

MLDI

Media Legal
Defence Initiative

Journalist impact survey 2018

Results

Author: Patrick Regan - Evaluation, Strategy & Communications Manager

Background

- As part of MLDI's monitoring and evaluation strategy, we seek to measure the impact of our work as reported directly by the journalists we have supported.
- In order to this, we have developed an impact survey to collect feedback from journalists we have supported either directly or via our partners.
- This was the second time we circulated the survey. Results from the first wave, conducted in 2017 can be found here:
<https://www.mediadefence.org/publications/impact-survey-findings>

Notes on methodology

- This was the second annual impact survey sent out to journalists supported by MLDI.
- The 2017 survey focused on those directly supported by MLDI. The 2018 survey was sent to both those directly supported by MLDI as well as those supported by partner projects funded by MLDI.
- The survey was sent via SurveyMonkey and was open for the entire month of July 2018.
- The survey was available in English, Italian, Russian and Spanish.
- A total of 55 completed responses were received.
- The response rate for MLDI supported journalists was much lower than last year, 23% compared to 52% in 2017.
- However, the overall number of responses was much higher in 2018 (55 responses compared to 22) – this is mainly due to the inclusion of partner-supported journalists, adding weight to the accuracy and validity of the data.

Notes on comparability and analysis

- As this survey included partner-supported journalists, and the number of MLDI directly-supported journalists is small, year on year comparison is very limited.
- The first survey was sent to those with cases closed in 2015 and 2016. This year's survey was sent to those with cases closed in 2017 only (two years Vs. one year).
- Country and region analysis and comparison needs to be treated with caution and it is somewhat skewed due to the inclusion of partner-supported journalists, resulting in some regions and countries being over represented.

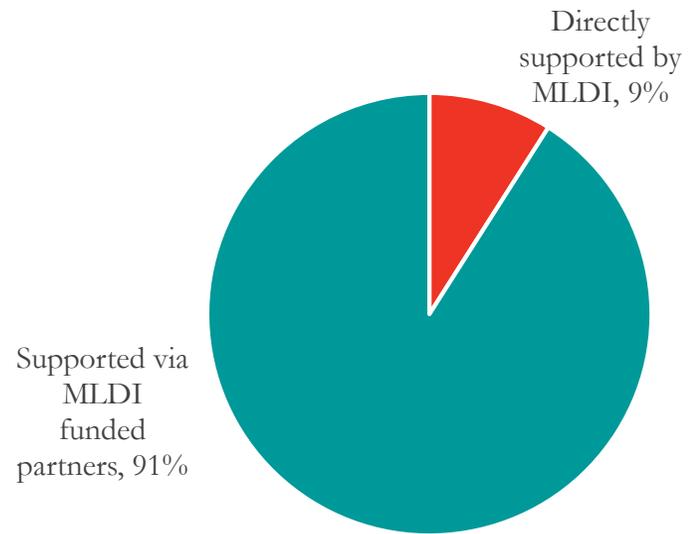
The report

- This report provides a summary of the responses received, question by question, and initial analysis including comparisons from 2017 (where there was significant difference) as well as differences between partners or regions.
- The majority of questions were optional and some participants were presented with slightly different questions based on previous answers. Therefore the number of responses for each question varies. The number of responses received for each question is included throughout the report.
- Data was analysed by MLDI's Evaluation, Strategy and Communications Manager.

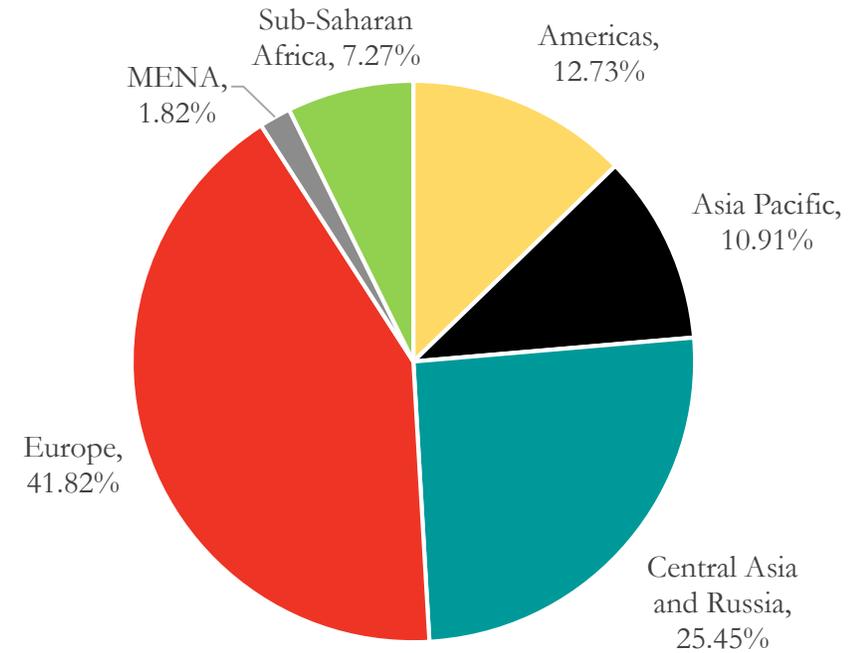
Respondents' profiles

Organisation and region

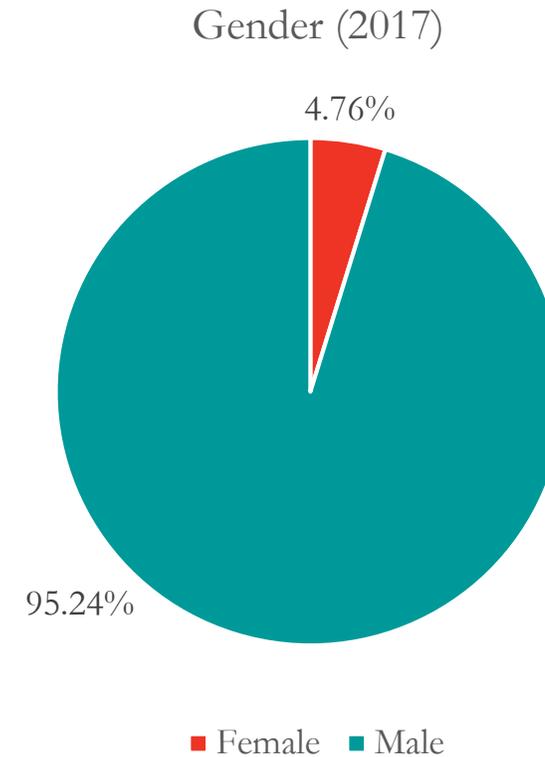
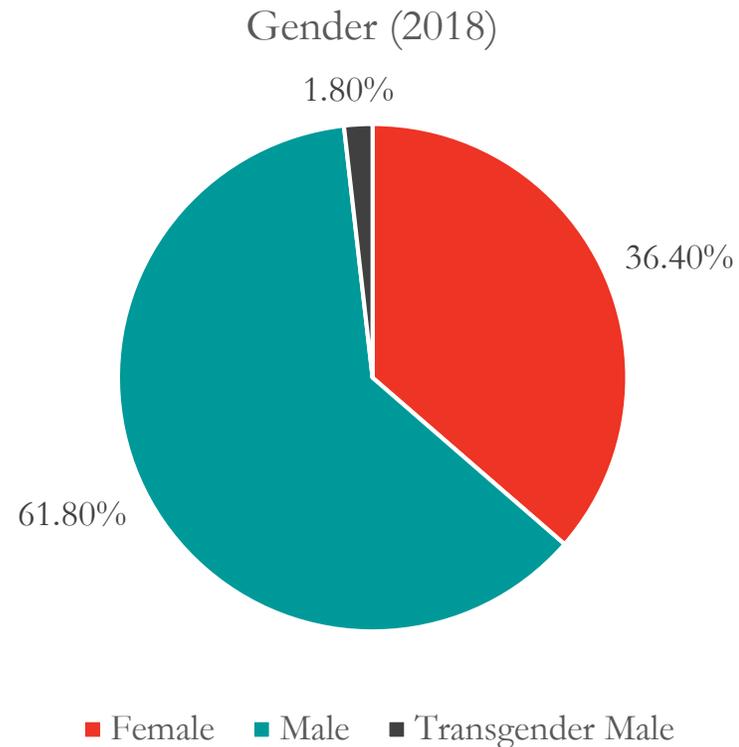
Proportion of respondents supported by MLDI



