. Workers who continued to report into newsrooms — many of whom work in broadcasting — did so amidst considerable uncertainty and fear. Those workers often saw additional workloads, technical challenges and responsibilities as news operations tried to compensate for the in-person absence of workers who shifted to remote work.

Media workers under the age of 30, as well as photographers, video journalists, camera operators (AKA video shooters) and reporters worked in the field the most during the pandemic. Field work was highest in New Brunswick (80%), Saskatchewan (78%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (75%). By comparison, 52% of Ontarians and 41% of Quebecers worked in the field. These two provinces were hardest hit by the pandemic and related public-health restrictions.

“[Working conditions have] gotten worse since the pandemic happened. There is burnout between all of my colleagues. We have been given a bigger workload while also being kicked out of the office — most [of the] time being forced to work out of our driver's seats, which isn't practical. I am tired no matter how much I sleep or take time off. And although I perform under stress very well, it is exhausting.”

—Video journalist, Ontario

Most respondents had access to adequate personal protective equipment (PPE). However, more than one-third of photographers said they did not have access to proper PPE.

“We are also the ones who cannot work from an office and must work in person and so are put at the biggest emotional and physical risk, especially in a pandemic,” said a freelance photographer from Ontario. “Very few employers offered PPE or had conversations about safety and what support they would provide if we contracted COVID on the job. I lost basically all my income because I would push back and question employers' safety practices.”

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Safety and harassment

Even before the pandemic, media workers were already encountering a rise in harassment, confrontation and online abuse. COVID-19 only made things worse, turning media workers into targets for the public's frustration with various pandemic-related safety measures. This came to a head during the "freedom convoy" and blockades of early 2022.

Journalists have been increasingly targeted and intimidated online for doing their jobs, with workers with the highest profiles or most visible job roles most likely to report worsening online harassment:

- 85% of video journalists
- 71% of photographers
- 67% of hosts/presenters
- 55% of reporters
- 53% of camera operators

Journalists from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador reported the biggest increases of harassment during the pandemic.

One CBC journalist told us the toxicity directed at media workers has had an impact: "It is taking more of a toll on me than interviews with trauma victims. I believe in what we do and that has always carried me through, but when it feels like so many other people no longer believe in us, it's discouraging."

While the vast majority of people overall felt safe doing their jobs in spite of these added challenges, more than half of photographers and nearly one-third of video journalists say they did not feel safe doing their jobs. More people in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick reported feeling unsafe when compared with other provinces.





*In Montreal, family members of Flight 752 victims grieve.
Graham Hughes/Canadian Press*

2. Trauma exposure/witnessing

Media workers routinely run toward conflict, toiling among the details and graphic imagery of war, murder, sexual violence, humanitarian crises, natural disasters and other crimes and calamities. Whether we witness traumatic events just once, or many times over our careers, this kind of exposure can profoundly affect media workers' mental health.

And, it's not only those who witness the events in person who suffer; from editing suites to the online desk, trauma can affect people across the newsroom. We also have to contend with the stressful, fast-paced nature of the biz — elements that make it very difficult to adequately process the things we have witnessed.

Though we are fortified by our sense of purpose and mission, news industry culture often hinders open dialogue — or even acknowledgement — of how work stress affects us, both in the moment and cumulatively over time. Exposure to horrific details, gruesome images

and gut-wrenching interviews have long been considered “just part of the job,” and we have been celebrated for our ability to power through emotions, adversity and trauma.

Taking Care survey data shows Canadian media workers are repeatedly exposed to a steady stream of traumatic events and that we suffer lingering effects:

- Two-thirds of respondents were negatively affected by covering these stories.
- 26% of respondents found it difficult to manage their exposure to difficult material at work.
- More specifically, 85% reported negative personal impacts from covering crimes against children, sexual assault and other forms of severe human suffering.

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“Because of the nature of the work, we don't get time to feel human emotions while we're reacting, and sometimes it hits really hard after a shift. There are some events I've covered as a video editor that I will never unsee or forget.”

— Video editor, CBC

“I'm well wired for gross or graphic things, but hearing the pain of good people who are suffering is difficult. Put together [with] hostility in the general public, higher work demands and some management that can be pretty unsympathetic or oblivious to our traumatic experiences, and I feel like it's getting harder to stay healthy and balanced with work. Which is too bad. I mostly love what I do.”

— Reporter, CTV

“Covering stories like the racial reckoning of 2020 on top of the poorly organized response to a public crisis like COVID-19 requires regular time off to decompress and restore any faith in humanity. The constant exposure to stories like this for hours on end daily is beyond draining and leaves nothing for a person to give to their family. There is not enough regard for journalists covering these stories day in and out... employers present themselves as caring but only when convenient for them and their bottom line.”

— Host/presenter, CityNews

“The stories we have covered around accidents and trauma have haunted me. I'm so anxious and every time my children venture out [in] the car, all the very worst accidents [...] roll around in my head. Fear the worst all the time.”

— Producer/associate producer,
New Brunswick

“Since the shooting on Parliament Hill, I process traumatic events differently. Up until that point, I was able to have a separation from the events, but that shooting blurred the lines between news story and personal life. Since then, I find it more difficult to process those kinds of events. As I get older, it is also more difficult for my body to recover from the daily stresses of work. Where once I could bounce back from the adrenaline rushes and stresses of live television within a few hours, it now takes a few days to recover.”

— Producer, CBC

Who gets exposed to trauma

Journalists' cumulative exposure to trauma stories generally increased with age and years on the job. Those in certain roles, notably video journalists, consistently reported more frequent exposures.

But those with the most frequent exposure were not necessarily in jobs considered “frontline.” In fact, editorial and production assistants, video editors, video/audio librarians and hosts/presenters also reported high exposure levels to graphic images or details.

Take, for instance, coverage of murder stories: 91% of editorial/production assistants reported working on such stories during the past four years, compared with 71% of reporters and 70% of video journalists.

Other jobs that report high rates of murder coverage include:

- Audio/video librarians: 86%
- Audio/video editors: 81%
- Hosts/presenters: 76%

Frequency of exposure

The Taking Care survey asked respondents how frequently they've covered stories or handled material involving 22 types of potentially traumatic events (PTEs) within the past four years.

The PTE list is based on the Life Events Checklist from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). The checklist is a self-reporting tool used to measure exposure to trauma over a lifetime and evaluate risk for psychological injuries such as PTSD.

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People pay respects to Portapique, N.S. shooting victims. Andrew Vaughn/Canadian Press

The Life Events Checklist has 17 PTEs, including:

- Natural disasters
- Fires or explosions
- Domestic and sexual violence
- Armed conflict and war
- Severe human suffering
- Death

The Taking Care survey added five other categories common in the news business: court cases/inquests, crimes against children, racist attacks, animal cruelty and suicide.¹

Despite that expansion, more than 100 Taking Care respondents told us they'd covered a wide range of traumatic stories outside our categories. Those included: effects of COVID-19, residential schools, poverty, climate crisis, displaced persons, drug overdoses, the Ebola

outbreak, elder abuse, extremism, genocide, systemic discrimination, child separation, police violence, social unrest, self-harm, eating disorders and terrorism.

Cumulatively, 81% of respondents reported covering stories, or being exposed to images or interviews, involving at least five of these PTEs in the past four years. **Perhaps even more significantly, 42% of all respondents reported working on at least 13 of the 17 events on the Life Events Checklist.** The stories affecting respondents most were: Crimes against children, sexual assault, racist attacks/crimes, murder, domestic violence, suicide and other human suffering.

While comprehensive data on media workers and trauma remains scarce, this proportion represents a very high rate of exposure when compared with the general population.²

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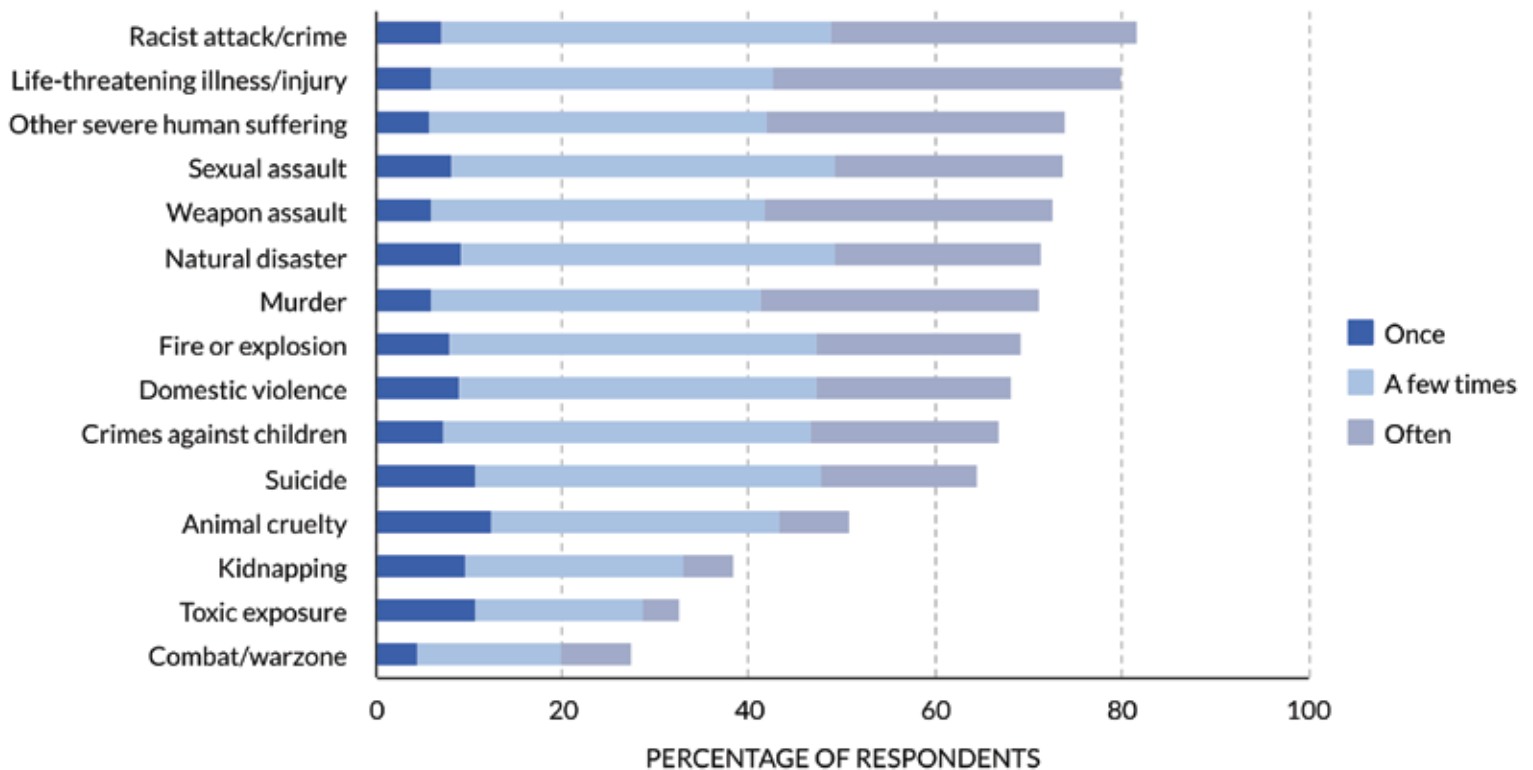
¹ The Taking Care survey was conducted before the Russian war on Ukraine. The results do not reflect Canadian media workers' most recent experiences covering that conflict, either in the field in Europe or from here in North America.

