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# ANNUAL REPORT 2025: Tracking Albania's Progress on Media Freedom and Journalistic Safety in Line with European Union Standards





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## Disclaimer

This report, titled “Annual Report 2025: Tracking Albania’s Progress on Media Freedom and Journalistic Safety in Line with EU Standards”, has been developed by a dedicated research team comprising experts from various fields.

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*The content of this report is the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the views of the European Union and the project partners.*

*Tirana, January 2026*

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*This report reflects the collective commitment and dedication of all contributors to advancing media freedom and journalistic safety in Albania. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and thoroughness of the information presented, this report reflects the findings, interpretations and conclusions of the research team and contributors. It is not intended to represent an absolute or definitive account but rather a comprehensive analysis based on the available data and perspectives at the time of publication.*



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## ABBREVIATIONS

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<b>AI</b>	Artificial intelligence
<b>AMC</b>	Albanian Media Council
<b>BIRN</b>	Balkan Investigative Reporting Network
<b>CEC</b>	Central Election Commission
<b>EMFA</b>	European Media Freedom Act
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>DSA</b>	Digital Services Act
<b>FOI</b>	Freedom of Information
<b>JIC</b>	Joint Industry Committee
<b>LGBTQ+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>ODIHR</b>	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>RTSH</b>	Radio Televizioni Shqiptar (Albanian Radio Television)
<b>SCiDEV</b>	Center for Science and Innovation for Development
<b>SLAPP</b>	Strategic lawsuit against public participation
<b>TV</b>	Television

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In 2025, Albania's media environment evolved within a dual trajectory: institutional frameworks expanded in line with commitments under the European Union (EU) accession process, while structural vulnerabilities affecting independence, pluralism, and journalist safety remained entrenched. This report assesses developments across media regulation, journalist protection, defamation reform, electoral coverage, and institutional accountability, drawing on institutional responses, monitoring data, and survey evidence from journalists.

Overall, 2025 reflects procedural progress and renewed attention to media reform but limited impact. Formal safeguards have been adopted or strengthened, structured dialogue mechanisms have operated, and legislative initiatives have advanced. However, the gap between formal alignment and practical impact continues to shape the media environment.

### *Media market transparency and pluralism*

Mechanisms for ownership disclosure in the audiovisual sector are operational through the regulator's publicly accessible ownership transparency database. In parallel, the institutional architecture for audience measurement has been established through the creation of a Joint Industry Committee and the preparation of draft legal amendments intended to formalize the framework. Preparatory steps were also undertaken to align national legislation with the European Media Freedom Act and the Digital Services Act; however, as of year-end, no corresponding legislative amendments had been formally adopted. At the same time, enforceable safeguards addressing media concentration and pluralism remain absent. Consequently, while procedural transparency and institutional structuring have advanced, structural risks related to market concentration and undue influence remain insufficiently addressed.

### *Structured dialogue and legislative reform*

A structured multi-stakeholder dialogue on media reform functioned throughout 2025 and progressed from thematic consultations to legislative consideration. Recommendations were transmitted to Parliament and contributed to draft amendments addressing journalist protection and criminal law provisions. However, traceability between dialogue outputs and final legislative proposals and decisions remained limited, and the extent to which recommendations are reflected in enacted reforms will depend on further developments and their implementation in 2026.

### *Journalist safety and enforcement*

Institutional mechanisms for journalist protection are formally in place. The State Police adopted guidelines on journalist safety, designated contact points, and incorporated training modules into professional development. The Prosecutor General's Office issued a circular prioritizing cases involving journalists and designated specialized prosecutors. However, survey data indicate low awareness of these mechanisms and limited confidence in institutional responses. Monitoring data recorded 42 violations in 2025, while 40.6% of journalists reported experiencing threats or intimidation and 68% reported restrictions on their ability to report freely. Political actors remain the primary source of pressure. The evidence suggests that while procedural safeguards exist, their deterrent impact and perceived effectiveness remain limited.

### *Defamation reform and legal alignment*

Developments in 2025 reflected mixed signals in the regulation of defamation. The July draft of a new Penal Code raised concerns regarding potential expansion of criminal liability for speech-related offences. Subsequent December amendments to the current Penal Code proposed repealing criminal insult and defamation provisions and transferring such matters to civil law, marking a move closer to European standards. However, parallel proposals to decriminalize defamation exclusively for journalists introduced risks of differentiated protection and legal uncertainty. Preparatory work on the transposition of Directive (EU) 2024/1069 (anti-SLAPP) has commenced, but draft amendments had not been published by year-end.

### *Electoral period as a stress test*

The May 2025 parliamentary elections functioned as a practical test of institutional commitments towards freedom of expression and journalists' safety. Approximately 70% of journalists covering the campaign reported difficulties accessing information. Nearly half reported that reliance on pre-prepared materials limited editorial independence, and 24% reported experiencing pressure or threats during the campaign. Political candidates and government officials were identified as primary sources of pressure. While quantitative monitoring was operational, qualitative constraints—including access restrictions, structured message control, and digital hostility—indicate that electoral periods continue to amplify existing pressures on independent journalism.

### *Cross-cutting structural challenges*

Across thematic areas, a recurring pattern emerges: formal compliance has advanced more rapidly than operational consolidation. Deeper structural issues continue to shape the media landscape. Persistent concerns regarding media pluralism, entrenched relationships between political actors, business interests and media ownership, informal networks of influence, and integrity risks create conditions in which undue pressure can be exercised without necessarily breaching formal safeguards. Precarious labour conditions and limited collective representation further increase vulnerability within the profession, while digital harassment and coordinated online attacks introduce additional layers of risk. These dynamics, combined with evolving economic and technological shifts affecting journalism as a profession, continue to influence the capacity of media actors to engage in independent public-interest reporting. Gender-based threats remain present, and a significant proportion of women journalists report adopting precautionary measures specifically because of their gender, underscoring the layered nature of professional vulnerability.

### *Implications for reform credibility*

As Albania advances within the EU accession framework, the credibility of media-related reforms will depend on consistent implementation, coherent legislative alignment with European standards, and enforcement and sustainability of reforms. Procedural establishment of safeguards is a necessary step and welcomed; however, demonstrable effectiveness, institutionalization, and trust-building

are critical to consolidating progress. The 2025 evidence suggests that while important frameworks are in place, sustained effort is required to translate commitments into durable protection of media freedom and journalist safety in practice.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1. Media freedom and journalists' safety context in Albania in 2025

In 2025, Albania's media environment evolved within a paradox: international indicators reflected relative improvement, yet structural vulnerabilities remained entrenched and, in several respects, became more visible.<sup>1</sup> Albania ranked 80th out of 180 countries in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index, improving by 19 positions and shifting from a "difficult" to a "problematic" classification.<sup>2</sup> However, assessments by the SafeJournalists Network,<sup>3</sup> Albanian civil society organizations, and media watchdogs underline that structural vulnerabilities persist despite this relative improvement. Continuous monitoring<sup>4</sup> throughout 2025 documented recurring patterns of political pressure, intimidation, ownership concentration, opaque financing, and weak institutional enforcement, including during the electoral period.

Also, the European Commission's 2025 Progress Report<sup>5</sup> and Rule of Law Country Chapter<sup>6</sup> assessed progress in freedom of expression as limited, describing conditions as largely unchanged and still affected by political–business overlap, opaque financing, ownership concentration, intimidation, and precarious working conditions. Freedom of expression and the safety of journalists remain core components of the EU accession "Fundamentals" cluster, as they directly relate to the rule of law, protection of fundamental rights, and the proper functioning of democratic institutions.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bino, B. (2025, May 3). [The Sisyphean climb of media freedom in Albania](#). Center for Science and Innovation for Development (SCiDEV).

<sup>2</sup> Reporters Without Borders. (2025). [World Press Freedom Index 2025: Albania](#).

<sup>3</sup> SafeJournalists Network. (2025). [Alerts on Albania](#).

<sup>4</sup> SCiDEV. (2025). [Media Landscape Briefs](#).

<sup>5</sup> European Commission. (2025, November 4). [2025 Progress Report for Albania](#). Brussels

<sup>6</sup> European Commission. (2025, July 8). [2025 Rule of Law Report – Country Chapter: Albania](#). Strasbourg

<sup>7</sup> Council of the European Union. (2024, October 3). [Accession negotiations: Cluster 1 – Fundamentals – EU common position](#). Brussels.

Freedom of expression and media freedom continue to be constitutionally guaranteed in Albania. Sectoral laws regulate audiovisual media, and structured dialogue mechanisms between institutions and media stakeholders were conducted during the year to discuss legislative and regulatory reform.<sup>8</sup> Alignment with key elements of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) and the Digital Services Act (DSA) has begun but remains at an early stage of transposition and institutional adaptation. At the same time, defamation remains criminalized at year-end, specific safeguards against abusive litigation (strategic lawsuits against public participation, SLAPPs) have not yet been adopted, and the legal framework does not provide comprehensive, tailored protections for journalists engaged in public-interest reporting.

Judicial safeguards, however, were not absent in 2025. On 22 April, the Constitutional Court annulled earlier decisions permitting the seizure of a journalist's devices and materials in an organized crime investigation.<sup>9</sup> The Court affirmed that source protection is integral to freedom of expression and the public's right to information, reinforcing constitutional limits on intrusive investigative measures. This ruling represented a significant protective precedent. Its systemic impact, however, depends on consistent lower-court and prosecutorial application.

In 2025, several developments brought into focus the practical application of rule-of-law safeguards, including due process, proportionality of state action, and the effective protection of freedom of expression.

On 6 March 2025, during the pre-election period, the Council of Ministers restricted access to TikTok nationwide for a period of one year on grounds of protecting children online.<sup>10</sup> Civil society and media watchdogs publicly opposed the measure, arguing that a blanket platform restriction raised concerns regarding proportionality, necessity, and due process in the protection of freedom of expression.<sup>11</sup> The measure was subsequently challenged before the

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<sup>8</sup> Council of Europe. (2025, January 31). [Promoting freedom of expression in Albania through open dialogue 01.2025-12.2026](#).

<sup>9</sup> SafeJournalists Network, partner organizations of the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR), & Reporters Without Borders (RSF). (2025, April 29). [Constitutional Court of Albania strengthens freedom of expression in Elton Qyno case](#). Joint Statement.

<sup>10</sup> Sinoruka, F. (2025, March 6). [Albanian ministry confirms one-year ban on TikTok to protect children](#). Balkan Insight.

<sup>11</sup> SafeJournalists Network, Media Freedom Rapid Response & civil society organizations. (2025, March 11). [TikTok ban in Albania threatens freedom of expression ahead of general elections](#). Joint Statement.

Constitutional Court,<sup>12</sup> where proceedings remained ongoing at the end of the reporting period. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) Final Report<sup>13</sup> on the 11 May 2025 parliamentary elections recorded that this constituted a broad restriction and noted that it limited some candidates' campaign opportunities.

The 11 May 2025 parliamentary elections brought freedom of expression concerns into sharper focus. Findings from BIRN Albania's 2025 audiovisual<sup>14</sup> and online media<sup>15</sup> monitoring during the parliamentary campaign provide quantitative evidence of structural imbalances in political visibility, editorial framing, and platform-specific distortions, reinforcing concerns identified in this report regarding media pluralism, editorial independence, and electoral fairness. Beyond structural imbalance in media coverage, civil society organizations and media freedom watchdogs reported that political parties and candidates failed to fully respect principles of media freedom and transparency during the campaign.<sup>16</sup> Monitoring documented widespread reliance on pre-produced party materials, restricted access to campaign events, and limitations on journalists' ability to ask questions and conduct independent reporting.<sup>17</sup> The OSCE/ODIHR Final Report assessed that the campaign took place in a highly polarized and constrained media environment, with the two largest political parties dominating television news coverage and other contestants receiving limited visibility.<sup>18</sup> On election day and in the immediate post-election period, journalists faced verbal abuse, intimidation, obstruction, and instances of physical

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<sup>12</sup> Sadiku, D. (2025, March 26). [Mbyllja e TikTok në Shqipëri, vendimi i qeverisë sfidohet në Gjykatën Kushtetuese \[TikTok ban in Albania: Government's decision challenged at the Constitutional Court\]](#). Shteg.

<sup>13</sup> OSCE/ODIHR. (2025, October 23). [Albania Parliamentary Elections, 11 May 2025: Final Report](#). Warsaw.

<sup>14</sup> Voko, K., Lelo, E., & Shehu, J. (2025). [Audiovisual Media Monitoring: Albania's Parliamentary Elections 2025](#). BIRN Albania. Tirana.

<sup>15</sup> Voko, K., Babameto, S., & Keta, V. (2025). [Online Media Monitoring: Albania's Parliamentary Elections 2025](#). BIRN Albania. Tirana.

<sup>16</sup> Media freedom and civil society organizations. (2025, May 14). [Post-election statement: Political parties and candidates failed to fully respect media freedom and transparency during the general elections of May 11, 2025](#). SCiDEV.

<sup>17</sup> Media Freedom Rapid Response & SafeJournalists Network. (2025, May 12). [MFRR and SafeJournalists condemn blatant intimidation of journalists covering parliamentary elections in Albania](#).

<sup>18</sup> OSCE/ODIHR. (2025, October 23). [Albania Parliamentary Elections, 11 May 2025: Final Report](#). Warsaw

aggression in multiple locations, as documented by the SafeJournalists Network.<sup>19</sup> The electoral period therefore illustrated how formal guarantees of media freedom can be undermined in practice when political actors, enforcement bodies, and regulatory institutions fail to ensure a safe and enabling environment for independent reporting.

In July 2025, the Ministry of Justice published a draft new Criminal Code for public consultation,<sup>20</sup> reopening debate on the scope and proportionality of criminal-law provisions affecting freedom of expression. The draft prompted broad scrutiny regarding its potential impact on freedom of expression, public debate, and professional journalism.<sup>21</sup> Although the Ministry subsequently indicated that amendments to defamation-related provisions were under consideration and consultations continued, final alignment with European standards remained pending at year-end.<sup>22</sup> Penal reform therefore emerged as a pivotal area for assessing practical alignment with European principles, particularly regarding necessity, proportionality, and the prevention of chilling effects on legitimate journalistic activity.

In August 2025, the obstruction of Focus Media Group's operations became one of the most significant rule-of-law incidents affecting media freedom during the year. During an eviction process from state-owned premises, authorities blocked access to the buildings housing outlets including News24, Balkanweb, Panorama, and Gazeta Shqiptare; electricity was cut, journalists were prevented from entering their newsrooms, and normal editorial and broadcasting activities were disrupted.<sup>23</sup> The incident was documented through monitoring alerts and subsequently addressed in coordinated statements by press freedom organizations, which raised concerns regarding due process, proportionality of enforcement measures, and the protection of

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<sup>19</sup> SafeJournalists Network. (2025, May 12). [SafeJournalists: We condemn attacks and intimidation of journalists during Albania's election day.](#)

SafeJournalists Network. (2025, May 11). [We strongly condemn verbal abuse, intimidation and aggression toward journalists by Democratic Party officials and supporters in Albania.](#)

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Albania. (2025, July 25). [Drafti i Kodit të ri Penal \[Draft of the new Penal Code\].](#)

<sup>21</sup> Sinoruka, F. (2025, August 12). [Alarm në Shqipëri për ndryshimet e propozuara në Kodin Penal; Qeveria mohon përfshirjen \[Alarm in Albania over proposed changes to the Penal Code; government denies involvement\].](#) Reporter.al.

<sup>22</sup> See more details [here](#).

<sup>23</sup> SafeJournalists Network. (2025, August 9). [Attacks on media outlets and organizations: News24, Balkanweb, Panorama and Gazeta Shqiptare – 09/08/2025, Tirana.](#)

journalists' right to work and access journalistic materials.<sup>24</sup> A first-instance court later found the restrictive measures disproportionate and ordered the return of equipment and documents. However, concerns were subsequently raised regarding the implementation of the ruling, as the ordered return of materials was not effectively carried out.<sup>25</sup> This episode highlighted structural vulnerabilities in the practical enforcement of media freedom safeguards and demonstrated how executive actions, particularly when implemented without clear procedural guarantees, can generate chilling effects.

Structural governance concerns extended to public service media throughout 2025. In early 2025, procedural irregularities were reported in the selection process for the Director-General of the public broadcaster (RTSH), followed by the dismissal of the Steering Council by Parliament and the subsequent appointment of a new council.<sup>26</sup> However, concerns were raised about political influence of the new RTSH Steering Council.<sup>27</sup> In April 2025, the newly constituted Steering Council elected a new Director-General. The leadership transition was accompanied by declarations regarding accumulated financial liabilities, employment disputes, and management challenges within RTSH.<sup>28</sup> These underscored structural weaknesses in the management and independence of the public broadcaster, raising questions regarding merit-based appointments, institutional autonomy, and safeguards against political and administrative interference in line with European standards for public service media.

Market structure remained a persistent challenge. The Media Pluralism Monitor 2025 continued to classify Albania among European countries at high risk regarding ownership concentration and state advertising transparency.<sup>29</sup> Media ownership remains concentrated among actors with

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<sup>24</sup> SafeJournalists Network, partners of the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR), Reporters Without Borders (RSF), & Albanian media freedom organizations. (2025, August 12). [Albania: Urgent answers needed on Focus Media Group blockade and journalists' right to work](#). Joint Statement.

<sup>25</sup> International and regional press freedom organizations. (2025, August 25). [Press freedom groups demand urgent action to enforce court ruling and protect journalists in Albania](#). Joint Statement. SafeJournalists Network,

<sup>26</sup> SafeJournalists Network. (2025, January 28). [SafeJournalists: Concerns over the selection process of the RTSH Director-General in Albania](#).

<sup>27</sup> Gjoka, B. (2025, March 24). [BE shpreh shqetësimin për ndikimin politik në bordin e ri drejtues të RTSH \[EU expresses concern over political influence in the new RTSH steering board\]](#). Reporter.al.

<sup>28</sup> Sinoruka, F. (2025, September 11). [Albania's public broadcaster struggling with "catastrophic" debts, head say](#). Balkan Insight.

<sup>29</sup> Voko, K. & Likmeta, B. (2025). [Media Pluralism Report: Albania country profile](#). Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, European University Institute.

broader economic interests dependent on state concessions and regulated sectors, reinforcing incentives for editorial alignment rather than scrutiny.<sup>30</sup> The absence of clear and transparent rules governing indirect subsidies and public advertising further distorts competition and deepens financial dependence. Initial steps were taken to enhance market transparency, including the operation of the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA) media ownership register and the establishment of a Joint Industry Committee for audience measurement.<sup>31</sup> However, both ownership disclosure and audience accountability mechanisms remain at an early stage of effective implementation.

Beyond institutional and market factors, the enabling environment for journalists remained fragile. The SafeJournalists Network recorded 42 violations of the safety of journalists and freedom of expression in 2025, predominantly involving verbal attacks, online harassment, and smear campaigns.<sup>32</sup> Their monitoring documented persistent intimidation and digital attacks, especially affecting women journalists,<sup>33</sup> alongside precarious working conditions. Journalists continue to operate under unstable employment arrangements marked by informality, irregular pay, and weak collective bargaining mechanisms.<sup>34</sup> These conditions reduce professional autonomy and increase vulnerability to political, economic, and legal pressures.

The digital transformation of the media ecosystem has amplified both opportunities and risks. The proliferation of opaque online portals,<sup>35</sup> coordinated smear campaigns,<sup>36</sup> and artificial intelligence (AI)-generated disinformation, particularly visible during the electoral period, intensified threats to information integrity. In July 2025, Parliament adopted the first National

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<sup>30</sup> Karaj, V. (2025, August 12). [Si 'përfitimet strategjike' nga qeveria po rrezikojnë lirinë e medias në Shqipëri \[How the government's "strategic benefits" are threatening media freedom in Albania\]](#). Reporter.al

<sup>31</sup> See the AMA's [Transparenca e pronësisë së medias \[Media Ownership Transparency Database\]](#).

<sup>32</sup> See [SafeJournalists Incidents Database](#).

<sup>33</sup> Bino, B. (2025). [Women Journalists' Safety: Albania Report 2024](#). SafeJournalists Network.

<sup>34</sup> Karaj, V. & Mitre, O. (2025). [National Media Freedom Barometer in Albania 2024–2025](#). Albanian Helsinki Committee. Tirana.

<sup>35</sup> Bino, B. (2025). [Albania: Indicators on the Level of Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety Index 2024](#). SafeJournalists Network. Tirana.

<sup>36</sup> Likmeta, B. (2025, May 23). [Kandidatët për deputetë shkelën heshtjen zgjedhore me reklama politike në Facebook \[Candidates for deputy violated the election silence with political advertising on Facebook\]](#). Reporter.al.

Strategy against Foreign Interference and Disinformation.<sup>37</sup> While this strategy aligns Albania with broader European resilience frameworks, its implementation remains critical. Without clear safeguards, transparency, and proportionality, disinformation policy risks being perceived as a speech-regulation instrument rather than a resilience mechanism.

Taken together, developments in 2025 depict a media environment characterized not by overt systemic repression but by structural exposure to political leverage, economic dependency, digital intimidation, and weak enforcement of safeguards. Formal frameworks continue to evolve and dialogue platforms exist, yet the year demonstrated that media freedom in Albania is tested by operational practice: enforcement capacity, proportionality of state action, independence of governance structures, market transparency, and effective remedies. As EU accession advances under the Fundamentals cluster, the credibility of reform will increasingly depend on demonstrable implementation rather than procedural compliance.

## 1.2. Albania's progress towards European Union accession

In 2025, Albania reached a procedural milestone in its EU accession process with the opening of all remaining negotiation clusters.<sup>38</sup> This development marked the formal advancement of negotiations across the full *acquis* framework and reflected continued political engagement with the enlargement agenda. The opening of all clusters signalled institutional momentum and alignment efforts across multiple policy domains, positioning the country within an accelerated phase of negotiations.

In its 2025 Enlargement Package, the European Commission assessed Albania's objective of concluding negotiations by the end of 2027 as ambitious but "on track", provided reform

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<sup>37</sup> Albanian Parliament. (2025). [Projektligji "Për miratimin e Strategjisë Kombëtare kundër ndërhyrjeve të huaja dhe dezinformimit" \[National Strategy Against Foreign Interference and Disinformation\]](#).

<sup>38</sup> European Commission. (2025). [Albanian: Candidate Country Status](#).

momentum is sustained.<sup>39</sup> However, progress under the Fundamentals cluster, covering rule of law, democratic institutions, and fundamental rights, remained central to the credibility and sequencing of the accession process. The Commission noted limited progress in areas related to freedom of expression and emphasized that structural issues affecting media independence, transparency, and protection of journalists persisted.<sup>40</sup>

The Council of the European Union reiterated that the protection of fundamental rights constitutes a cornerstone of the accession framework.<sup>41</sup> Ensuring freedom of expression, safeguarding journalists from threats and intimidation, and fostering an enabling environment for independent journalism were highlighted as essential for the proper functioning of democratic institutions.

Independent analysis in 2025 characterized Albania's EU trajectory as marked by both momentum and stagnation.<sup>42</sup> While the rapid opening of negotiation chapters was widely recognized as a significant achievement, observers cautioned that acceleration must be matched by measurable improvements in democratic governance, institutional independence, and accountability mechanisms.<sup>43</sup> The risk identified is the possibility that a rapid negotiation progress may outpace deeper structural reforms necessary for democratic consolidation. In this context, developments affecting rule of law, media freedom, and institutional safeguards acquire heightened relevance, as they serve as indicators of whether accession momentum is accompanied by substantive democratic strengthening.

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<sup>39</sup> European Commission. (2025, November 4). [2025 Enlargement Package shows progress towards EU membership for key enlargement partners](#).

<sup>40</sup> European Commission. (2025). [2025 Progress Report for Albania](#). Brussels.

<sup>41</sup> Council of the European Union. (2025). [7th Accession Conference with Albania](#).

<sup>42</sup> Vurmo, G. (2025, November 5). [Albania's EU path – Navigating momentum and stagnation](#). Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BiEPAG).

<sup>43</sup> Bino, B. (2026, January 2). [Albania in the EU fast lane – accelerating without democratizing?](#) Balkan Insight.