Region of respondents



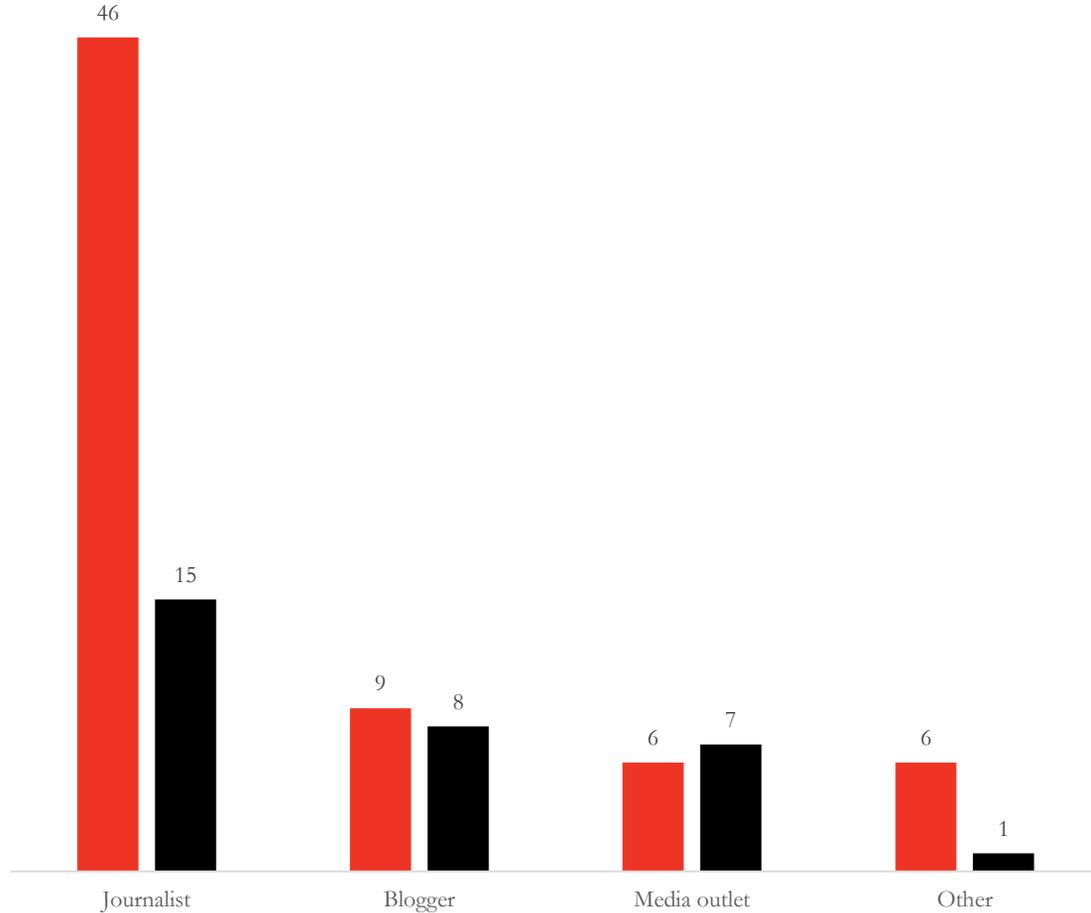
Gender



There was an insufficient quantity of MLDI respondents to know if there was a significant shift in the gender make up of the respondents since 2017, but we can see that the gender split of this year's respondents is significantly more balanced, likely due to the involvement of partner-supported journalists.

I am a(tick all that apply)
55 responses

■ 2018 ■ 2017



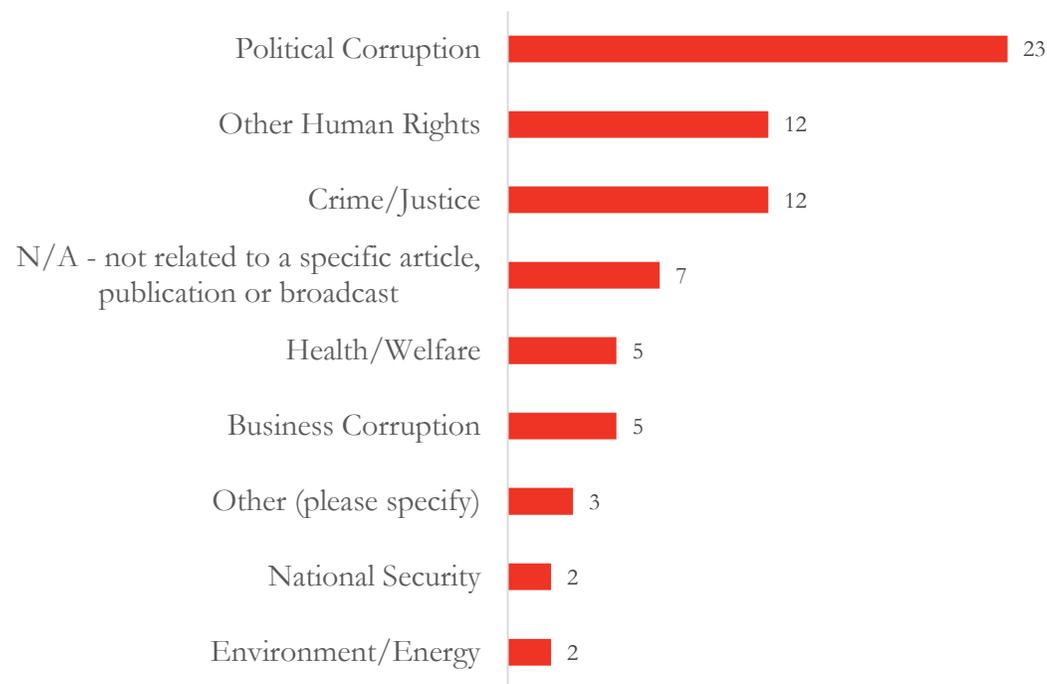
“Other” includes: NGO, historian, filmmaker, family member of a journalist, lawyer (also a journalist)

The proportion of journalists supported is much higher than 2017 compared to bloggers or media outlets. The number of bloggers and media outlets is roughly the same in raw numbers despite the much bigger sample size. It is unclear why this is, one possible explanation could be the some of our partners support more traditional journalists.

The case

If your case was related to a specific article, publication or broadcast, what was the content of the article, publication or broadcast?

