



# **IFJ-Union to Union (UTU) Global Union Strengthening**

**Equipping Young Media Workers  
in Sri Lanka for Union Leadership  
in the Digital Economy- 2022**

**STRENGTHENING THE PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF  
JOURNALISTS THROUGH SITUATIONAL MAPPING AND  
EVIDENCE-BASED DATA**



## **Presentation on Survey conducted by the Federation of Media Employees Trade Unions, in collaboration with International federation of Journalists, Asia Pacific, Union to Union Project, 2022**

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## Introduction

As part of the Equipping Young Media Workers for Union Leadership in the Digital Economy- 2022 project, a survey of 300 journalists on the professional status of the Federation of Media Employees Trade Unions (FMETU) members across Sri Lanka, was conducted in August and September 2022, by FMETU. A representative sample of journalists from all districts, working in mainstream media and also provincial correspondents of all major ethnic and religious groups participated in the survey. The respondents work for print, electronic and digital media. Both males and females are included.

A distinctive feature of this survey is that it focused on the professional issues with special reference to labour issues faced by journalists in Sri Lanka.

The objective of this survey is to strengthen the professional status of journalists through situational mapping and evidence-based data. The survey results are recorded below, and key information is translated into Sinhala and Tamil.

We believe that this information will be useful for FMETU and other journalists bodies, for lobbying with relevant authorities for the fulfillment of professional rights of journalists on par with employees in other sectors and adhering to labour regulations in Sri Lanka.

## Methodology

The survey included questions to understand the professional status of the target population on challenges related to their background and professional status. The survey was disseminated through a Google form to 350 journalists, and 318 responses were received. The survey was translated into the Sinhala and Tamil languages

## Findings

### வயக் கிடை வயதெல்லை Age Limit

353 responses

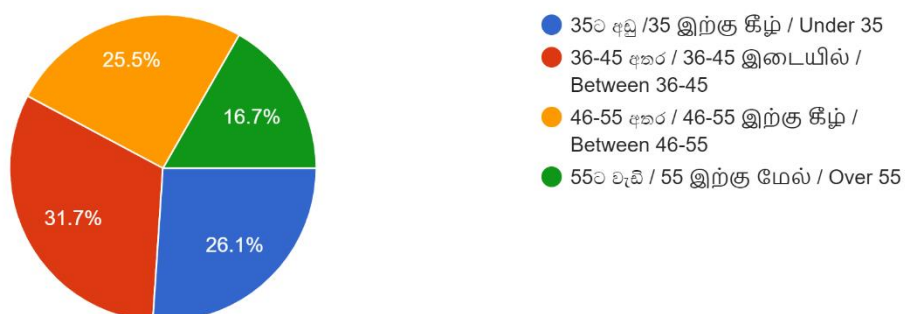


Figure 1 – Age Limit

Through the above it is noted that while majority of the participants were between 35 – 45, there is a similar representation of other age groups too in the profession.

### பொதுக் கல்வித் தகைமை Educational Qualifications

353 responses

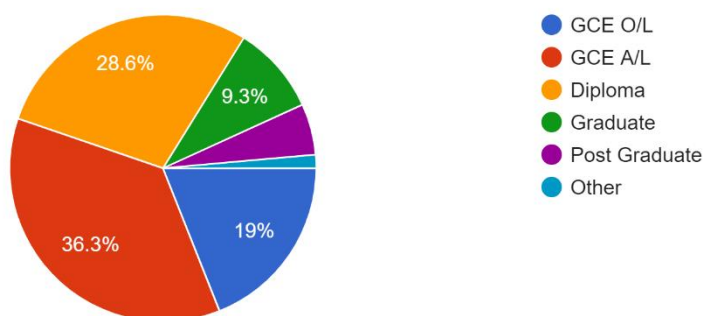


Figure 2 – Educational Qualifications

Through figure 2, it is noted that majority of the journalists have only secondary education. However, it was found out that the 28.6% have followed courses leading to Diplomas in Journalism and other related subjects.

