



Journalist Impact Survey

Key Findings from 2025



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Key Findings

The impact and quality of our support

The legal advice and support provided by Media Defence was rated excellent (page 14). Replies also reflect an efficient and communicative organisation. Financial support remains crucial for journalists; 52% told us that Media Defence was the main way they could cover their legal fees. Journalists also appreciated the international solidarity support they received.

The broader impact of cases supported

From the responses, 70% believed that their legal case had a broader positive impact, either in their country or wider region (page 12).

Our contribution towards journalists being able to continue reporting

95% of respondents continued reporting after their legal case, even from exile. While most respondents continued reporting, some have introduced changes in their journalism practices (page 10).

Background and Methodology

Media Defence provides legal help to journalists, citizen journalists and independent media across the world.

Through this survey, we aim to learn more about:

- The impact of legal cases on journalists and media outlets
- The impact and quality of our support to journalists and media outlets
- Our contribution towards journalists being able to continue reporting
- Our contribution towards journalists and media enjoying stronger protection of their rights, creating an enabling environment

Background and Methodology

Our Journalist Impact Survey provides an important opportunity to seek feedback from the journalists Media Defence supported.

We approached lawyers and journalists whose cases closed in 2025 with our survey. The survey was sent by email in six languages: English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Turkish and Spanish.

Due to our working model, we sometimes need to reach out to journalists through their lawyers. In some instances, when the risk of contacting either the journalist or their lawyers was too high, we avoided contacting them. We received 23 responses in total. This report is based on the received responses and the corresponding broader trends observed by Media Defence. The survey results are anonymous, all photos in the report are illustrative.

Who took part in the survey?

We received 23 responses from journalists supported by us*, from 14 different countries. Some of the journalists completed the survey from exile.

Gender breakdown

Over a quarter of respondents identified as female (26%).

74% of respondents identified themselves as male.

Geographic spread

In 2025 most respondents (52%) were in Europe and Central Asia, followed by the Americas (12%) and the Sub-Saharan Africa (7%) region.

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.

*one survey was completed by the lawyer representing the journalist



Key Statistics

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

100%

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

70%

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

95%

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

The **voices** behind the numbers



We would have been unable to hire a lawyer, and the consequences would have been fatal. Without the support of organisations like Media Defence, [our organisation] would have been unable to continue to do its work under such difficult contexts.

- Nigerian journalist

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).

52% of respondents cited **crime and justice** as the public issue most likely to result in legal action. A high number of respondents (48%) cited political and/or business **corruption** as the issue that resulted in legal action. This follows from previous years 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 national security, indigenous and minority rights, environment and energy, women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights.



Change in Journalistic Practices

While respondents reported resilience in continuing their journalism following their legal cases, many have introduced changes in their journalistic practices.

Several journalists noted that they have become more risk aware and some now seek legal advice before publishing investigative pieces.

Journalists have also become more cautious and have made more precautions to strengthen their online and physical safety.



*I learned to be more cautious
- Latin American journalist*



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Continuing **legal threats** to independent journalism

100% of respondents believed that they would likely face some form of legal action in the future as a result of their journalistic activity.

Legal pressures continue to threaten independent journalism, and some journalists face multiple legal actions.

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



Our media resources are highly volatile because they are based solely on donations from individuals. Every legal expense is an unforeseen cost that limits our investigative capabilities.

- French journalist

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

Broader impact

70% of respondents believe that their case had a positive wider impact, either in their country or their region.

While journalists reported experiencing stress and anxiety as a result of their legal cases, a high number of survey respondents have reported that their cases also had wider positive impact.

Journalists have noted that their legal cases drew attention to the specific investigative issues they were working on or their legal case provided a positive precedent.



There's no doubt that my colleagues and I feel more "empowered" by the prospect of specialized legal assistance, and this is reflected in the way politicians are treating us, since they now know that they will gain no advantage from judicial harassment but will instead face public and political backlash (...)" Brazilian journalist

Some journalists also observed that their legal cases highlighted the challenges journalists and media outlets face and served as catalysts for further actions to protect media freedom.



this [case] facilitated the mobilisation and organisation of the independent press" French journalist

Turkey



Country Context

Today, [Reporters Without Borders](#) ranks Turkey as 159 out of 180 in its World Press Freedom Index. Journalists continue to face legal threats as a result of their work, with a rise of legal actions against journalists covering protests.

Media Defence support

In our 2025 Journalist Impact Survey, 26% of respondents were from Turkey, reflecting our considerable work in the country. In 2025, Media Defence supported 32 new cases in Turkey, awarding individual grants totalling £38,200. Cases from Turkey constituted around 11% of our new cases in 2025 and focused on counter-terrorism / national security cases, as well as criminal defamation and arbitrary detention.