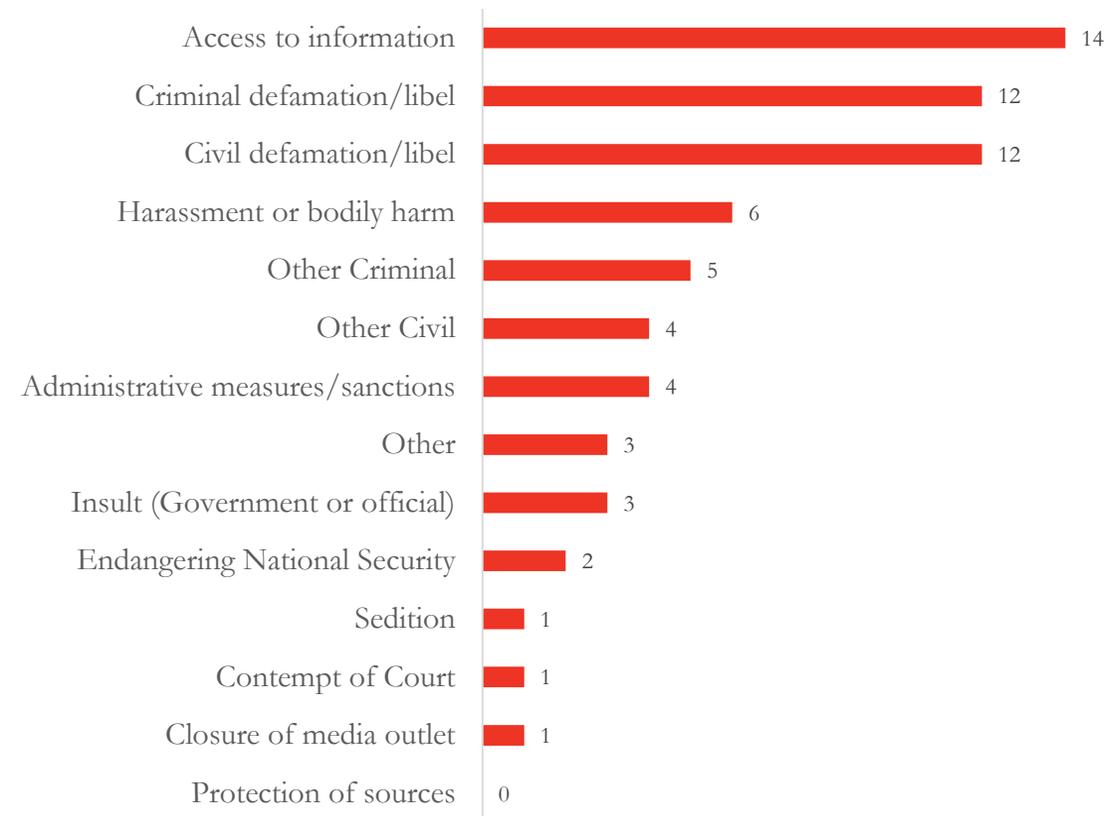
53 responses



Compared to 2017, there were no significant changes in the type of journalistic content, with exception of business corruption, which came much higher in the ranking in 2017.

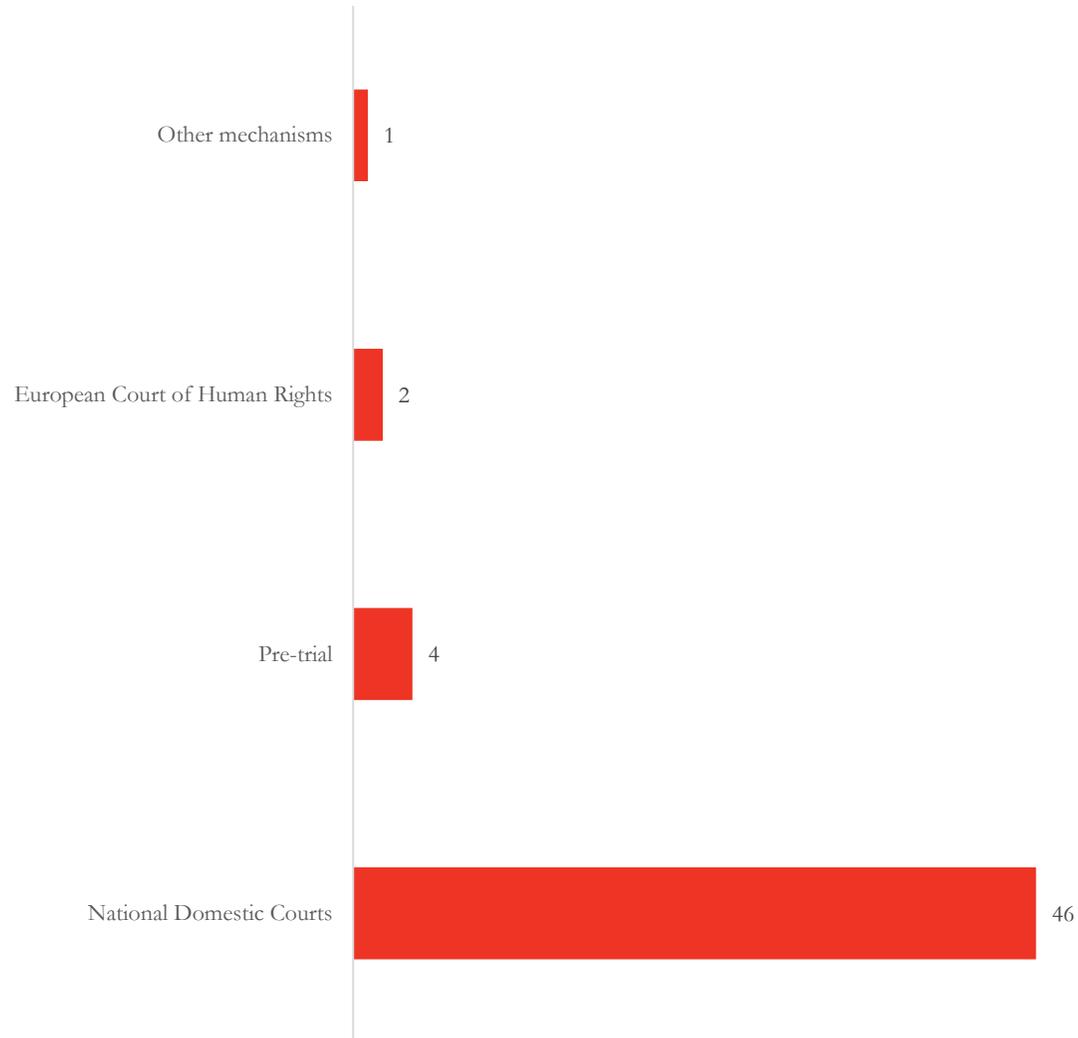
What types of case(s) did you receive support for? Tick all that apply.