² There are few studies measuring rates of exposure to potentially traumatic events in general populations using the LEC-5 scale, as it is used more commonly as a diagnostic screening tool in conjunction with in-person interviews with medical professionals. However, some indications of general population exposure to trauma can be gleaned from a 2019 study of serious life events in

Norway that found two-thirds of the general population had encountered fewer than half of the LEC-5 criteria. That study is entitled "Serious life events and post-traumatic stress disorder in the Norwegian population" by Trond Heir et al. doi: 10.1192/bjo.2019.62

Additionally, a 2017 US study found that among thousands of college undergraduates, fewer than 9% had experienced four or more of the serious LEC-5 life events. That study is entitled "Predictors and mental health outcomes of potentially traumatic event exposure" by Cassie Oversteel et al. doi: 10.1192/bjo.2019.62

STORIES COVERED IN PAST 4 YEARS



Risks of trauma exposure

Regularly witnessing human suffering puts media workers at elevated risk of compassion fatigue, burnout and traumatic stress.³ In this way, we are not unlike jurors, first responders and health care professionals — people who repeatedly bear witness to horrifying scenes and details.⁴

Additionally, we are at risk of secondary or vicarious trauma, which is typically caused by empathetically engaging with trauma survivors.⁵ Frontline media workers are not the only ones at risk, either; trauma can affect anyone across an organization tasked with handling disturbing material.

Impacts of trauma exposure

Roughly two-thirds of media workers reported being negatively affected by working on trauma-related stories. Burnout was the top consequence, reported by 80% of respondents. Other negative impacts include:

- 71% unable to get certain stories out of their heads
- 54% feeling numb
- 30% uncontrollable crying while working on certain stories

As well, some reported panic attacks, weeping when interviewing grieving family members or “numbing out”

emotional responses afterward by using alcohol or other substances. One-tenth of respondents confided they’ve felt suicidal thoughts in relation to stories.

More women than men reported being negatively affected when covering or being exposed to PTEs. This is consistent with trends in other studies of non-journalists, which have found that women report greater rates of exposure to traumatic life events and are diagnosed with PTSD more frequently than men.⁶

Meanwhile, those reporting the most extreme impacts from trauma stories were media workers who spent lots of time going over disturbing images or details, notably video journalists, camera operators, podcasters, video editors/librarians and researchers.

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³ Feinstein, A., and J. Owen. 2002. “Journalists, war and post traumatic stress disorder.” In *Sharing the front line and the back hills: International protectors and providers: Peacekeepers, humanitarian aid workers and the media in the midst of crisis*, edited by Y. Daniell, 305–315. N.p.: Baywood Publishing Co.

⁴ Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (US). 2014. “Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services.” Rockville (MD): Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US). (Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series, No. 57.) Exhibit 1.3-4, DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria for PTSD.

⁵ British Medical Association. 2021. “Vicarious trauma: signs and strategies for coping.” <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/your-wellbeing/vicarious-trauma/vicarious-trauma-signs-and-strategies-for-coping>.

⁶ Olf, Miranda. 2017. “Sex and gender differences in post-traumatic stress disorder: an update.” *European Journal of Psychotraumatology* 8, no. 4 (Sept). 10.1080/2008198.2017.1351204.

The spectre of mental ‘weakness’

In the news industry, mental health has long been treated as a private matter best left to each individual according to their own capacity to manage stress. For a long time, many of us have viewed admission of work-related psychological suffering as “weakness,” and that notion was reflected in several Taking Care survey respondents' comments:

“I think some employees could use help developing resilience, rather than focusing on their own sensitivities so much. If people are highly susceptible to ‘bystander trauma,’ or have serious difficulty dealing with unpleasant material, this isn't really the right profession for them. Their inability to function makes the job worse for those around them, who not only have to do the difficult work that the others don't, but also have to expend extra emotional energy supporting their colleagues, to their own detriment.”

—Writer, CBC

“What I have some trouble reconciling is that trauma and exposure to trauma is part of the job — which means it can't be escaped, it needs to be managed. [...] There is so little meaningful acknowledgement of the

impact this job has — an email noting that a story was difficult and well done is nice but it isn't proactive time off or genuine inquiry about well being. Obviously part of the issue [is] that you don't want to be seen as weak or unable to do a job that requires the ability to deal with trauma and keep going.”

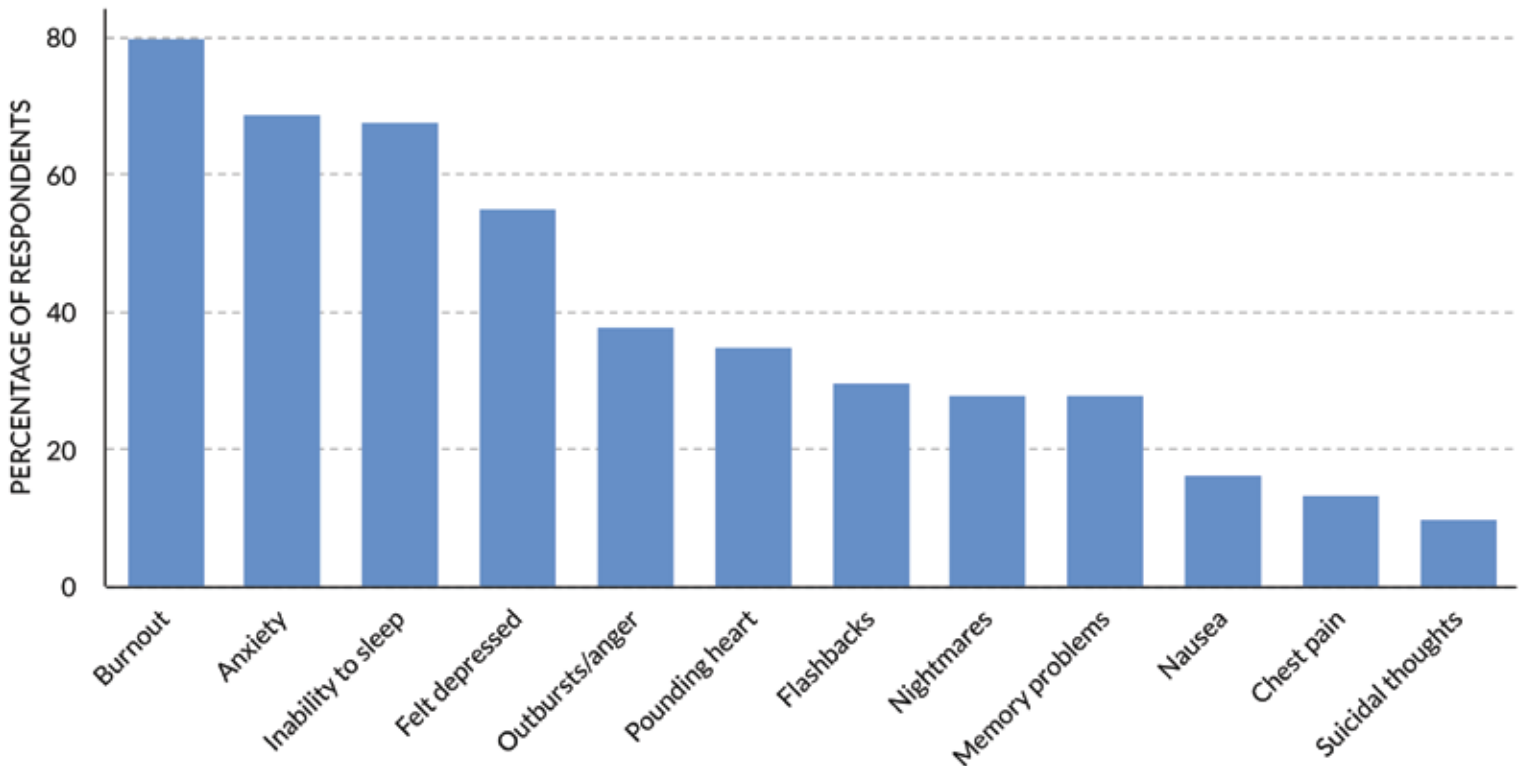
—Reporter, Toronto

“Thankfully I had a manager once who brought in a counsellor to address our small newsroom. While I was offered counselling I didn't think I needed it, but when the woman came to speak to us I quickly realized I was deeply affected. And that recognition helped me to see that I needed to get external help to understand and cope with the experience of dealing with a traumatic story. When I felt those feelings again on yet another horrific story, I was able to recognize what was going on and sought help. But, most journalists I know don't want to be labelled as ‘weak’ so they keep their mouth shut. This serves no one.”

—Producer/associate producer, CBC

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COVERAGE-RELATED SYMPTOMS OVER PAST 4 YEARS





Father of Humboldt Broncos bus crash survivor. Andrew Vaughan/Canadian Press

Additional considerations

Other factors come into play affecting how media workers interact with traumatic material:

Breaking news. Frontline reporting can at times mean arriving at scenes or victim's doorways ahead of authorities. Some media professionals told us they've been the first to announce a death to a victim's friends or family. This scenario was reported most frequently by managers, video journalists, reporters, hosts, assignment staff and photographers.

In-depth investigations. Long-form/investigative journalism often requires spending long periods of time poring over harrowing and sometimes gruesome details, sounds or images.

Repeat exposure. Repeated exposure to difficult material is most pronounced among audio/video librarians, podcasters, hosts/presenters, editorial and production

assistants, producers/associate producers as well as audio/video editors.

Experience. Older, more senior media workers were more likely to report witnessing gruesome scenes in person, particularly photographers, video journalists and camera operators.

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“Newsrooms need to focus on building resiliency among journalists, but also learn that reporters need to [...] have the ability to decline assignments on a basis of well-being and take breaks when needed. Journalists shouldn't be told certain things are just ‘part of the job’ as that's not enough when it comes to trauma and mental health.”

— Reporter, Hamilton

DEFINING AND IDENTIFYING MORAL INJURY

As we learn more about the science of trauma and attempt to understand its causes and impacts, one promising analytical framework to emerge is that of “moral injury.”