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353 responses

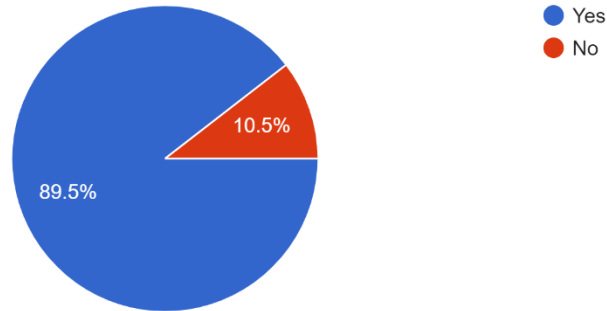


Figure 3 – Professional Status

While an overwhelming majority engaged full time in the profession of journalism, 10.5% are engaged in other jobs as well and work part time only as journalists.

මාධ්‍ය වෘත්තීය සඳහා විශේෂ සම්මාන ஊடகவியல் விசேட விருதுகள் Special award/s for Journalism

353 responses

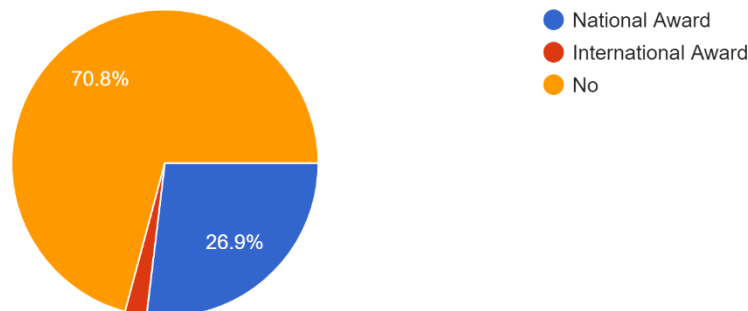


Figure 4 – Awards for Journalism

As per the findings, 70.8% have not received any awards, 26.9% have received national awards such as the Editors Guild Awards for excellence in Journalism, which are the most prestigious awards given annually by the industry for the industry,

විශේෂ මාධ්‍ය පුහුණු වැඩසටහන් සහභාගී වී තිබේද? විශේෂ ඉහළ පැයිර්ෂිකලි  
 පඤ්ඤෙරුලුරුලුරු? Important Media Training Programmes followed?  
 353 responses

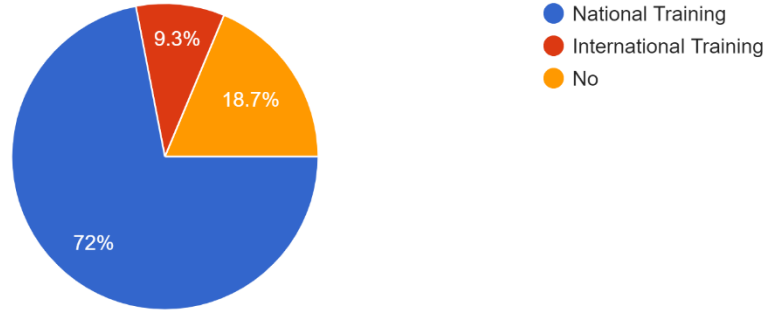


Figure 5 – Media Trainings followed

According to figure 5, majority have followed national level trainings such as short certificate courses and workshops conducted by the Government and Non Governmental organizations engaged in media development. However, a considerable segment (18.7%) have received no formal training at all. This is another indicator of the insufficient support and resources available.