53 responses

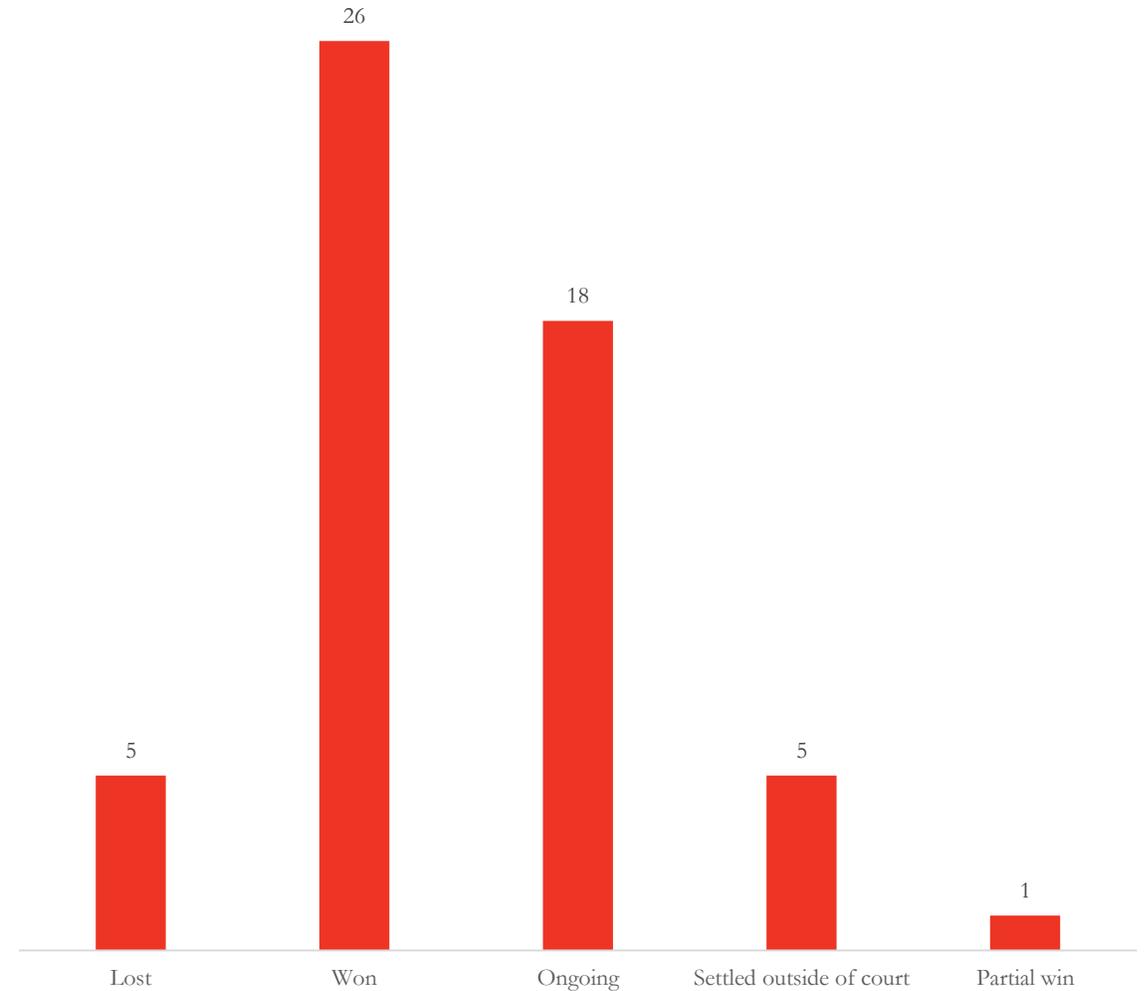


The only significant difference to 2017 was an increase in cases on access to information and harassment.

Was your case at a national/domestic court or at one of the following regional/international courts?
53 responses



What was the outcome of your case?
55 responses



2018 Impact statistics



91%

Success Rate



92.5%

have continued to report



92%

have continued to report (MLDI cumulative average, from directly supported cases in 2017 and 2018)

As a result of the legal challenges you faced, have you changed your journalistic practice in any way? If so please explain.

50 responses

- 31 (62%) said they made no changes to their journalistic practice
- 8 (16%) said they are now more diligent in their reporting e.g. fact checking
- 5 (10%) felt more emboldened and committed to their journalism or that it has enabled them to do more investigative journalism
- 1 (2%) made substantive changes to the type of stories they were reporting on to avoid conflicts with the police
- 1 (2%) made logistical changes to their work for safety (avoiding travelling or working alone)
- 1 (2%) said they now seek pre-publication advice more
- 1 (2%) said they now have a better understanding of the legal framework and laws

“““

Since my case, I have focused more on human rights issues, so I would say that they failed in silencing me, quite to the contrary, they have provoked me to extend my interest to a whole new set of topics.

“““

I will be even more careful to have documentation that proves the truth of what I write.

“““

No. The challenges in this particular case and the outcome of the case have made it easier to work without fear of unconstitutional actions being taken against journalists.

What has prevented you from practicing journalism?

6 responses

Two responses were excluded from the count as their cases were either still ongoing or stated they were a historian and thus would not be practising journalism. The other responses included:

- Needing time to restore financial and organisational strength
- Exhausting personal resources and moving abroad
- Becoming a lawyer instead

The support

Would you recommend the organisation's support to a journalist in a similar situation?

55 responses

98.2%

said they would recommend the support received to a journalist in a similar situation



The 1.8% represents one respondent (supported by MLDI) who said they would not recommend MLDI's support. Their explanation stated that although MLDI had good intentions, it lacked country-specific knowledge of methods used by large corporations to harass journalists.

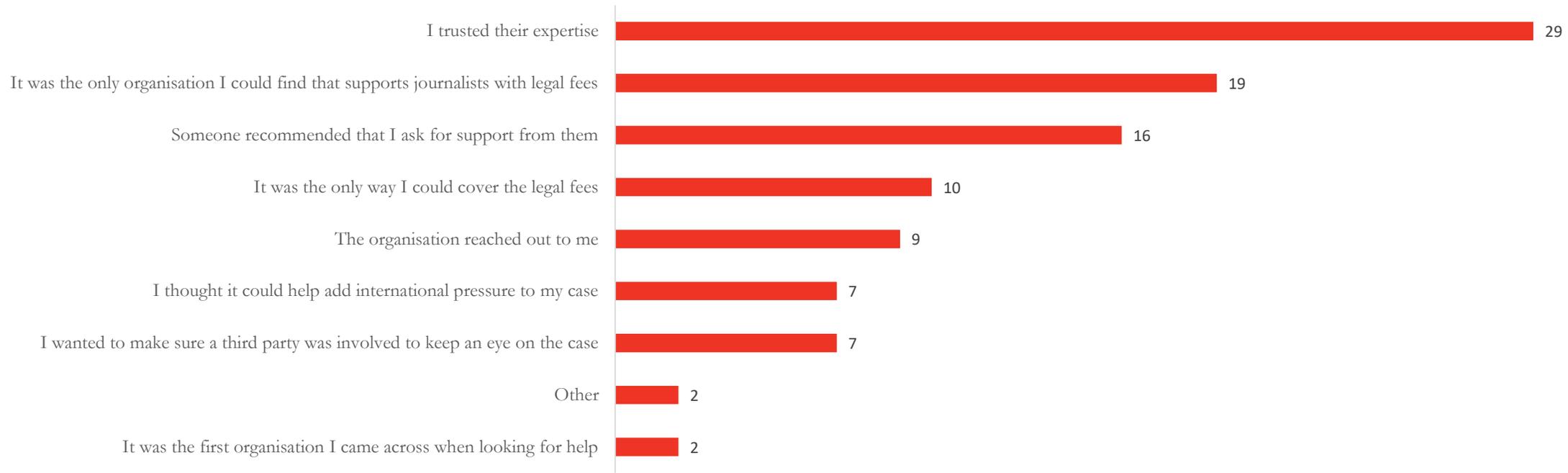


This brings MLDI's cumulative rate (combined 2017 and 2018, directly supported journalists) down from 95% to

92.3%

Why did you choose to approach the organisation for support with your case? (Please tick all that apply)

