



Journalist Impact Survey

Key Findings



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Background and Methodology

Our Journalist Impact Survey provides an important opportunity to seek feedback from journalists that we have supported during the year.

Our theory of change means that our financial and legal support to journalists and media outlets will result in journalists successfully defended in cases against them and can continue reporting. 2024 marked our eighth Journalist Impact Survey.

Through this survey, we hope to assess:

- The quality of our support;
- The success of cases supported;
- Our contribution towards journalists

being able to continue reporting.

Background and Methodology

The survey was sent by email in seven languages: Azeri, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Turkish and Spanish.

We approached lawyers and journalists regarding 82 cases that closed in 2024. Due to our working model, we sometimes need to reach out to the journalists through their lawyers. In some instances, the risk is too high to contact the journalist. We therefore excluded contacting some journalists on this basis. We received 24 responses in total. This report is based on the responses received and the corresponding broader trends observed by Media Defence.

Our Findings

The quality of our support

The legal advice and support provided by Media Defence was rated excellent. Replies also reflect an efficient and communicative organisation. Financial support remains crucial for journalists; 25% told us that Media Defence was the only way they could cover the legal fees, with others noting the severe legal penalties they could have potentially faced if they had lost their case.

The success of cases supported

From the responses, 71% were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the outcome of their case. Significantly, 71% believed that their case had a broader positive impact, either in their country or wider region.

Our contribution towards journalists being able to continue reporting

92% of respondents continued reporting after their legal case. In addition, we found that journalists are often reporting on multiple issues, highlighting that by continuing to support journalists, we can contribute to a more pluralistic media landscape.

A photograph of a news crew in a field, featuring a woman with a camera on a tripod, a woman with a notebook, and a man with a microphone and a bag.

**Headline Statistics
and Key Learnings**

Key **Statistics**

Some of the key statistics showing the impact of our support for journalists:

71%

of respondents were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the outcome of their case.

100%

of respondents would recommend our support to other journalists facing legal action.

71%

of respondents believe that their case had a positive wider impact, either in their country or their region.

92%

of respondents have continued to practice journalism since the conclusion of their case.

Broader Impact: **Key Learnings**



Building trust & providing quality legal support

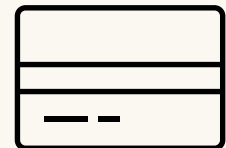
Media Defence continues to be recognised as a trustworthy and reliable organisation.

67% of respondents chose to approach the organisation for support based on recommendations from others or because they trusted Media Defence's expertise, which indicates a high level of trust.

100% of all respondents noted that they would recommend our services.

Moreover, the feedback from respondents indicates that Media Defence continues to deliver high-quality services.

Broader Impact: **Key Learnings**



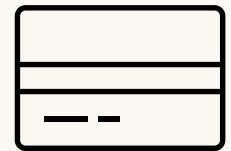
Crucial Economic Relief

Our financial support continues to be pivotal in allowing journalists to continue their critical work.

All respondents noted that they would have faced significant financial and legal challenges without Media Defence's support.

A quarter of respondents told us that Media Defence was potentially the only way they could cover the legal fees. Some respondents added that without Media Defence's support they would have given up or carried on with their legal case without a lawyer.

Behind the numbers



**Crucial
Economic
Relief**



The support I received from Media Defence has encouraged me to do better journalism instead of retreating to other professions or avoiding investigative reporting altogether. If I had not received the support, I would have been stranded, because my income is not enough to cover the huge legal fees. I am really grateful to Media Defence for coming to my aid.

Journalist, Nigeria

**Who took part
in the survey?**



Who took part in the survey?

We received 24 responses from journalists supported by us, from 18 different countries.



Geographic spread

In 2024, most respondents (42%) were in Europe and Central Asia, followed by the Americas (21%), Sub-Saharan Africa (21%), Asia Pacific (12%) and MENA (4%) regions. This contrasts with 2020, where 90% of respondents were from Europe. The change underscores our increased global diversity in cases. The survey availability in multiple languages may also have contributed to gaining wider global perspectives.

Nigeria



Country Context

Today, [Reporters Without Borders](#) ranks Nigeria as 112 out of 180 in its World Press Freedom Index. Journalists continue to face legal threats as a result of their work, in particular since the adoption of the country's Cybercrimes Act in 2015.