ඤ්ඤෙරුලුරු? පඤ්ඤෙරුලුරු? Working Language?  
 353 responses

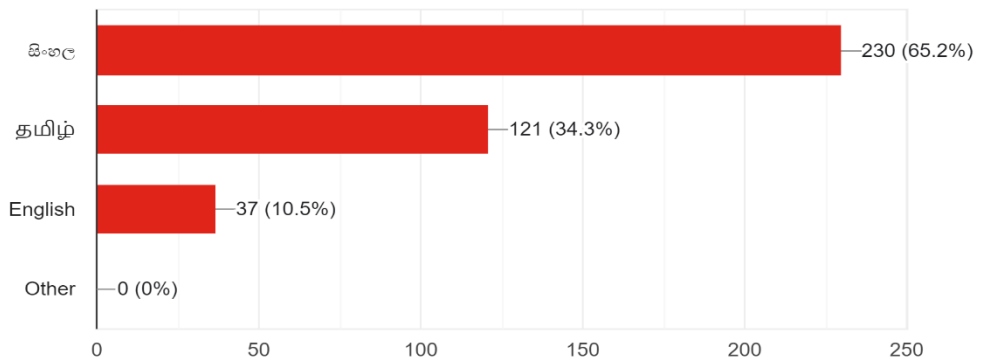


Figure 6 – Working Language

It is noted that the majority of the responders work in Sinhala, with the next largest language being Tamil (34.3%) the national languages. The low level of proficiency in the English language is an impediment for journalists to become exposed to global trends and reach global competitiveness.

### சேவையினை செயல்படுத்தும் ஊடகம்? Working Media?

353 responses

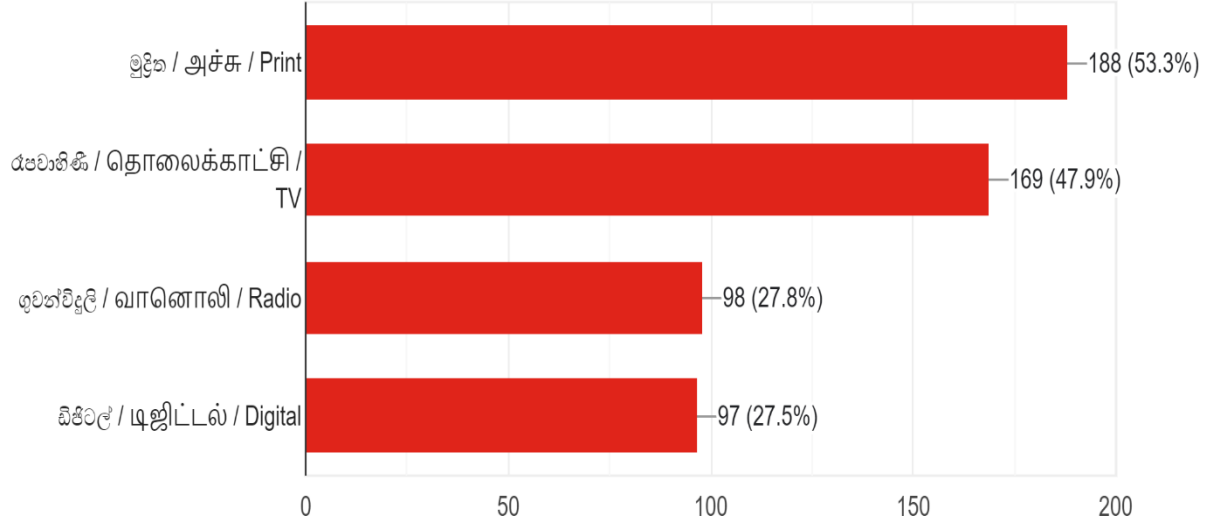
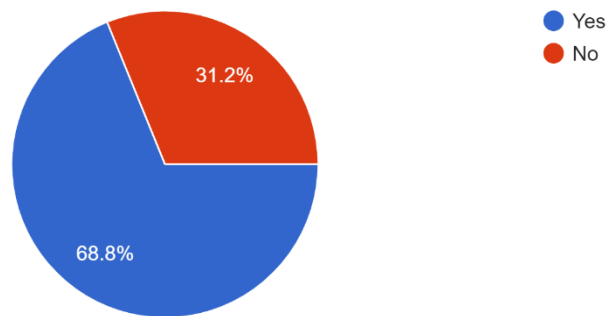


Figure 7 – Type of Media Engaged in

Most of the responders are engaged in traditional media, with only 27.5% engaged in digital media. However it is noteworthy that most traditional media channels are available online too and the contributions of journalists are uploaded by IT personnel, on the online platforms of these traditional media channels.