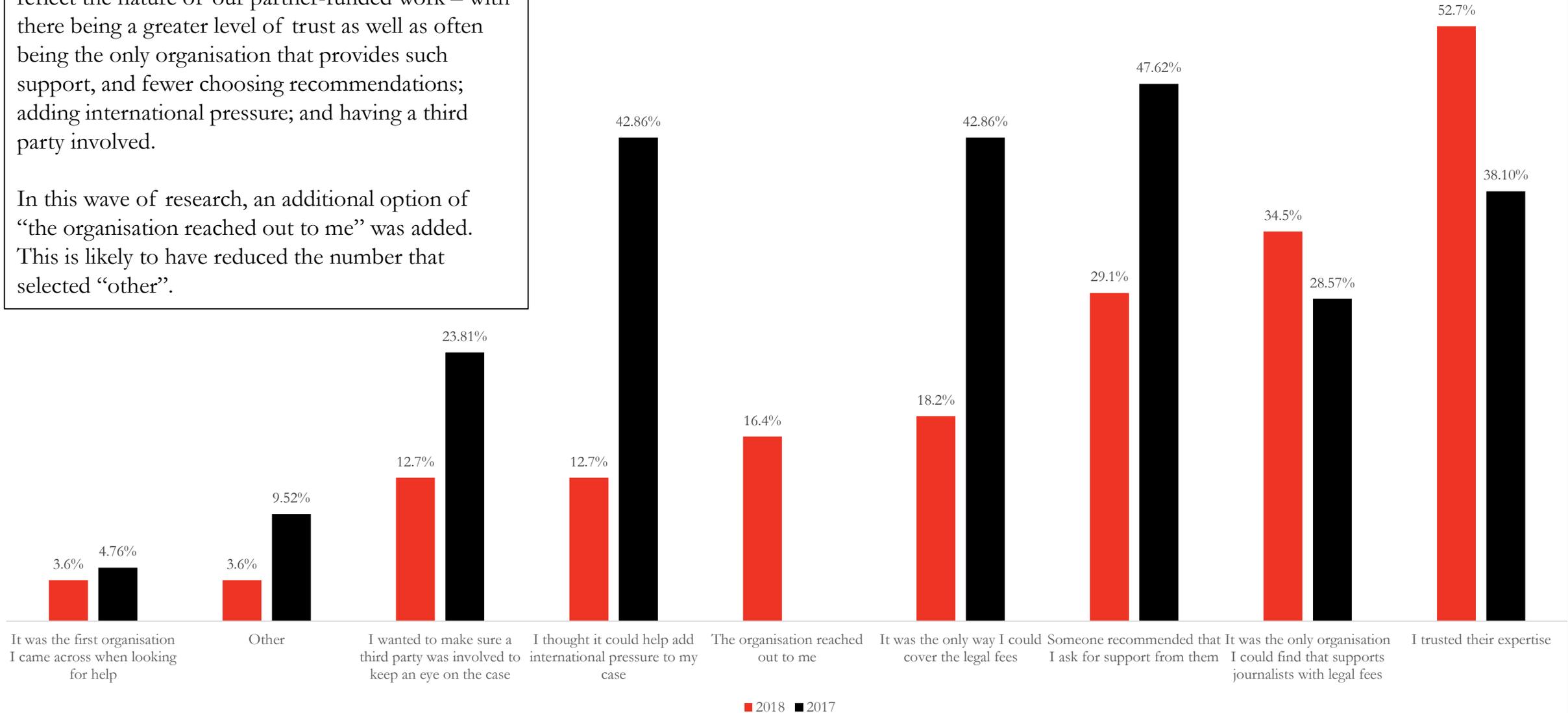
55 responses



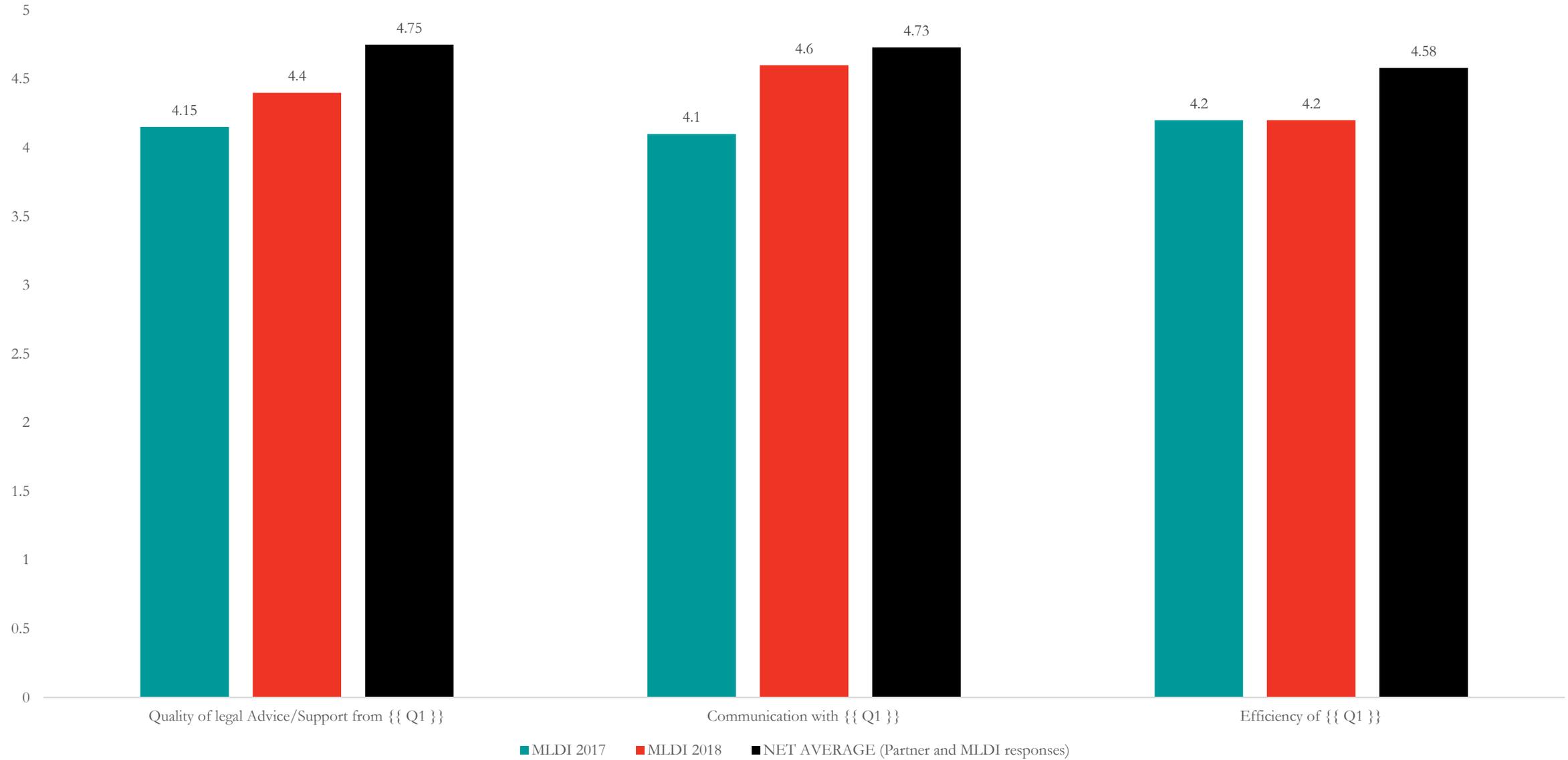
Why did you choose to approach the organisation for support with your case? (Please tick all that apply) (2017 v 2018)

Significant changes compared to 2017 most likely reflect the nature of our partner-funded work – with there being a greater level of trust as well as often being the only organisation that provides such support, and fewer choosing recommendations; adding international pressure; and having a third party involved.

In this wave of research, an additional option of “the organisation reached out to me” was added. This is likely to have reduced the number that selected “other”.



On a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being the best and 1 being the worst), how would you rate the following (average)
n=55



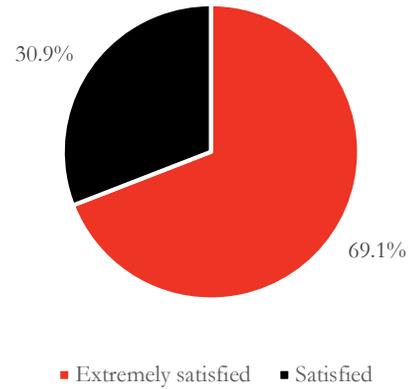
How could the organisation have improved its support?

32 responses

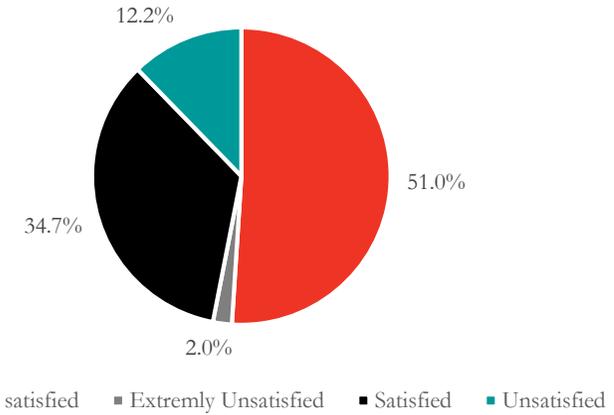
As scores concerning the quality, communication and efficiency were generally very high for all organisations, suggestions for improvement varied with no clear or common themes. Many just suggested providing more support to more journalists – however a number of specific suggestions included:

- Having an online complaint platform
- Better resourcing
- Internal communication
- More communication
- Better communication between parties (MLDI supported respondent)
- Greater technical knowledge of multinational legal strategies (MLDI supported respondent)
- More site visits
- Providing pre-publication advice
- Providing psychological and moral support.