Dr. Anthony Feinstein, an adviser to the Taking Care research project, describes the concept this way:

“Moral injury may be defined as the injury done to a person’s conscience or moral compass when that person witnesses, perpetrates or fails to prevent acts that transgress their own moral and ethical values or codes of conduct. It is associated with the primary emotions of guilt, shame and anger. It has been little studied in journalists, unlike in the military where data show that it was common in soldiers returning from the wars in Vietnam and more recently, Iraq and Afghanistan.”

Evidence of media workers’ vulnerability to moral injury emerged in a study of how they responded psychologically when covering the migration crisis in Europe.⁷ In Canada, moral injury has surfaced as a particular challenge for journalists covering missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

The concept is increasingly being applied to the study of journalists as a means of understanding how bearing witness to suffering or injustice can offend a media worker’s moral code and cause injury. Moral injury can morph into PTSD or major depression, Feinstein warns.

“It can also profoundly alter a journalist’s way of thinking and behaviour. Cynicism about the profession, a sense of futility in relation to one’s work, social withdrawal, self-doubt and feelings of failure are just some of the consequences that may arise from morally injurious events,” Feinstein says.

He argues that the news industry must develop a better understanding of this concept in order to be able to protect workers from harm. Although moral injury is not considered a mental illness in itself, Feinstein adds, there are effective therapies that help address it, including cognitive processing therapy and prolonged exposure therapy.

But we need to name it in order to be able to treat it — and there’s a lot more work to be done here. In the Taking Care survey, just 18% of respondents said they knew what moral injury was. Another 31% said they were somewhat familiar, while the remaining 51% said they were totally unfamiliar with the concept.

Feinstein’s research team at the Sunnybrook Research Institute is currently collaborating with Globe and Mail editor-in-chief David Walmsley to develop a moral injury self-report rating scale specifically for journalists. They hope to develop a questionnaire to help detect moral injury in journalists and monitor change in the condition in response to interventions.

⁷ Feinstein A, Pavisian B, Storm H. (2018) Journalists covering the refugee and migration crisis are affected by moral injury not PTSD. *JRSM-Open*, Mar 8;9(3):2054270418759010. doi: 10.1177/2054270418759010.



Sean Kilpatrick/Canadian Press

3. Well-being at work

The Taking Care survey documents and quantifies intimate details about media workers' personal health, medical conditions and treatments.

The verdict? Canadian media workers are experiencing serious job-related health consequences.

Job satisfaction

Most Canadian media workers reported high levels of job satisfaction (50% rated job satisfaction as good or excellent, and 30% said it was fair). This improved with age, with 48% of respondents aged 21–29 rating job satisfaction as good or excellent, steadily rising to 61% for those in their 60s. But working in the news business appears to come at a high cost.

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“In the last couple years, I have seen so many people leaving journalism. They are doing it because they can't handle the stress anymore and aren't being supported. I've seen this happen with many colleagues.”

—Freelancer, Vancouver

“It's just all so relentless (the work, the news) and even if our bosses care about us and want us to be OK... at the end of the day the show must go on and there aren't enough resources to give anyone a break. I am seriously considering leaving the industry because I just don't know if this job is worth the stress it causes me.”

—Producer, CBC

Only one quarter of Taking Care survey respondents said their mental well-being was good. Stress is an overwhelming and ever-present hazard, with 57% of media workers reporting the daily grind is difficult to manage.

Mental health impacts

Canadian media workers report suffering alarming levels of depression, anxiety and PTSD at rates much higher than average Canadians. Above-average numbers of people also reported diagnoses of high blood pressure.

We compared self-reported and diagnosed cases of these conditions — along with alcohol or substance use disorder — and found significant discrepancies between self-reported and diagnosed cases, suggesting that a large proportion of media workers are living with undiagnosed psychological conditions.

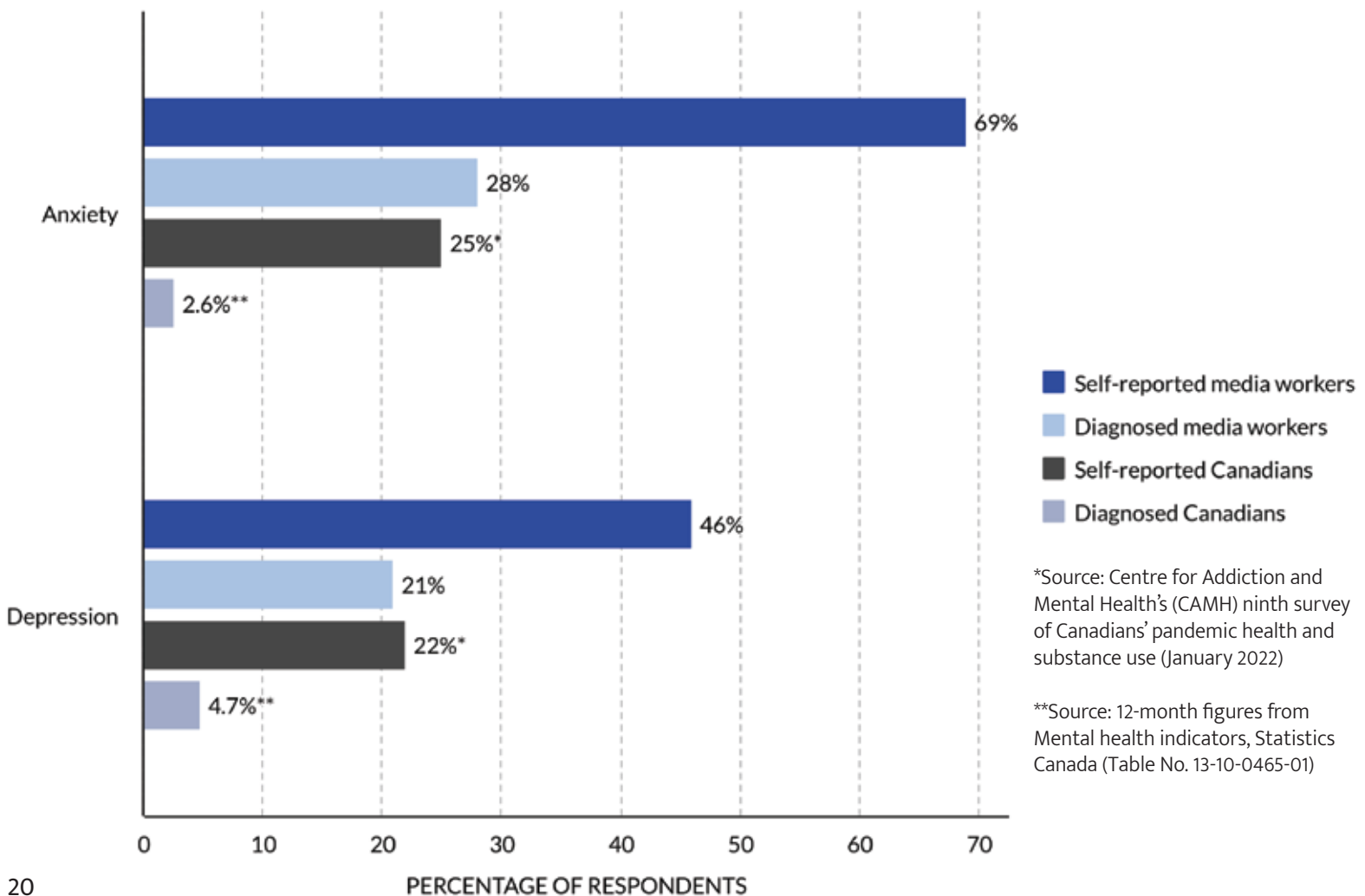
The Taking Care survey found that more women respondents than men have been diagnosed with anxiety and depression. Additionally, while the sample size is small, nearly all trans or non-binary respondents reported suffering depression and anxiety. Taking Care respondents also reported exhaustion, bipolar disorder, burnout, eating disorders, hypervigilance, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, persistent headaches and vicarious trauma.

Seeking treatment

More than half (53%) of respondents said they visited a variety of health professionals to help them cope with work-related stress and manage their mental well-being.

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MENTAL CONDITION



They sought out doctors, massage therapists, counselors, psychiatrists and a number of other service providers including: acupuncturists, dermatologists for sudden hair loss, group therapy counsellors, life coaches, meditation guides, naturopaths, osteopaths, physiotherapists, sleep specialists, social workers and yoga instructors.

Some trends in our survey results:

- 59% of women and 42% of men have sought professional medical help for work-related issues.
- Although our sample sizes are small, 44% of non-binary and 67% of trans workers said they sought professional help for work reasons.

“It would be much easier to cope with the topics we report on, and harassment, if I for instance had paid days off, any kind of benefits at all, or [job] security. Those [with] full-time work and proper pay are typically mostly white and I don't see that changing. My employers can act like they are ‘there’ for me but if they cannot provide [me] with stable employment that is at a living wage, it becomes impossible to truly be ‘well.’”

—Reporter,
multiple employers/contract, Toronto

“In my case, it's time that I'm lacking to be able to access psychological help. I'm in daily production, so I have one day to do a story, not one week ... It's a very fast pace.”

—Reporter, Radio-Canada

- Regarding race/ethnicity, there was no significant difference in proportions of people seeking help (about half of most groups sought help).
- 28% of all respondents report taking a prescription drug to help them cope with mental health concerns or stress related to work.
- Respondents under 40 were more likely than those aged 40+ to have sought mental health treatment for work-related issues.

Medical benefits: unequal access

We sought information about the paradematical benefits that Canadian media outlets offer to employees, i.e., coverage for psychotherapy, physiotherapy, osteopathy, massage therapy, chiropractor, acupuncture, naturopathy and sometimes other auxiliary health services.

We obtained benefits information from almost two dozen outlets, ranging from the Toronto Star, the Canadian Press and CBC, to the Georgia Straight, l'Acadie Nouvelle and Xtra.ca.

Some of our findings:

Benefits are usually reserved for full-time permanent employees, although some part-time and contract workers receive a degree of coverage, or payment in lieu of benefits. Freelancers said they never receive their own employer-paid benefits.

During COVID-19, Corus/Global decided to lift the cap on psychological counselling coverage, making coverage unlimited. CBC also doesn't have a cap. The Toronto Star, meanwhile, offers \$5,000 a year in psychology coverage. During COVID-19, some organizations also expanded counselling coverage to include social workers and other mental health professionals.

The size of the outlet did not necessarily correlate to generosity of coverage. For instance, one major national news service covers just \$300 a year for clinical psychology, while much smaller organizations offer two to four times more coverage. Considering private therapy sessions can cost as much as \$250 per session — and sometimes even more — media workers can easily max out their coverage.

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The greatest disparities in benefits were found in coverage for psychological counselling. For other paramedical benefits, most outlets offered similar coverage (usually with annual maximums between \$300–\$500) for massage, osteo, physio and so on.