### சனவரி 2019-ல் உத்தரவு? நியமனக் கடிதம் உள்ளதா? Were you issued an Employment Contract?

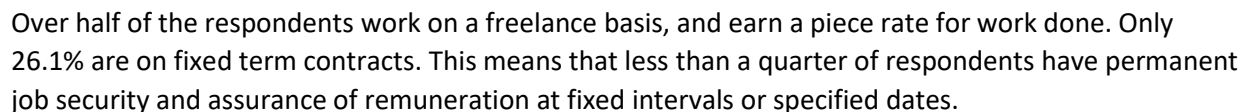
353 responses



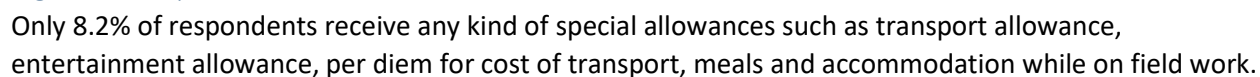


The majority of the organizations that the respondents are attached to have issued employment contracts. However, it is alarming to note that 31.2% of the respondents have been working for lengthy periods for media institutions without receiving any employment contract in written form.

353 responses



353 responses



லாபகரமான நேரத்தில் பணம் வருமா? குறிப்பிட்ட திகதியில் சம்பளம் வழங்கப்படுமா? Are you remunerated on a fixed date?

353 responses

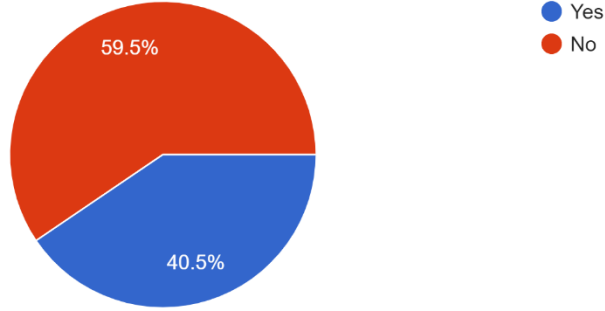


Figure 11 – Payment Date

While stable income is a priority in any profession, 40.5% of the respondents receive payment on an ad-hoc basis. This would result in having a negative impact on their quality of life, and would make basic needs such as the ability to take and pay back loans and pay utilities bills, house rent, and fees a huge challenge. challenge.

இவ்வளவு வேலைக்கு இவ்வளவு பணம் போதுமா? தற்போதைய ஊதியம் உங்கள் தகைமைக்கு போதுமானது என நி...tion is adequate for your credentials?

353 responses

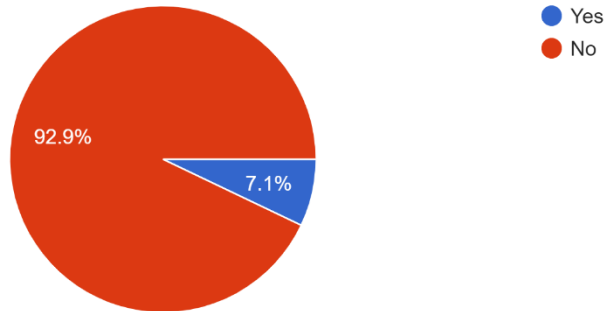


Figure 12 – Compensation for work done

As per figure 12, there is majority consensus that the remuneration they receive is inadequate in relation to their professional experience, qualifications and skills. To make matters worse, most media

institutions have not raised the quantum of the remuneration package given to journalists in the context of the current economic crisis. . Being disgruntled would lead to a drop of quality in work.

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353 responses

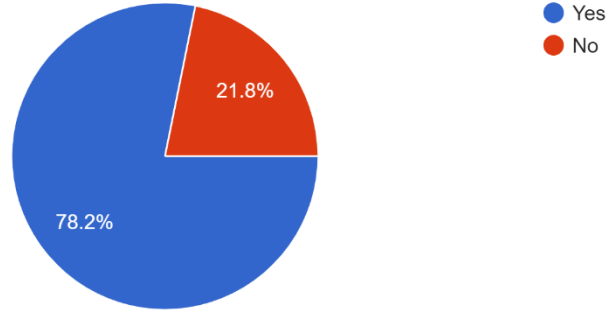


Figure 13 – Media Identity card

21.8% of respondents have no formal media identity card giving them legitimacy to their profession as journalists. In the current political and social environment. Media Institutes provide institutional Identification cards to journalists . The Government Information Department too provides identification based on the recommendation of the employers. This is a key document that is essential for the identity, safety and wellbeing of the journalists. The fact that 21.8% do not have such identification is significant.