How satisfied were you with the lawyer that defended you/handled your case? (49 responses)



How satisfied were you with the outcome of your case? 49 responses

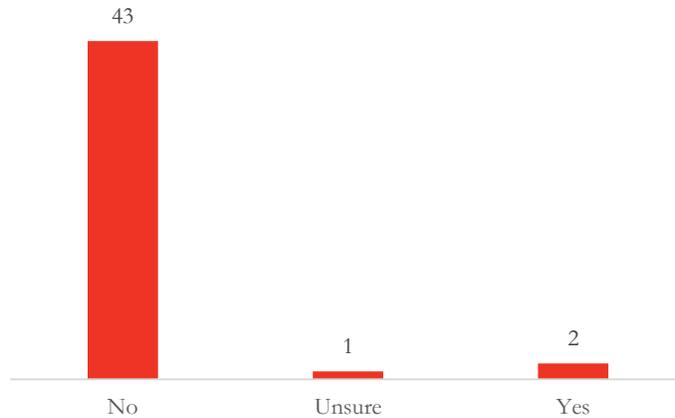


2017 (Extremely satisfied or satisfied)	2018 (Extremely satisfied or satisfied)
85%	100%

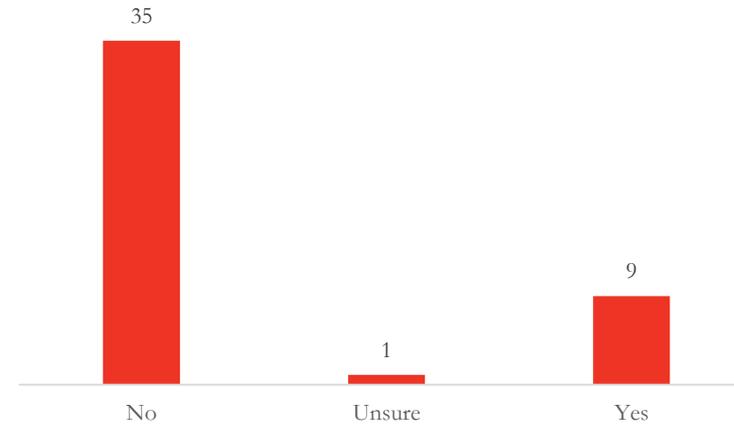
2017 (Extremely satisfied or satisfied)	2018 (Extremely satisfied or satisfied)
65%	86%

Did you receive any of the following types of support from any other organisations?

Financial Support

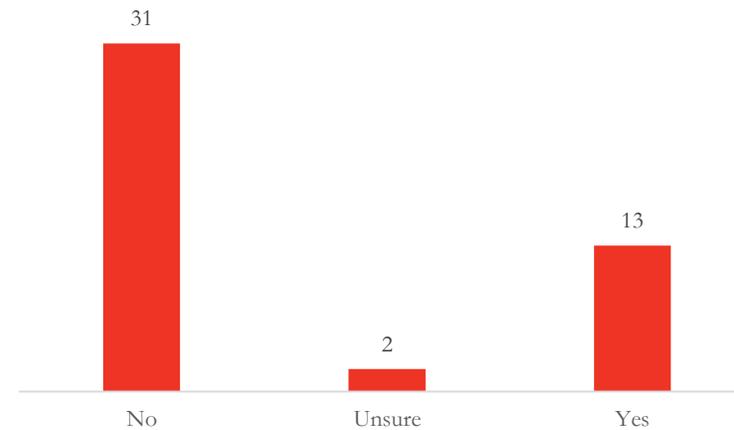


Legal Support



Very few journalists received additional support outside of that provided by MLDI or its partners. A small number received additional advocacy support, but very few received additional legal or financial support.

Advocacy/Campaigning Support



Thinking about the different individuals or organisations that supported your case, which was the most valuable form of support for you? (Respondents had a free text box and their responses have been coded).

42 responses



What do you think would have happened if the organisation was unable to support your case?

49 responses

“““

I would have gone mad. I already had deteriorating health and I fear I would have given in. Also, there is little chance I would have been able to hire a quality lawyer on my own.

“““

I would be dead or disabled.

“““

It is difficult to get a good and committed lawyer when you are financially constrained. The case may not have been defended as swiftly and aggressively without money to pay a good lawyer.

“““

I would have had to sell my belongings, look for a cheaper place to live to be able to pay the professional fees.

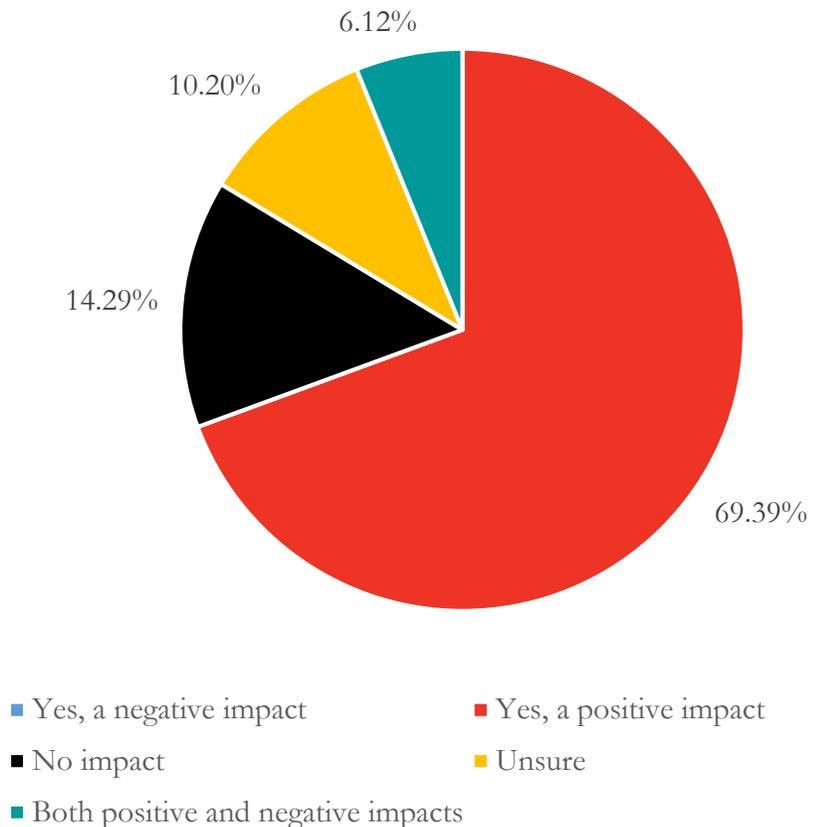
“““

I think I would have been found guilty and maybe today I would do something else and not be a journalist.

The wider context

Do you think your case has had a wider impact, either positive or negative, in your country or region?

49 responses



Respondents were asked to explain the impact of their case. 19 responses were received which fell under six main themes:

Positive impact

- Increased public support of/respect for journalism
- Setting legal precedent
- Increased protection standards for the media
- Fewer attacks on journalists
- Encouraging other journalists to seek justice

Negative impact

- Increased hostility towards journalists

““”

We took people who are members of the ruling party to court, defeated them and they got embarrassed, their hate towards journalists has gotten worse, so in that regard the impact is negative. On the other side we made a statement towards all those that want to attack journalists that you can attack them but you will be dealt with.

““”

As for now people in my country know that a journalist must be respected and protected during execution of his or her work.

““”

At least in the last few months the rate at which we were insulted has reduced.