A number of outlets offer employee assistance programs (EAPs), including CBC, Vice, Toronto Star, The Tyee and Georgia Straight. These EAPs offer counselling paid for by employers, among other services. However, anecdotally, respondents expressed rather low satisfaction with EAPs, particularly their relevance to the realities of journalism. “The counselling available through work that keeps being offered (EAP) is short-term and mostly useless, I have found,” noted one CBC editor.

This raises questions for employers, workers and unions: are the offered supports adequate, or even designed to address the realities of our work? And what happens to workers without benefits at all?

Amid the criticisms, some media workers reported feeling supported by their employer or manager.

“My employer constantly supports us in wellness, including unlimited access to mental health professionals,” wrote a host/presenter at Corus.

An editor at Postmedia noted that, “I’ve found Postmedia to take any mental health concerns seriously. I have also been supported by my employer during serious cases of gender or racial harassment I experienced in the field. But I also feel they don’t have the resources to do as much as they want. I have also heard from colleagues at different Postmedia publications who have not felt as supported as myself.”

On another positive note, 77% of Taking Care respondents told us they know where to get help if they feel they need it. However, junior reporters, people in small newsrooms and journalists in Nova Scotia, Manitoba and B.C. were among those least likely to know how and where to get help.

Balancing self-care & work

Media workers routinely miss meals, have lousy sleep patterns and fail to get enough exercise and so, it wasn’t surprising to discover that only a quarter of respondents thought their overall health was good or excellent.

It’s important to acknowledge that a moderate amount of stress improves our efficiency and mental acuity, according to the Canadian Mental Health Association. The challenge is balancing that stress with work demands and other aspects of our life. When we examined the Taking Care data carefully, we found that many media workers are out of balance.

For instance, higher proportions of younger media workers, as well as women, said it was tough to take breaks, take time off, make time for hobbies and exercise, parent, manage work stress and plan for the future.

“Sometimes I am so busy I don’t know which way is up.”

At the same time, not everyone struggles equally. We examined some of the disparities:

Diet. About half of editorial/production assistants and researchers said their diet is poor. Roughly one-third of podcasters, video journalists, hosts/presenters and photographers said the same.

Exercise. Nearly half of people who work full-time for a single outlet say it’s hard to make time for exercise, compared to a third of freelancers. Most (88%) of Black, 69% of South Asian and 50% of Indigenous media workers said it was difficult to make time for exercise, compared to 46% of white workers and 36% of Chinese respondents.

Sleep. More than half of Taking Care respondents said getting at least seven hours of sleep is difficult. As well, more Black media workers (88%) said it was difficult to get enough sleep, compared to their white counterparts (52%).

Hobbies: Three-quarters of Black, 63% of South Asian and 50% of Indigenous media workers said it was difficult to make time for hobbies, compared to white (49%) and Chinese respondents (44%). Here, more women said they struggled than men (55% vs. 44%). Sixty percent of people with disabilities also struggled.

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Friendships, relationships and parenting. More than one-third of Taking Care respondents said it's difficult to maintain friendships and relationships (38% of men and 37% of women). Black respondents were nearly twice as likely as white ones to report this issue (71% vs 37%).

And, almost a quarter of all respondents (23%) said it's difficult to parent. As one Toronto-based media worker noted, "I am not a parent but I am thinking about it. More often than not I don't see a path to both doing my job and becoming a parent, in part due to the demands of the job and the constant feeling of instability due to the nature of the industry (obviously the other part includes the wild expense and constraints of child care, etc)."

"Sometimes I am so busy that I don't know which way is up, and at other times I am so concerned that I am not going to find work that I am frantically trying to unearth some big story ideas. There never seems to be a time for rest. I think my non-media friends cannot understand that insecurity. My non-media friends cannot truly appreciate, as well, how carefully guarded we have to be in our personal lives. For instance, everything I do or say in my private life can affect my professional life because I have a job in the public sphere. There is a special kind of pressure on someone who cannot afford to screw up on the job because that error has public ramifications."

—Researcher, multiple employers/part-time/
contract, Toronto



*Alanna Rizza/
Canadian Press*



4. Workplace culture & support

Workplace culture can have a profound impact on a person's mental health and well-being, not to mention their willingness to open up about the struggles they face. The news industry's unwritten rule to "suck it up" when confronted by difficult subject matter and challenging situations can be harmful to media workers.

Respondents told us about being repeatedly told at work not to cry in stressful situations, with one reporting the existence of a "crying tree" where newsroom members go to cry in private when they get yelled at. In another comment, a producer/associate producer at CBC in Toronto noted, "[the culture is] changing, but I think most people feel they have to hide difficulties and cope on their own."

In an extreme case, we learned of a Canadian journalist who suffered a rare kind of heart attack attributed to extreme work stress. She says she felt ignored even though she'd spent a year warning her bosses that she was under extreme stress and was struggling to manage increased work demands at her newspaper.

A majority of comments highlighted negative experiences, but we must also keep in mind the adage, "no news is good news." As such, it's impossible to know

how many people were satisfied enough with their workplaces that they simply did not write anything.

Others weighed their workplace's pros and cons. As a video journalist in Toronto noted, "My team is small and supportive, but that does not reflect other people's experiences at the company, which is one of the largest broadcasters in Canada. Even now, they will let me take time off if I really need it for my mental health, but the situation has to be quite bad (breakdown/severe depression); burnout or exhaustion, for example, are not good enough reasons. [...] The work culture differs across bureaus I'm told, and smaller bureaus have it especially hard."

Overall, however, media workers across Canada painted a dire picture of an industry-wide workplace culture that sometimes punishes those who decline work when the story is too graphic or upsetting, and which fails to deliver meaningful training to those whose job it is to report on trauma. It's a culture in which constructive feedback is sometimes rare, working conditions can be poor and many feel their employers do not care about their well-being.

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Working conditions

People are feeling overworked. Fifty-two percent of all Taking Care respondents reported their workload on a typical day is more than they would like, and 36% said they had more deadlines than they would like.

Taking breaks is a major struggle:

- 51% of all media workers said it was difficult to take a break (women: 58%; men: 40%; other genders found it easier).
- Black, Latin American and West Asian media workers had a harder time taking breaks than their peers in other ethnic/racial categories.
- 82% of editorial/production assistants found it difficult to take a break; the next highest were hosts/presenters, at 65%.
- In line with these findings, one Ontario-based Rogers reporter noted that, “We are not able to take breaks ever, but only get paid for seven of eight hours worked.”
- Only 30% of Taking Care respondents said their overall working conditions were good.

“Companies that try to care always seem as if they are also trying to cover their own ass, and have never frankly and fairly acknowledged that the nature of our work can be challenging and traumatic. If we don’t acknowledge that, and instead perpetuate a stiff-upper-lip mentality, we will continue to burn out young people, lose talent to other industries and become undesirable places to work.”

—Manager/executive, Toronto

“The conditions of employment can often be more stressful than disturbing imagery encountered on the job. Deadlines, demanding supervisors, constantly shifting schedules and job insecurity are major contributors to daily stress.”

—Reporter, Ontario

“I’m ashamed of feeling burnt out because I’m a relatively new journalist but this industry feels so unsustainable sometimes. Weekly papers are especially hard due to miniscule newsrooms and the scramble to fill a paper each and every week. The cycle doesn’t stop, news doesn’t stop and neither can I.”

—Reporter, Winnipeg



*Vina Nadjibulla, wife of Michael Kovrig, prepares for interview.
Justin Tang/Canadian Press*



In Vancouver, journalist Eileen Park Robertson speaks at a rally against anti-Asian racism. Darryl Dyck/Canadian Press

Taking time off

More than half of women respondents told us taking time off work is difficult, as did nearly two-thirds of people aged 21-29. A majority of people with disabilities also said it's hard to take a holiday.

Workers across a wide range of roles said it's difficult to take time off work, but the problem was most acute among editorial/production assistants, podcasters, writers, editors, reporters and hosts/presenters.

Here's how one Toronto Star reporter described the challenge: "Asking for time off feels weak, feels like you are letting the organization down. You get praised for doing more work than others, even if doing all that work is bad for your mental health. You get told to take care of yourself but don't witness anyone actually doing it, so you don't feel like you can do it too."

A reporter in Mississauga shared a similar perspective: "When I request vacation, I work overtime to finish everything so I can take a break. This usually can be late

into evenings or not breaking at all throughout the day before my 'vacation.'"

Refusing work

More than two-thirds of respondents throughout Canada told us they have never refused an assignment because they were uncomfortable with the story's graphic or upsetting content.

That doesn't mean they haven't **wanted** to. In fact, almost half of all Taking Care respondents have wanted to refuse a story assignment because of its troubling content. The desire to refuse assignments was highest among those aged 30-39, and among those who work as camera operators and audio or video librarians.

This tension points to a disconnect summed up by one producer based in Ottawa, who said the news business "is an industry where you literally succeed by never saying 'no' to anything, even if you are burnt out, don't want to work an average 12-hour day, etc.

Young journalists are also taught to move wherever is needed and work whatever hours are available, regardless of whether it is a good choice for them in terms of health or social well-being.”

Our data suggests the least experienced media workers are the ones who are least likely to refuse a story. As suggested by the Ottawa producer, this could be indicative of the pressure some younger journalists feel when it comes to proving themselves.

Why do people feel like they can't say no?

Answer: the fear of professional consequences, according to more than half of our respondents. And by and large, they're right to be worried. Of those who told us they had refused work because of discomfort with the content, nearly half said there were consequences.

Some of those most likely to say they paid a professional price for turning down assignments include:

- People with disabilities: 73%
- Photographers: 69%
- Freelancers: 58%
- People aged 30–39: 52%
- Reporters: 46%
- Parents with children at home: 43%

Concern for well-being

The Taking Care survey tried to gauge the degree to which media workers feel their well-being is cared for in two ways: by their immediate supervisor and by their employer as a whole.

Overall, nearly three-quarters of respondents said their supervisor cares about their well-being. However, when we asked if their employer cares about their mental well-being, only 51% said yes. People working in smaller newsrooms (up to five people) were more likely to report their employer caring about their well-being compared with those in larger newsrooms.

Feeling not cared for can have profound consequences, as a writer for CBC said: “Most of the trauma I have suffered has been the result of poor management and outdated approaches. So much of it [has] been entirely preventable, but the will to prevent injury is lacking. Wish I'd chosen a different profession.”

“Too many employers assume we'll work until we drop with little thanks and stagnant wages that have not come close to keeping up with inflation in the last decade.”

—Reporter, Toronto

Constructive feedback

Fifty-six percent of Taking Care respondents said they don't get meaningful feedback on their work. This trend was most pronounced among editors, photographers, writers and video journalists. Men and media workers over 50 years of age also received less constructive feedback.

Planning for the future

The rapid pace of closures and mergers within the industry over the past 15 years, fuelled by the shrinking fortunes of media companies, have left many journalists and media workers concerned about job security and fearful for the future — and for good reason. The Local News Research Project, which tracks changes to media outlets across Canada, says a total of 466 news operations closed in more than 325 communities between 2008 and April 1, 2022.