### 1.3. Report aim and structure

This 2025 Annual Report builds on the monitoring framework established in the *Annual Report 2024: Tracking Albania's Progress on Media Freedom and Journalistic Safety in Line with EU Standards*,<sup>44</sup> which provided a baseline assessment of structural challenges affecting media freedom within Albania's EU accession process. By applying the same analytical lens and methodological approach, the present report identifies areas of progress, stagnation, and regression during the 1 January–31 December 2025 reporting period.

The report aims to provide an evidence-based assessment of the state of journalism and media freedom in Albania, with particular attention to institutional reform, implementation of EU recommendations, and the lived experiences of journalists. A central objective of this report is to assess Albania's alignment with European standards, including commitments stemming from the EU accession process, the Rule of Law Roadmap, and the Roadmap on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions.

The structure of the report reflects this dual focus. It first situates media freedom within Albania's EU accession framework, then evaluates progress on specific roadmap measures, and finally presents quantitative findings from journalists' perceptions and experiences. The concluding section formulates targeted recommendations aimed at strengthening institutional accountability, legal safeguards, and professional conditions for journalists in Albania.

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<sup>44</sup> Canga, E. & Xhaferaj, O. (2025, February 24). [Annual Report 2024: Tracking Albania's Progress on Media Freedom and Journalistic Safety in Line with European Union Standards](#). SCiDEV & BIRN Albania. Tirana.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1. Approach

This report employs a mixed-methods approach to systematically monitor Albania's progress on media freedom and the safety of journalists in alignment with EU recommendations. It also measures and analyses the perceptions and experiences of journalists to offer a nuanced view of the media environment and identify areas requiring reform. By combining quantitative and qualitative research methods, the report provides a solid foundation for assessing the country's advancements and ongoing challenges. The report has consulted existing data sources and reports on media freedom and the safety of journalists, building upon them and offering complementarity of analysis and data. Key documents include: (i) independent reports, such as the Media Pluralism Report, Indicators on Media Freedom and Safety of Journalists, and Digital Rights Monitoring Report; (ii) public institutions' annual reports and action plans; (iii) the EU Annual Report and EU Rule of Law Report; (iv) other relevant publications.

### 2.2. Survey design and sample

The design of the report was guided by two main objectives: first, to monitor Albania's progress in implementing the EU's recommendations on media freedom and journalist protection; and second, to analyse the experiences of media professionals in the country.

To achieve these aims, the research employed a quantitative methodology, focusing on the collection of demographic and professional data from journalists across Albania. A total of 106 media professionals participated in the survey, conducted through mid-June to mid-August 2025, gathering their perceptions on press freedom, concerns over safety, and working conditions.

The sample included respondents from different professional roles and types of media outlets, with various years of experience and educational qualifications, allowing exploration of patterns across different demographic and professional groups.

Of the 106 journalists surveyed, 54.7% were women, while 45.3% were men. In terms of age distribution, the largest group, 41.5%, consisted of respondents aged 25–34 years old, followed by those in the 35–44 age bracket, at 29.2%. Respondents under 25 years old, and those aged 45–54, each represented 14.2% of the sample. Only 0.9% of respondents were between 55 and 64 years old.

A significant share of respondents, 43.4%, reported having more than 10 years of experience in journalism. The second largest share of respondents, 22.6%, consists of those with 4–6 years of experience. Respondents with 7–10 years of experience account for 16.0% of respondents, followed by those with 1–3 years of experience at 11.3%. Only 6.6% of respondents reported having less than 1 year of experience in journalism.

*Figure 1: Profile of respondents by gender*

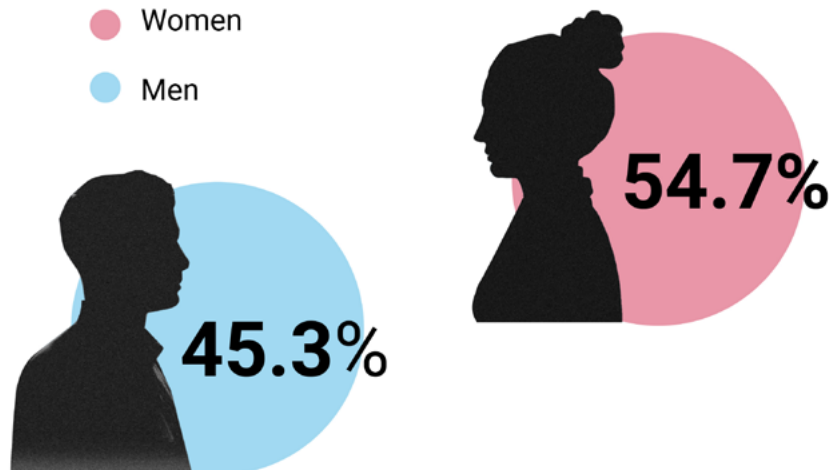


Figure 2: Profile of respondents by age group

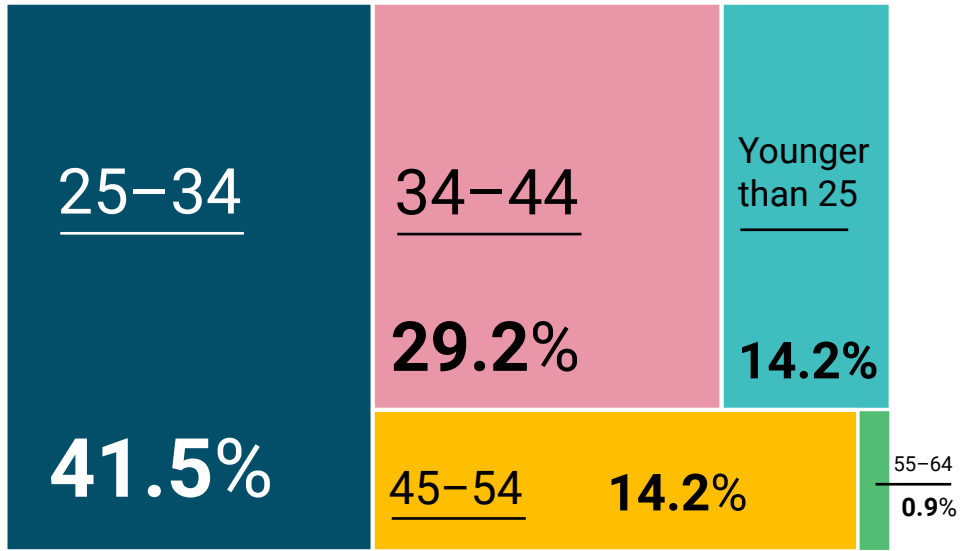
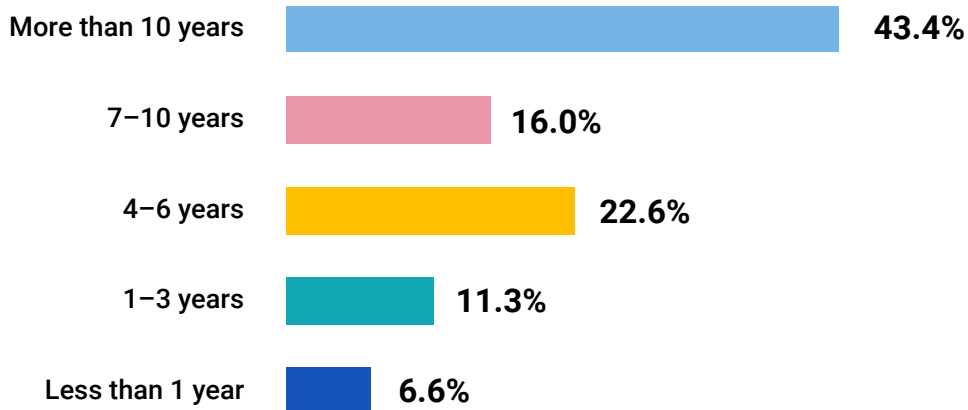
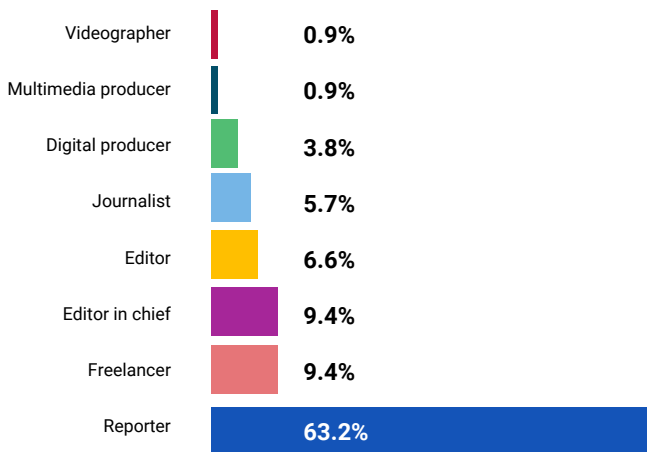


Figure 3: Profile of respondents by their experience in journalism



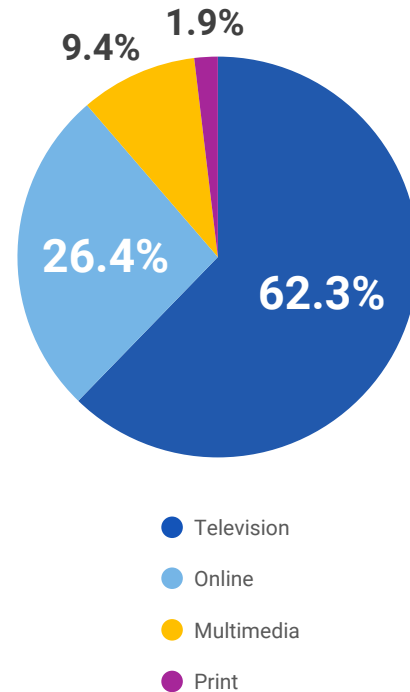
In terms of professional roles, more than half of respondents, 63%, declared they were reporters, followed by 9.4% holding the role of editors-in-chief, 9.4% freelancers, and 6.6% editors. The remaining respondents held other roles within the sector.

Figure 4: Profile of respondents by their role



A large proportion of respondents, 62.3%, worked in television, followed by those working for online media, which accounted for 26.4%. The remaining respondents worked for print and multimedia companies.

Figure 5: Profile of respondents by type of media outlet they work for



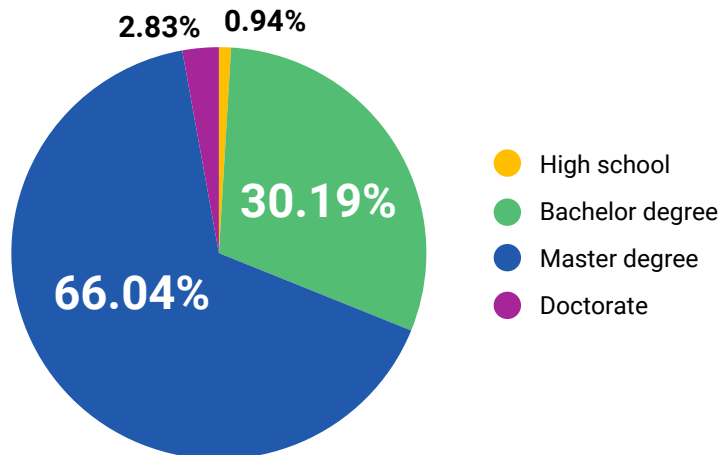
The majority of respondents, 79.2%, worked for private media, while the remainder were employed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 17.9%, and public media, 2.8%.

Figure 6: Profile of respondents by ownership of media outlets they work for



About 66% of respondents reported holding a master’s degree as their highest level of education, followed by 30.19% holding a bachelor degree. A small percentage, 2.83%, hold a doctorate, while only 0.94% have a high school diploma as their highest level of education.

Figure 7: Profile of respondents by their highest level of education



In addition, freedom of information (FOI) requests were submitted to 10 institutions in September 2025 to gather official data and documents on media regulation, transparency, and incidents involving journalist safety by month. The report also incorporates inputs and a summary of discussions from the 2025 roundtable on media freedom and the safety of journalists, which provided additional qualitative insights and stakeholder perspectives.

## 2.3. Merits and limitations

The mixed-methods approach used in this report allowed for a rigorous assessment of Albania's progress in 2025 towards EU recommendations regarding media freedom and the safety of journalists. The combination of secondary resources such as reports and documents, a survey with journalists, and FOI requests to public institutions enabled the triangulation of findings, ensuring a nuanced understanding of structural challenges and individual experiences. The report is relevant to Albania's ongoing EU accession process.

However, the report is not without limitations. The reliance on self-reported data from the survey may introduce biases based on perceived personal experiences. Additionally, while valuable, the FOI requests were limited to institutions' responsiveness and the quality of the information provided. Despite these constraints, the report offers a useful framework for monitoring progress and identifying actionable priorities for enhancing media freedom and journalist safety.

## 3. RULE OF LAW ROADMAP MEASURES—TRACING PROGRESS IN 2025

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This chapter reflects the level of progress achieved in 2025 for each of the measures outlined in the Rule of Law Roadmap, approved in 2023.<sup>45</sup> The information presented here builds on data stemming from document analysis, responses to FOI requests, and survey responses.

### 3.1. Media ownership concentration and transparency

Albania’s Rule of Law Roadmap frames media market concentration and ownership transparency as core rule-of-law and democratic institution issues under freedom of expression and media pluralism. The Roadmap links media ownership transparency, beneficial-owner disclosure, regulator effectiveness, and safeguards against undue influence, including transparency of state advertising and public funding, as mutually reinforcing measures.<sup>46</sup> It envisages strengthened monitoring of the beneficial ownership framework within 2025, systematic regulatory implementation from 2025 onward, and measures addressing market concentration risks. This policy framing is aligned with European standards reflected in the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), which treats transparency, concentration safeguards, and state advertising rules as interconnected components of media pluralism protection.

In 2024, the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA) adopted Regulation No. 40 establishing criteria and procedures for reviewing ownership changes and strengthening transparency of ownership data for audiovisual media service providers (OSHMA).<sup>47</sup> The regulation mandates disclosure of ownership structures and provides for review of changes in shareholding and control. According

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<sup>45</sup> Government of Albania, Council of Ministers. (2023, December 13). [Roadmap on the rule of law](#).

<sup>46</sup> Government of Albania, Council of Ministers. (2023, December 13). [Roadmap on the rule of law](#).

<sup>47</sup> Audiovisual Media Authority. (2024, April 26). [Regulation No. 40: Regulation on changes in ownership](#).

to the AMA's FOI responses and public communications, ownership-change notifications are processed under this framework, beneficial owner data are cross-checked with the National Business Center registry, and formal approvals of ownership restructuring were issued in 2025. The AMA maintains a publicly accessible ownership transparency database for licensed audiovisual operators<sup>48</sup> and publishes periodic bulletins containing relevant ownership and financial data.<sup>49</sup> These steps demonstrate that Albania has operational mechanisms to record, assess, and publish ownership data for licensed audiovisual operators.

However, no new structural concentration-control mechanisms were introduced in 2025. Publicly available information does not indicate the existence of binding cross-media ownership limits, audience-reach thresholds, or an operational pluralism test capable of triggering enhanced review in cases of market dominance. No updated 2025 concentration assessment or consolidated cross-media market data were published. The absence of regularly updated, comprehensive market indicators limits the ability to assess pluralism trends in real time.

Beneficial ownership monitoring in 2025 appears to remain primarily compliance-based and reliant on disclosure and registry cross-checking. Publicly available documentation does not indicate publication of compliance rates, investigative audits, or sanctions specifically related to ownership transparency breaches. While procedural mechanisms are in place, evidence of enhanced monitoring depth, as envisaged in the Roadmap, remains limited in the public domain.

Moreover, ownership transparency remains sector-limited. The existing disclosure regime applies primarily to licensed audiovisual operators, while online and digital-only media outlets are not subject to equivalent ownership transparency requirements. Independent assessments underline that the media ecosystem remains partially informal and fragmented, with limited reliable, consolidated market data.<sup>50</sup> This fragmentation restricts comprehensive concentration assessment across converged media environments.

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<sup>48</sup> See [here](#).

<sup>49</sup> See [here](#).

<sup>50</sup> Dragomir, M. (2025). [Advancing Media Ownership Transparency Reform in Albania: Gap Analysis, Alignment with European and International Standards and Good Practices, and a Practical Roadmap](#). OSCE Presence in Albania.

Structural concentration indicators remain high.<sup>51</sup> Publicly available information does not indicate that binding cross-media ownership caps, audience-reach limits, or systematic pluralism tests are currently operationalized as enforceable tools capable of directly constraining dominant positions. The regulatory framework is therefore stronger in procedural disclosure than in structural pluralism safeguards.

Formal disclosure of shareholding structures, even when publicly accessible and procedurally compliant, does not in itself guarantee transparency of influence. While ownership registers can identify the legal holders of shares and declared beneficial owners, they may not capture the broader network of relationships through which control or influence is exercised. In highly concentrated and economically interconnected markets like in Albania,<sup>52</sup> influence can operate through related-party interests, informal affiliations, family ties, or cross-sector business structures that are not immediately visible in corporate filings. Media companies are embedded within regulated sectors, where commercial dependencies and exposure to public procurement or concession arrangements create structural incentives that affect editorial autonomy.<sup>53</sup>

Furthermore, financial leverage may be exerted indirectly through state contracts, preferential advertising allocations, subcontracting arrangements, or other forms of public resource distribution that do not appear within formal shareholding data.<sup>54</sup> The OSCE's 2025 assessment highlights that systems relying predominantly on self-reporting and fragmented supervisory mechanisms risk overlooking complex ownership chains and indirect influence channels.<sup>55</sup> In this context, transparency limited to formal shareholding disclosure may provide necessary information but remains insufficient to fully identify and mitigate the risks of concentration, capture, or undue influence in the media sector.

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<sup>51</sup> Voko, K. & Likmeta, B. (2025). [Media Pluralism Report: Albania country profile](#). Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, European University Institute.

<sup>52</sup> Londo, I. (2025). [The Media Landscape is Changing, the Problems Remain the Same. The Future of the Media in Albania – Facts and Trends](#). Future of Media Project.

<sup>53</sup> Karaj, V. (2025, August 12). [How the government's "strategic benefits" are threatening media freedom in Albania](#). Reporter.al

<sup>54</sup> Voko, K. & Likmeta, B. (2025). [Media Pluralism Report: Albania country profile](#). Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, European University Institute.

<sup>55</sup> Dragomir, M. (2025). [Advancing Media Ownership Transparency Reform in Albania: Gap Analysis, Alignment with European and International Standards and Good Practices, and a Practical Roadmap](#). OSCE Presence in Albania.

## 3.2. Transparent audience measurement

Within the broader framework of media market transparency and pluralism safeguards, the establishment of a transparent audience measurement system constitutes a central structural reform. Albania’s Rule of Law Roadmap identifies audience measurement as part of the transparency architecture necessary to ensure fair competition, objective allocation of public advertising, and improved regulatory oversight.<sup>56</sup> In line with European standards, including the logic underpinning the EMFA, reliable and independently verified audience data are essential not only for market functioning but also for safeguarding against favouritism and undue influence.

In 2024, the AMA initiated a structured reform process aimed at addressing long-standing gaps in audience measurement. Following consultations with audiovisual media service providers and advertising market stakeholders, a Joint Industry Committee (JIC) was agreed upon in July 2024 and formally registered as an independent legal entity in September 2025. The JIC includes representatives of national and regional broadcasters, the public broadcaster (RTSH), and marketing agencies. In parallel, the AMA prepared draft amendments to Law No. 97/2013 introducing the concept of “audience measurement” into the legal framework, currently under public consultation.<sup>57</sup>

These steps reflect tangible institutional progress. The creation and legal registration of the JIC established a formal governance structure for audience measurement, which had previously been fragmented or contested. The reform also signals alignment with European practice, where industry-led bodies frequently oversee measurement systems under regulatory supervision.

However, as of 2025, the reform remains at an institutional and preparatory stage. Publicly available documentation does not indicate that a unified, officially adopted measurement methodology has been published. There is no evidence of operational audience datasets produced under the new JIC framework, nor is there documentation of independent auditing arrangements, validation procedures, or transparent vendor selection processes. Without these elements, the system’s reliability, credibility, and comparability cannot yet be assessed.

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<sup>56</sup> Government of Albania, Council of Ministers. (2023, December 13). [Roadmap on the rule of law](#).

<sup>57</sup> Response of the AMA to FOI request, October 2025.

Furthermore, it remains unclear whether audience measurement outputs, once operational, will be formally integrated into regulatory oversight mechanisms, including market dominance assessment or the allocation of state advertising. The absence of a legally binding linkage between measurement results and public advertising distribution limits the reform’s immediate impact on mitigating favouritism or ensuring fair competition.

The governance model of the JIC is industry-based, which is consistent with European models but requires robust safeguards to ensure independence and credibility. Effective implementation will depend on clear conflict-of-interest rules, transparent methodological standards, and external verification mechanisms. Publicly accessible documentation reviewed does not yet provide detailed information on these safeguards.

### 3.3. Structured dialogue for media freedom

Albania’s Rule of Law Roadmap recognizes the importance of structured dialogue and coordinated institutional engagement in addressing challenges related to freedom of expression, media pluralism, regulatory independence, and journalist safety.<sup>58</sup> Within this framework, consultation and multi-stakeholder cooperation are treated as enabling mechanisms for advancing reforms aligned with European standards and Albania’s EU integration commitments. In 2025, progress was observed in this regard with the functioning of the structured media dialogue platform.

In January 2025, the “Open Dialogue on Freedom of Expression” was formally launched under a joint Council of Europe and European Union-supported initiative, in cooperation with the Department of Journalism and Communication of the University of Tirana, which served as the institutional host of the structured platform.<sup>59</sup> Between January and June 2025, nine thematic meetings were convened, bringing together representatives from civil society organizations, media organizations, journalists’ associations, and academia with representatives from executive

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<sup>58</sup> Government of Albania, Council of Ministers. (2023, December 13). [Roadmap on the rule of law](#).

<sup>59</sup> Council of Europe. (2025). [Promoting freedom of expression in Albania through open dialogue](#). Council of Europe.

institutions, including the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Public Administration and Anti-Corruption; the media regulator (AMA); the public broadcaster RTSH; the State Police and the Security Academy; the Labour Inspectorate; and other relevant institutions and stakeholders.

The thematic scope reflected the interconnected nature of media governance challenges. Discussions addressed journalist safety and working conditions; self-regulation mechanisms; access to information; media pluralism, including ownership transparency and concentration; and the institutional independence of the AMA and RTSH. A structured methodology was applied, including the preparation of background papers, expert contributions, and the drafting of recommendations intended to consolidate areas of agreement.<sup>60</sup> The first phase culminated in a high-level plenary conference held on 30 June 2025, where draft recommendations prepared by national and international experts were presented and debated.<sup>61</sup>

During the second half of 2025, the process shifted towards legislative engagement. Two additional meetings were convened between September and December 2025 with parliamentary participation. One meeting focused on proposed amendments to the Criminal Code, including provisions relating to defamation and insult, while the other addressed media concentration, ownership transparency and the independence of regulatory institutions.<sup>62</sup> In October 2025, the outcomes of the platform were formally transmitted by the Ministry of Justice to Parliament. In December 2025, a legislative initiative of the Chairwoman of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Means of Public Information reflecting elements of the dialogue, including proposals related to criminal defamation, was submitted to Parliament and opened for public consultation,<sup>63</sup> with no final legal amendments approved till year-end.

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<sup>60</sup> Background papers and recommendations developed by the structured media platform have been made available by the Council of Europe via [this link](#).

<sup>61</sup> Council of Europe. (2025, June 30). [Key media actors and institutions unite to advance freedom of expression and media reforms](#).

<sup>62</sup> SCiDEV. (2025, September 25). [SCiDEV presents analysis on the draft Criminal Code at the 10th Working Group on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists](#).

<sup>63</sup> SCiDEV. (2025, December 15). [Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Means of Public Information Consultation with Civil Society](#). Media Landscape Brief.

While the structured dialogue process in 2025 represents a constructive step towards coordinated media reform, several aspects merit attention. The most significant issue concerns the absence of a clearly defined traceability framework linking the Platform’s recommendations to subsequent governmental and parliamentary action. While it is not expected that all recommendations from a multi-stakeholder platform be adopted, greater transparency regarding which proposals were accepted, modified, or not pursued and the reasons for such decisions would strengthen accountability, ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement, strengthen trust building, and reduce the risk that structured consultation is perceived as procedural rather than substantively influential.