Media Defence support

In our 2024 Journalist Impact Survey, 13% of respondents were from Nigeria, reflecting our considerable work in the country. In 2024, Media Defence supported 11 new cases in Nigeria, awarding individual grants totalling £20,350. Cases from Nigeria constituted around 5% of our new cases in 2024 and focused on defamation, including SLAPP cases, as well as criminal defamation, digital rights and violence against journalists cases.

In addition to providing individual grants, Media Defence has also been working with lawyer partners in Nigeria to support journalists and media freedom - as our [interview with Mojirayo Ogunlana-Nkanga](#) also demonstrates.

Who took part in the survey?

We received 24 responses from journalists from different regions and backgrounds.



Gender breakdown

Over a third of respondents identified as female (38%).

62% of respondents identified themselves as male.



Emilia Șercan: Upholding Privacy and Press Freedom in Romania



In January 2022, Romanian investigative journalist Emilia Șercan published a report exposing alleged plagiarism by then Prime Minister Nicolae Ciucă. A month later, she received an anonymous message containing intimate images of herself - taken two decades earlier - which she discovered uploaded to dozens of adult websites. Within 24 hours of reporting the threat to the police and providing evidence, a screenshot of the private message and the photos appeared on a Moldovan website and were quickly disseminated across dozens of Romanian platforms.

Rather than protecting her, Romanian police appeared to have leaked the very evidence she submitted. When officials failed to properly investigate, Șercan filed multiple criminal complaints, including one against then Minister of Interior, Lucian Bode, for failing to report the breach—an obligation under Romanian law.

Emilia Şercan: Upholding Privacy and Press Freedom in Romania

Despite a troubling pattern of delays, procedural failures, and initial dismissal, Şercan, with legal support from Media Defence's Emergency Defence programme, fought to have the investigation reopened.

In 2024, Bucharest Court of Appeal ruled in her favour, ordering the investigation to be resumed. In a related case, the Romanian Supreme Court also reopened proceedings against Bode, recognising the flaws in the original investigation. Emilia told us that the



reopening of the case is an important victory for me, as it confirms the systematic irregularities I have been denouncing for two years regarding the investigation of the case and the authorities' intent to bury the files so that those responsible would not be held accountable for their actions.

As part of this effort, Media Defence submitted written comments to the Bucharest Court of Appeal, outlining the Romanian authorities' obligations under Article 8 (right to private life) and Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the European Convention on Human Rights. Our submission emphasised the chilling effect of such violations on press freedom, particularly for women journalists, who face disproportionately high levels of sexualised online harassment.

This ruling marks a pivotal moment for press freedom and privacy rights in Romania. It not only brings hope for accountability in Şercan's case but sends a clear message that attempts to silence critical journalism through intimidation will not go unchallenged.