Community papers publishing fewer than five times per week accounted for 77% of the closures.

Sixty percent of Taking Care respondents told us planning for the future is difficult. That number increases to nearly two-thirds of people aged 21 to 39, and exceeds 70% for people with disabilities. Looking at job categories, photographers, freelancers, writers, reporters, and producers/associate producers reported the greatest difficulty.

A person in the producer/associate producer category from Toronto captures this sentiment aptly: “You didn't touch on the stress of continuing cutbacks, layoffs, shrinking newsrooms. This is an additional layer of trauma in our profession and one that directly affects so many of us.”

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*Black Lives Matter protesters in Ottawa.
Adrian Wyld/
Canadian Press*

Lack of trauma training leaves media workers in the lurch

At j-schools and in newsrooms, future and current media workers are not receiving adequate trauma training.

- 90% of Taking Care respondents didn't get trauma training in journalism school.
- 85% haven't received it at work.
- Almost no reporters, writers, photographers and camera operators have received any trauma training, despite higher likelihood of being on the frontlines of traumatic events.
- 33% of managers/executives said they had received training.

Freelancers and people working part-time for multiple employers were least likely to get trauma training.

We asked journalism programs across the country to describe their programming on trauma and well-being.

Not all journalism schools responded. Of the ones that did, just one institution (Carleton University) said it had a full course on trauma-informed reporting — and that is a course led by Taking Care co-author Matthew Pearson, launching in 2023. That said, a number of schools said they are making efforts to include trauma training in some way; for instance, a number of respondents said there were mentions, modules, workshops and other training formats regarding trauma and

reporter safety within their curricula. Some institutions offer intersectional perspectives on trauma, notably how it affects people of colour.

This feedback is encouraging because it shows there is an appetite to train new journalists on trauma-informed reporting. However, none of the institutions said they offered programming on journalists' own mental health and well-being.

"I feel extremely lucky that I haven't experienced trauma through my work in media. It feels inevitable that it will happen at some point though, and that scares me because I've never had any training on trauma reporting in journalism school and I don't want to come across as weak to my manager by asking about how to deal with it or appearing hesitant to cover certain stories."

—Writer, Halifax

"Our reporters need more training covering traumatic events. I attempted to organize a training session for our employees but the company did not think it was necessary, which was disappointing."

—Manager/executive, Alberta



“Convoy” protesters. Amber Bracken/Canadian Press

5. Harassment

CTV’s Evan Solomon and his cameraperson came close to getting a frozen beer can to the head in early 2022, as they prepared for a live hit during Ottawa’s “freedom convoy” blockade.

They weren’t alone. At various protest sites during the blockade, news crews were swarmed, spat on, shoved, threatened and had their live broadcasts interrupted. In Toronto, one demonstrator warned on camera that journalists would soon face “executions.” At a southern B.C. border crossing, protesters hurled insults at Global News TV reporter Kamil Karamali and his camera operator, calling them “liars” and “fake

news” and yelling at them to, “Go home, you sack of shit! Shame on you, you disgusting, filthy human-being!”

Despite 10 years on the job, the incident has left Karamali questioning his career choice.

“It’s quite unnerving and unsettling,” he tells us. “We’re used to seeing those words on a screen, from what you think are online trolls. To all of sudden come from people — living, breathing beings willing to say such crass and vile things and have such disdain and hate for you just for the job you do.” >>>

Increasing rates of harassment

The “freedom convoy” was a flashpoint for growing anti-media rhetoric, but as we are intimately aware, it did not start then. From the days of yellow journalism and the emergence of the “hack” moniker, to the 2014 debut of the trend in which people interrupted live TV reports to yell “fuck her right in the pussy!” to Donald Trump’s anti-journalism tirades, distrust and hatred of media is nothing new.

A 2022 joint report titled *Poisoned Well* by the Canadian Association of Journalists and Canadian Journalism Foundation found that journalists of colour, along with 2SLGBTQ+ and women journalists, are the biggest targets for anti-media hate.

In the *Taking Care* survey, 56% of Canadian media workers reported being harassed or threatened on social media, and 35% said they also experienced face-to-face harassment while working in the field. But not all of this adversity is delivered by disgruntled citizens; 28% of respondents said they got harassed in the newsroom, too, suggesting there is some degree of lateral violence going on.

Taking Care results show that this abuse is taking a toll on the mental health of Canadian media workers. The majority of people who experienced threats and harassment — whether online, in the field or in the newsroom — reported being psychologically harmed by them.

Online harassment

We asked respondents whether they’d experienced harassment or threats online in the last four years. Fifty-six percent said yes.

“I’ve noticed the online rhetoric is getting nastier on social media.”

—Freelance reporter, B.C.

“I have worked in both newspaper and magazine journalism. I found the former much more stressful and, in today’s social media climate, would suggest that journalists who work on daily news face much more targeted harassment than ever before. I left daily news 20 years ago and would never go back to it today.”

—Editor, Ontario



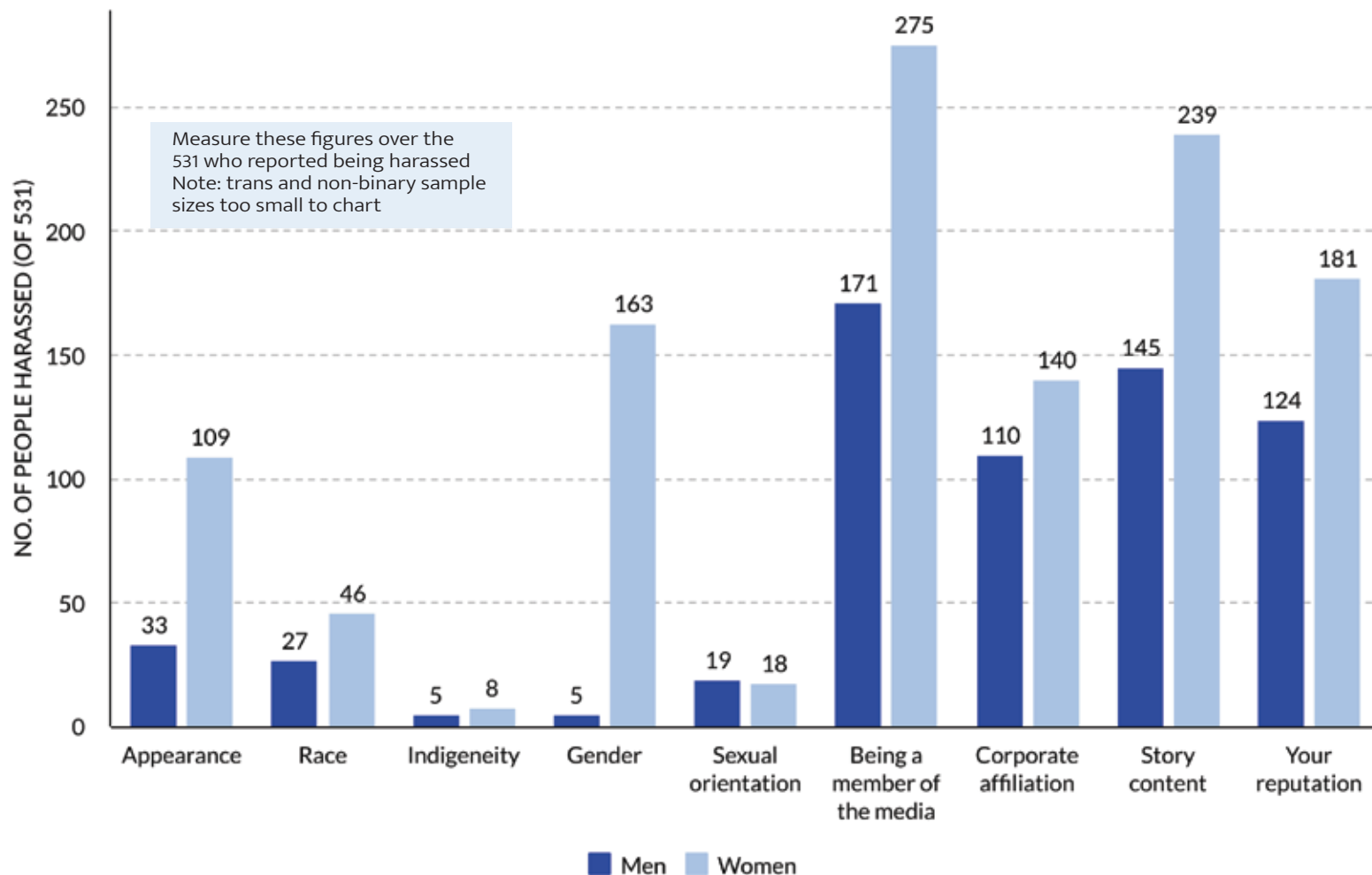
Unsplash

Online harassment was more prevalent among non-binary (89%) and trans (67%) people. Between men and women, our data indicates that although 55% of men reported at least one instance of harassment in the past four years, women bear harassment most frequently. Women encountered harassment and violence at every turn — by email, on social media, in the field and in the newsroom — and were more likely to receive sexual harassment, hate speech, threats and intimidation.

Women reported the highest likelihood of being psychologically harmed by this harassment. And, when compared to men, at least twice as many women reported increasing security at work or home, leaving their home city/region/country, changing their phone number or email address, or quitting social media at least twice as often as men reported.

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TARGETS OF ONLINE HARASSMENT



Regarding race or ethnicity, white and Indigenous workers reported some of the lowest incidence rates of online harassment or violence, while Arab, Asian and Black media workers reported the highest:

- Arab: 83%
- South Asian: 75%
- Filipino: 75%
- Black: 71%
- White: 56%
- Indigenous: 54%

Younger workers were likelier to experience online harassment: 65% of 21–29 year olds said they did, versus 41% of people aged 60–69 and 13% of people over 70. Elsewhere, the following reported the highest rates of online harassment, suggesting that some of the most visible workers take the brunt of online vitriol:

- Host/presenter: 76%
- Reporter: 72%
- Podcaster: 71%
- Video journalist: 68%
- Photographer: 63%

Harassment in the field

While harassment and abuse aimed at media workers is ubiquitous online, fewer media workers (35%) experienced in-person harassment while working in the field.

Non-binary and two-spirit individuals, followed by men, were most likely to report in-person violence. Television camera operators, photographers and video journalists were overwhelmingly targeted when compared to other types of workers, with 83% of photographers saying they encountered in-the-field harassment.

Of those who reported harassment or violence in the field, men were most likely to experience physical abuse, while women were most likely to experience sexual harassment. Women received 90% of gender-based harassment, 76% of harassment about appearance and 75% of harassment about indigeneity. Across the board, all media workers regardless of gender reported being targeted for being members of the media.