උසස්වීම් පිළිබඳ පටිපාටියක් තිබේද? පතවි උයර්වු තිද්දම් ඇළළුතා? Is there a promotion scheme for you?

353 responses

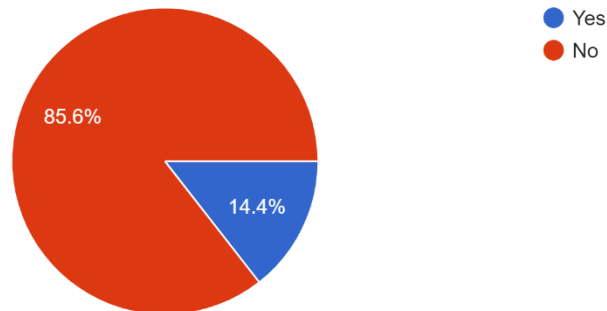


Figure 14 – Promotions

Only 14.4% of respondents have a clear path for any form of career progression. With career progression comes career satisfaction. It is evident that the journalists suffer from lack of professional growth, prospects, which has a direct impact on their personal lives.

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353 responses

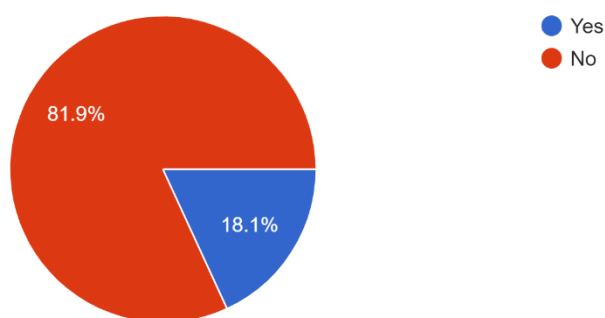


Figure 15 – Annual Increments

Only 18.1% of respondents are entitled to annual salary increments, which is essential with the sky rocketing inflation and cost of living. Most institutions in other sector, both public, private and non governmental organizations in Sri Lanka have an annual increment scheme.

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353 responses

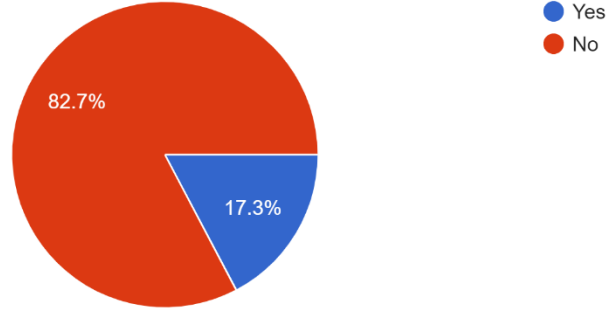


Figure 16 – EPF benefits

Only 17.3% of respondents are entitled to Employee Provident Fund , formal social security benefits. It is mandatory according to the labour Laws in Sri Lanka for employers to provide this benefit. However, as illustrated in this chart, many journalists are victims of observance of this regulation in the breach.

සේවක භාර අරමුදල හිමිද්? ஊழியர் நம்பிக்கை பொறுப்பு நிதியம் கொண்டதா? Are you entitled to the Employees' Trust Fund?

353 responses

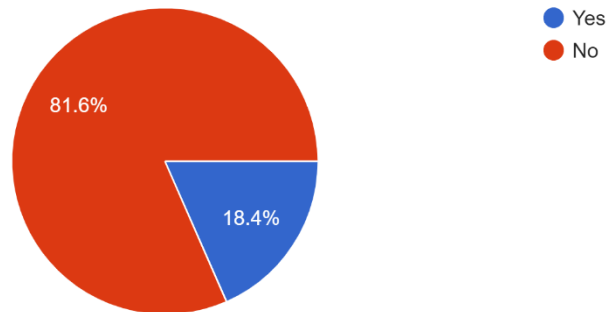


Figure 17 – ETF benefits

Only 18.4% of respondents are entitled to the Employee Trust Fund, social security benefits which again is enshrined in the Labour regulations of Sri Lanka

சேவை பணித்தொகை கிடைக்கிறதா? சேவை பணித்தொகை பெற உரிமை உள்ளதா? Are you entitled to service gratuity?