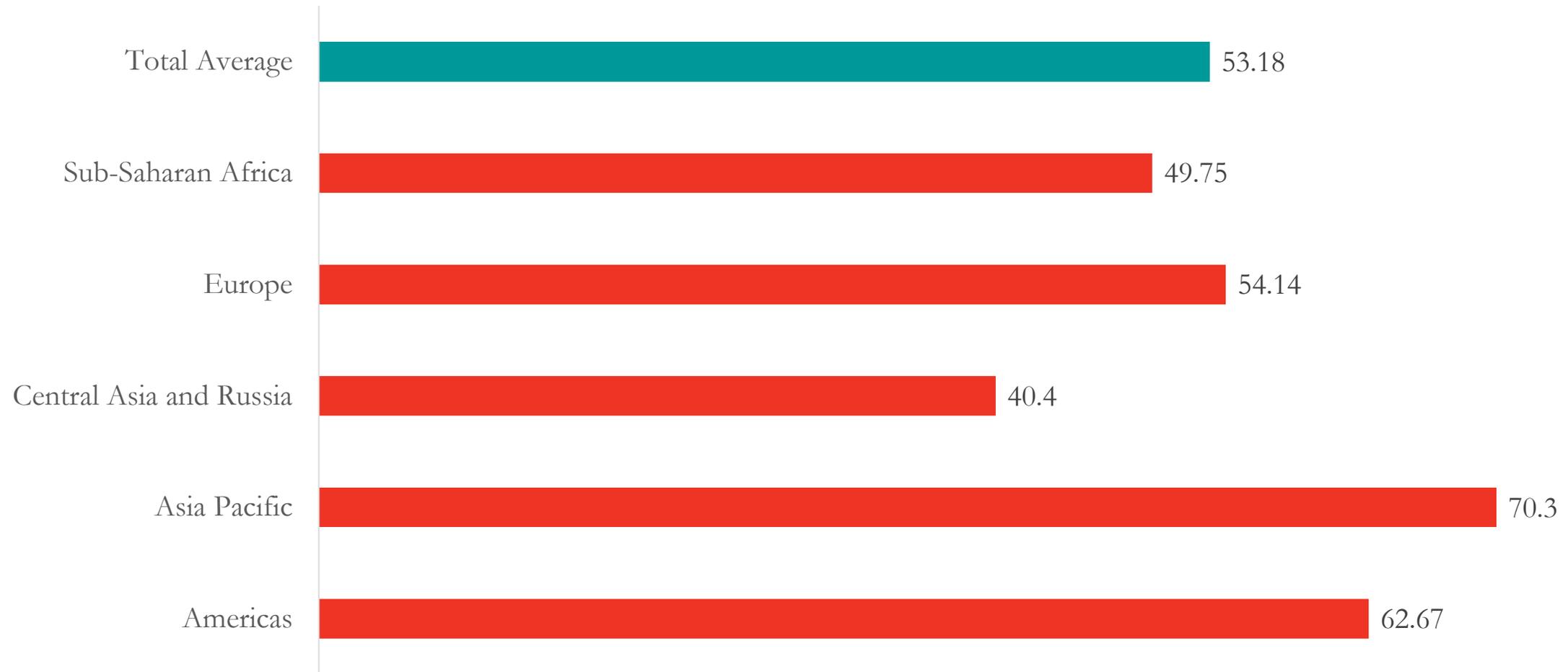
““”

After conclusion of my case, the attitude of the police authorities and the state remained unchanged. They were still aggressive and targeting journalists in the region. In fact, police authorities visited my house with a search warrant even after the conclusion of my case.

How likely do you think it is that your journalistic activity will result in more legal challenges in the future? (average scores)

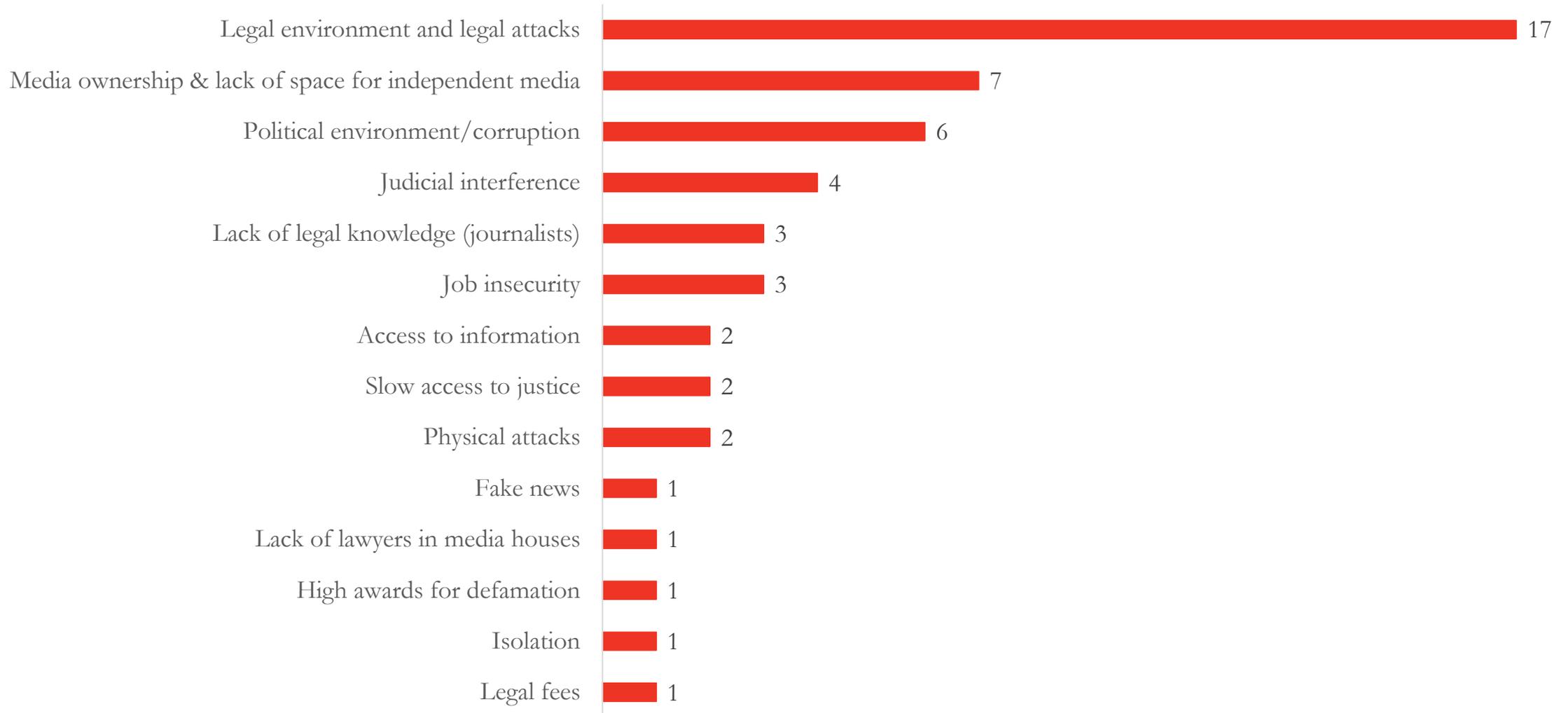
50 responses

0 = Extremely unlikely; 50 = Somewhat likely; 100 = Extremely likely



What is the biggest legal challenge currently facing journalists in your country? (Respondents had a free text box and their responses have been coded).

45 responses



What is the biggest legal challenge currently facing journalists in your country? Continued.

“““

There are no free forums where journalists can write, every media is under government control, everyone becomes manipulated somehow. You can hardly read or hear a propaganda free piece of article nowadays.

“““

The political criminal nexus is biggest threat to freedom of journalists, besides they are subjected to payment of less than minimum wages by their employers. If they raise their voice they lose their job, so insecurity among them is a major cause for compromising their freedom, killing their own conscience. Unfortunately slow dispensation of justice further demoralizes their struggle.

“““

Most journalists are assaulted during work and even cameras are taken or broken by people or police.