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Harassment in the newsroom or office

More than a quarter (28%) of Taking Care respondents said they'd experienced harassment or threats inside the newsroom or office in the past four years.

When broken down and analyzed, our sample sizes of marginalized workers (e.g. trans people, Black people, etc.) were too small to make conclusive statements. However, some trends emerged:

- People with disabilities reported harassment slightly more often than people without.
- Racialized workers — particularly Asian, Black and Arab people — reported workplace harassment more often than those who are white.
- Across all genders, men experienced the least amount of newsroom harassment.
- There was no particular group singled out for newsroom harassment; rather, it seems to be sprinkled throughout various workers' experiences.
- Verbal threats, intimidation and sexual harassment were the most common forms of abuse.

“Employers refuse to disable comments online or social media, which increases the amount of direct harassment.”

—Reporter, Rogers

“My last supervisor at Torstar was very supportive, compassionate and easy to work with. The two supervisors [...] I worked with before her were toxic, abusive and manipulative, and would periodically target one or two journalists in the newsroom to systematically belittle, gaslight and draw into arguments and conflict... Several employees reported this behaviour by management to human resources staff, though it never seemed to result in any improvement.”

—Writer, TorStar/Metroland

“The discourse online on social media has a hugely damaging effect on mental health, and I believe for members of the media in particular. We are the focal point for a lot of the hate and vitriol, targeted specifically for being ‘fake news’ or ‘mainstream media’ for reporting on facts that don't agree with the altered worldview of those who target us.”

—Reporter, rural Ontario

Race, gender and disability in the industry

The term “intersectionality” was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to describe how people can experience compounded discrimination. In the media as in larger society, race, gender, sexuality, class, disability — along with other areas of discrimination — intersect with each other to create personalized advantages and disadvantages. In this spirit, we’d like to acknowledge several trends in our data.

Race/ethnicity

“There is a lot of trauma that racialized journalists experience within newsrooms in Canada due to the lack of diversity at leadership levels. Being questioned on the integrity of our journalism, having to defend editorial decisions, being overlooked and discriminated against, and in some cases contributing to (bad) journalism that has a racist slant because there's only so much that you push back on — these are just some examples that have chipped away at my own confidence in myself and my confidence in our industry

—Producer/associate producer, Toronto

The vast majority of Taking Care survey respondents were white (81%). The remaining 19% was composed of Asian, Indigenous, Black, Arab, Latin American and “other” racial or ethnic groups. Our results are emblematic of the ongoing diversity and inclusion problem in Canadian media. In a 2021 media diversity study, the Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) found that newsrooms were mostly white (75%) and that 90% of newsrooms had no Latin American, Middle Eastern or mixed race staff at all.

The fact that only a few diverse newsrooms are compensating for a lack of industry-wide diversity speaks to a larger problem, noted Anita Li in a 2019 article in Policy Options: “Newsrooms in Canada are disproportionately white. This inequity means Canadian news coverage is less inclusive and therefore not truly representative of our country’s racial diversity. We’ve known all this for years, and still [...] establishment journalism organizations have not taken steps to address this worrying gap in a meaningful and systemic way.”

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Unsplash

In the set of exposure/witnessing questions, in which we asked about how often respondents had to witness various tragedies and crimes, some types of exposure have notable racial discrepancies. Take, for example, frequency of covering or handling material on fires/explosions. These are some of the proportions of people who answered “often”:

- White: 23%
- Black: 29%
- Filipino: 50%
- West Asian: 100%

We can see similar proportions among white and non-white respondents in covering/handling material related to natural disasters, physical assault, sexual assault, life-threatening illness or injury and other severe human suffering. However, other types of exposure in the same question skewed white, while others had similar proportions across all races and ethnicities. This has made it difficult to validate whether one group over another is more likely to get assigned certain types of stories.

Gender

This lack of diversity echoes across all intersections of identity. For instance, only 15 trans, non-binary and Two-Spirit people answered the Taking Care survey (plus two who answered “other”). Was this an accurate reflection of the media’s actual gender diversity, or was it an issue with our sample?

It’s hard to know. As Xtra.ca reported in 2021, “The number of trans people, if any at all, who work at outlets like the Star, CBC and CTV is tiny, despite there being more than 75,000 openly trans and non-binary people in Canada.”

Regardless, working with small samples presents challenges when trying to identify trends in surveys like this one. For instance, if only three trans people answered the survey, but 100% of them said they had anxiety, can we safely conclude 100% of trans journalists are anxious?

Disability

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents with disabilities said they have paid a professional price for turning down assignments and more than 70% said planning for



*Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Global's Neetu Garcha in 2021.
Sean Kilpatrick/
Canadian Press*

the future is difficult — numbers much greater than people without disabilities. And, nearly half rated their overall working conditions in terms of psychological health and safety as poor.

However, our disability data only includes people who acknowledge they have a disability. Many people either don't want to check the disability box, or don't know that they qualify. Considering that 22% of the Canadian population has at least one disability, our finding — that 9% of media workers have a disability — likely underestimates the prevalence among media workers.

Data highlights need for greater inclusion, more study

The Taking Care survey was a general health survey. There are constraints stemming from our data, but respondents told us repeatedly that discrimination and exclusion take a toll on their well-being.

Our industry must do better to attract a greater diversity of people to all job levels, and ensure efforts to enhance mental health supports meet the needs of workers with different backgrounds, identities and lived experiences.

Much more research needs to be done to understand how media workers' mental health and well-being are affected by covering traumatic stories, experiencing harassment and facing discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, disability and age, among other factors.

“I worry for my female and POC [person of colour] colleagues because they have it far worse than I do.”

—Audio/visual editor, Black Press

“I believe most media structures in Canada are incredibly harmful to BIPOC journalists. Constantly feeling demeaned, not being heard or seen, having to work twice as hard just to be respected. In my four years working in journalism, I've had instances where the quality of my reporting was questioned because of my ethnicity [...] and being accused that I didn't do my due diligence on highly sensitive stories based purely on nothing but my ethnicity alone. [...] These microaggressions at work are incredibly triggering, and make many of us feel like we have no future in this industry. It is something that seriously needs to be addressed, and still occurs despite open conversations about discrimination post 2020. I fear that many journalists of colour will leave the industry (and some of my colleagues have already have) because of these microaggressions, which will contribute to the continuation of an incredibly homogenous Canadian media landscape that fails to reflect the people and communities it reports on. I can't imagine how Black and Indigenous reporters must feel every day in the face of this oppression.”

—Reporter, Toronto Star

ALCOHOL & DRUG USE IN CANADIAN MEDIA

There's a reason the stereotype of the hard-working, hard-living journalist exists. From the days of Ernest Hemingway to Hunter S. Thompson to today, alcoholism and drug use have been romanticized and woven into the culture of journalism. Some of us have used these substances as creative fuel, as ways of coping with stress and trauma — and ultimately, as both a solution to and a cause of our problems.

The Taking Care survey found that Canadian media workers are at much higher risk of problem drinking than the general public. We came to this conclusion by using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test-Concise (AUDIT-C), a screening tool used in healthcare that asks people about their drinking habits. Based on that test, 46% of Taking Care respondents are considered to be at “higher risk” for alcohol use issues, compared with 27% of the general Canadian population.

Alcohol use among media workers

The Taking Care survey asked about both frequency of drinking and volume of drinking. We found that about half (49%) of media workers drink at least two days a week, with many reporting drinking more than four days a week.

Percentage of workers drinking at least two days a week

- Managers/executives: 67%
- Hosts/presenters: 65%
- Camera operators: 58%
- Photographers: 58%
- Assignment editors: 55%
- Editors: 48%
- Reporters: 48%

The majority of respondents qualified a “drinking day” as having one or two drinks, but a significant number of respondents defined it as three or four drinks. A tiny proportion of men and women reported seven or more drinks on a given drinking day.

Notably, the older a respondent was, the more days of the week they drank. However, if we look closer, we can see two inverse correlations: Older media workers drank more frequently than younger ones, but had fewer drinks in one sitting. Meanwhile, younger media workers (ages 21–29) drank on fewer days of the week than all other ages, but when they drank they had at least three drinks, with 9% reporting five or six drinks, and 3% reporting seven to nine.

Freelancers drank most, with 31% of them reporting drinking at least four times a week — the highest among all types of employment. People working for multiple employers (whether part time or on contract) were next, at 27%. Finally, 22% of people working full-time for just one outlet reported drinking four or more times a week. This may suggest a correlation between job security and frequency of drinking.

Most media workers have not sought treatment for alcohol or substance abuse. Of those who did seek treatment, men (7.6%) were twice as likely to seek help than women (3.5%). And, although our sample sizes of trans and two-spirit individuals were very small, they seemed to be more likely to seek treatment compared to other genders.

Looking at the general Canadian population, three-quarters of us reported having had at least one drink in the past year, according to government data. About one in five (19%) of Canadians are considered heavy drinkers (defined as having five or more drinks on one occasion, at least 12 times a year). Looking at Taking Care data, it appears an average of 26% of Canadian journalists are considered heavy drinkers.

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Drug use among media workers

Our data shows Canadian media workers vastly prefer cannabis to other drugs, especially for help in managing work-related stress. Of the 912 respondents who answered every single question in this section, 26% overall said they used cannabis.

We examined this further by looking at the proportion of people using the drug specifically to manage job stress.

People using cannabis specifically to manage work stress

- Non-binary: 100%
- Women: 64%
- Men: 57%
- People who didn't provide their gender: 69%

Note: Our sample sizes for trans, Two-Spirit and non-binary people were small.

MDMA and cocaine use

As for other drugs, a very small handful of individuals said they've used either MDMA, heroin or methamphetamines to help them manage work-related stress. Meanwhile, the majority of people who used crack or cocaine did so recreationally, and not to manage work-related stress.

Opioids

Perhaps the most notable ratio was among those who reported using opioids. Although less than a dozen individuals said they used opioids, almost all (86%) said they used them for work-related stress.

Opioid medications include oxycodone, hydrocodone, methadone and fentanyl, and are normally prescribed to manage physical pain, not stress. Notably, almost all of the people who said they used opioids for work-related stress worked for one outlet full-time and were currently in positions likely to be desk jobs. Most were men and most of them were over the age of 50.



Meng Wanzhou reads a statement outside B.C. Supreme Court. Darryl Dyck/Canadian Press

Precarious work

Nearly 10% of Taking Care respondents were freelancers, and another 12% worked on contracts or part-time. Whether done by choice or necessity, the people performing these types of work face some of the most precarious employment conditions in the news industry.

Freelancers

In Canada, as in other parts of the world, many media outlets have come to rely heavily on freelance labour. There are obvious reasons for that: outlets don't have to guarantee freelancers work, or give them paid vacation or sick days, or give them medical benefits (or pay bumps in lieu of benefits). Freelancers are usually excluded from joining outlets' unions.