In addition, while technical-level participation from government institutions was consistent and substantive, sustained political-level engagement appeared more limited and was largely concentrated at later stages of the process. Broader political ownership throughout the dialogue cycle would enhance continuity and increase the likelihood that reform proposals are carried through coherently. Consultation timeframes in certain phases were relatively short. Furthermore, the Platform did not consistently reconvene in response to major media developments during the summer of 2025.<sup>64</sup>

### 3.4. Safety of journalists

The safety of journalists in Albania continues to be shaped less by isolated incidents and more by structural conditions that increase vulnerability. Journalists and media professionals operate within an environment characterized by precarious labour conditions, economic dependency, political–economic entanglement, and restricted access to institutions, all of which may expose them to pressure, harassment, or intimidation.<sup>65</sup> These pressures are amplified in the digital sphere through online threats and smear campaigns.

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<sup>64</sup> See reaction of civil society on the [new draft penal code](#) and the situation surrounding [Focus Media Group](#). Council of Europe Platform on Safety of Journalists [Alert](#) on penal code and [Alert](#) on Focus Media Group.

<sup>65</sup> The SafeJournalists Network [Monthly Newsletters January–December 2025](#).

According to monitoring by the SafeJournalists Network, 42 cases of violations against journalists were recorded during 2025.<sup>66</sup> These include threats, intimidation, online harassment, and other forms of pressure linked to journalistic activity. SafeJournalists' monitoring approach emphasizes that individual cases should be understood within this broader structural context, particularly when assessing the gap between formal protections and practical implementation.

By comparison, official law enforcement data reflect a smaller number of formally registered cases. The State Police recorded 18 cases involving journalists between January and 20 October 2025, including six complaints related to threats to life or bodily harm and 12 involving other forms of threats or harassment.<sup>67</sup> The Prosecutor General's Office reports that nine proceedings involving journalists were under review between January and September 2025, with four new complaints filed during that period, most remaining at preliminary verification stage.<sup>68</sup> The discrepancy between independently documented violations and formally registered cases indicates that there is under-reporting and not all incidents reach investigative stages.

### 3.4.1. Overall perceptions of safety and freedom

Perception-based survey data for 2025 indicate that concerns regarding journalist safety remain embedded within a broader climate of deteriorating professional conditions. When asked to assess changes compared to the previous year, 36.8% of respondents reported that the safety of journalists had worsened (16.0% significant decline and 20.8% moderate decline), while 17.0% reported improvement (2.8% significant and 14.2% moderate), and 44.3% reported no change. Although this reflects a lower proportion reporting deterioration compared to 2024 (54.7%), more than one-third of respondents continue to perceive a decline in safety conditions. This suggests that while perceptions of safety may have stabilized relative to the previous year, a substantial proportion of journalists continue to experience or perceive vulnerabilities in their professional environment, indicating that underlying structural concerns remain unresolved.

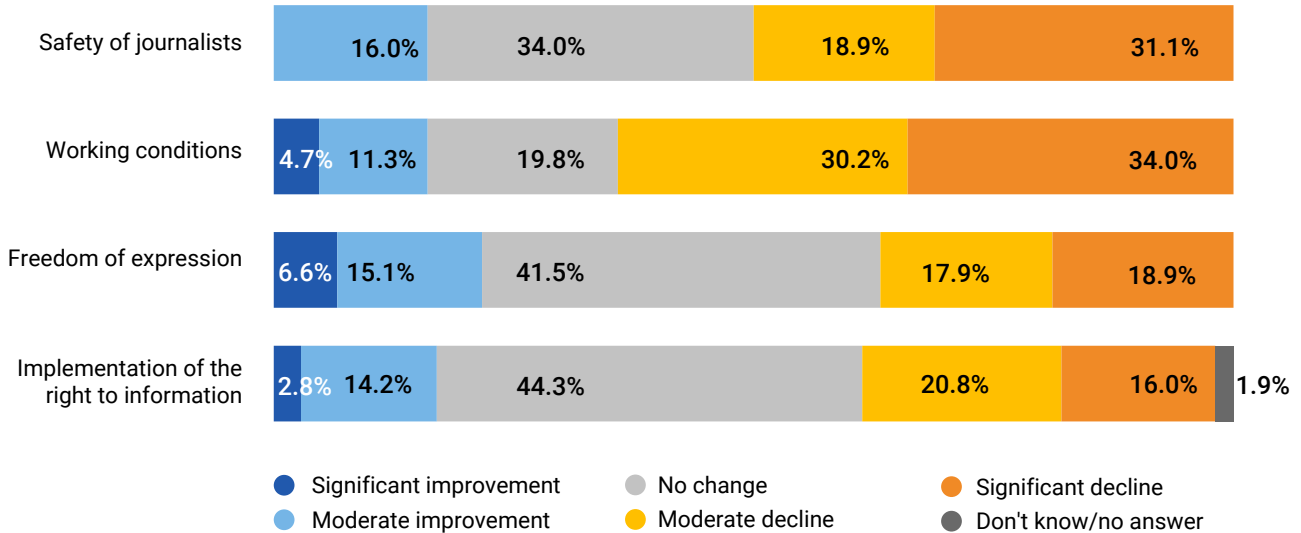
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<sup>66</sup> The SafeJournalists Network [Incidents Database](#).

<sup>67</sup> Response of the State Police to an FOI request, October 2025.

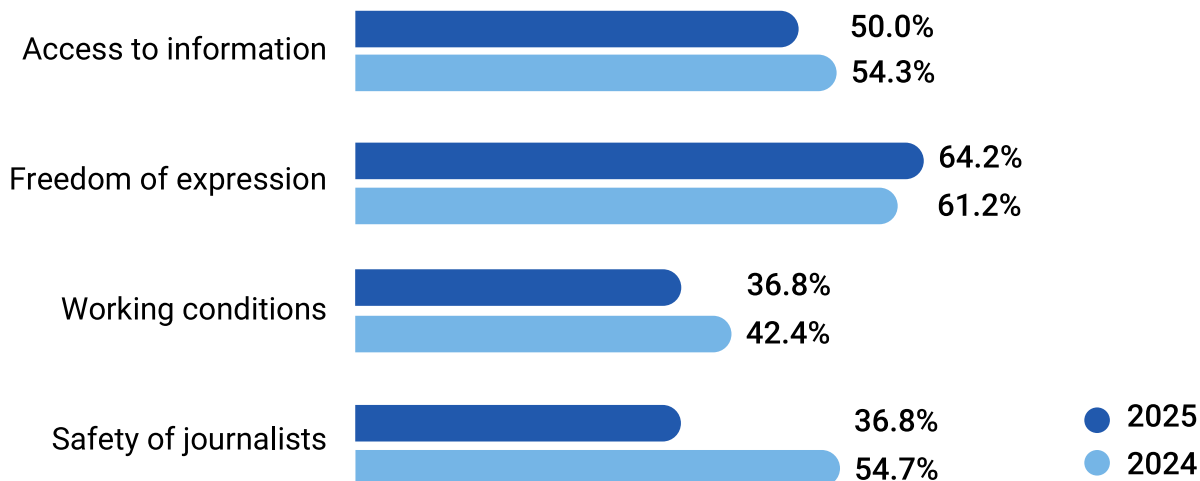
<sup>68</sup> Response of the Prosecutor General's Office to an FOI request, October 2025.

Figure 8: Improvements in safety of journalism, working conditions, freedom of expression, and access to information compared to the previous year



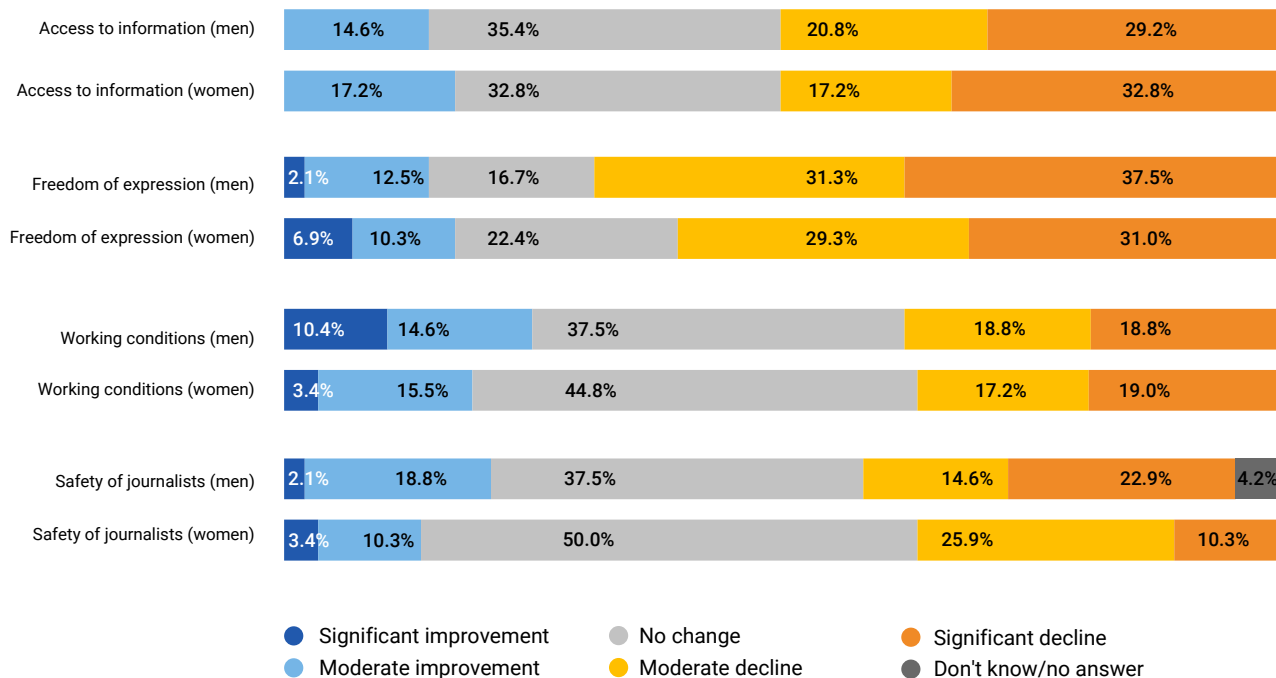
Perceptions of decline are even more pronounced in related enabling conditions. In 2025, 64.2% of respondents stated that freedom of expression had deteriorated (34.0% significant and 30.2% moderate decline), compared to 61.2% in 2024. Access to information was perceived to have worsened by 50.0% of respondents (31.1% significant and 18.9% moderate decline), only marginally lower than the 54.3% recorded in 2024. Working conditions were reported as having deteriorated by 36.8% of respondents in 2025 (18.9% significant and 17.9% moderate decline), compared to 42.4% in 2024. These figures indicate that while perceptions of physical safety show some relative improvement compared to the previous year, broader structural conditions affecting journalism remain persistently negative.

Figure 9: Perceived declines in aspects of journalism in Albania over the past year, 2025 vs 2024 data



Gender-based differences are more limited. Men are somewhat more likely than women to perceive deterioration in freedom of expression (68.8% of men compared to 60.3% of women reporting moderate or significant decline). In other areas, perceptions between men and women are broadly comparable.

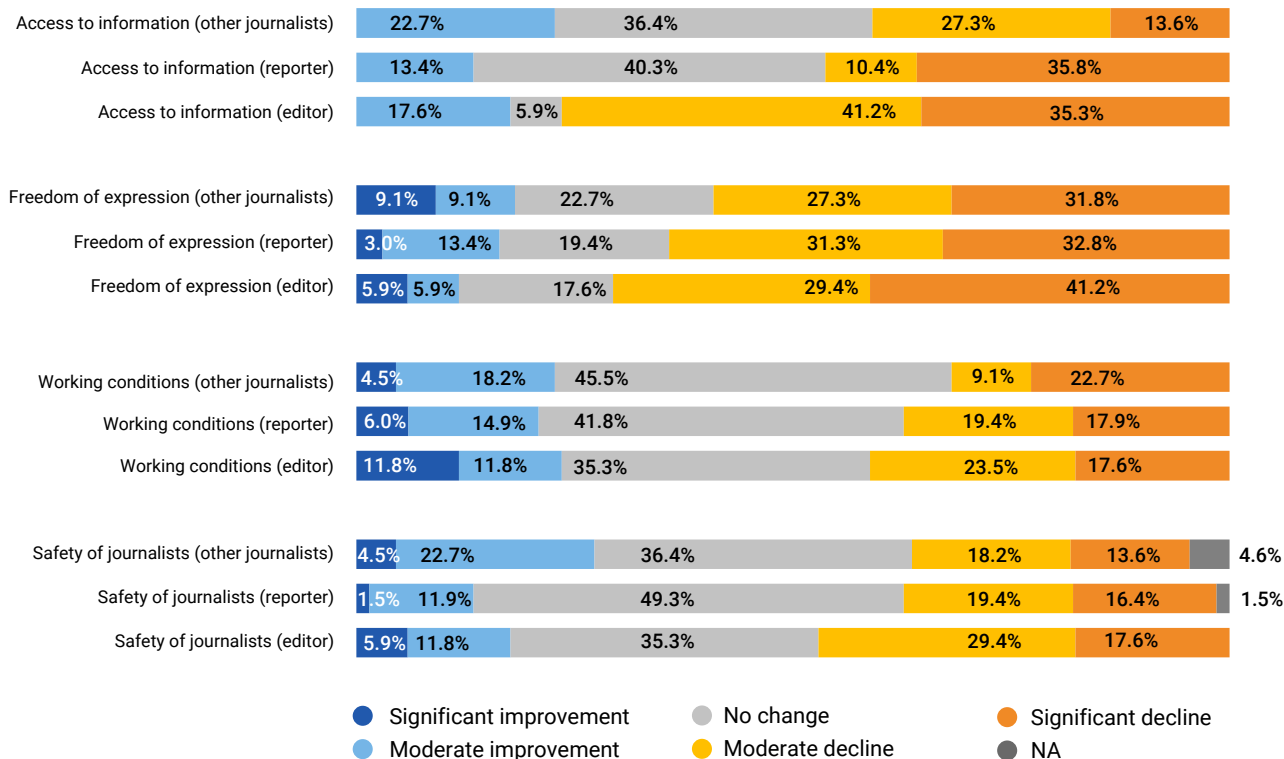
Figure 10: Improvements in safety of journalism, working conditions, freedom of expression, and access to information compared to the previous year



The data reveal important differences by professional role. Editors report the highest levels of deterioration in freedom of expression, with 41.2% indicating significant decline and 29.4% moderate decline (70.6% combined), compared to 64.1% among reporters (32.8% significant, 31.3% moderate) and 59.1% among other journalists (31.8% significant, 27.3% moderate). Regarding safety of journalists, 47.0% of editors (17.6% significant, 29.4% moderate) perceive a decline, compared to 35.8% of reporters (16.4% significant, 19.4% moderate) and 31.8% of other journalists (13.6% significant, 18.2% moderate). For access to information, 76.5% of editors (35.3% significant, 41.2% moderate) report deterioration, compared to 46.2% of reporters and

40.9% of other journalists. These role-based differences suggest that journalists in editorial decision-making positions perceive sharper constraints, particularly in areas directly linked to editorial independence and institutional access.

*Figure 11: Improvements in safety of journalism, working conditions, freedom of expression, and access to information compared to the previous year, by respondent's role in journalism*



Taken together, the 2025 evidence points to a dual reality. Albania has established formal institutional mechanisms for registering and investigating attacks against journalists, and perceptions of deterioration in safety have declined compared to 2024. However, high levels of reported restriction, continued perceptions of declining freedom of expression and access to information, and structural vulnerabilities in working conditions suggest that safety challenges remain closely linked to broader governance and market conditions. Ensuring that formal protection frameworks translate into tangible improvements in journalists’ professional autonomy and security remains a central task.

### 3.4.2. Experience with censorship on freedom of reporting

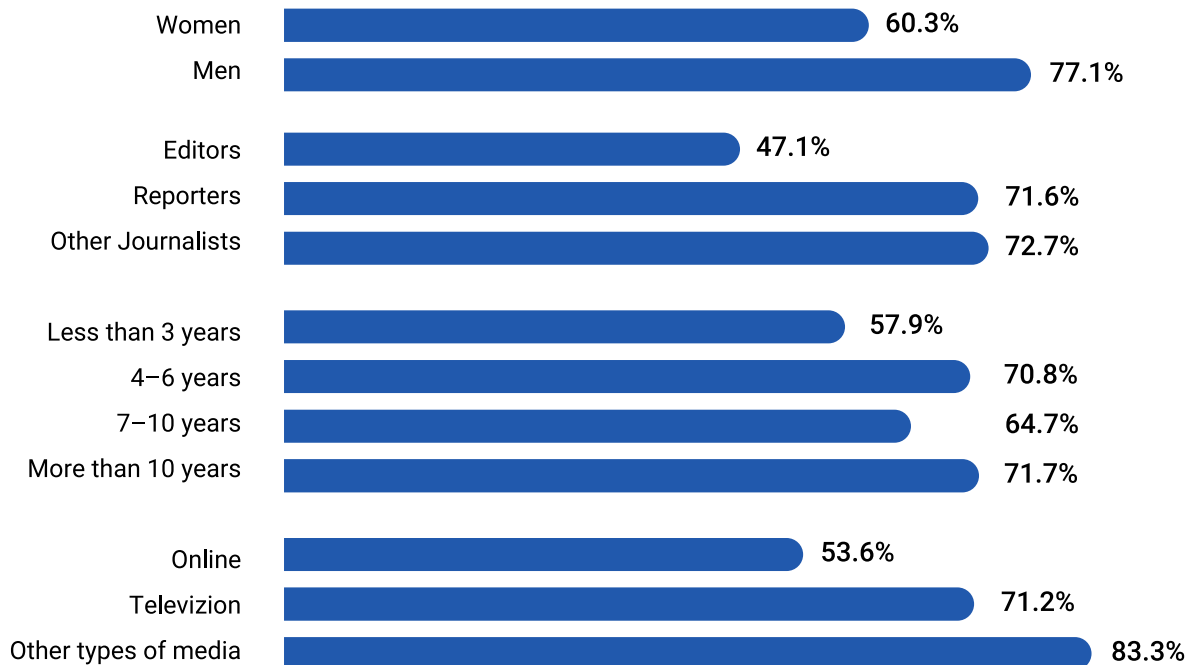
Survey data indicate that perceived restrictions on reporting remain widespread in 2025 and largely unchanged compared to the previous year. Only 9.4% of respondents report that they have consistently been able to report freely without fear of reprisal or censorship. By contrast, 40.6% report sometimes feeling restricted, 16.0% report frequent concerns, and 11.3% state they were consistently unable to report freely. In total, approximately 68% of respondents experienced some degree of restriction in the past year.

Figure 12: “In the past year, have you felt free to report on any topic without fear of reprisal or censorship?”



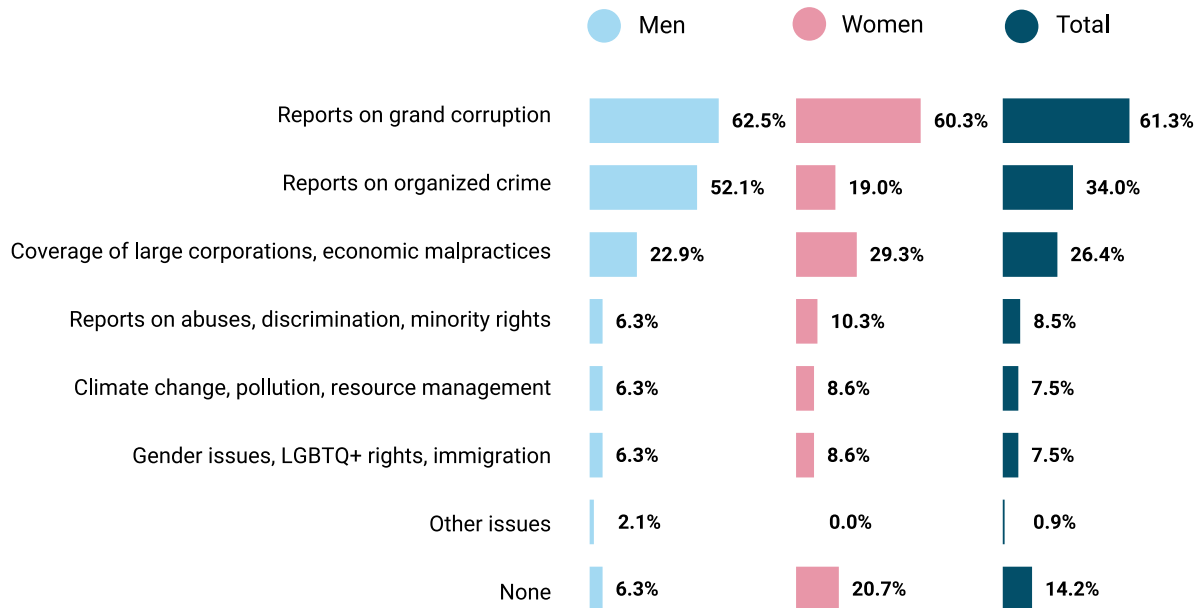
Disaggregated data reveal significant variation across groups. Men respondents report higher levels of restriction (77.1%) compared to women respondents (60.3%). By professional role, reporters (71.6%) and other journalists (72.7%) report higher levels of restriction than editors (47.1%). By media type, journalists working in “other” media categories report the highest levels of restriction (83.3%), followed by television journalists (71.2%), while online journalists report lower but still substantial levels (53.6%). Experience also influences perceptions: journalists with 4–6 years (70.8%) and more than 10 years (71.7%) report higher restriction levels than those with 0–3 years (57.9%). These variations indicate that perceived restrictions are not uniformly distributed across the profession and suggest differentiated exposure to pressure.

*Figure 13: Percentage of respondents who have, over the past year, either “consistently felt unable to report freely due to fear of reprisal or censorship”, “frequently faced concerns about reprisal or censorship”, or “sometimes felt restricted or feared repercussions”*



Restrictions are concentrated around specific subject areas. Reporting on grand corruption is identified as sensitive by 61.3% of respondents, making it the most restricted topic across all categories. Organized crime follows at 34.0%, with a pronounced gender gap (52.1% of men versus 19.0% of women reporting restrictions). Coverage of large corporations and economic malpractice is identified as restricted by 26.4% of respondents. These findings indicate that perceived constraints cluster around issues involving political accountability, economic interests, and criminal networks.

Figure 14: Topics or areas that respondents felt were particularly sensitive or restricted over the past year, by gender

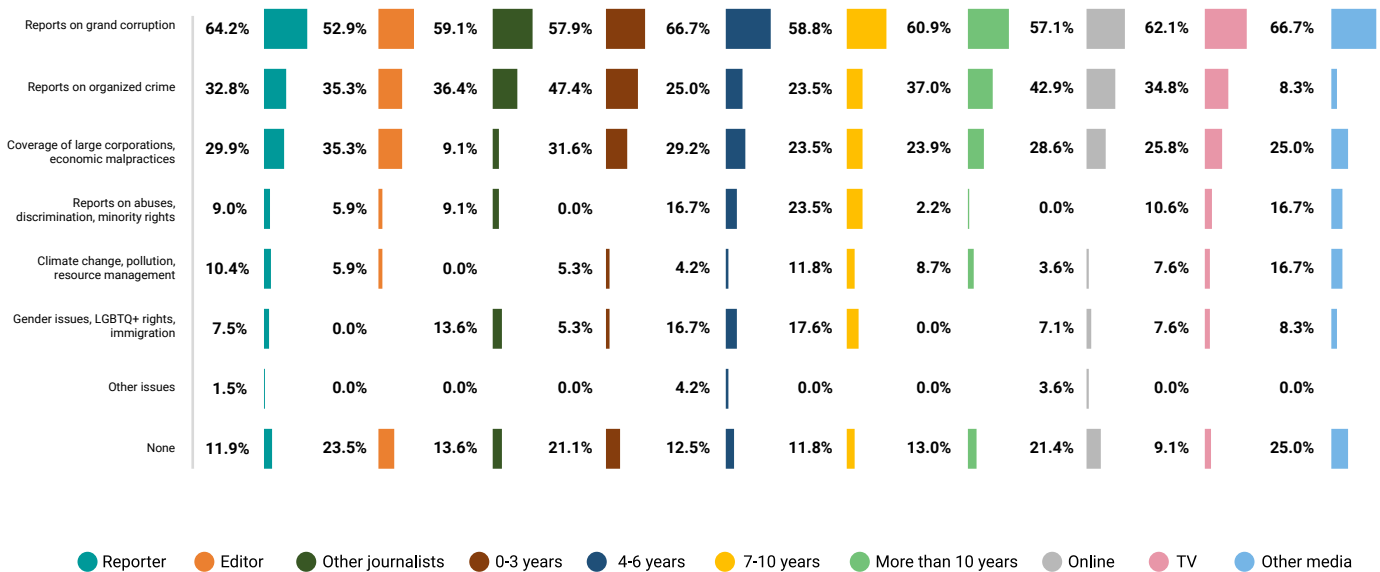


Note: Multiple responses were allowed.