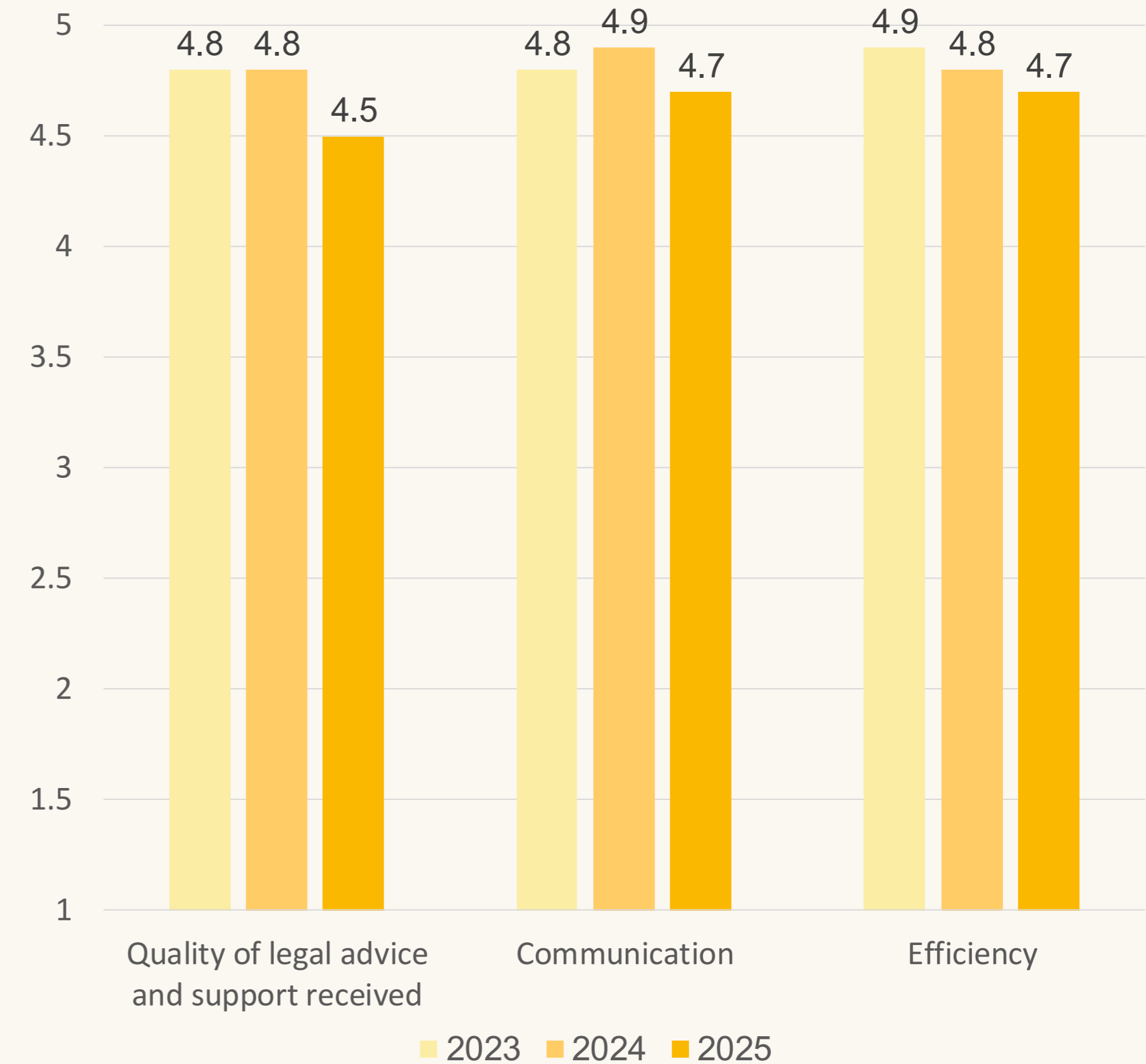
In addition to providing individual grants, Media Defence has also been working with our funded partners in Turkey, the Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA) and the Foundation for Society and Legal Studies (TOHAV), to defend journalists accused of incitement to terrorism, criminal defamation or anti-State rhetoric for their reporting critical of the government.

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 new cases has doubled over the past 5 years, Media Defence has continued to provide high quality legal advice and support.

Average ratings from respondents in 2023-2025



The **voices** behind the numbers



This support covered my legal expenses while also making me feel that I was not alone, thanks to the solidarity shown. In an environment like Turkey, where journalists are constantly targeted and isolated, the demonstration of international solidarity, regardless of the outcome of the case, inspired me to persevere in my profession despite the lawsuits I may face in the future.

-Turkish journalist



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Recommendations

While the legal and financial support that Media Defence provided was appreciated by the responding journalists, need for increased and additional support was also expressed by the respondents including in the areas of trauma and stress management, public relations alongside with support for additional legal cases the journalists face. The needs identified highlight the multifaceted challenges journalists and media outlets face.

We thank all the journalists who shared their reflections and feedback with us. Media Defence will continue to provide support and will take the received feedback into account to improve our work.





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)