One Ontario freelance photographer illustrated some of the financial realities of being a freelancer: "This survey doesn't take into account the financial precarity that freelancers have to go through and that we have no access to any mental health services from the major publications which increasingly rely on us."

This isn't to say these media workers freelance because they can't get a job. In fact, many people prefer to freelance, even turning down job offers so they can continue working for themselves. As one freelance writer in Toronto noted, "Having autonomy over my work life is the key to good mental health."

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“The precarious nature of my work and toxicity within the industry have the greatest impact on my mental health.”

By and large, though, freelancing is a game of compromises. For instance, freelancer respondents routinely reported less exposure to traumatic events than most other types of media workers. They also rated their sleep, diet, exercise, overall physical health and mental well-being more favourably than full-time employees.

However, 60% of freelancers also said they couldn't refuse work without fear of professional consequences. That figure was surpassed only by media workers with multiple employers — i.e., individuals who experience similarly precarious work. Additionally, 15% of freelancers reported having less work than they would like (compared to full-time workers' 2.7%).

‘Casuals’ and contract work

Of the 12% who said they worked on contract, half said they worked for a single employer, while the other half worked for multiple ones. Three-quarters worked part-time while the remaining worked full-time.

Sometimes, contractual or “casual” employees are treated differently from full-timers and from freelancers. Depending on their organization(s), they might get benefits and paid vacation days, or extra money in lieu of benefits/vacation, or nothing at all. Some news outlets are infamous for stringing workers along on back-to-back contracts or keep-

ing them in “temp” status indefinitely instead of hiring them full-time — a practice that a rep for one major union approaching a new round of negotiations said is on his radar.

Other times, these workers are different from permanent staff in name alone, working regular shifts sometimes for years without having the same security and benefits as full-timers. In terms of the content of news stories, contract/casual workers report the same rates of exposure to potentially traumatic events as full-timers do, meaning they regularly perform the same kinds of work with less support.

The majority of contract/casual workers (74%) also told us that they couldn't refuse work without fear of consequences; considerably fewer (60% for freelancers and 57% for full-timers) said the same. This was most pronounced among people working part-time for multiple employers, who were also likeliest to rate their job satisfaction as poor.

Financial security

In freelancing or perpetual contract/casual status (sometimes referred to as “permalancing”), not enough work usually means not enough money — a reality that can have a multitude of consequences across a person's life.

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Across the media landscape, it was freelancers who bore the greatest financial burdens of the pandemic, followed by contract/casual workers (see chart below).

Also when compared to full-time workers, more freelancers felt:

- Unsafe on the job (22% of freelancers vs. 15% of full-timers)
- Unsupported by employers/clients (42% vs. 29%)
- Difficulty with social isolation (75% vs. 58%)

Workers with multiple employers typically fared better than freelancers on these questions.

Low pay has long been a common complaint among freelancers in Canada — a reality that can spread a person thin, financially and mentally. A freelance photographer in Winnipeg told us that, “Being underpaid and exploited by employers is a unique trauma in and of itself.”

Trauma exposure

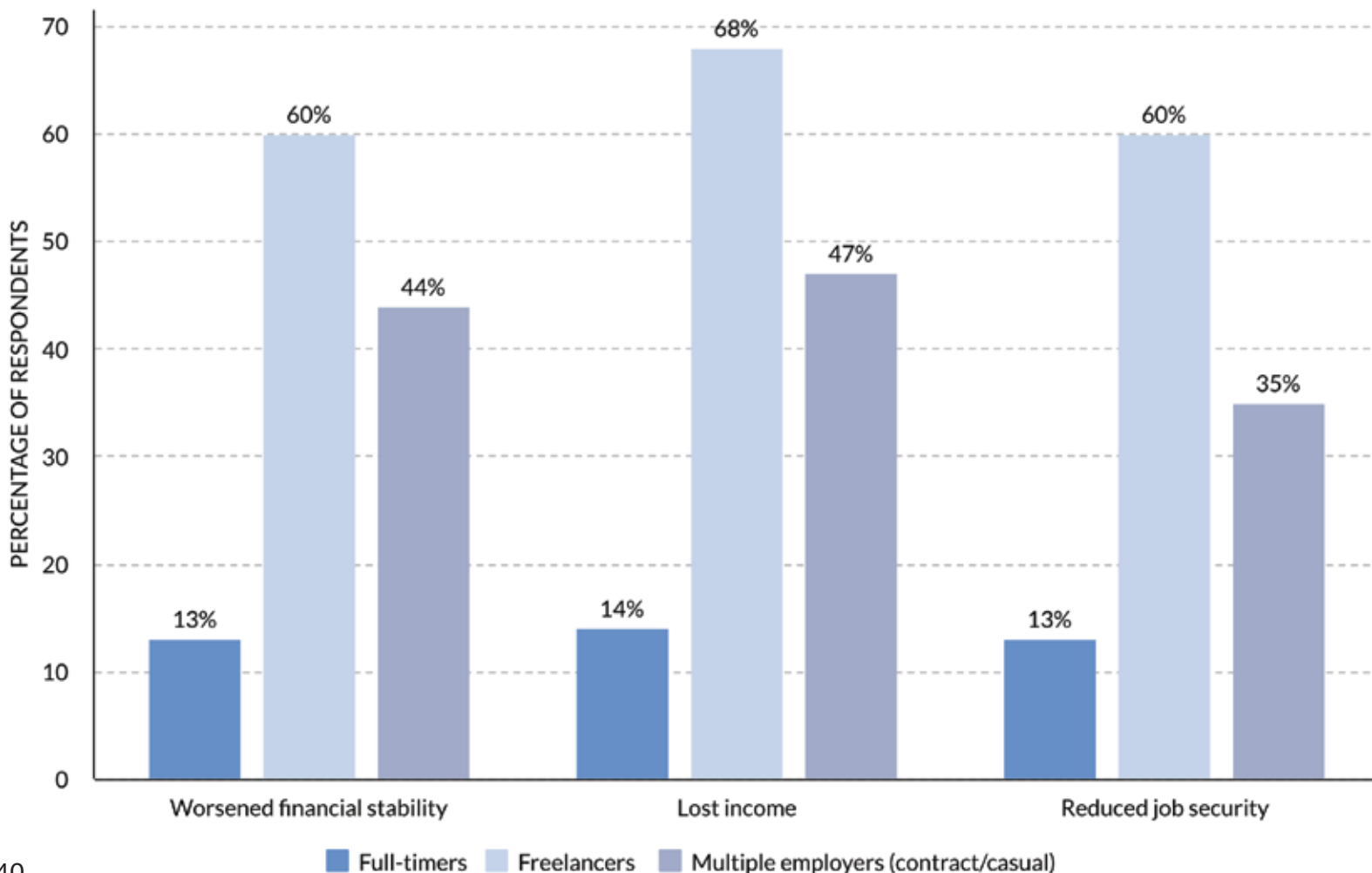
Overall, freelancers witnessed fewer traumatic events than full-time employees. But they were more likely than their full-time counterparts to witness someone being killed or seriously injured (28% vs. 19%) and as likely to witness a gruesome scene while on the job.

“My distress comes mainly from covering the Portapique massacre as a freelancer. I have come to think that single freelancers should not do that kind of work. It is better done by people with families who have staff jobs.”

— Freelance writer, Nova Scotia

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PANDEMIC-RELATED NEGATIVE FINANCIAL EFFECTS



Visitors pay respects at memorial for Portapique massacre victims.
Andrew Vaughn/
Canadian Press



Mental health

Unlike permanent employees and others who receive benefits, freelancers and contract workers often have to pay for psychological help and other paramedical services out-of-pocket. With many registered psychologists typically charging upwards of \$200 depending on location, it's not uncommon for these workers to wave off psychological counselling altogether.

“My biggest traumas are from when I was a freelancer, but psychology services are expensive,” wrote a part-time/contract worker at Le Devoir. This trend is notable, since they report having poor mental health at the same rate as full-timers (each at 35%) but with fewer supports.

Freelancers also drank more frequently, with 31% reporting four or more drinks a week (vs. 22% for full-time employees), although they were slightly less prone to binge drinking.

“I didn't realize until recently that it builds up over the years. Things from my freelance days, 30 years ago, are triggered by current events.”

— Manager/executive, Toronto

“Following the van attack in Toronto, those images stayed with me for a while. Also covered a helicopter crash, where people died. Couldn't look at my pictures from that day for a long time.”

— Freelance photographer
(Toronto Star, Canadian Press, AFP, Reuters, etc.)

“As a freelancer, I don't have supports to cover mental health care or supports around trauma reporting. Companies are becoming slower in payment, which adds financial stress even if I'm working all the time. Freelancers are often excluded from efforts by newsrooms and professional organizations to address stress, burnout, harassment and training. I think Canadian freelancers are really struggling but have little support.”

— Freelance reporter, Calgary

Recommendations

There are many difficult and complex challenges involved in improving well-being and mental health in the Canadian news industry. There are no simple solutions. Different individuals and organizations are each at their own particular places of awareness, comfort, support and response.

“What we’re talking about is culture change,” says Bruce Shapiro, executive director of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma at Columbia University’s graduate school of journalism.

He routinely advises newsrooms and industry managers on the issue.

“It does not happen overnight, but is an accumulation of small, attainable victories. So be kind to yourselves and give it time,” Shapiro urges.

He and other pioneers in this field argue that enhancing well-being within the news industry requires improved literacy and practices in how we do our journalism. It also requires prioritizing well-being as a journalistic value, one that ensures the protection of our people’s psychological health and safety in the pursuit of the news. In this sense, promoting well-being is equally important as timeliness, accuracy, fairness and integrity.

Thinking about well-being isn’t only relevant when covering extreme situations such as war, terrorist attacks, disasters and other traumatic events.

“It’s very important that we understand that if we’re going to change newsroom culture around stress and trauma, it’s not just about those spectacular cases. It’s about the routine day-to-day,” Shapiro says. “You’re building a scaffolding that will sustain your journalists and sustain your teams when the shit really does hit the fan ... for when there really is a spectacular incident or a very, very challenging crisis.”

This is not just a “management issue.” Everyone in the industry — from the frontlines, to assignment, to newsroom managers, to corporate executives, to unions and associations — all have a role to play in changing the culture.

The following recommendations are based on emerging best practices in newsrooms around the globe, as well as the input here of the more than 1,200 Canadian media workers who completed the Taking Care survey.

1 Develop post-pandemic plans

News organizations of all sizes must plan to protect employee mental health in the wake of the global pandemic. We must address the unique toll that two-plus years of profound disruption and covering monumental suffering and death has had on workers. We must also re-evaluate and adjust traditional workflows to ensure some of the positive lessons of the pandemic are not lost. Plans for employee reintegration and resumption of “regular work” should seriously consider:

- Flexibility in remote work arrangements.
- Introducing additional paid time off as annual wellness days.
- Special focus on safe social events to create opportunities for team reintegration.
- Intentional efforts to welcome, integrate and mentor recent hires who may have never previously met colleagues in person while working remotely.
- Ensuring ongoing access to personal protective equipment and safe workspaces.