The data show that perceived restrictions are concentrated primarily around reporting on grand corruption, which is identified as sensitive by 64.2% of reporters, 52.9% of editors, and 59.1% of other journalists, with similarly high levels across experience groups (ranging from 57.9% to 66.7%)

and media types (57.1% to 66.7%). Organized crime follows as the second most restricted topic, but with more variation: 47.4% of journalists with 0–3 years of experience report restrictions in this area compared to 23.5%-37.0% among more experienced journalists, and 42.9% of online journalists report restrictions compared to 34.8% of television journalists and 8.3% among other media types. Coverage of large corporations and economic malpractice is reported as restricted by 29.9% of reporters and 35.3% of editors, compared to 9.1% of other journalists. By contrast, topics such as discrimination, climate, or gender issues show significantly lower restriction rates.

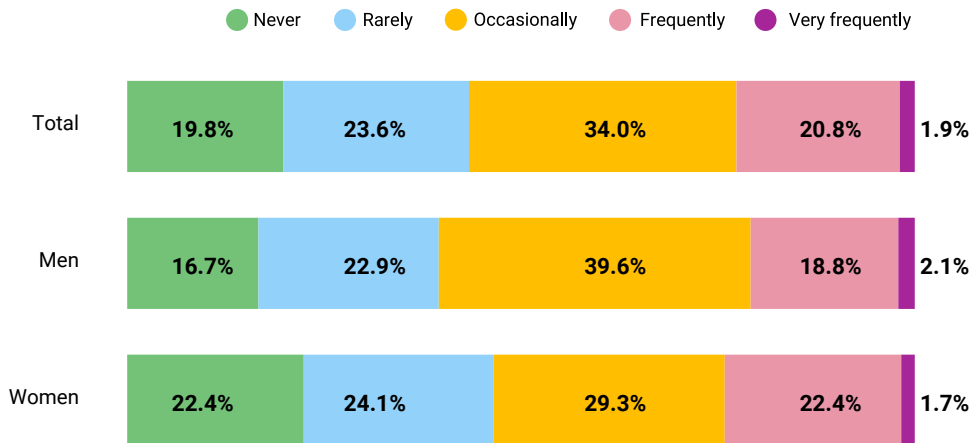
Figure 15: Sensitive or restricted topics identified by respondents over the past year, categorized by role, media experience, and media type(multiple choice)



The distribution of responses suggests that perceived restrictions are concentrated primarily around issues involving corruption, economic interests, and organized crime—areas typically linked to political power, financial influence, and legal risk.

In 2025, only 19.8% of respondents reported that they never had to abandon or withhold a story due to pressure, censorship, editorial decisions, or self-censorship, while approximately 80% experienced this on at least one occasion. Notably, 22.7% reported doing so frequently or very frequently. Gender differences are limited, with slightly higher “never” responses among women (22.4%) compared to men (16.7%). These findings indicate that perceived constraints are not merely subjective impressions but have a measurable impact on journalistic output and the information available to the public.

*Figure 16: “In the past year, have you had to abandon or not publish a news report or story due to pressures, editorial decisions, censorship, or self-censorship?”, by gender*



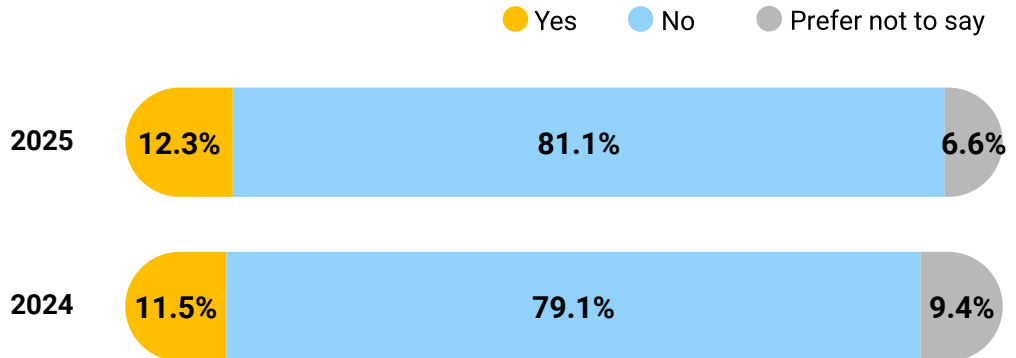
The variation across experience levels and media types indicates differentiated exposure to pressure, with less experienced journalists and those working in online media reporting higher levels of restriction in certain sensitive areas. At the same time, the consistency of corruption as the most restricted topic across nearly all categories points to a structural pattern rather than isolated incidents, reinforcing the assessment that perceived constraints are embedded within specific high-risk reporting domains rather than evenly distributed across the journalistic field.

### 3.4.3. Experiences with safety and threats

Survey data for 2025 indicate that while the overall prevalence of threats and intimidation remains significant, patterns have shifted slightly compared to the previous year. A total of 12.3% of respondents report having been physically attacked or assaulted at least once while working as journalists, compared to 11.5% in 2024, reflecting a marginal increase. In contrast, 40.6% report having experienced threats or intimidation related to their professional activity, a modest decrease from 45% in 2024. This suggests relative stability in the overall threat environment, with no substantial improvement.

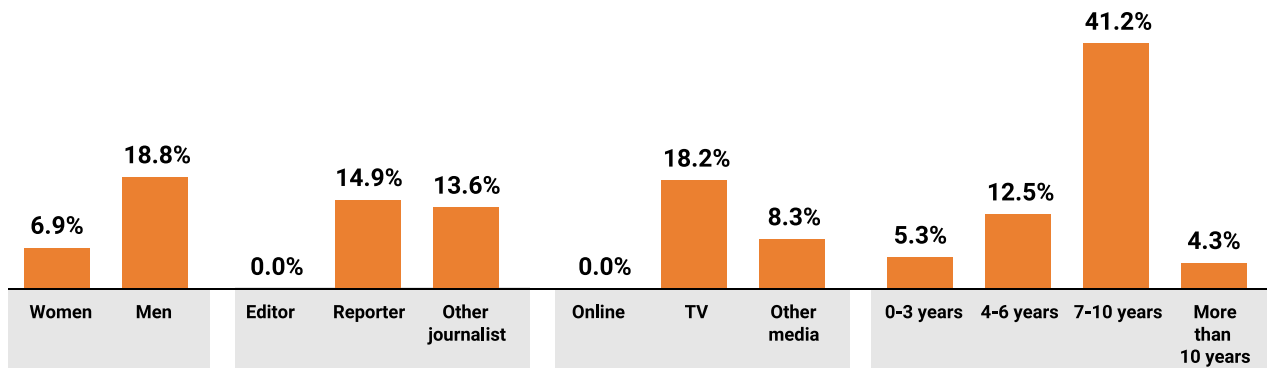
Figure 17:

Proportion of respondents that have been physically attacked or assaulted while working as a journalist in Albania, 2025 vs 2024 results



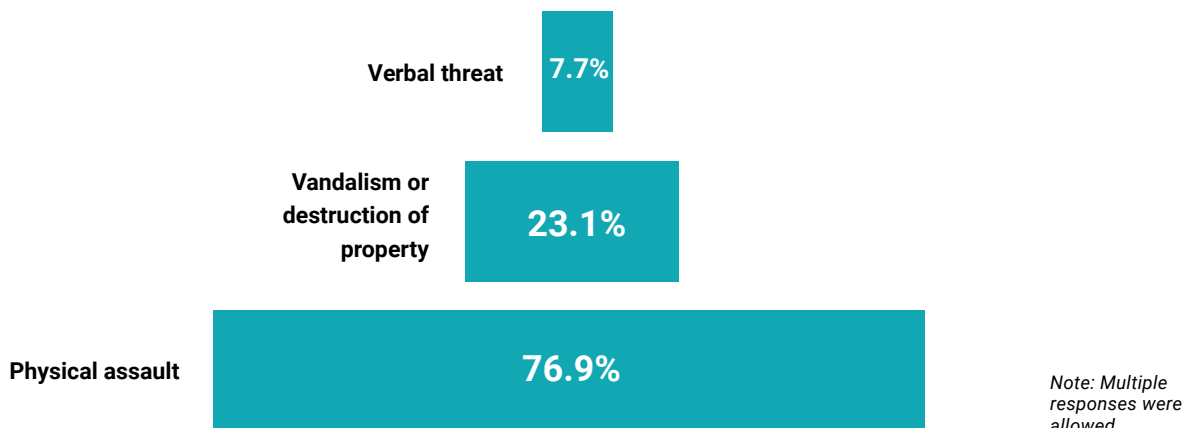
Disaggregation reveals differentiated exposure across groups. Men report higher levels of physical attack (18.8%) compared to women (6.9%). Reporters appear more affected than editors, with no reported physical attacks among editors in the sample. Television journalists report higher exposure to both physical attacks and threats than online journalists. In terms of experience, journalists with 7–10 years of experience report the highest incidence of physical attacks, although variations across experience groups are not consistent enough to establish a clear linear trend.

Figure 18: Proportion of respondents that have been physically attacked or assaulted while working as a journalist in Albania, disaggregation



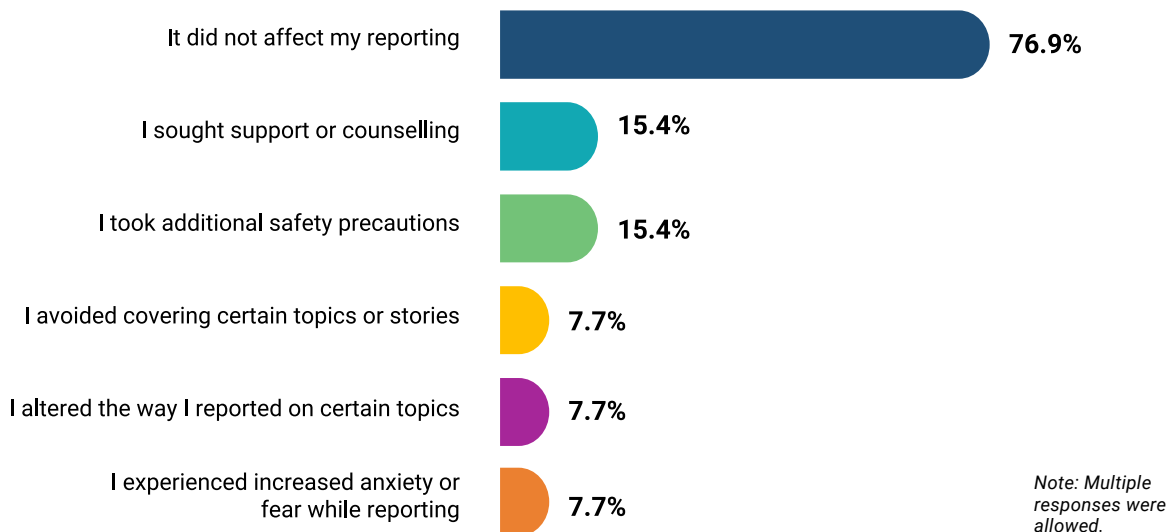
Among those who experienced physical attacks, 76.9% report physical assault, 23.1% report vandalism or property destruction, and 7.7% report verbal threats during incidents. Notably, one respondent reported being physically assaulted by police officers while conducting investigative reporting.

Figure 19: The nature of the attack or assault (only those that have been attacked)



While the majority of respondents (76.9%) indicate that attacks did not fundamentally alter their reporting, a measurable proportion report behavioural adjustments: 15.4% sought support or counselling, 15.4% adopted additional safety precautions, and 7.7% avoided covering certain topics or modified their reporting approach.

Figure 20: “Did the attack or assault affect your reporting, and if so, how?” (Only those that have been attacked)



Survey data show that 40.6% of respondents in 2025 reported having experienced threats or intimidation related to their work as journalists, compared to 45.3% in 2024. While this represents a modest decrease of approximately five percentage points, the proportion remains high, indicating that exposure to intimidation continues to affect a substantial segment of the profession. The share of respondents who reported not experiencing threats remained broadly stable (47.2% in 2025 compared to 46.8% in 2024), while the proportion preferring not to answer increased from 7.9% to 12.3%, which may suggest growing sensitivity around the issue. The data indicate relative stability rather than significant improvement in the threat environment, with intimidation remaining a persistent feature of the professional context for journalists in Albania.

Figure 21: Proportion of respondents that have experienced threats or intimidation related to their work as a journalist, 2025 vs 2024 results

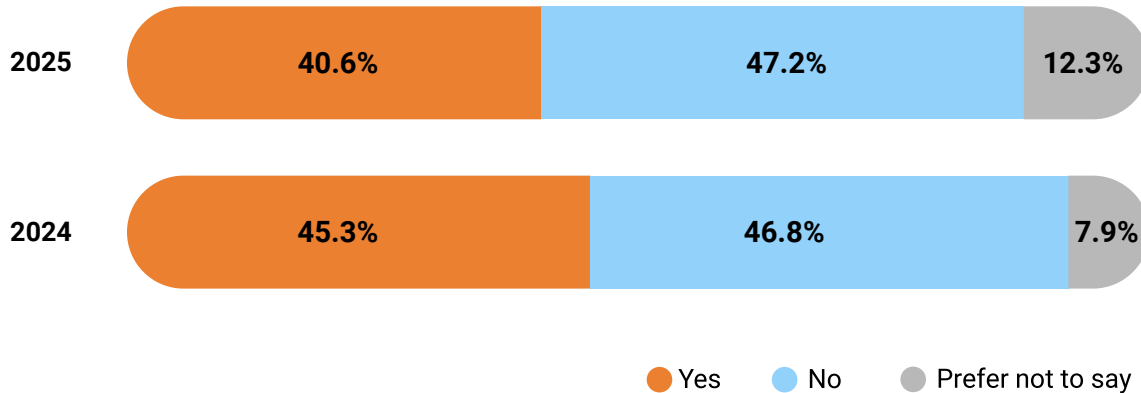
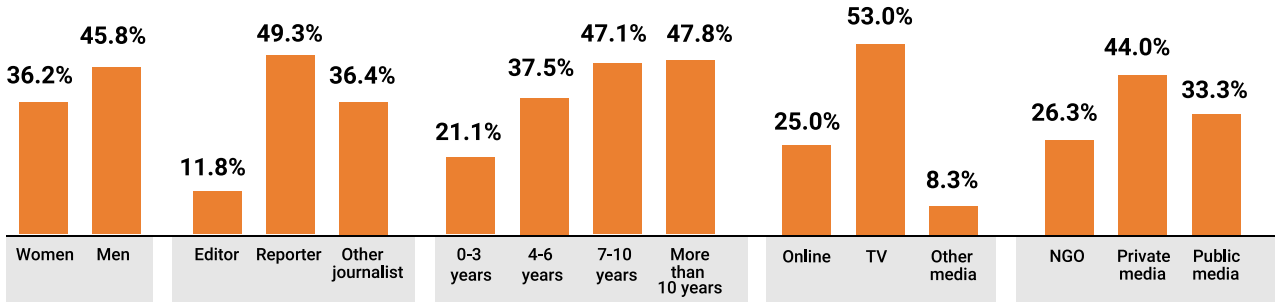


Figure 22 provides a detailed disaggregation of journalists who reported experiencing threats or intimidation in 2025. Gender differences are evident, with 45.8% of men respondents reporting threats compared to 36.2% of women respondents. By professional role, reporters appear most exposed (49.3%), followed by other journalists (36.4%), while editors report substantially lower exposure (11.8%). Experience also shows variation: journalists with 7–10 years (47.1%) and more than 10 years (47.8%) report higher exposure than those with 0–3 years (21.1%), suggesting that mid- to senior-career professionals may be more likely to cover sensitive issues that attract pressure. Media type differences are pronounced: 53.0% of television journalists report threats compared to 25.0% of online journalists and only 8.3% among other media types. Ownership structure also appears relevant, with journalists in private media reporting higher exposure (44.0%) than those in public (33.3%) or NGO media (26.3%).

Figure 22: Proportion of respondents that have experienced threats or intimidation related to their work as a journalist, detailed disaggregation

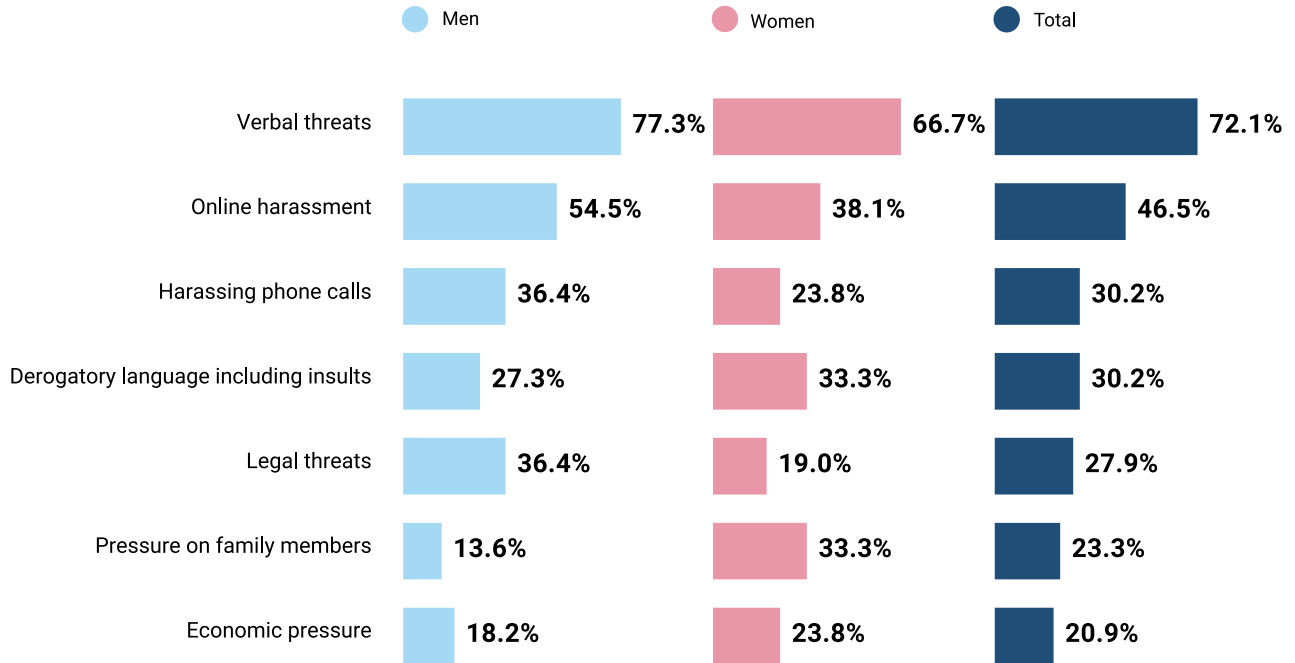


The distribution indicates that exposure to threats is uneven across the profession and is particularly concentrated among reporters, television journalists, and those working in private media, suggesting differentiated vulnerability linked to role, platform visibility, and ownership context.

Data show that verbal threats are the most common form of intimidation, reported by 72.1% of those who experienced threats, with higher exposure among men (77.3%) than women (66.7%). Online harassment follows at 46.5% overall, again more frequently reported by men (54.5%) than women (38.1%). Harassing phone calls and derogatory language, including insults, are each reported by 30.2% of respondents overall, although women report higher exposure to derogatory language (33.3%) compared to men (27.3%). Legal threats are reported by 27.9% overall and are notably more common among men (36.4%) than women (19.0%). In contrast, pressure targeting family members is significantly higher among women (33.3%) than men (13.6%), while economic pressure affects both genders at comparable levels (20.9% overall).

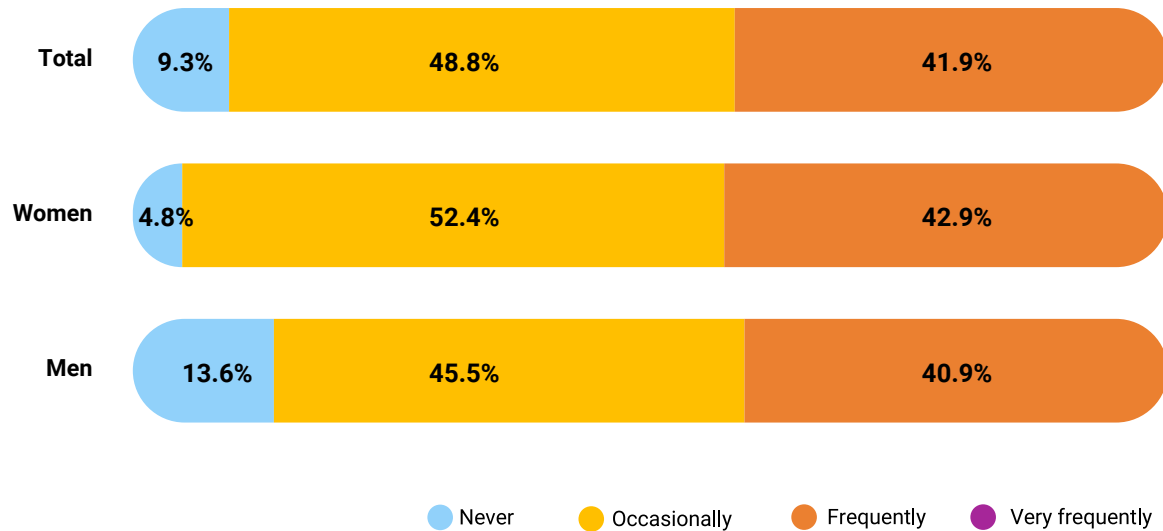
These patterns indicate that threats against journalists are predominantly verbal and digital in nature, with gendered differences in how intimidation is experienced, suggesting that pressures may be tailored differently depending on the target.

Figure 23: Type of threats or intimidation faced, by gender (only those that have faced threats or intimidation)



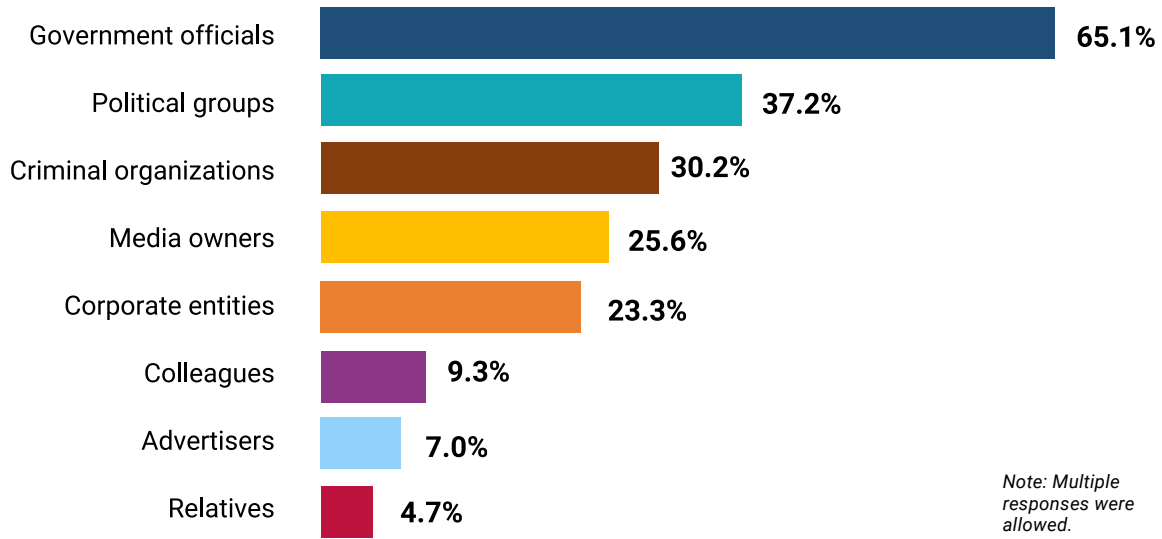
Among respondents who experienced threats or intimidation, 41.9% reported facing them frequently. This is a significant finding: for many journalists, threats are not occasional incidents but a regular part of their daily work. Notably, among those who encountered threats, women reported experiencing them more frequently than men.