353 responses

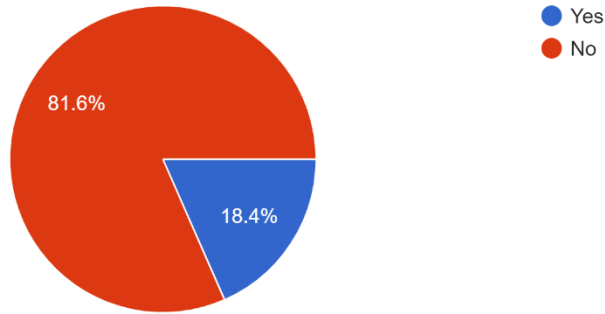


Figure 18 – Service Gratuity

Only 18.4% of respondents are entitled to service gratuity after working for several years as a journalist. Gratuity is a benefit that is legally mandatory after completion of 5 years of service by an employee. Many journalists do not enjoy this right too.

பூக்கி கொடுக்கிறதா? போனஸ் பெற தகுதி உள்ளதா? Are you entitled to a bonus payment?

353 responses

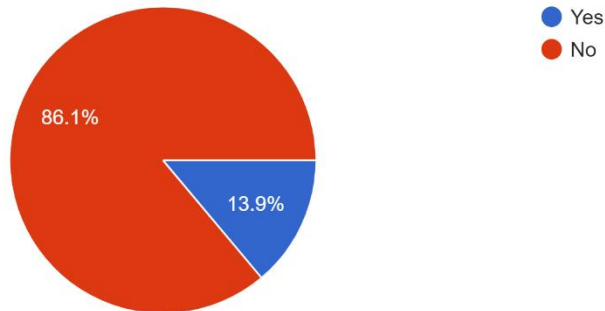


Figure 19 – Bonuses

Only 13.9% of respondents are entitled to bonus payments. Most private sector and even public sector corporations provide annual or bi annual bonus payments for employees. This is another benefit that many journalists do not enjoy.

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353 responses

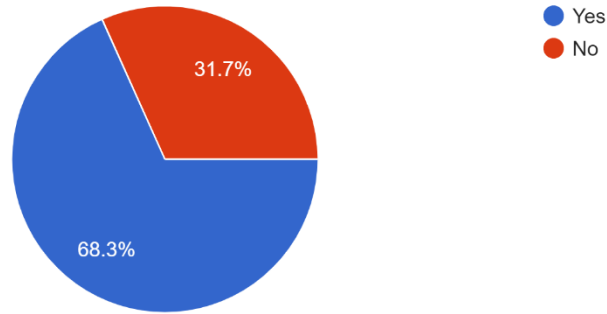


Figure 20 – Facing abuse as a journalist

A majority of respondents have at some point of their career, suffered abuse for being a journalist in Sri Lanka.

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353 responses

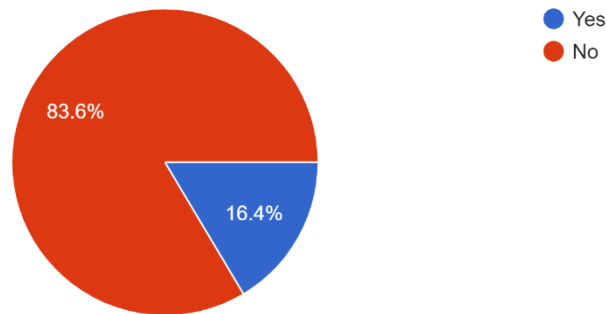


Figure 21 – Facing gender-based abuse as a journalist

16.4% of respondents have at some point faced gender- based abuse while practicing their profession as journalists.