2 Improve education and training

In newsrooms: News organizations should train and educate managers, supervisors and assignment staff, as well as all newsroom and frontline teams on the science of well-being, mental health and the impact of trauma. This training should practically address the unique challenges, jobs, culture and experiences of news professionals with a view of protecting and promoting well-being. The primary goal should be to enhance newsroom literacy around mental health and form the foundation for enhancing newsroom practices in the day-to-day. Newsrooms should also hold anti-racism and inclusion training for all staff and cover the costs of participation for regular freelance contributors.

In journalism schools: Journalism schools and educators should build and incorporate training on journalist mental health and trauma-aware reporting into the core curricula of post-secondary college, undergraduate and graduate level programs. This training should

practically address the specific challenges journalists-in-training will face, including newsroom culture issues. The primary goal should be to enhance each program's literacy around mental health and prepare students for real-world reporting scenarios. Training in mental health first aid is also recommended for journalism instructors to better support students affected by their reporting assignments.

3 Foster in-house expertise

News leaders should acknowledge they are not the experts — and that they don't have to be. Rather, they should hire professional mental health advisers to help inform and guide their newsrooms on industry best practices. For instance, the BBC employs a chief medical health officer, an organizational psychologist and a nurse to work with news teams on psychological health and safety. ABC Australia employs a social media well-being adviser. ABC also employs a registered psychologist who leads internal training and conducts routine post-deployment assessments with news crews. Reuters, NPR and Al Jazeera all retain specialists to oversee internal peer support networks to offer specialized, "journalist-focused" counselling services.

4 Improve culture & work/life balance

Well-being of people should be formally adopted as a core organizational value within news organizations and other media outlets. Well-being should be included in formal editorial standards and practices, alongside the needs for ensuring facts, fairness, accuracy, etc. News organizations should ensure employees use available time off, eat lunch, take breaks and unplug from technology. One critical way of accomplishing this is by asking managers and other newsroom leaders to model self-care by establishing clear expectations and boundaries around off-hours expectations.

5 Establish protocols to protect health

Newsrooms should adopt and promote practices aimed at preventing harm from burnout, stress, overwork and exposure to trauma. They should include:

- Clear protocols on what to do when an employee needs a break from story coverage.
- Assignment plans that consider psychological risks before, during and after filing/deployment.
- Prioritization of rest, decompression and processing time in the wake of heavy stories.
- Protocols and policies that address the higher rates of harassment, stress, PTSD and other issues among women. Strategies can involve flexible work hours, on-site childcare, private childcare benefits, signage promoting dedicated help for women who may be experiencing domestic violence, as well as reminders in the office of harassment protocols and how to access support.
- Regular training of all staff on health and safety.
- Devising clear protocols and supports for handling harassment of staff, be it online, in the field or within the workplace.
- Acknowledging that workers come from different backgrounds with their own unique experiences and baggage, and that these differences mean that not everyone will react the same way to an assignment. Modelling and advocating for boundary-setting can help promote better health and greater newsroom diversity.

6 Rethink alcohol

News organizations, unions and associations should rethink their relationship with alcohol, including within the workplace, as gifts and at work-related celebrations. As we saw in the report, Canadian media workers are at higher risks of developing harmful substance and alcohol habits and dependencies. Finding other ways of gathering or celebrating without alcohol will help promote a culture focused on improving well-being.

7 Launch peer support programs

Canadian news organizations, unions and industry associations should implement peer support networks to provide systems for dialogue and assistance for news professionals who are struggling. This model is in place at BBC, ABC Australia, Reuters, NPR and elsewhere where employees trained in basic mental health first aid assist their colleagues to offer empathetic listening or refer them to professional counselling or other supports. This peer-to-peer framework offers quick, easily accessible, confidential mental health support that does not require an employee in need to speak to a manager or take time off to go to a doctor/counsellor.

While this method does not replace therapy, it does quickly refer people in crisis to professional support. Moreover, the training of designated peer supporters enhances know-how and mental health literacy across organizations, helping to educate, break down stigma and normalize discussion about mental health, while accelerating the culture change needed within the industry.

Additionally, news organizations should actively support the creation of employee resource groups to improve working conditions for marginalized workers, such as Black, Indigenous and other racialized workers, women, 2SLGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities and older workers. The volunteers who drive these initiatives should be granted time during their paid working hours for these efforts.

8 Improve & expand benefits

News organizations and unions should provide enhanced mental health benefits to all employees and ensure those benefits are openly and widely promoted. That includes:

- Advertising available benefits in newsletters, regular emails and plain-language posters in newsroom common areas.
- Compiling and promoting a referral list for reputable counsellors, psychologists, massage therapists, etc. within the community to make it easier and more

convenient for employees to access them.

- Extending benefits to all employees, including providing coverage for those who work part-time, casual, contract or on a freelance basis, or paying premiums on top of wages to assist in all workers having access to private medical benefits.
- Reviewing existing employee assistance programs to ensure they offer counselling services that are designed for news professionals and responsive to their unique circumstances.
- Reviewing existing counselling services to ensure they address the specific needs of racialized, Indigenous and gender-diverse media workers.
- Ensuring that in-house and external counselling supports are both “journalism-aware” and trauma-informed. Psychologists who understand and specialize in working with news professionals are both rare and in high demand. Canadian news organizations, unions and associations should explore working together to help train and build a network of clinicians with expertise in helping media workers (similar to efforts underway in the United States led by the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma).

9 Seek employee input

News organizations should be open-minded about the struggles their employees face, and work to create a collaborative environment in which mental health issues can be discussed without stigma or shame. Managers and executives should conduct regular internal mental health surveys and audits to better understand employee needs and challenges as well as to identify areas where well-being can erode. In performing this exercise, they should be mindful that different workers and job roles have different concerns, vulnerabilities and exposure levels.

A call to take care

These solutions are critical to achieving a necessary cultural shift in Canadian media. By recognizing media workers' elevated risks of trauma, acknowledging their personal sacrifices and honouring their commitment, we can together create a healthier, more sustainable news industry — one that better supports its people in pursuit of journalism's greater mission of serving the public good.

Methodology

The Taking Care report is based on a 20-minute voluntary survey conducted using the Qualtrics online platform between Nov. 1 and Dec. 18, 2021.

Participation was anonymous and respondents were selected as eligible after self-identifying as working in Canadian news and media currently or within the last five years.

This approach was adopted after the authors consulted international experts in the field of journalism research and online surveys, and after having weighed a series of factors including the challenge of reaching a broad cross-section of participants, the sensitivity of the topics, participant trust, integrity of the data, layers of eligibility screening and simplicity.

While we acknowledge the survey results may suffer some bias toward participants already positively predisposed to, interested in, or aware of mental health issues within journalism, the authors found no anomalies in the data to suggest any false submissions. The authors incentivized participation by holding a raffle for 50 electronic gift cards valued at \$25 each. The raffle was held in January 2022.

The survey questions were designed with guidance from Erika Ibrahim, who previously worked at Statistics Canada. The topics and themes were developed in response to emerging themes in Canadian media, and took inspiration from previous journalism surveys in other jurisdictions, as well as other mental health research and established methodologies. For example, questions on trauma exposure were expressly based on the Life Events Checklist for DSM-5, and questions on alcohol use mirrored the established screening tools known as the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test Consumption (AUDIT-C).

The survey was reviewed and approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A (ethics clearance ID #115958), piloted and tested by working journalists, and adjusted based on their feedback to ensure clarity and ease of user experience.

The survey was shared through a multi-pronged approach which included promotion via news release, social media, the website of the Canadian Journalism Forum on Violence and Trauma, as well as direct

appeals to news company leaders, unions and industry associations to distribute a link to employees and members.

Participants clicked a link bringing them to a website landing page that explained the survey. They were then asked a series of questions to affirm their voluntary participation and screen them for eligibility.

Researchers received 1,444 unique responses of complete and partially complete survey responses (participants were allowed to skip questions.) We excluded invalid surveys and those with a less than 10% completion rate relying on a total of 1,251 unique responses as the basis for our study. Most were completed in English, and 122 were completed in French. A total of 916 respondents answered every single survey question. The authors have used most of the data collected, including partially completed surveys, and adjusted the analysis based on the numbers of individual responses to each question.

Analysis of the data was conducted by Cassandra Yanez-Leyton, a graduate student specializing in data journalism at Carleton University's School of Journalism and Communication, using Excel and MySQL data analysis tools.

Demographic data was collected at the end of the survey allowing people to identify their age, gender and race/ethnicity, among other data points. Respondents could select several racial categories if they wished. Their multi-answers were then standardized according to Statistic Canada's framework.

Results of the analysis were reviewed by the research team and double checked by journalism instructor and data journalism specialist David McKie.

The final report was written by Matthew Pearson, Dave Seglins and Tracey Lindeman.

We are thrilled with the resulting data, the survey response rates, the candour of participants and the ability to assess the pressing issues affecting well-being in the Canadian news industry. However, any errors, omissions or shortcomings in this report are the unintentional fault of the lead authors alone, despite our best efforts.

Acknowledgements

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Beyond the Forum's financial contributions, its president Cliff Lonsdale and executive producer Jane Hawkes have been steadfast partners and unsung heroes fighting to improve health and safety in Canadian journalism. In particular, we thank them for hosting the survey and this final report on the Forum's website; coordinating press releases and outreach; producing video testimonials used to promote the survey. We also thank the Forum's website developer Alicia Giammaria for her talents in making the online space attractive and user-friendly.

Dr. Anthony Feinstein served as an adviser and contributor to this report's section on moral injury. He is a world leader in the study of journalists and trauma, and we are indebted to him for his contributions.

We thank Carleton University faculty, staff and others for its support. In particular, we recognize Michael Agnew in the Office of the Dean of Faculty of Public Affairs for his sage advice on our SSHRC application; Leslie Macdonald-Hicks in the Office of Research Ethics for her wisdom and encouragement of an early career researcher; and Allan Thompson and colleagues in the School of Journalism and Communication for supporting this endeavour.

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The following academics and news leaders offered invaluable advice: Paul Adams, Klas Backholm, Irene Gentle, Elana Newman, Bruce Shapiro and Zane Schwartz.

We are grateful to the volunteers who tested our survey when it was in beta form: Paul Adams, Tara Carman, Lisa Khoo, Patrice Mathieu, Cecil Rosner, Ioanna Roumeliotis, Fatima Syed and Chris Tremblay.

François Girard provided a French translation of the survey and final report.

Canadian Press graciously provided images for this report.

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We thank our families and friends for their love and support.

We save our heartiest and most heartfelt thanks for the journalists and media workers from across Canada who entrusted us with their personal experiences and diligently took part in the Taking Care survey.