Figure 24: Frequency of threats or intimidation experienced by gender (only those that have experienced threats or intimidation)



Government officials are identified as the primary source of threats or intimidation (65.1%), followed by political groups (37.2%), criminal organizations (30.2%), and media owners (25.6%). Similarly, among those reporting pressure to modify, delay, or abandon stories, 61.8% identify politicians or government officials as the main source, followed by media superiors and business interests (each 38.2%). The concentration of pressure originating from political and institutional actors suggests that risks to journalistic independence are not confined to criminal intimidation but are significantly embedded within political and governance structures. This pattern indicates that challenges to media freedom in 2025 are closely intertwined with power asymmetries between journalists and state or political actors, raising concerns about the broader enabling environment for independent reporting.

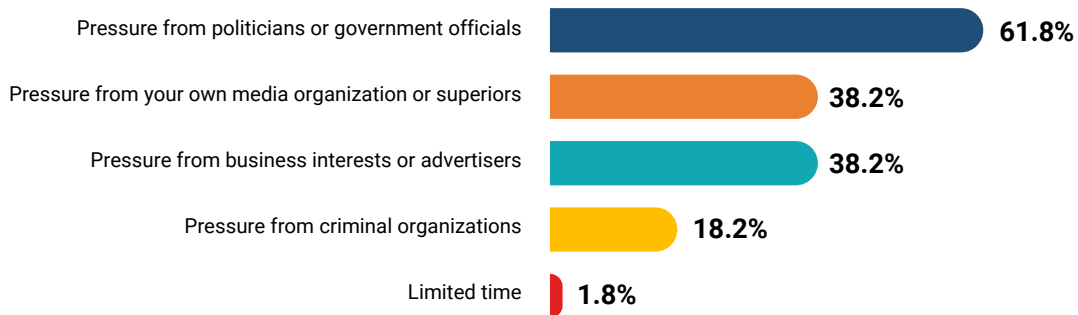
Figure 25: Main sources of threats or intimidation (only those that have experienced threats or intimidation)



Data indicate that among journalists who reported having experienced pressure to modify, delay, or abandon stories, the most common type of pressure was direct pressure from politicians or government officials (61.8%). Internal pressure from media organizations or superiors and pressure from business interests or advertisers are reported at equal levels (38.2% each), indicating that editorial constraints arise not only externally but also within media structures. Pressure from criminal organizations is reported by 18.2%, while limited time constraints are marginal (1.8%). The distribution suggests that political pressure is the dominant form of interference, but commercial and internal organizational pressures also play a significant role in shaping editorial decisions.

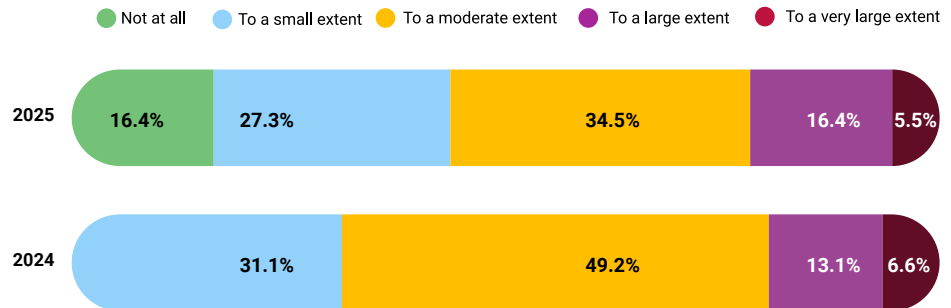
The predominance of political pressure, combined with substantial internal and commercial pressures, indicates that editorial constraints operate across both state and market dimensions, reinforcing the structural vulnerability of journalistic independence.

*Figure 26: Types of pressure experienced by journalists to modify, delay, or abandon stories (only those who have felt such pressure)*



In 2025, 16.4% stated that threats did not affect their reporting at all, while 27.3% reported self-censoring to a small extent and 34.5% to a moderate extent. More concerning, 16.4% reported self-censorship to a large extent and 5.5% to a very large extent. Compared to 2024, the proportion reporting self-censorship to a moderate extent declined (from 49.2% to 34.5%), while those reporting large or very large extent increased slightly overall. Taken together, the data indicate that while the intensity of moderate self-censorship may have shifted, more than half of journalists who experienced pressure continue to adjust their reporting to some degree, confirming that threats and intimidation have a sustained impact on editorial autonomy rather than remaining isolated incidents.

*Figure 27: To what extent have threats or intimidation led journalists to practise self-censorship in their reporting over the past year? (Only those who have felt this pressure)*



### 3.4.4. Safety of women journalists

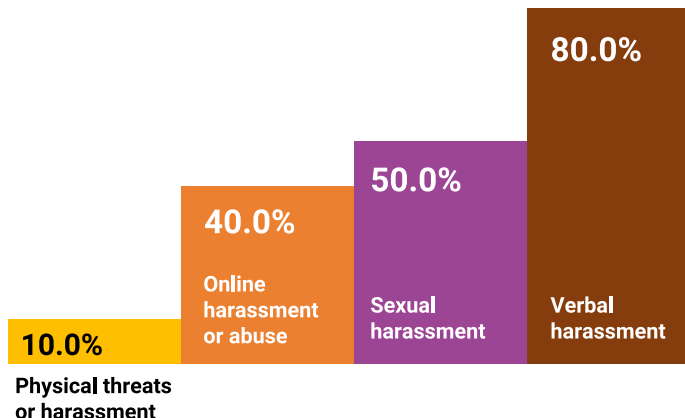
Women journalists in Albania continue to face gender-specific risks within a broader environment characterized by pressures on media freedom and structural inequalities. In 2025, 17.2% of women journalists reported experiencing gender-specific threats or intimidation related to their professional activity. This represents a decrease compared to 20.6% in 2024; however, given the limited sample size, this change should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 28: The experience of any gender-specific threats or intimidation related to working as a journalist (only women journalists respondents)



Among those who experienced gender-specific threats, verbal harassment was the most common form (80.0%), followed by sexual harassment (50.0%) and online harassment or abuse (40.0%). Physical threats were reported by 10.0%. These findings indicate that gender-based threats are primarily verbal and psychological in nature, although a significant proportion involve sexual harassment.

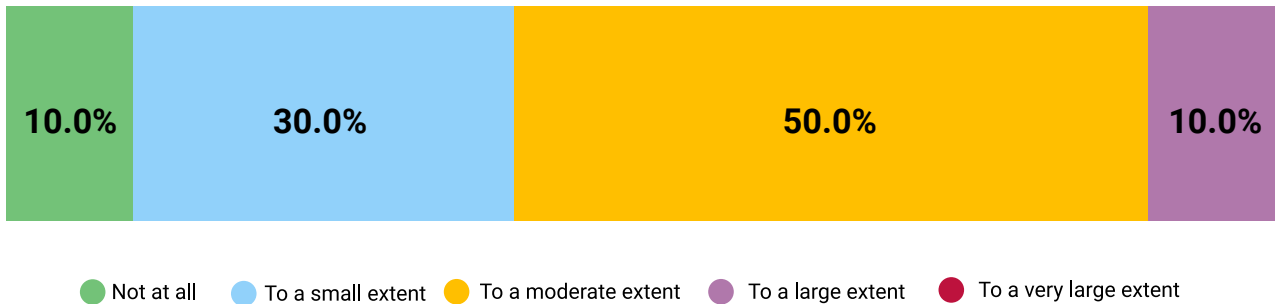
Figure 29: Type of gender-specific threats or intimidation that women have faced (only those who have faced these)



Note: Multiple responses were allowed.

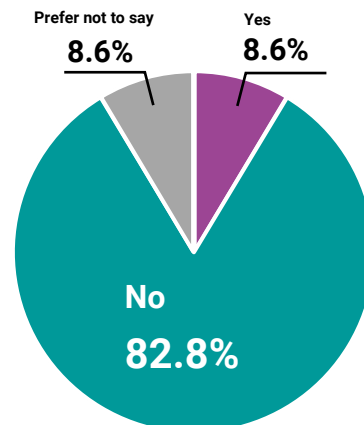
Importantly, 60.0% of affected respondents reported that such threats influenced their reporting to at least a moderate extent, suggesting that gender-based intimidation has a tangible impact on editorial practice.

Figure 30: “To what extent have gender-specific threats or intimidation affected your reporting in the past year?” (Only those who felt this pressure)



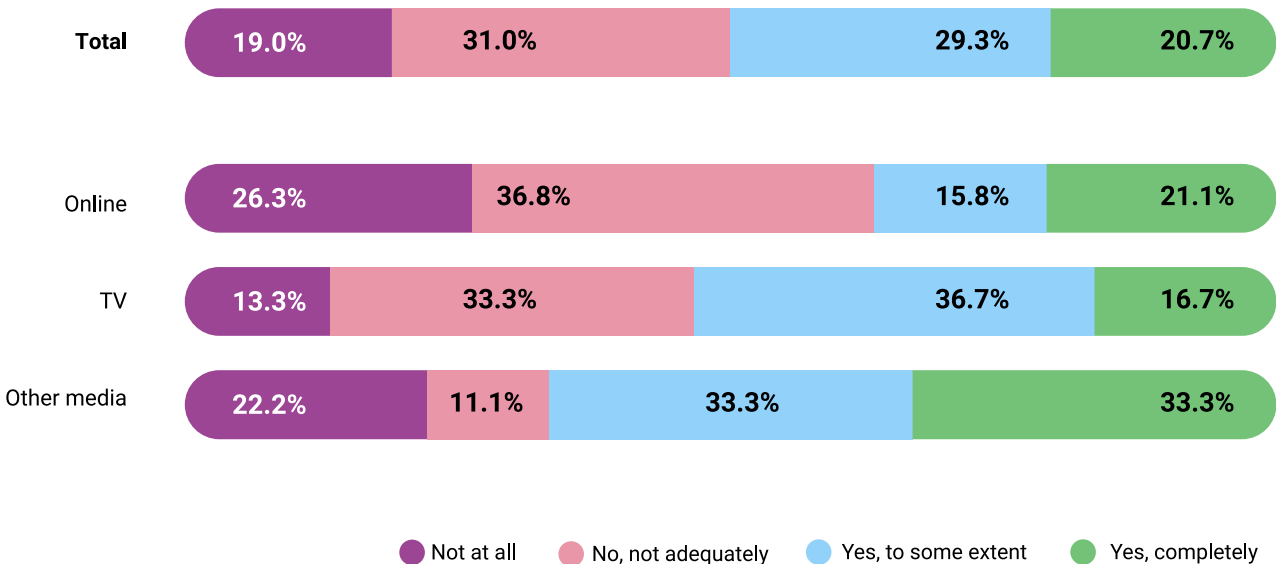
In 2025, 8.6% of women journalists reported feeling pressured to modify, delay, or abandon a story specifically due to their gender, compared to 17.6% in 2024. While this decline may suggest some improvement, nearly one in 11 women journalists continues to face gender-specific editorial pressure. This indicates that gender-based constraints remain present within newsroom dynamics.

Figure 31: Proportion of women journalists that have felt pressure to modify, delay, or abandon a story specifically because of their gender



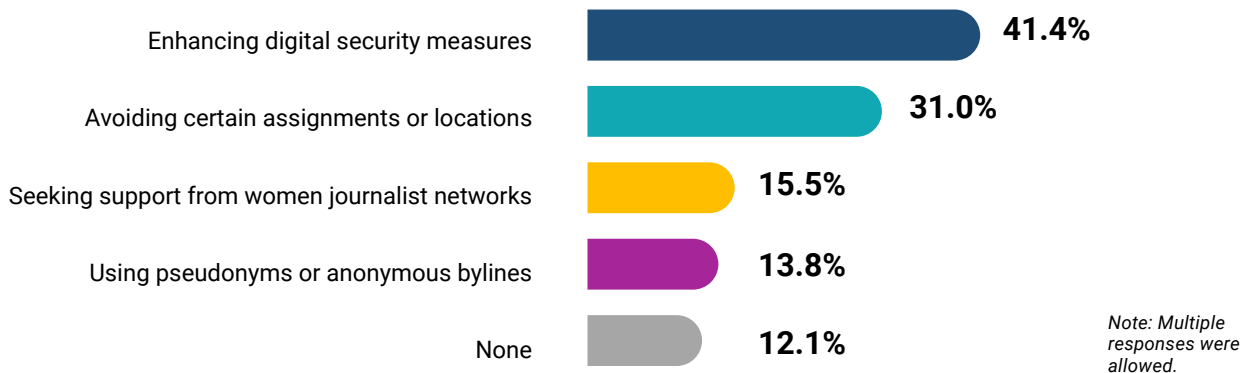
Regarding institutional support, 19.0% of women journalists reported that their safety concerns were not addressed at all by their media organization, and an additional 31.0% reported that concerns were inadequately addressed. Although this reflects some improvement compared to 2024, when 29.4% reported that concerns were not addressed at all, a substantial proportion of women journalists continue to perceive insufficient institutional protection. Differences across media types suggest that women working in television may report lower levels of institutional responsiveness than those in online media, though these findings are indicative rather than statistically conclusive.

Figure 32: “Have you felt that your safety concerns as a woman journalist are adequately addressed by your media organization?” (Only women by type of media they work in)



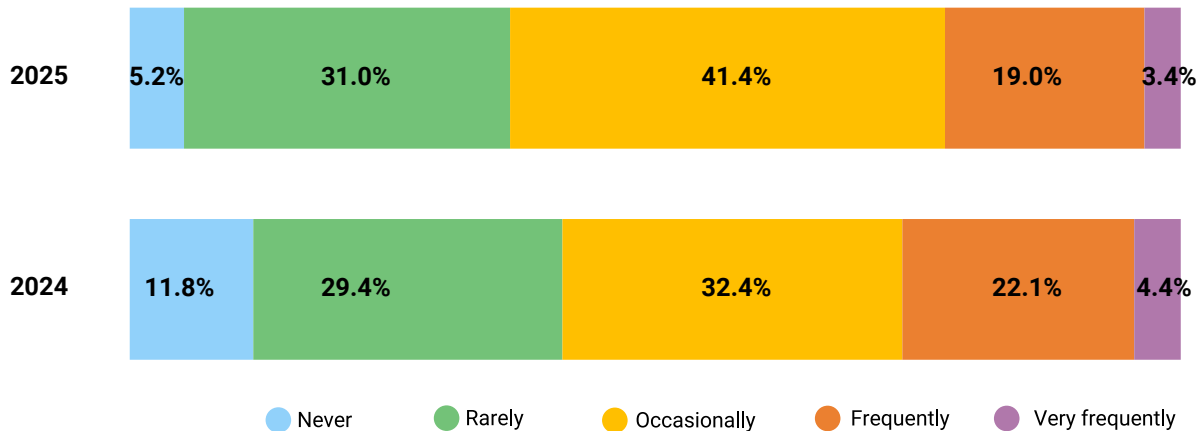
A large majority of women journalists (87.9%) reported taking at least one safety measure specifically because of their gender. The most common response was enhancing digital security measures (41.4%), followed by avoiding certain assignments or locations (31.0%). The latter has direct implications for news coverage, as it may limit women journalists' ability to pursue particular stories safely. Smaller proportions reported seeking support from women journalists' networks (15.5%) or using pseudonyms or anonymous bylines (13.8%).

*Figure 33: Safety measures specifically because of their gender, only women*



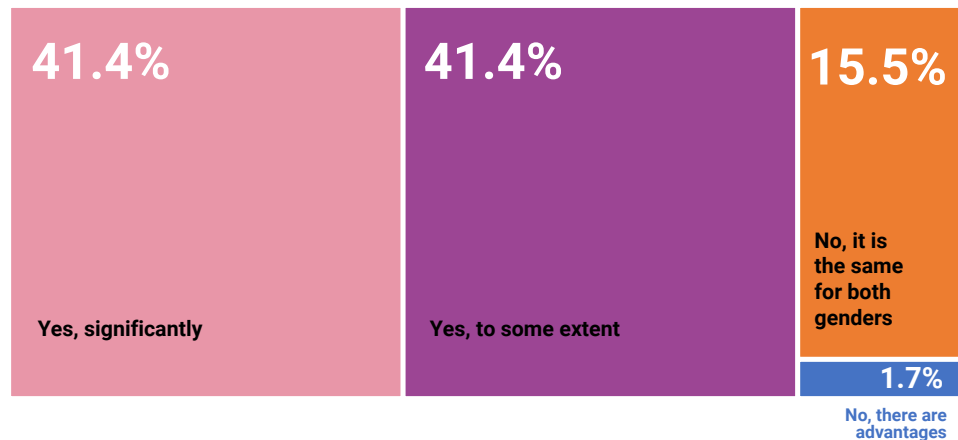
More than one-fifth of women journalists (22.4%) reported that they frequently or very frequently feel their gender influences how they are treated by sources, colleagues, or interviewees. While comparative data suggest variation over time, the persistence of such perceptions indicates that gender dynamics continue to shape professional interactions. Furthermore, the majority of women respondents believe that women journalists in Albania face unique challenges compared to their men counterparts, reinforcing the perception of structural gender-specific barriers within the profession.

Figure 34: “How often do you feel your gender affects the way sources, colleagues, or interviewees treat you?” (Only women respondents, 2025 vs 2024 data)



Approximately 82.8% of women respondents believe that women journalists in Albania face unique challenges compared to men. However, 15.5% of women respondents do not see any difference in challenges women face compared to men.

Figure 35: “Do you believe that being a woman journalist in Albania presents unique challenges compared to your men counterparts?”, (Only women respondents)

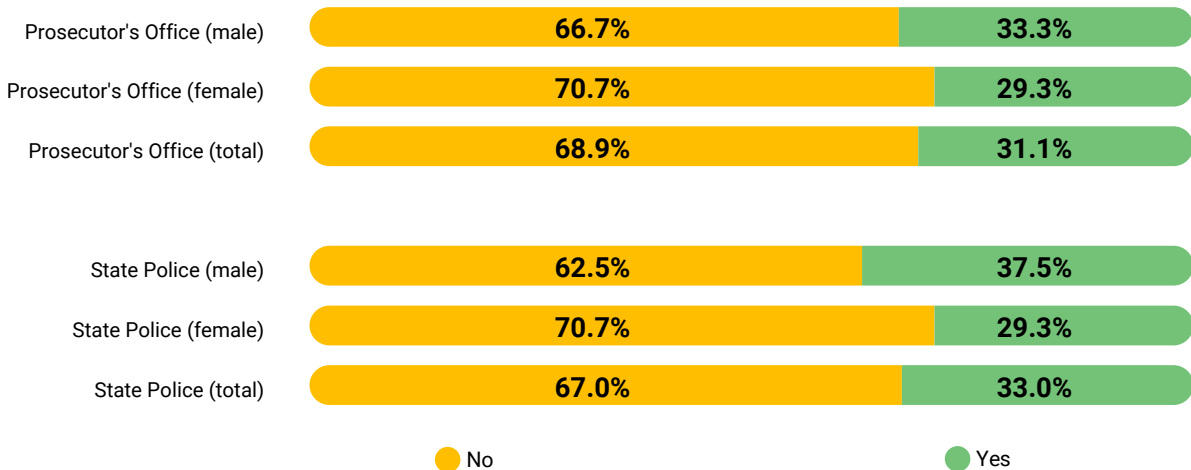


The data suggest that although certain indicators show marginal improvement compared to the previous year, gender-specific threats, pressures, and differential treatment remain embedded within the professional environment. The high prevalence of precautionary behaviour and reported impact on reporting underscores that gender-related safety concerns extend beyond isolated incidents and reflect broader structural vulnerabilities.

### 3.4.5. Reporting and response

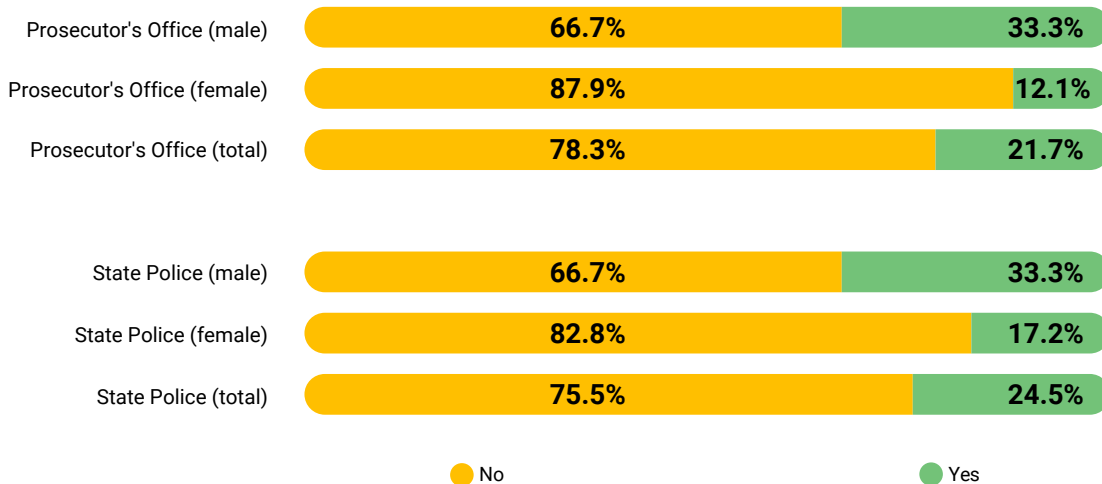
Despite the establishment of formal mechanisms to address violence against journalists, awareness of these instruments remains limited. In 2025, 68.9% of respondents reported not being aware of the specific safety protocol adopted by the Prosecutor’s Office, while 67.0% reported similar lack of awareness regarding the State Police protocol. Women journalists demonstrated slightly lower awareness compared to men.

*Figure 36: “Are you aware of the specific safety protocol for journalists adopted by State Police and Prosecutor’s Office?”, by gender*



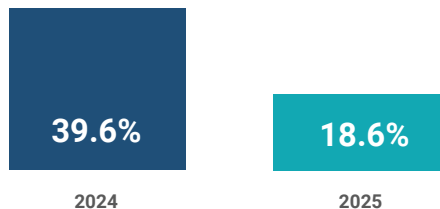
Awareness of designated contact points is even more limited: 78.3% of respondents were unaware of the Prosecutor’s Office contact point, and 75.5% were unaware of the State Police contact point. These findings indicate a significant communication gap between institutional safeguards and the journalistic community.