වෘත්තීය වශයෙන් ඔබට ප්‍රමාණවත් ආරක්ෂාවක් තිබේද? தொழில் ரீதியாக உங்களுக்கு போதுமான பாதுகாப்பு உள்ளதா? Do you have adequate safety and security as a professional Journalist?  
353 responses

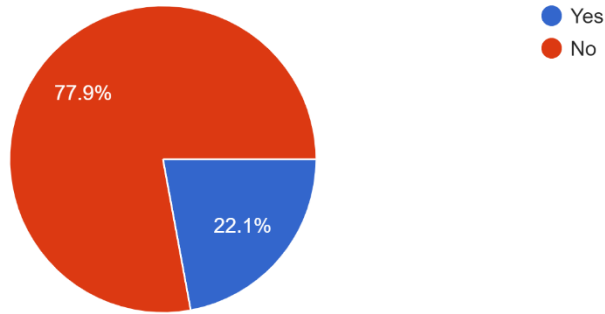


Figure 22 – Safety and security as a journalist

An overwhelming majority of respondents do not feel safe or secure as a journalists in Sri Lanka. The past and current record of cases of journalists being murdered, abducted and assaulted has not provided any lessons nor, paved the way for enhanced security and safety measures for journalists in general.

සංවිධානය වූ වෘත්තීය එක්සත්කම වැදගත්ද? ஒழுங்கமைக்கப்பட்ட தொழிலாளர் சங்கம் அவசியமானதா? Is organized professional unionism important to you?  
353 responses

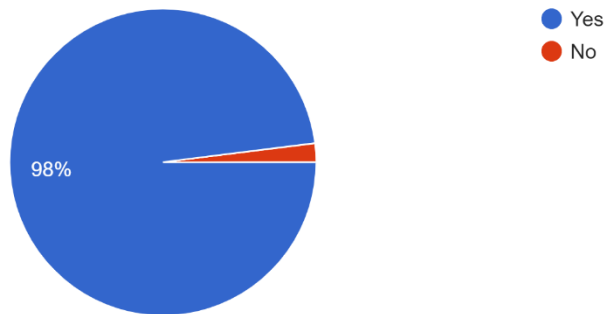


Figure 23 – Organized unions for journalists

Almost all respondents feel it necessary to be a part of an organized and professional journalists trade union to protect their career and life.



වෘත්තීය ජාත්‍යන්තර සබඳතා අවශ්‍ය ද? சர்வதேச ஊடக அமைப்புகள் மூலம் உங்களுக்கு பாதுகாப்பு அவசியமா? Do you need protection through international journalism bodies?  
353 responses

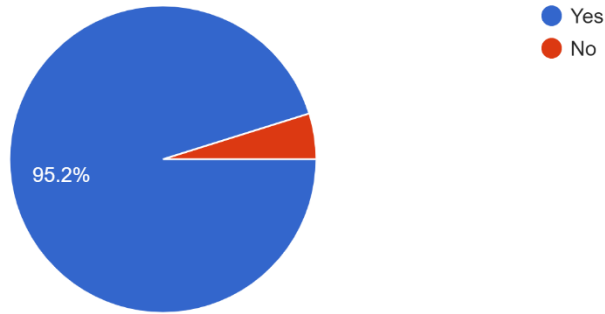


Figure 23 – International bodies for journalists

Almost all respondents feel it necessary to garner support from international bodies such as International federation of Journalists which work towards the rights and protection of journalists.

## Conclusion

It is evident from the above findings that the professional status and access to rights of journalists in Sri Lanka is far from healthy. Primarily, a number of basic professional needs such as job security, lack of resources, lack of incentives, and lack of career progression and social security are salient issues. . Furthermore, lack of formal training and physical danger are just some of the downsides in this field.

From the data gathered, it is evident that journalists in Sri Lanka are grappling with myriad challenges with little prospects for the future, whilst they report from the ground.

These problems may tempt vulnerable journalists to indulge in unethical practices, leading to a low level of professional dignity.

As the Fourth Estate, Sri Lankan journalists and media as a whole, should be provided with even the basic professional rights and incentives for professional growth, in line with international norms, to strengthen democratic values and accelerate national development.

September 2022