“““

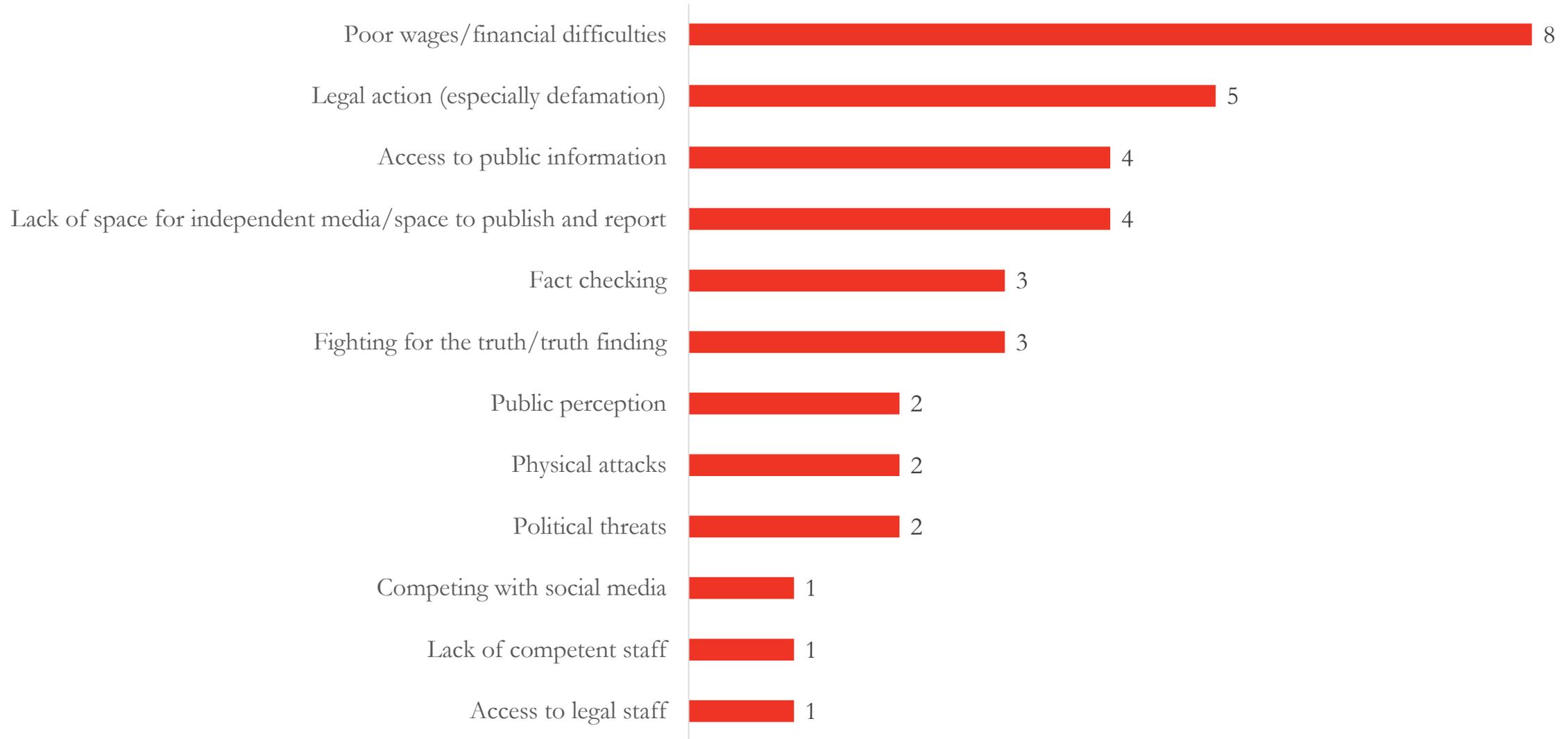
New laws specifically brought to curtail journalists or force different media personalities or media houses into self-censorship.

“““

Independence of press is in extreme danger. Any journalist who delivers his or her duty ethically is seen as a threat to the government and is at high risk of facing legal charges for the same.

What is the biggest challenge you face generally as a journalist? (Respondents had a free text box and their responses have been coded).

39 responses



What is the biggest challenge you face generally as a journalist? Continued.

“““

The protection of my own life.

“““

The general financial difficulties faced by all journalists remain the biggest challenge.

“““

To survive in a country that does not respect journalists and freedom of expression.

“““

Every attempt to write anything that brought out truth against corruption by the government resulted in me being called anti-national.

“““

Verification of information, because not everyone checks the information and can say anything, accuse other people unfoundedly

“““

I am thankful for the existence of such a programme. As noted, without such a support, I suspect it would not have ended positively for me. This programme is especially important for small media that can't provide proper support to journalists in my situation.

“““

Journalism alone might not be able to bring the desired change. A person should be aware of the problem that surrounds him and have the will to fight for what is right. Also, then if is coupled with activism along with the proper understanding of the society and system that governs it, it can turn out to be fruitful. Further collective efforts of everyone plays a crucial role.

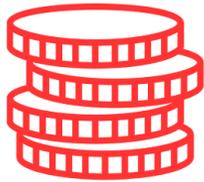
“““

I want to convey the words of gratitude to MLDI. Without the support of this organisation, I would not have been able to obtain qualified legal assistance and found myself in prison on false charges.

Conclusions

Impact themes

Data from the survey indicates that the support of MLDI, its partners and a positive case outcome impacts on journalists and press freedom in different ways, and can be grouped into four key impact themes:



Economic impact

- Over a third said it was the only organisation they could find to support them with legal fees.
- “I would have had to sell my belongings, look for a cheaper place to live to be able to pay the professional fees.”
- “The general financial difficulties faced by all journalists remain the biggest challenge.”



Legal impact

- 91% had a positive case outcome.
- 86% were satisfied with the outcome of their case.
- 100% were satisfied with their legal representation.
- Some reported that their case set positive legal precedent, contributing to country-wide impact.



Journalistic impact

- 92.5% have continued reporting.
- 10% felt more emboldened and committed to their journalism.
- “Since my case, I have focused more on human rights issues, so I would say that they failed in silencing me, quite to the contrary, they have provoked me to extend my interest to a whole new set of topics.”



Journalist community impact

- Some reported their case demonstrated to others that justice can be sought.
- Some felt their case resulted in increased protection standards for the media.
- “The challenges in this particular case and the outcome of the case have made it easier to work without fear of unconstitutional actions being taken against journalists.”

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the findings and results from the journalist impact survey:

- As in the 2017 report, the 2018 survey data continue to add weight and credibility to MLDI's theory of change by providing data to verify some of the causal links between its activities, outputs and outcomes. For example the need for financial and legal support to defend themselves that they couldn't access elsewhere, making it possible for them to have a positive outcome in their case to set precedent and continue their reporting. It also adds weight to our theory of how MLDI's support to partners enables them to provide quality and trusted legal defence at a local level.
- Some distinct differences can be seen when comparing MLDI's work to that of its partners – including the reasons for approaching the organisation for support and the diversity of the journalists supported. Partner-supported journalists had a more equal gender balance compared to MLDI, whereas MLDI seemed to have a higher proportion of bloggers and media outlets compared to partners).
- Other factors were more consistent across both MLDI supported journalists and partner supported journalists, such as the communication, efficiency and quality of support.
- There are some additional unexpected outcomes as a result of facing legal action, such as increasing their due diligence which begs the question of to what extent MLDI might want to partner with media development organisations or to signpost to relevant media organisations that might aid journalists in their professional practice – this may also support many of the more general (non-legal) challenges described by the journalists.
- The findings also highlight the important consideration that other actors and external factors influence on the journalists' experiences and ability to continue reporting, such as space (or lack of) for independent media, other organisations providing advocacy or other kinds of support, the political environment, job security and finances.

Suggestions for further implementation

- Due to the small number of MLDI supported journalists that would be captured each year, it may be more sensible to send the survey on a rolling basis, one year after the case is closed. This would mean responses ‘trickle in’ and can be analysed and evaluated on an annual basis or once a meaningful number of responses have come in. As journalists have the option to opt-in to have case studies made about their story, collecting responses on a rolling basis would also make it easier to develop communications resources based on the journalists’ stories by having a regular supply throughout the year.
- The involvement of partner organisations was very useful to help measure the results of our partners, compare experiences of those directly supported by us and increase the sample to make it more credible – however it should not be overlooked that this did involve additional work by our partners, and they also suffer from the same challenges of having a small sample eligible to participate on an annual basis. Thus it may be more reasonable to involve them on a biennial cycle.
- The questions seem to be well understood and provide useful insights – the questions should remain standardised to enable comparability between years, however as MLDI refines its other data processing and coding systems this may impact on some of the response options, which may impact on the comparability of results. Where this is the case, this should be noted in any evaluation reports.
- Providing the survey in multiple languages proved to be effective. MLDI should consider also translating it into French and Arabic for future waves of research.
- Data from those directly supported by MLDI can be aggregated together for key performance indicators to increase the sample size and track performance on a rolling basis.

We would like to thank all of the partner organisations, journalists and bloggers that participated in this research.

If you have any queries, or would like to know more about the research, please contact Patrick.regan@mediadefence.org