Figure 37: “Are you aware of the specific contact points for journalist safety within the State Police and the Prosecutor’s Office?”, by gender



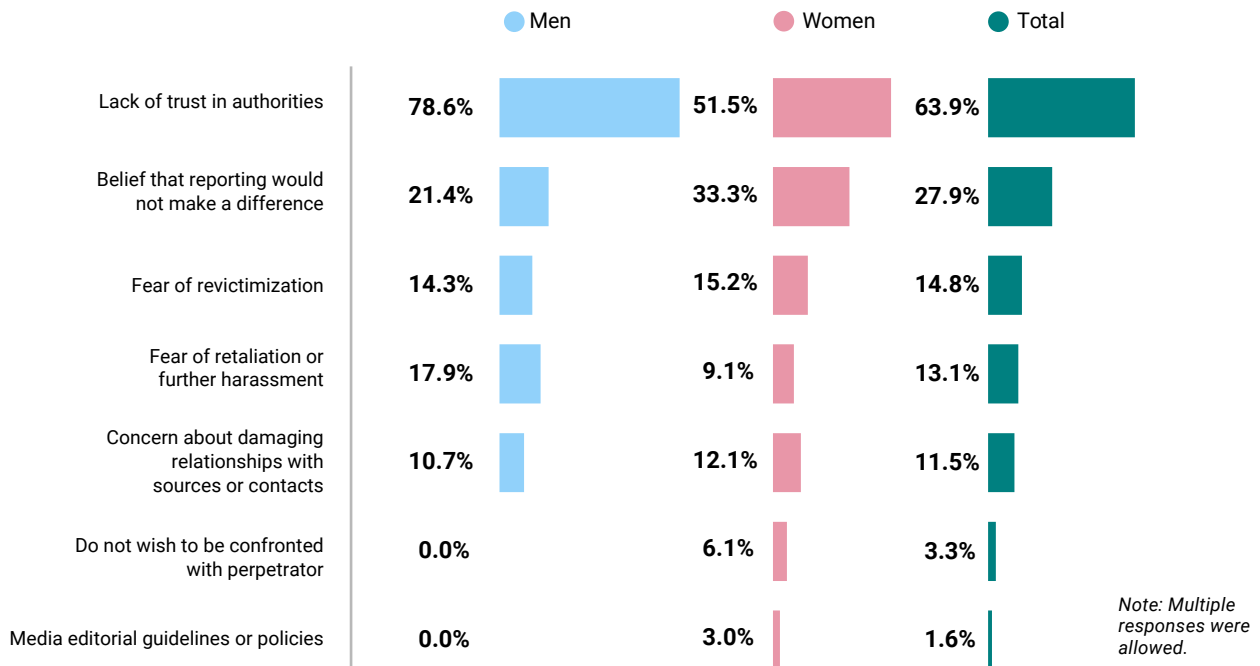
Low awareness appears to correlate with low reporting rates. Among journalists who experienced threats or intimidation, only 18.6% reported incidents in 2025, a marked decline from 39.6% in 2024. No significant gender differences were observed in reporting behaviour..

Figure 38: Proportion of the journalists who reported the threats or intimidation to any authorities or institutions (only those who faced such threats, 2024 vs 2025 data)



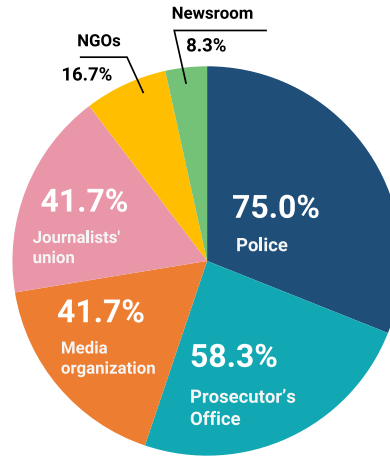
The primary reason cited for non-reporting was lack of trust in authorities (63.9%), followed by the belief that reporting would not make any difference (27.9%). While men more frequently cited lack of trust, women were more likely to express scepticism about the effectiveness of reporting. This suggests that under-reporting is driven less by procedural barriers and more by perceived institutional inefficacy.

*Figure 39: Reasons for not reporting threats or intimidation to any authorities or institutions (only journalists who faced threats but did not report these, by gender)*



Among those who did report incidents, most approached the police (75.0%) and the Prosecutor's Office (58.3%), with a substantial share also reporting to journalists' unions or media organizations (41.7% each).

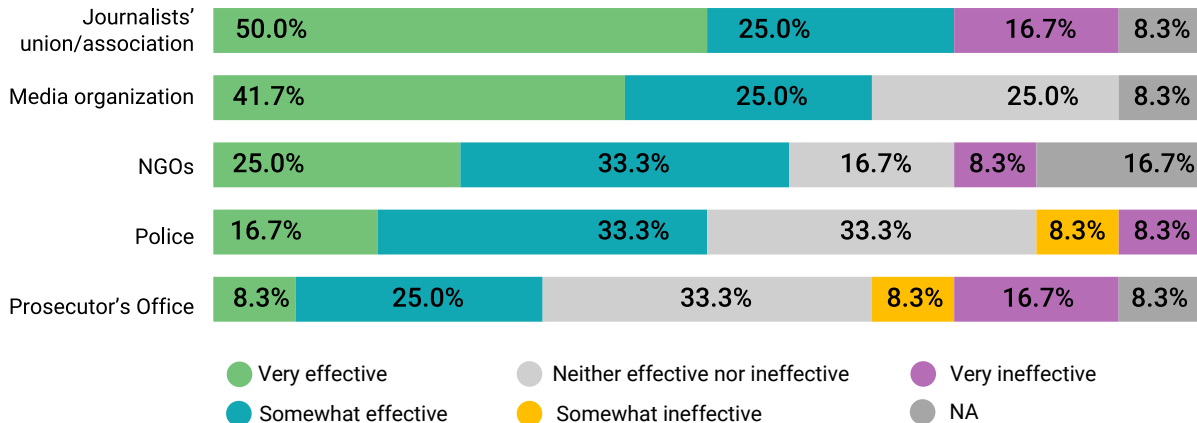
Figure 40: Authorities or institutions to which respondents reported their cases of threats or intimidation (only those who reported these)



Note: Multiple responses were allowed.

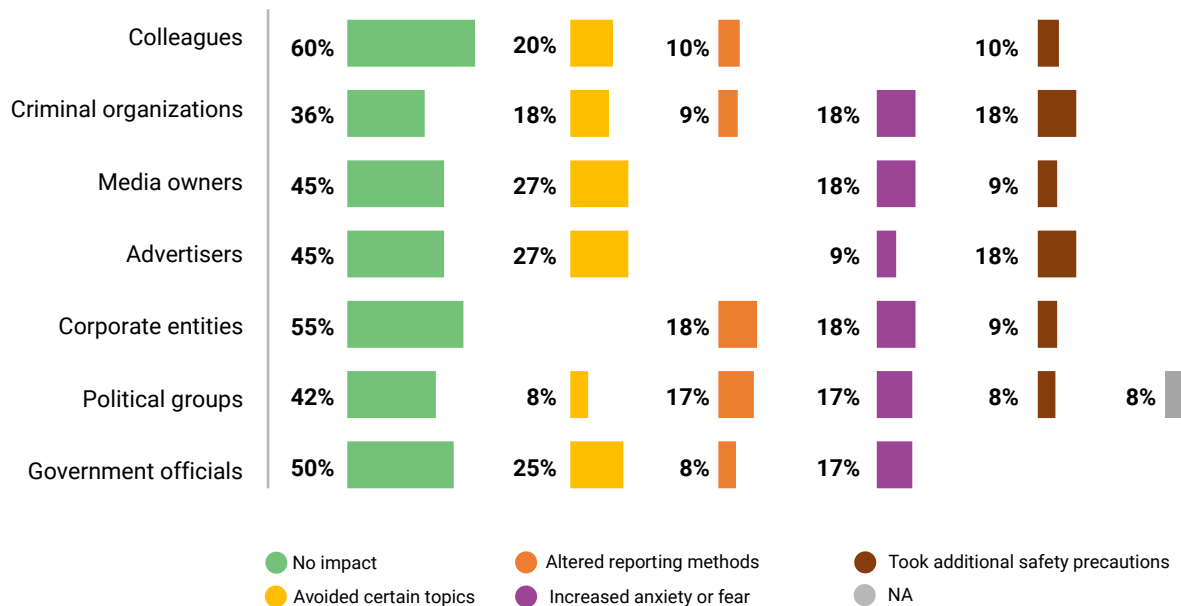
However, perceptions of institutional effectiveness remain low. Only 16.7% of respondents consider the police very effective in responding to reports, and only 8.3% hold the same view of the Prosecutor’s Office. By contrast, journalists’ associations, media organizations, and NGOs are perceived as more responsive. This divergence reinforces the trust deficit identified earlier and suggests that formal mechanisms have not yet translated into perceived protection.

Figure 41: Responses from various authorities as reported by journalists (only those who reported their cases)



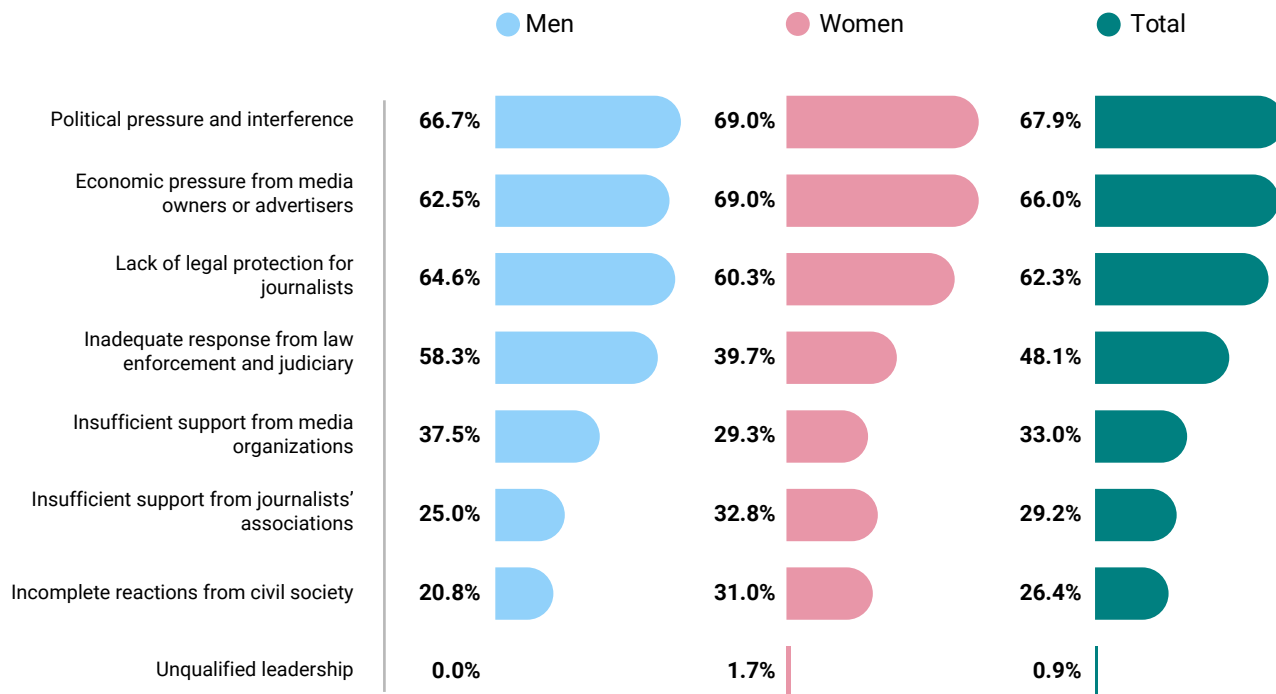
The behavioural impact of threats varies by source. When intimidation originated from government officials, 25.0% of journalists reported avoiding certain topics, and 16.7% reported increased anxiety or fear. Threats from political groups or corporate actors similarly led to altered reporting methods and increased anxiety. In cases involving advertisers or media owners, 27.3% of respondents reported avoiding certain topics. These patterns indicate that the source of pressure shapes the form of self-protective behaviour, but consistently results in adjustments to reporting practice.

Figure 42: The main impact of threats or intimidation by source (only those who have been threatened or intimidated)



When asked to identify the main challenges to journalist safety, 67.9% cited political pressure and interference, followed closely by economic pressure from media owners or advertisers (66.0%) and lack of legal protections (62.3%). The narrow gap between these factors suggests that journalists perceive safety risks as systemic and multifaceted rather than attributable to a single dominant threat.

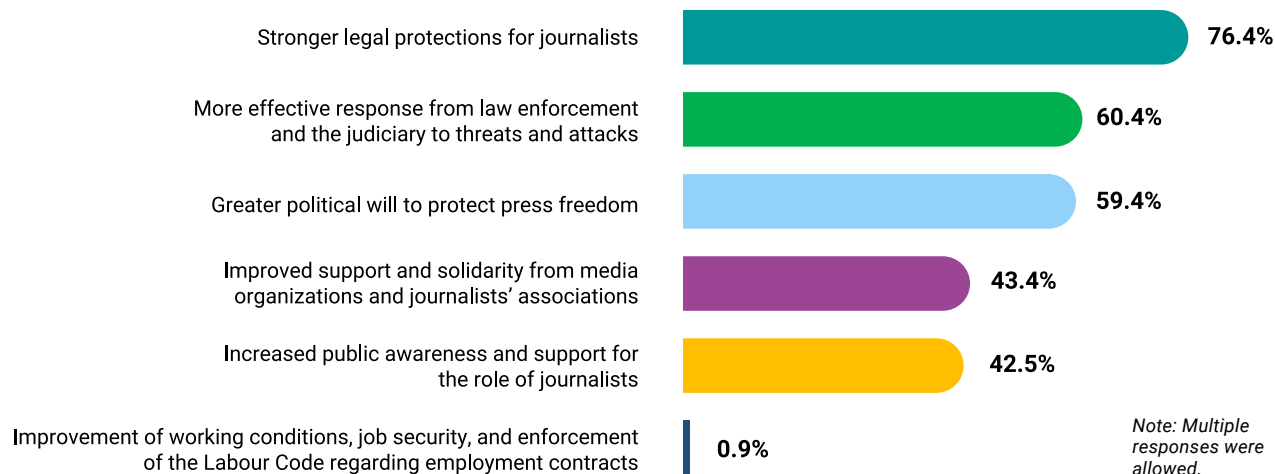
Figure 43: The main challenges facing journalists in Albania when it comes to safety and freedom from intimidation according to journalist respondents, by gender



Note: Multiple responses were allowed.

Correspondingly, respondents prioritize structural reform: 76.4% identify stronger legal protections as the primary measure to improve safety, followed by more effective law enforcement and judicial responses (60.4%) and greater political will to protect press freedom (59.4%). Solidarity-based solutions and internal newsroom improvements rank lower, indicating that journalists view safety primarily as a governance and institutional issue rather than solely a workplace concern.

Figure 44: The main measures or actions that journalists believe could help improve the safety and security of journalists in Albania



The data suggest that while formal protocols and reporting channels exist, limited awareness, declining reporting rates, and low confidence in institutional effectiveness undermine their practical impact. The gap between formal mechanisms and perceived protection remains a central challenge in strengthening journalist safety in Albania.

### 3.4.6. Progress towards the Roadmap's provisions regarding journalists' safety

The Rule of Law Roadmap proposes critical measures to address gaps in journalists' safety through legal reforms, institutional capacity building, and enhanced coordination between law

enforcement and prosecutorial services.<sup>69</sup> This section assesses the progress made on each measure based on institutional responses and survey data collected in 2025.

*Measure: The safety of journalists is guaranteed through the strengthening of the capacities of the relevant law enforcement agencies. The Police Academy continues to provide training, including on the handling of cases of violence against journalists as of 2024, based on annual planning. The State Police and prosecution services designate a contact point within their structures responsible for addressing attacks against journalists by 2024 and ensure public information and awareness on such cases from 2024 onwards. The General Prosecutor's Office publishes, on a case-by-case basis, the results of investigations into cases involving journalists from 2024 onwards.*

Data indicate that the formal institutional architecture required under the Roadmap (guidelines, contact points, specialized assignments, and training components) has been established. Procedurally, mechanisms for case registration, prioritization, and coordination are in place, demonstrating advancement and fulfilment of long-standing requirements of civil society and media community.

On 21 May 2025, the General Directorate of the State Police adopted Order No. 760 approving the “Guidelines for State Police on the Safety of Journalists and the Establishment of a Contact Point”. The Guidelines define procedures for police response, designate contact points in regional directorates, and outline coordination mechanisms. According to the State Police, contact points have been appointed in all local directorates, specialized cybercrime units operate at regional level, and all cases involving journalists are recorded in a centralized database.<sup>70</sup> Training activities have reportedly been conducted for police officers through the Security Academy and the module on freedom of expression and safety of journalists has been included as part of the professional development of the police force.<sup>71</sup> Also, the Ministry of Interior had a dedicated contact point since 2024 for the Council of Europe Campaign on the Safety of Journalists.

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<sup>69</sup> Government of Albania, Council of Ministers. (2023, December 13). [Roadmap on the rule of law](#).

<sup>70</sup> [SCIDEV. \(2025, June 3\). Media Landscape – May 2025 Brief](#).

<sup>71</sup> State Police response to an FOI request,, October 2025.

In 2024, the Prosecutor General approved a circular for the investigation of issues related to the safety of journalists as an initial step towards creating a safer environment for journalists and media workers in Albania.<sup>72</sup> The Prosecutor General's Office has designated 13 specialized prosecutors to handle cases involving journalists and established a dedicated contact point.<sup>73</sup> Also, training and awareness activities have been conducted for law enforcement and judicial actors.<sup>74</sup> During 2025, only one case was published on the website of the General Prosecutor's Office. For the period January–September 2025, a total of four new criminal complaints were registered, referred by journalists who claim to have been threatened or harmed due to the exercise of their professional duties. Of these cases, three complaints are currently in the preliminary verification phase, while for one complaint a criminal proceeding has been registered and is in the investigation phase.<sup>75</sup>

International partners and civil society organizations have supported the implementation of these measures through workshops and consultative meetings aimed at strengthening inter-institutional cooperation.<sup>76</sup> Increased cooperation between law enforcement authorities, prosecution bodies and the community of journalists, particularly through structured dialogue in workshops facilitated by civil society and media platforms, has been observed as a positive development. However, these efforts require further institutionalization and consolidation to ensure sustained impact and mutual trust.

However, available evidence from 2025 suggests that the practical impact of these measures still needs to be consolidated. Survey data indicate low levels of awareness among journalists regarding the existence of safety protocols and designated contact points. Reporting rates of threats and intimidation declined significantly compared to the previous year, and a majority of journalists cite lack of trust in institutions as a primary reason for not reporting incidents. While

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<sup>72</sup> [Circular of the General Prosecutor 2024](#).

<sup>73</sup> General Prosecutor's Office response to an FOI request, October 2025.

<sup>74</sup> Ministry of Justice response to an FOI request, October 2025.

<sup>75</sup> Response to an FOI request, October 2025.

<sup>76</sup> [Workshop Tirana](#), [Consultative Meeting Tirana](#), [Workshop Fier](#), [Roundtable Tirana](#), [Multistakeholder Roundtable Shkodra](#), [Roundtable Korça](#).

cases are formally registered, publicly available data do not provide sufficient transparency regarding investigative outcomes, prosecutorial follow-through, or deterrent effects.

Notwithstanding the adoption of formal safeguards, developments in 2025 illustrate the importance of consistent implementation and proportionality in practice. In August 2025, enforcement actions affecting Focus Media Group resulted in the interruption of broadcasting operations and restricted journalists' access to their workplace and production facilities.<sup>77</sup> While the matter involved broader legal and enforcement considerations,<sup>78</sup> the operational impact on journalists underscored the need for clear protocols when state actions affect media entities. The involvement of law enforcement authorities in measures directly affecting newsroom operations further highlights the importance of ensuring that journalist safety frameworks are applied consistently and in a manner that reinforces institutional trust.

Sustainability and institutional consolidation remain areas where progress is not yet fully demonstrated. Training activities appear to have been conducted, but there is limited publicly available information indicating whether they are embedded in systematic annual planning cycles or evaluated for impact. Awareness among journalists of existing safety protocols and designated contact points remains low, suggesting that communication and outreach mechanisms have not yet achieved broad penetration within the profession. Moreover, no dedicated fast-track or rapid-response mechanism for cases involving attacks on journalists has been formally operationalized, and public reporting on case outcomes remains limited. These factors indicate that while procedural structures exist, their institutionalization and measurable effectiveness remain incomplete.

*Measure: The High Judicial Council collects and publishes data on cases involving journalists from 2023 onwards.*

In 2025, limited progress has been made regarding the collection and publication of data on cases involving journalists. In response to an FOI request, the High Judicial Council confirmed that statistical data on criminal cases are publicly available through the Tirana First Instance

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<sup>77</sup> See SafeJournalists [Alert](#) and Council of Europe Safety of Journalists Platform [Alert](#).

<sup>78</sup> See [here](#).

Court portal, filterable for 2024 and 2025, including cases under Articles 119 and 120 of the Criminal Code. Civil cases can also be accessed through the civil case database of the same portal.

However, the filtering functionality does not allow systematic identification of cases involving journalists in criminal proceedings. For civil cases, filtering is technically possible, but determining whether a journalist is a plaintiff or defendant, and whether the matter relates to professional activity, requires manual review of case descriptions. The system does not provide a dedicated category or structured dataset specifically identifying journalists as parties to proceedings.

Moreover, the publicly available data do not include disaggregated statistics on convictions of journalists (including in defamation cases or cases with characteristics of SLAPP litigation), the number of cases initiated against journalists that were dismissed, or the legal grounds for dismissal. As a result, while basic case-level information is accessible, the absence of structured and consolidated reporting limits the capacity to assess trends, judicial outcomes, or the use of legal proceedings against journalists.

*Measure: The School of Magistrates enables the training of judges on the proper handling of SLAPP cases.*

The Ministry of Justice in response to an FOI request states that there has been some progress made on this measure. Topics on freedom of expression and journalists' safety have been included in the curricula of the School of Magistrates. In the same response, the Ministry states that 38 magistrates have attended seminars and dedicated training on protection of journalists and the fight against silence campaigns (SLAPPs).

*Measure: The criminal and civil aspects of provisions related to defamation are fully harmonized with EU standards.*

Regulation of defamation in Albania remains a contentious area, with developments in 2025 reflecting both reform efforts and ongoing tensions regarding alignment with European standards.

In late July 2025, the Ministry of Justice published the draft of a new Penal Code for public consultation. Several provisions under this draft, such as those on defamation, insult, and influencing judicial independence, were considered by media freedom organizations as direct threats to media freedom, the safety of journalists, and the fundamental right to freedom of expression.<sup>79</sup> Media freedom organizations expressed concern that certain formulations could expand criminal liability and risk creating chilling effects on public interest journalism and broadly on freedom of expression.<sup>80</sup> Alerts were submitted to the Council of Europe Platform for the Protection of Journalism, highlighting potential incompatibility with European standards, including the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), which consistently emphasizes that criminal sanctions for defamation should be used only in exceptional circumstances. In response, the Ministry of Justice stated that the draft remained under consultation and that comments from civil society and international partners would be considered to ensure alignment with European standards.<sup>81</sup> In November 2025, the Ministry of Justice organized a consultation meeting to discuss the implications of the draft Penal Code on freedom of expression.<sup>82</sup> However, as of the end of the year, no revised draft or publicly communicated timeline for adoption had been issued.

In December 2025, the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Public Information Means held an open consultation on proposed amendments to the Criminal Code aimed at strengthening the protection of journalists and media workers.<sup>83</sup> The initiative, introduced by Jorida Tabaku, Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on European Affairs, proposes stricter criminal penalties for violence and serious threats committed against journalists in connection with their professional activity, enhanced safeguards against unlawful interference with media activity, and the repeal of criminal provisions on insult and defamation, transferring such matters to civil law.<sup>84</sup> This initiative builds upon the results of the structured media dialogue

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<sup>79</sup> SafeJournalists Network. (2025, August 1). [Joint statement on the draft penal code and its implications for media freedom and freedom of expression in Albania.](#)

<sup>80</sup> See all updates about the new draft Penal Code [here](#).

<sup>81</sup> See Ministry of Justice [Response](#) at the Council of Europe Platform for the Safety of Journalists.

<sup>82</sup> SCiDEV. (2025, December 10). [Media Landscape – November 2025 Brief.](#)

<sup>83</sup> SCiDEV. (2025, December 23). [Media Landscape – December 2025 Brief.](#)

<sup>84</sup> See more [here](#).

recommendations on the safety of journalists and responds to the measures envisaged in the Roadmap. As of the end of 2025, the draft remained under parliamentary consideration.<sup>85</sup> Its final scope and alignment with European standards will depend on the outcome of the legislative process and the incorporation of feedback from civil society, media organizations, and international partners.