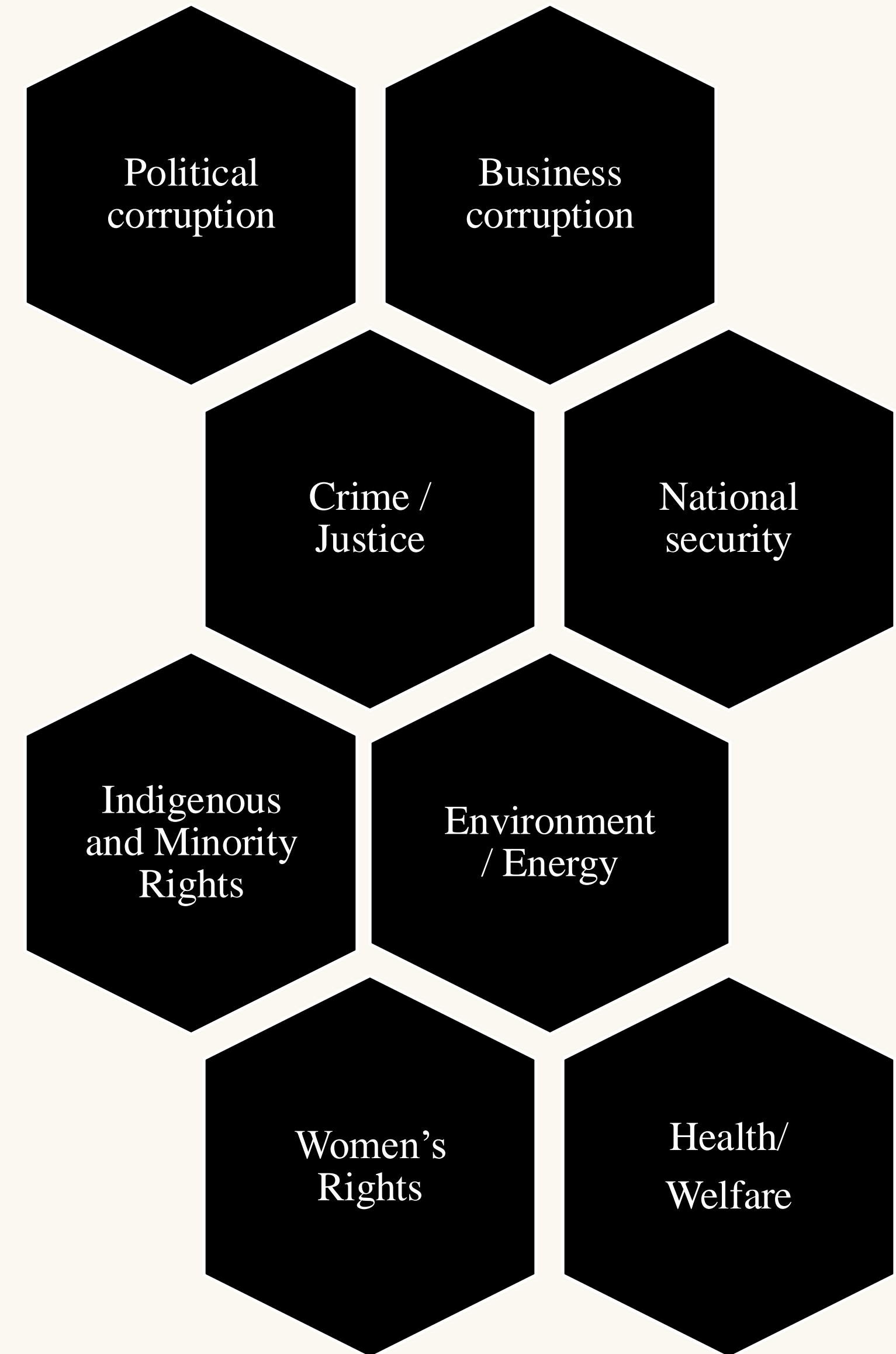


**Deeper Analysis
and Observations**

Trends in **legal action** against journalists

We asked survey respondents what type of content their cases corresponded to (if their case was related to a specific article, publication or broadcast)

58% of respondents cited **corruption** as the public issue most likely to result in legal action, consistent with trends seen in previous years. Respondents cited **political corruption** as the most frequent issue (46%) that resulted in legal action and 33% cited reporting on **business corruption**. This follows from previous year trends on increasing legal action in this area and may be linked with the global increase in the use of **SLAPPs** by powerful individuals and businesses. Other types of content included **crime and justice, national security, indigenous and minority rights, environment and energy, women's rights, health and welfare**.



Continuing **legal threats** to independent journalism

80% of respondents believed that they would face some form of legal action in the future as a result of their journalistic activity.

Legal pressures continue to threaten independent journalism.

Respondents indicated that defamation laws remain a problem.

Legal fees also posed a threat to journalists, with media outlets usually unable to provide sufficient funds to cover costs.

The financial burden of representation was not the only concern, as journalists also often face the prospect of high penalties in legal cases if they lose.

Lack of good quality representation was also a problem, with one respondent noting that more lawyers needed to be trained in defending journalists and freedom of expression issues.

Change in Journalistic Practices

While respondents reported resilience in continuing to practice journalism following their legal cases, some indicated that negative impacts had still arisen.

One respondent wrote that they feel less confident about reporting. Another noted that they have become more risk

aware when they travel.

Another remarked that while their case created solidarity, ‘judicial harassment against journalists has a negative impact on both society and journalists, creating an atmosphere of fear’.



The Voices Behind the Data



*Journalists must be free to do their work.
I have proven that journalists cannot
simply be arrested for reporting.*

Journalist, Belgium



*It (the support) meant everything! I
wouldn't have been able to afford the
costs of a specialized defence without
the support of Media Defence.*