Lastly, in December 2025, the Prime Minister publicly proposed the decriminalization of defamation exclusively for journalists, presenting this as a measure to protect media freedom.<sup>86</sup> However, civil society organizations deem that European and international standards support general decriminalization for all participants in public debate, not profession-specific exemptions. The proposed differentiated regime creates legal uncertainty and unequal treatment, excluding citizens, civil society organizations, and public-interest watchdogs from protection against the chilling effect of criminal sanctions.<sup>87</sup>

Taken together, developments in 2025 reflect parallel and partially overlapping reform tracks. While certain initiatives, particularly the proposed repeal of criminal insult and defamation provisions and enhanced protection, indicate movement towards alignment with European standards, the simultaneous circulation of draft provisions potentially expanding criminal liability and the proposal of profession-specific decriminalization introduce risks of policy fragmentation and legal uncertainty. Divergent legislative initiatives emerging from different institutional actors may undermine coherence and consistency, particularly if not harmonized within a unified approach grounded in ECtHR jurisprudence and EU standards. As a result, progress towards full harmonization of criminal and civil defamation provisions with European principles remains incomplete and uneven, with advances in certain areas counterbalanced by unresolved ambiguities and structural inconsistencies.

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<sup>85</sup> This proposal was rejected by the majority and a new draft that had not been consulted upon before was introduced and approved in Parliament in January 2026, partially decriminalizing defamation only for certain categories of journalists. This was contested by civil society and media freedom organizations. See more about this development at [SCiDEV January 2026 Media Landscape Brief](#). As this development falls outside of the reporting period for this report, it will be analysed in next year's report.

<sup>86</sup> IDP. (2025, December 16). [VII National Conference on the Right to Information](#).

<sup>87</sup> [SCiDEV. \(2025, December 23\). Media Landscape – December 2025 Brief](#).

*Measure: Civil law provisions on misleading or inaccurate publications are aligned with European standards and recommendations. A comprehensive analysis of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), including corrective measures where necessary, whether in legislation or institutional practice, is conducted in accordance with European standards and the acquis.*

The Ministry of Justice has initiated preparatory work for the transposition of Directive (EU) 2024/1069, including the preparation of a compliance table and a legal gap analysis to identify provisions in domestic legislation requiring amendment. As of October 2025, the Ministry reported that amendments are planned to the Code of Civil Procedure and to Law No. 11/2017 on State-Guaranteed Legal Aid, with the objective of aligning national legislation with the Directive by 2026.<sup>88</sup> These steps indicate that the transposition process has formally commenced; however, as of the end of 2025, draft amendments had not yet been published for public consultation, and no detailed implementation timeline had been made publicly available. The effectiveness of alignment will therefore depend on the scope, clarity, and timeliness of the forthcoming legislative proposals.

### 3.5. Working conditions of journalists

Journalists in Albania operate in a structurally precarious socio-economic environment that directly affects their ability to do public interest journalism. Employment insecurity, low and irregular salaries, informality, and weak enforcement of labour rights remain widespread across the media sector.<sup>89</sup> Labour inspections have confirmed systemic violations, including unpaid wages, lack of contracts, undeclared work, and unlawful dismissals.<sup>90</sup> Unionization remains weak, collective bargaining mechanisms are absent, and journalists have limited leverage vis-à-vis media owners.<sup>91</sup> This imbalance significantly increases vulnerability to political and economic pressure.

<sup>88</sup> Ministry of Justice Response to an FOI request,, October 2025.

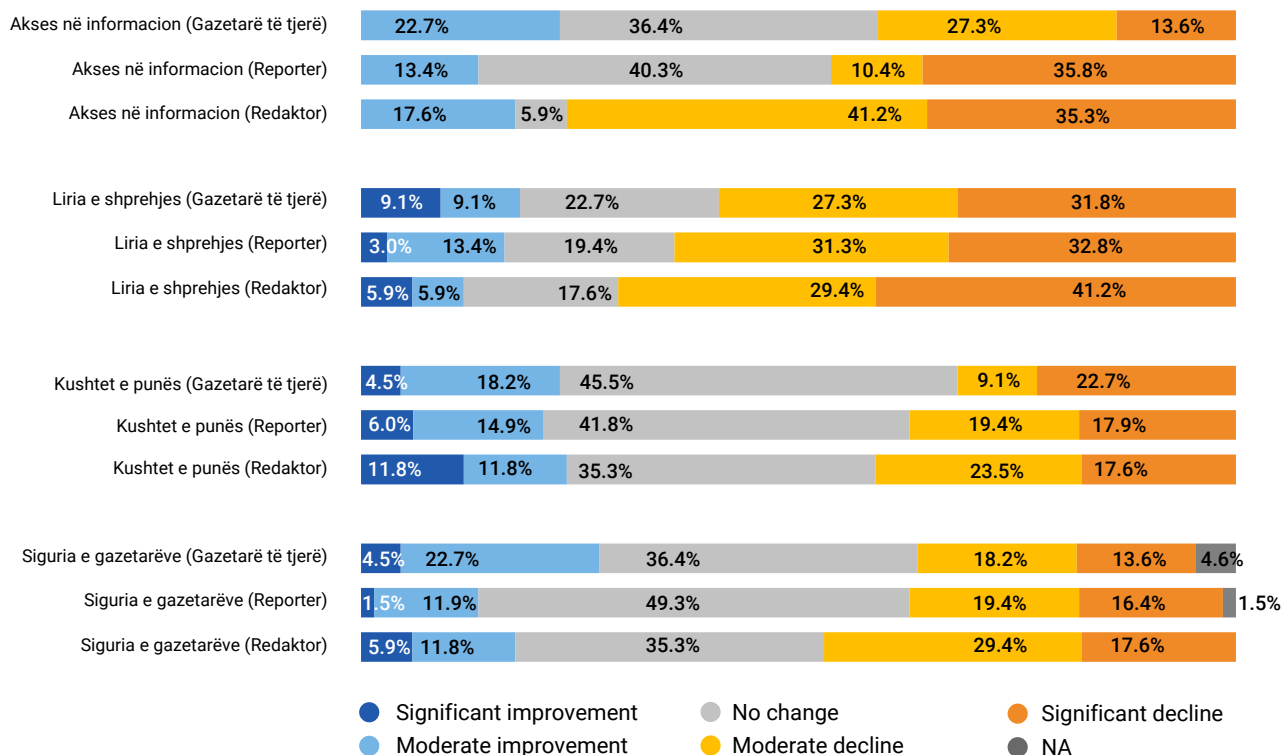
<sup>89</sup> Karaj, V. & Mitre, O. (2025). [National Media Freedom Barometer in Albania 2024–2025](#). Albanian Helsinki Committee. Tirana.

<sup>90</sup> SafeJournalists Network. (2025, July 16). [Albania: Improving Journalists' Working Conditions: Labour Inspectorate and AMA Host Media Roundtable](#).

<sup>91</sup> Bino, B. (2025). [Albania: Indicators on the Level of Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety Index 2024](#). SafeJournalists Network. Tirana

The majority of journalists surveyed for this report, 41.5%, perceive no change in working conditions compared to the previous year. A decline in working conditions was perceived by 36.8% of journalists compared to the previous year, and 21.1% perceive improvement. From a gendered point of view, perceptions on the decline of working conditions are similar between men and women, standing at 37.6% and 36.2% respectively. However, more men journalists, 25.0%, perceive improvements in working conditions, compared to only 18.9% of women. Editors are the category that most perceive a decline in working conditions compared to the previous year, standing at 41.1%, followed by reporters, 37.3%, and other journalists at 31.8%. Editors also constitute the majority of respondents who perceive an improvement in working conditions compared to the previous year.

Figure 45: Improvement of working conditions compared to the previous year, by role



In June 2025, representatives of civil society organizations and journalists' unions<sup>92</sup> met with the State Labour and Social Services Inspectorate to discuss the importance of unionization, educating journalists on the role and competencies of the Inspectorate, and fostering continuous dialogue and information exchange between the parties. To address the working conditions of journalists the AMA and the State Labour and Social Services Inspectorate signed a memorandum of understanding in May 2025. Such collaboration is expected to strengthen the application of labour rights and improve working conditions in the sector.<sup>93</sup>

Attempts to obtain disaggregated data on journalists registered as taxpayers from the Tax Administration proved unsuccessful. The General Directorate of Taxes responded that its nomenclature of economic activities (NVE Rev 2) does not include a specific designation for journalists or media workers and therefore cannot generate statistics in the format requested.

To address working conditions among Albanian media workers, two measures were included in the Rule of Law Roadmap.

*Measures: The State Labour Inspectorate adopts a risk-based inspection methodology for the enforcement of journalists' labour rights by 2025. ASPA continues to provide training for the staff of the State Labour Inspectorate on conducting risk-based inspections related to journalists' labour rights.*

In 2025, evidence indicates that the State Labour and Social Services Inspectorate applies a risk-based approach to labour inspections as part of its general methodology. The Inspectorate operates an electronic inspection planning system incorporating risk assessment tools, including a Risk Analysis System (RAS) and data-driven prioritization mechanisms. Journalism and audiovisual media have been identified among higher-risk sectors, and inspections have been carried out in media entities during 2024–2025, including enforcement action in response to reported labour violations. In May 2025, the AMA signed a memorandum of understanding with the State Labour Inspectorate to strengthen cooperation on monitoring working conditions in the audiovisual media sector, including compliance with labour law and social protections.

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<sup>92</sup> SCiDEV. (2025, July 7). [Media Landscape – June 2025 Brief](#).

<sup>93</sup> AMA. (2025, May 20). [AMA signs a Memorandum of Understanding with the State Labour Inspectorate](#).

These steps indicate institutional recognition of labour vulnerabilities within the media sector and the application of risk-based inspection tools in practice. Survey data indicating persistent concerns about precarious contracts and working conditions further suggest that enforcement impact remains uneven.

## 4. ROADMAP ON THE FUNCTIONING OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

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In October 2024, the Albanian Parliament approved the Roadmap on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions, which includes several media-related commitments in the context of elections.<sup>94</sup> These measures provide for legislative amendments to the Electoral Code through broad cross-party consensus by 2026, and legal changes to strengthen the efficiency and independence of the audiovisual media regulator in line with Council of Europe standards and Venice Commission recommendations within the same timeframe.

The Roadmap also foresees the approval of a regulatory framework for bodies monitoring online media during elections beginning in 2026. Importantly, two measures were set to commence with the 2025 elections: increased quantitative and qualitative monitoring and professionalism in media reporting during campaigns, including capacity building for the AMA through the “Modernization of the Monitoring Studio” project; and investment in capacities to address disinformation during electoral processes, including relevant target groups.

Additionally, the Central Election Commission (CEC) is expected to continue implementing robust monitoring mechanisms, including scrutiny of digital campaigns and cooperation with social media platforms to counter misinformation and manipulation. These commitments frame the 2025 elections as a first test of enhanced media oversight and disinformation response mechanisms under the Roadmap.

The following analysis draws on survey data capturing journalists’ perceptions of electoral coverage in 2025, providing an evidence-based assessment of whether the Roadmap’s commitments on media monitoring, professionalism, and countering disinformation translated into observable changes in practice.

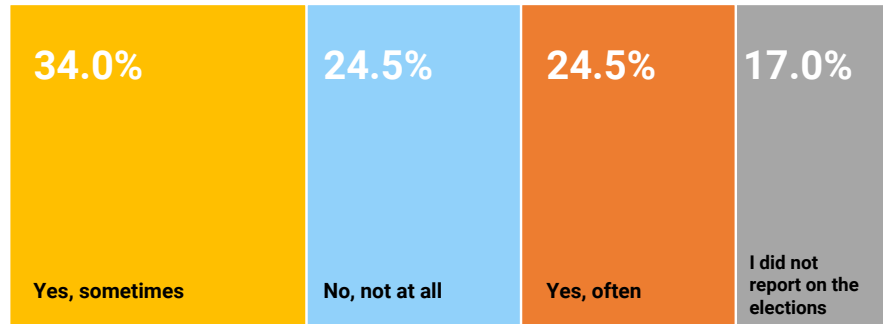
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<sup>94</sup> Republic of Albania, Council of Ministers. (2024, October 2). [Decision No. 611, dated 2 October 2024, on the approval of the Guideline on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions](#). Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Albania.

## 4.1. Electoral coverage: Access, pressure and editorial impact

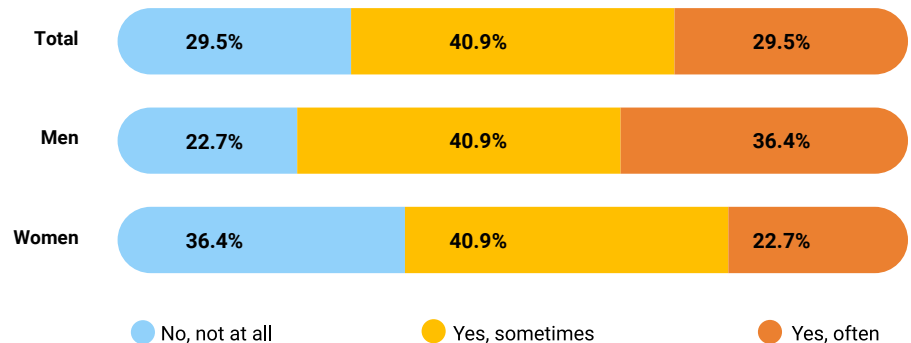
A large majority of respondents (approximately 83%) reported covering the 11 May, 2025 election campaign. Among those who covered the elections, 29.5% reported experiencing frequent difficulties accessing information, while 40.9% reported occasional difficulties. In total, roughly 70% of journalists covering the campaign encountered some level of access constraint, indicating that information access during the electoral period remained challenging.

Figure 46: "Did you experience difficulties accessing information while reporting on the election campaign and election day (11 May, 2025)?"



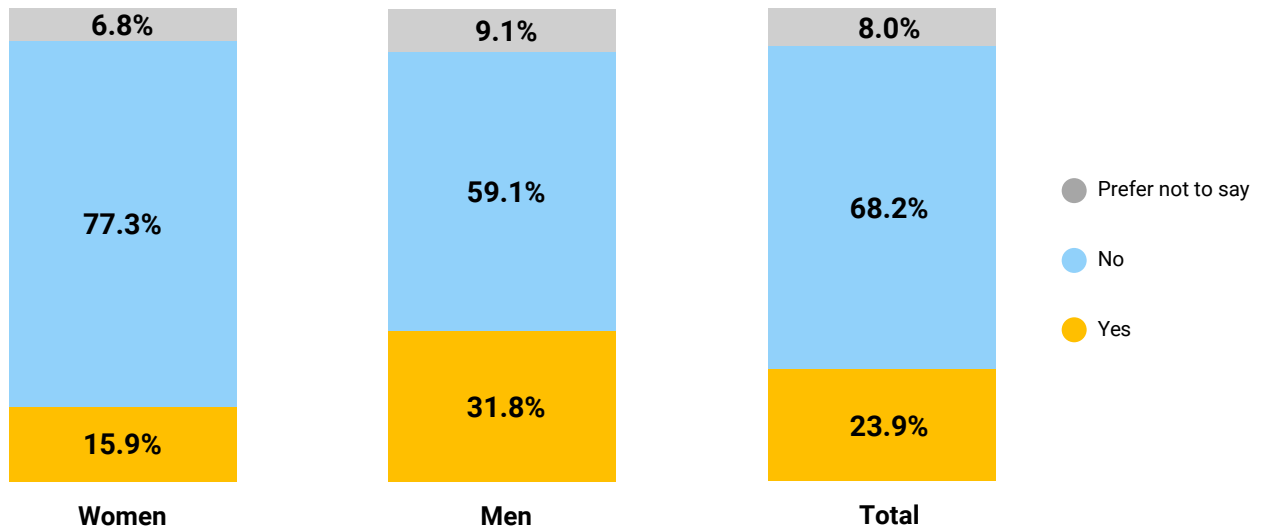
When disaggregated by gender, men reported higher levels of access difficulties than women.

Figure 47: "Did you experience difficulties accessing information while reporting on the election campaign and election day (11 May 2025)?" (Only those who covered the election campaign, by gender)



In addition to access barriers, 23.9% of journalists who covered the elections reported experiencing pressure or threats related to their work. Men were more likely than women to report such incidents.

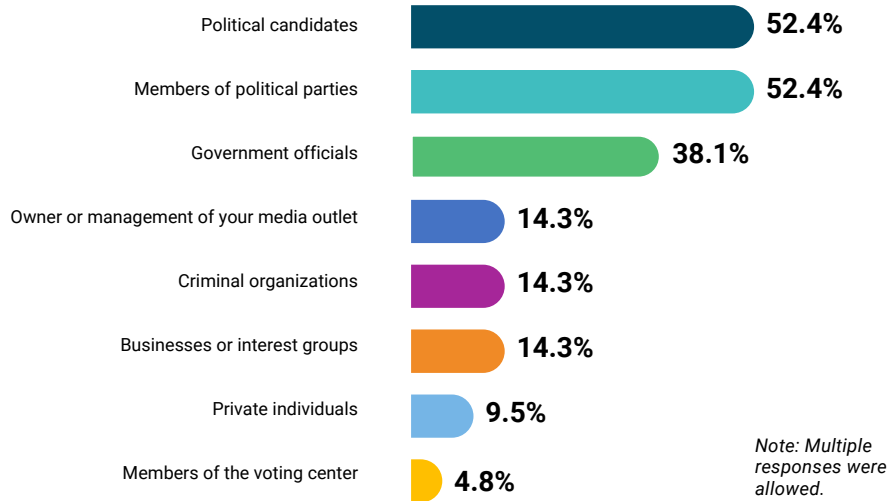
*Figure 48: “During the election campaign and on election day, did you face any form of pressure or threats related to your work as a journalist?” by gender*



More than half of the respondents who covered the election process identified political candidates (52.4%) and members of political parties (52.4%) as the primary sources of threats or intimidation.

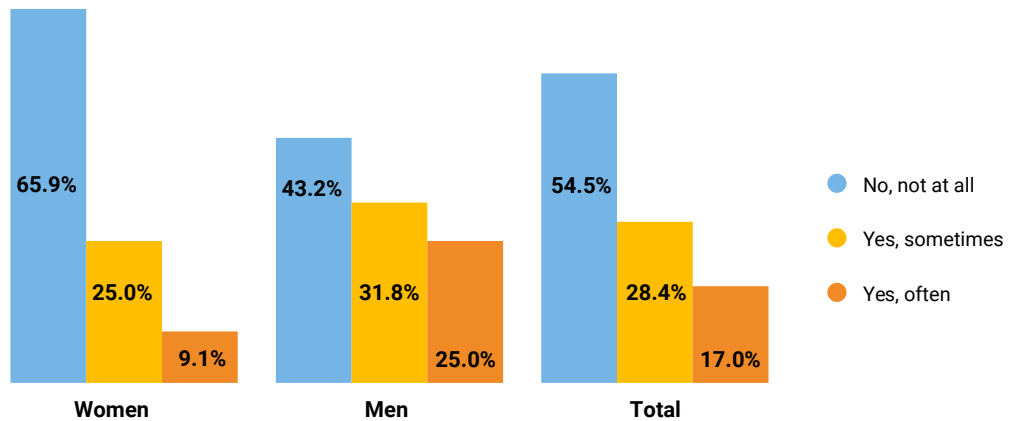
Additionally, 38.1% cited government officials as a main source of pressure. This was followed by owners or management of their media outlet, criminal organizations, and businesses or interest groups—each cited by 14.3% of respondents as the main source of threat or intimidation.

Figure 49: The main sources of threats or intimidation (only those who have been threatened or intimidated during the election campaign)



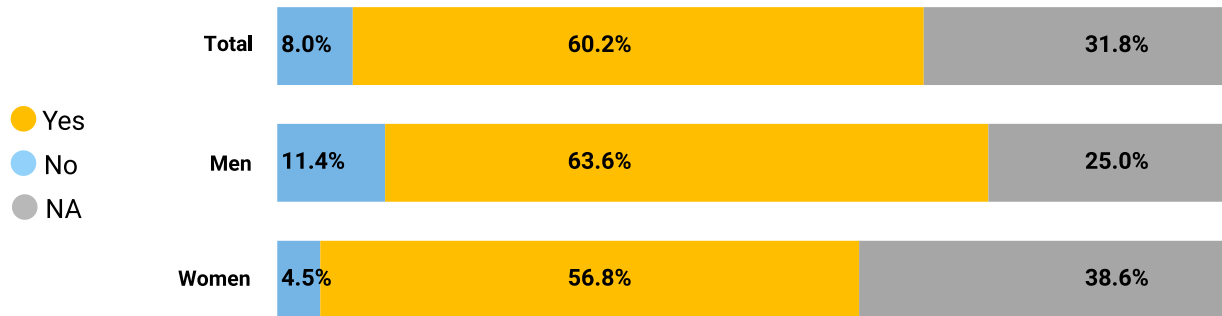
Online hostility was also prevalent. Seventeen per cent of respondents reported frequent online attacks, while 28.4% experienced them occasionally. Men reported higher exposure than women.

Figure 50: "Have you been the target of online attacks (e.g., offensive comments, threats, defamation) while covering the elections?", by gender



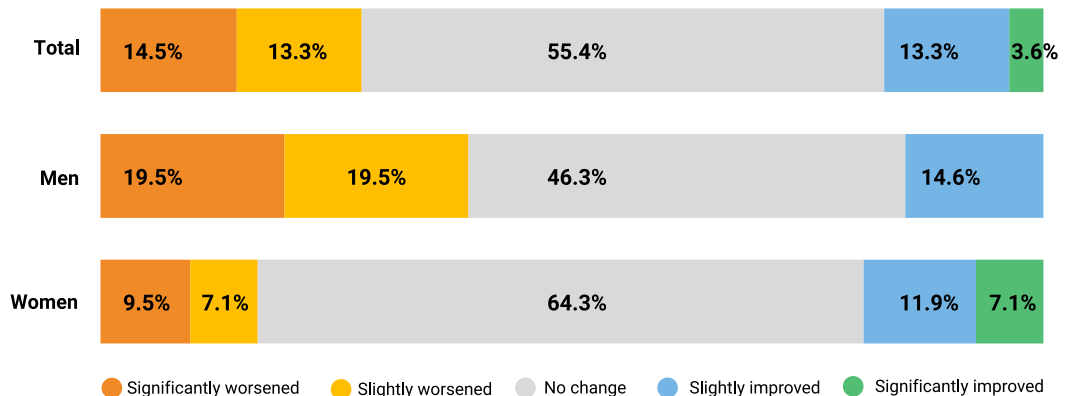
Approximately 60% of respondents did not report incidents of pressure, threats, or attacks to the relevant authorities while covering the elections. A higher proportion of women respondents chose not to report such cases compared to men respondents. Only 8.0% of all respondents stated that they had reported these incidents.

Figure 51: "If you have faced pressure, threats, or attacks while covering the elections, did you report these incidents to the relevant authorities?", by gender



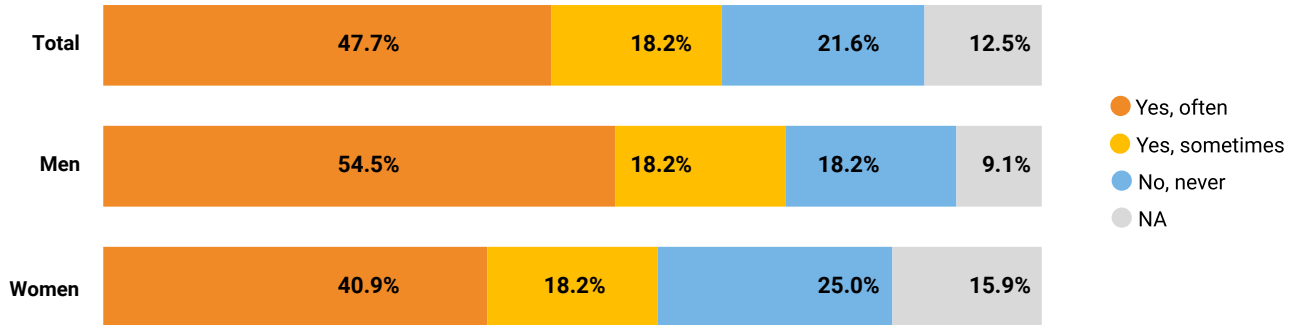
The electoral period worsened the freedom to report independently and without fear of censorship for 27.8% of respondents. Specifically, 14.5% stated that the situation had significantly worsened, while 13.3% reported a slight worsening. Men respondents were more likely than women respondents to believe that the electoral period negatively impacted their reporting freedom.