Journalist, Brazil



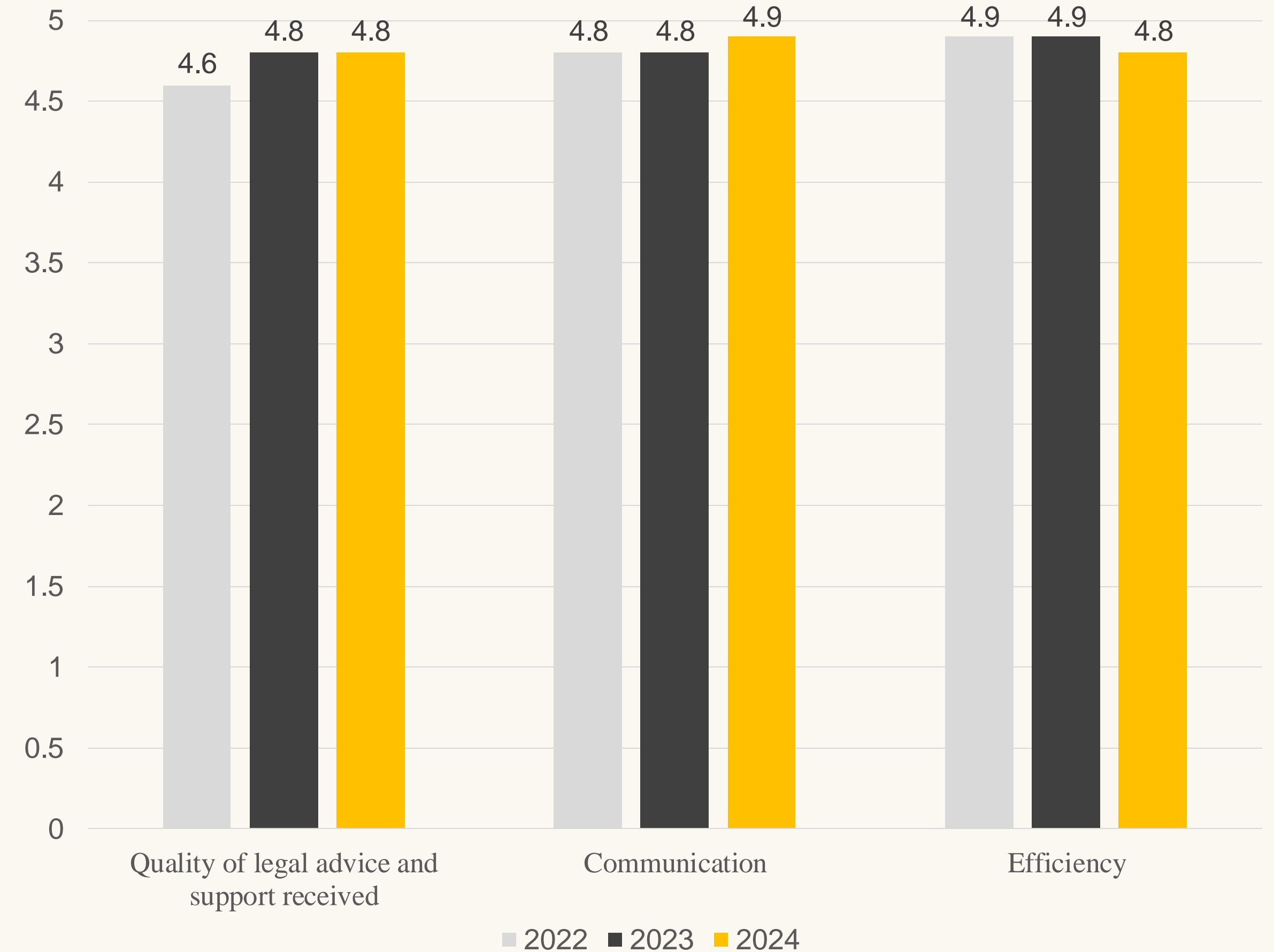
**Media Defence's
Support**

Maintaining High-Quality Legal Advice

Respondents were asked to rank support provided by Media Defence on a scale of 1-5 (*1 is the worst and 5 is the best*), across three areas: *quality of legal advice and support received; communication; and efficiency.*

Although the number of supported cases has increased over the years, Media Defence has continued to provide high quality legal advice and support.

Average ratings from respondents in 2022-2024



The Voices Behind the Data



If Media Defence were unable to support me financially, it would have been disastrous for me because I wouldn't have been able to hire a lawyer to defend me.

Journalist, Nigeria

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Media Defence

*330 High Holborn
London, UK
WC1V 7QH*

www.mediadefence.org

info@mediadefence.org

Bluesky: [mediadefence.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/mediadefence.bsky.social)

Facebook: [/Mediadefence](https://www.facebook.com/Mediadefence)

Instagram: [@mediadefenceteam](https://www.instagram.com/mediadefenceteam)

LinkedIn: [/mediadefence](https://www.linkedin.com/company/mediadefence)