Figure 52: "In your opinion, how did the electoral period affect your freedom to report independently and without fear of censorship?"



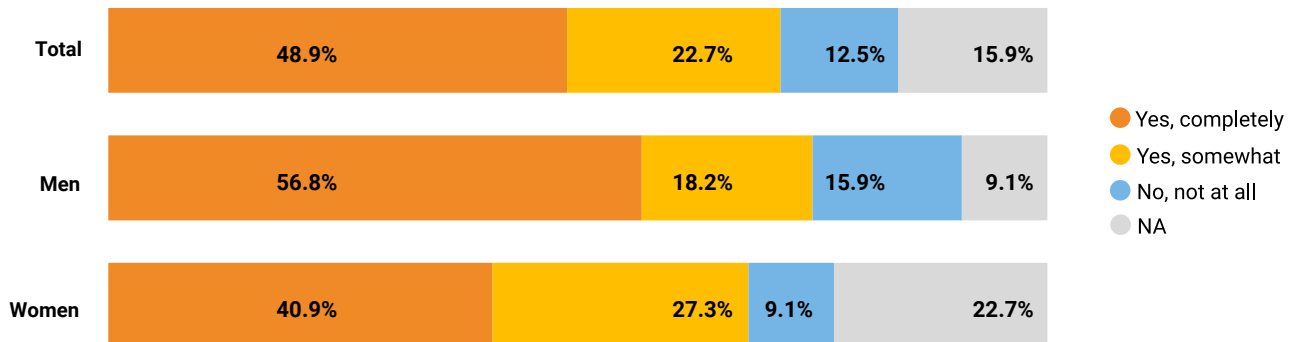
Almost two-thirds of respondents stated that during the election campaign and election day, they were offered pre-prepared materials, which resulted in avoiding direct questions or interviews. Specifically, 47.7% reported this happened often, while 18.2% said it occurred sometimes.

Figure 53: "During the election campaign and election day, were you offered pre-prepared media materials (video, audio, or text) by parties or candidates, avoiding direct questions or interviews?", by gender



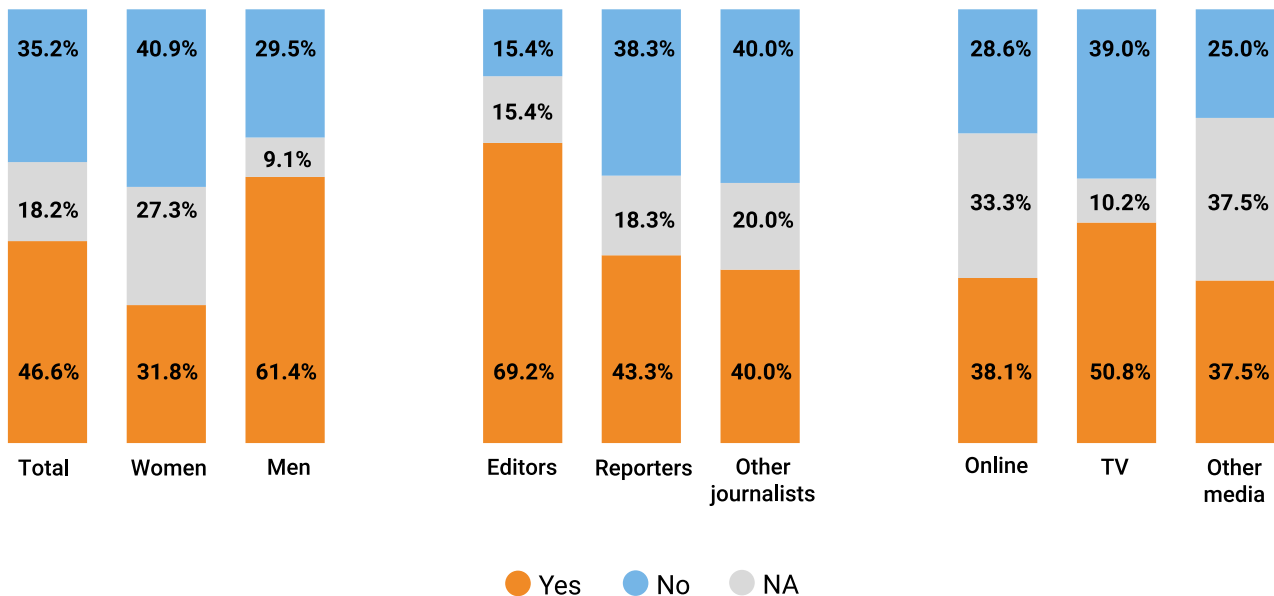
Nearly half of the respondents (48.9%), with a higher proportion of men than women, reported that pre-prepared materials have limited their journalistic work and editorial independence.

Figure 54: "Have ready-made materials from parties or candidates been perceived as limiting journalistic work and independence?", by gender



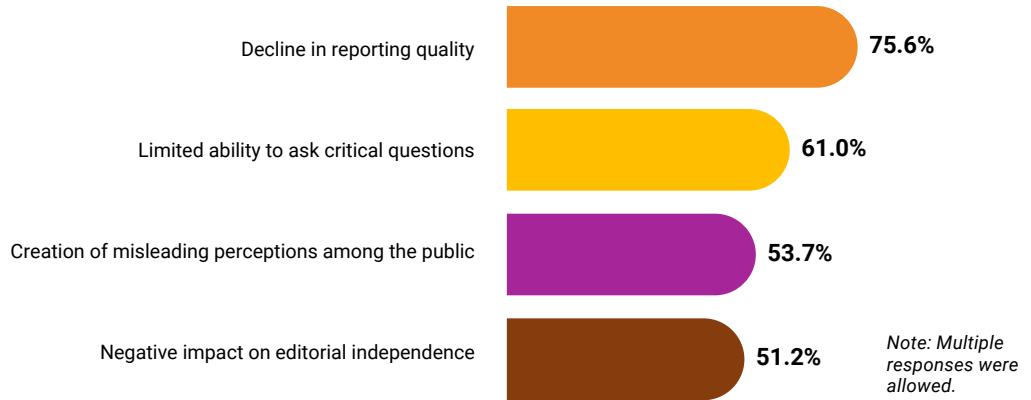
Almost half of the respondents (46.6%) reported feeling pressured by political parties or candidates to use only the materials provided, thereby limiting their ability to conduct independent interviews. This pressure was more frequently reported by men journalists than women, by editors more than reporters, and by those working in television compared to those in online media.

Figure 55: “Have you ever felt pressured by political parties or candidates to use only the materials they provided, limiting your ability to conduct independent interviews or reporting?”



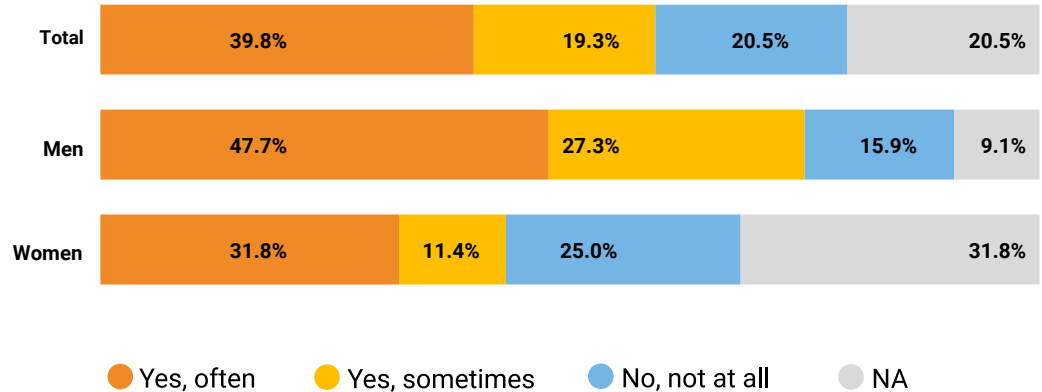
Approximately three-quarters of respondents (75.6%) stated that the use of pre-prepared media materials led to a decline in reporting quality. Additionally, 61.0% believed it limited their ability to ask critical questions, 53.7% pointed to the creation of misleading perceptions among the public, and 51.2% reported a negative impact on editorial independence.

Figure 56: “How did pre-prepared materials affect the quality and independence of your reporting during the elections?”



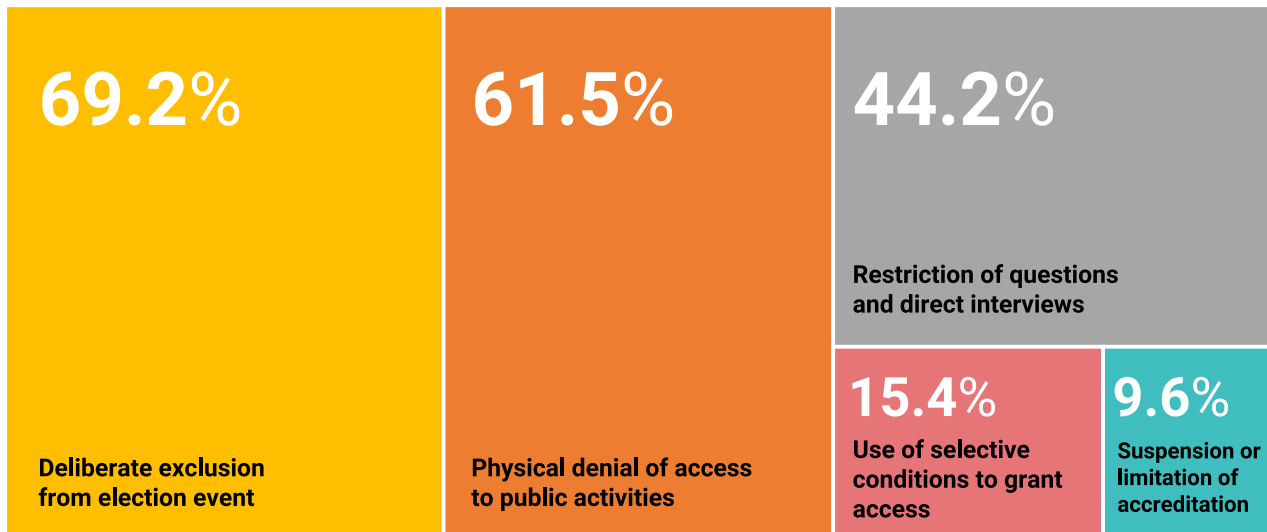
Just over a third (39.8%) reported that their access to electoral events, campaign activities, or public statements was often restricted by parties or candidates during the election period, while an additional 19.3% reported occasional restrictions. A higher proportion of men than women indicated experiencing such restrictions.

Figure 57: “Was your access to electoral events, campaign activities, or public statements by parties/candidates restricted during the election period (11 May, 2025)?”, by gender



Approximately 70% of respondents who experienced access restrictions reported deliberate exclusion from election events, 61.5% faced physical denial of access to public activities, 44.2% encountered restrictions on questions and direct interviews, 15.4% experienced the use of selective conditions for granting access, and 9.6% reported suspension or limitation of accreditation.

*Figure 58: "In what ways was your journalistic access restricted?"*



Taken together, the data suggest that the 2025 electoral period was characterized by heightened access constraints, political pressure, digital hostility, and structured message control practices. While not universal, these patterns indicate that electoral contexts continue to present systemic challenges to independent journalism, with implications for transparency, pluralism, and democratic accountability.

## 4.2. Progress on the Roadmap on the Functioning of Democratic Institutions

*Measure 1: Increased quantitative and qualitative monitoring and professionalism in media reporting during campaigns, including AMA capacity building through the “Modernization of the Monitoring Studio” project.*

The ODIHR report<sup>95</sup> found that “the AMA sent daily and weekly monitoring reports to CEC, in line with the law”, covering the quantitative aspect of the requirement set out in the measure. However, the report emphasizes that monitoring did not assess the tone of coverage, thus not addressing qualitative aspects of the measure. Furthermore, the report states that the “CEC received the monitoring report covering the period 1 – 10 May only on 19 May, one week after the elections”.

Data from the ODIHR report, independent monitoring, and the survey administered to media professionals, point to the dominance of pre-prepared materials sent out to media during the electoral campaign. BIRN Albania’s audiovisual and online media monitoring during the 2025 parliamentary campaign provides additional qualitative and structural insight into coverage patterns. Online media monitoring identified extensive republication of identical campaign materials across portals, limited source diversity, and headline framing that frequently amplified political messaging without contextual verification.<sup>96</sup>

The audiovisual monitoring of prime-time news editions and political talk shows across national broadcasters showed a strong reliance on pre-recorded campaign materials and event-based reporting, with limited space for critical questioning or adversarial debate.<sup>97</sup> Differences between public and private broadcasters were visible in terms of allocation of airtime and format, but across outlets the predominance of party-produced content reduced opportunities for substantive scrutiny. These findings suggest that while formal quantitative monitoring requirements were met, the qualitative dimension of electoral coverage—particularly

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<sup>95</sup> OSCE/ODIHR. (2025, October 23). [Albania Parliamentary Elections, 11 May 2025: Final Report](#). Warsaw

<sup>96</sup> Voko, K., Babameto, S., & Keta, V. (2025). [Online Media Monitoring: Albania’s Parliamentary Elections 2025](#). BIRN Albania. Tirana.

<sup>97</sup> Voko, K., Lelo, E., & Shehu, J. (2025). [Audiovisual Media Monitoring: Albania’s – Parliamentary Elections 2025](#). BIRN Albania. Tirana.

editorial autonomy, pluralistic representation, and critical engagement—remained structurally constrained during the campaign period.

Furthermore, threats and intimidation towards journalists reporting on the election campaign further undermine the quality and professionalism in media.

On 9 November, by-elections took place in five Albanian municipalities, those of Vlore, Berat, Mat, Tepelene, and Cerrik. The electoral campaign lasted seven days, and following the practice of the general elections of 11 May, the AMA sent quantitative media monitoring reports to the CEC, with the allocation of airtime to mayoral candidates. Information remains quite limited regarding any further qualitative monitoring of the information space during these elections.

*Measure 2: Investment in capacities targeting disinformation during electoral processes, including relevant target groups.*

In July 2025, the Albanian Parliament approved the law on the National Strategy Against Foreign Interference and Disinformation 2025–2030.<sup>98</sup> The strategy provides for aligning closely with the EU acquis regarding digital services, media freedom, and artificial intelligence. It emphasizes reinforcing civil society capacities, independent media, investigative journalism, fact-checking, and promoting public education to counter disinformation threats effectively. Implementation of the strategy remains the greatest challenge, requiring the establishment of clear safeguards to prevent the potential misuse of the strategy for labelling legitimate criticism or dissent as disinformation or foreign interference.<sup>99</sup>

Under objective one of the strategy, “Building and consolidating institutional capacities to prevent, detect and analyse foreign interference in election campaigns”, is foreseen the creation of a dedicated unit for the monitoring of and immediate reaction to disinformation and information manipulation. The strategy foresees this measure to be implemented within 12 months, and responsible institutions include the responsible parliamentary commission, CEC and Ministry of Justice.

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<sup>98</sup> [Official Gazette, no. 138, 2025.](#)

<sup>99</sup> SCiDEV. (2025, July 7). [Media Landscape – June 2025 Brief.](#)

The ODIHR<sup>100</sup> states that “before elections, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) held a training for the CEC regarding methods to monitor hate speech, disinformation, and spending on social networks”. Additionally, it reports the “CEC set up a special unit to monitor the social network accounts of 150 public institutions during the campaign and received training on detecting election-related misinformation”.

Seven political parties, including the two major ones, signed a Code of Conduct on Digital Campaigns<sup>101</sup> in March 2025, ahead of the parliamentary elections. The Code, facilitated by international partners with the participation of the CEC, does not have an obligatory nature and aims to build a shared commitment towards integrity, transparency, privacy, safety, fairness, and a level playing field, including abstaining from producing or disseminating misleading content.

Despite these efforts, monitoring data indicate that the electoral period was marked by a broader surge in online disinformation and manipulative content, involving both official political actors and unaffiliated third-party pages.<sup>102</sup> While AI-generated images and synthetic content were visible during the campaign,<sup>103</sup> they represented only one component of a wider ecosystem that included misleading narratives, recycled unverified claims, coordinated amplification through unofficial pages, and engagement-driven political messaging lacking transparency.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance’s Social Media Monitoring report on Albania’s parliamentary elections in 2025 identified 58 third-party social media pages and accounts that emerged during the campaign period.<sup>104</sup> These pages were not official political entities or verified media outlets, yet they actively disseminated politically framed content, including misleading and manipulated material. The proliferation of such actors illustrates the

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<sup>100</sup> OSCE/ODIHR. (2025, October 23). [Albania Parliamentary Elections, 11 May 2025: Final Report](#). Warsaw

<sup>101</sup> Gjoncaj, M. & Shehu, J. (2025, March 25). [Albanian parties adopt code of conduct on digital campaigns](#). International IDEA.

<sup>102</sup> Likmeta, B. (2025, January 31). “Kukull me çorape”: Faqja anonime në Instagram shpërndan dezinformimin për Lëvizjen Bashkë. Reporter.al.

Karaj, V. (2025, April 4). [Profilet anonime targetojnë edhe drejtuesit e “Nisma Shqipëria Bëhet”](#). Reporter.al.

Karaj, V. (2025, April 1). [Profili anonim në Facebook shpërndan dezinformim kundër partisë “Mundësia”](#). Reporter.al.

<sup>103</sup> Karaj, V. (2025, May 10). [Profilet në Facebook nga Vietnami përmbytin intervistën e Ramës në Opinion](#). Reporter.al.

<sup>104</sup> Likmeta, B. & Voko, K. (2025). [Social media Media Monitoring: Albania’s Parliamentary Elections 2025](#). International IDEA. Stockholm.

structural vulnerability of the online information environment, where influence operations can be conducted through loosely affiliated or opaque digital networks rather than through formally accountable campaign channels.

The general elections of 11 May, 2025, were also characterized by gendered disinformation,<sup>105</sup> especially AI-generated disinformation and digital attacks specifically targeting women.<sup>106</sup> Women candidates belonging to different political parties, both experienced and new-coming politicians, were subject to online disinformation, accompanied by hate speech.<sup>107</sup>

These developments confirm the findings of the 2025 vulnerability assessment on foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), which concludes that Albania's electoral environment remains structurally exposed to disinformation and external influence risks.<sup>108</sup> The assessment identifies a combination of enabling factors—including low institutional trust, concentrated and politically aligned media markets, regulatory gaps in the digital sphere, opaque online political advertising, and the rapid amplification capacity of loosely affiliated third-party pages—that create fertile ground for manipulative narratives during electoral periods.

Importantly, the study underlines that FIMI risks in Albania do not necessarily depend on strong domestic ideological alignment with foreign actors; rather, they operate through hybrid and opportunistic pathways, exploiting existing polarization, governance weaknesses, and the speed-driven logic of online media ecosystems. In this context, while the adoption of the National Strategy represents a significant policy step, the 2025 elections demonstrate that institutional preparedness, cross-institutional coordination, and regulatory enforcement mechanisms remain insufficiently consolidated to prevent the recurrence of coordinated disinformation campaigns or potential foreign-linked influence operations in future electoral cycles.

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<sup>105</sup> Karaj, V. (2025, June 6). [Pas perdes së fushatës: Gratë kandidatë u sulmuan me gjuhë seksiste dhe denigruese](#). Reporter.al.

<sup>106</sup> UN Women Albania, EDM & BIRN Albania. (2025). [Media Narratives, Visibility, Inequality and Gender-Based Violence in Politics during 2025 Elections. Women in Politics 2025 Factsheet](#).

<sup>107</sup> Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). (2025). [Findings on Gender-Based Violence in Media and Social Media Networks during the 2025 Electoral Campaign](#).

<sup>108</sup> BIRN Albania (2025). Albania's 2025 Elections: Vulnerabilities to Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 5.1. Conclusions

In 2025, Albania demonstrated measurable procedural alignment with EU standards in several areas related to media freedom and journalists' safety. Institutional frameworks have been adopted or strengthened, including journalist safety guidelines, ownership transparency registers, structured dialogue platforms, and preparatory work for EMFA and DSA alignment as well as preparatory steps towards anti-SLAPP and defamation reform. However, evidence throughout this report indicates that operational effectiveness and measurable impact remain uneven. A recurring pattern emerges in which formal mechanisms exist, but awareness, enforcement, transparency of outcomes, and institutional trust remain limited.

Structural vulnerabilities continue to shape the media environment. Political actors remain the primary source of threats and pressure reported by journalists. Media ownership concentration persists without enforceable structural pluralism safeguards. Labour precarity and economic dependency increase susceptibility to influence. Gender-specific threats and digital harassment remain embedded features of the professional landscape. These challenges are not episodic but systemic.

The 2025 parliamentary elections functioned as a practical test of institutional commitments. Survey data and independent monitoring indicate that access constraints, political pressure, structured message control through pre-prepared materials, and disinformation trends affected the campaign environment. While quantitative monitoring mechanisms were operational, qualitative assessment and real-time responsiveness appear limited. Electoral periods continue to amplify existing structural pressures on independent journalism.

Institutional trust remains fragile. Low awareness of safety protocols, declining reporting rates, limited transparency regarding prosecutorial outcomes, and incomplete judicial data collection restrict the perceived effectiveness of protection mechanisms. High-profile enforcement actions affecting media entities during 2025 further underscored the importance of proportionality and consistency in applying safeguards.

As Albania advances in its EU accession process, particularly under the Fundamentals cluster, media freedom reform enters a phase where procedural compliance alone is insufficient. The credibility of reform will increasingly depend on demonstrable implementation, institutional consolidation, transparency of outcomes, and the consistent protection of freedom of expression in practice.

## 5.2. Recommendations

*Alignment of legal framework with European standards:* Albania should systemically align its legal and regulatory framework with the requirements of the European Media Freedom Act and Digital Services Act, ensuring coherent transposition of standards on media independence, pluralism, transparency of ownership, finances, and influence, protection of journalists and media professionals, platform accountability, content moderation safeguards, and risk mitigation measures. This alignment should be accompanied by clear implementing rules, independent oversight mechanisms, and effective enforcement capacities to prevent formal compliance without substantive impact.

*Consolidate defamation reform in line with European standards:* Ensure coherent and comprehensive alignment of criminal and civil defamation provisions with ECtHR jurisprudence and Directive (EU) 2024/1069 against SLAPP and the Council of Europe's anti-SLAPP recommendation. Avoid fragmented or profession-specific approaches that may create legal uncertainty or unequal protection within public debate.

*Ensure effective implementation of journalist safety frameworks:* Strengthen the operational application of existing safety protocols through systematic follow-up, transparent publication of

investigative outcomes, and measurable performance indicators across police and prosecutorial bodies to enhance deterrence and institutional credibility.

*Institutionalize traceability in legislative and reform processes:* Introduce clear procedural mechanisms to document how recommendations emerging from structured dialogue processes are incorporated, modified, or declined in legislative drafting, ensuring transparency, continuity, and trust in reform pathways.

*Strengthen structural safeguards for media pluralism:* Complement ownership transparency mechanisms with enforceable safeguards addressing concentration risks and undue influence, including coherent oversight across audiovisual and digital sectors and strengthened regulatory independence.

*Enhance electoral-period media monitoring and disinformation response:* Advance qualitative monitoring capacity during electoral periods, ensure transparent reporting of monitoring findings, and clearly document the implementation and outputs of disinformation-related capacity-building initiatives foreseen under the Roadmap.

*Reinforce labour rights enforcement in the media sector:* Institutionalize risk-based inspection methodologies specific to the media sector and improve transparency of labour inspection outcomes, addressing persistent vulnerabilities related to precarious contracts and employment instability.

*Address gender-specific safety risks:* Strengthen institutional responsiveness to gender-based threats and harassment against women journalists, ensure accessible reporting channels, and integrate gender-responsive measures within broader journalist safety frameworks.

*Improve transparency and data availability:* Establish structured, publicly accessible reporting on cases involving journalists across police, prosecution, and judicial institutions, including data on investigations, prosecutions, dismissals, and judicial outcomes, to enable effective monitoring and reduce the current transparency gap.

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