

# EXPLOITATION OF FREELANCE JOURNALISTS IN THE INDONESIAN MEDIA INDUSTRY

*A Mapping of Salaries and Working Conditions of Freelance Journalists in Indonesia*



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## **Exploitation of Freelance Journalists in the Indonesian Media Industry: A Mapping of Salaries and Working Conditions of Freelance Journalists in Indonesia**

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The Alliance of Independent Journalist (AJI) Indonesia

2023



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Exploitation of Freelance Journalists in the Indonesian Media Industry: A Mapping of Salaries and Working Conditions of Freelance Journalists in Indonesia 55 page : 14,8 x 21 cm

First Printing, September 2023. If you find any printing/production errors or misinformation in this book, please contact the publisher.

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## FOREWORD OF AJI

### Prosperous Journalists, Quality News

Irony is one word that describes freelance journalists in this country. This is because almost 50 percent of journalists surveyed indicated their salaries were less than the minimum salary. In fact, dozens of other percent stated that their salaries were uncertain and that they were paid through advertising commissions. At least, this picture can be seen from the results of a survey conducted by the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) in collaboration with the Sedane Labour Resource Center (LIPS), which was funded by the USAID Media project and supported by Internews Indonesia.

In fact, we know that economic factors are one of the indicators of journalists' safety. Because, without welfare, journalists are more likely to work unprofessionally and violate the journalistic code of ethics (KEJ). Especially in Article 6 which reads, "the Indonesian journalist does not misuse his/her profession and accepts no bribe". Of course, this does not mean that journalists who are not prosperous would definitely accept bribes, be unprofessional, and violate the KEJ.

On the other hand, we know that employment status in the form of a fixed-term work agreement (PKWT) or contract is mushrooming in almost all parts of Indonesia. The names range from contributor to stringer to freelance journalist. This indicates that unless there is a new breakthrough, the welfare of Indonesian journalists will remain inadequate.

Actually, there is already a Press Council Regulation Number 03 of 2019 on Standard for Press Corporations. Article 14 to Article 21 of the regulation clearly requires media companies to fulfill the welfare of journalists. Among other things, the obligation to provide salaries at least at the minimum pay rate of the province concerned at least 13 times a year, as well as to provide health and employment insurance.

Not only that, but this regulation also mandates that press corporations can provide other benefits to journalists, such as share ownership, bonuses, and net profit sharing. This includes the obligation to provide legal protection to journalists who are carrying out their duties. This risk is frequently encountered by journalists, according to survey respondents.

However, this regulation is good on paper and may be partially applied to journalists with permanent employment status. In fact, the type of employment, whether permanent or temporary, should not be related to welfare. Both should ensure that journalists' welfare does not fall below their normative rights as workers. Not to mention if we refer to the Manpower Law, or even worse, the Job Creation Law and its derivative regulations. The working conditions of journalists in the country are still worse than these laws.

We certainly cannot ignore this situation. The press community must work together to find the best solution so that journalists can be more prosperous and the country's journalism quality improves. One of the things that AJI offers is to make provisions on the value of better journalistic works, ranging from straight news, in-depth coverage, photos, audio, and audio-visual. This is to ensure that journalists' normative rights as workers are not violated.

Finally, AJI would like to thank the researchers and respondents who participated in this research, as well as USAID Media and Internews in Indonesia for funding and supporting it.

AJI hopes that this research can be followed up by relevant stakeholders such as the Press Council, Ministry of Manpower, and media companies. Prosperous journalists, quality news.

Best regards,

**Sasmito**

Chairman of AJI Indonesia

## FOREWORD OF INTERNEWS

Democracy, as one of the main pillars of modern life, demands openness, transparency, and access to accurate and diverse information. In this context, the press's function as a "watchdog" of democracy cannot be underestimated. They are entrusted with examining and exposing the truth, keeping an eye on the government, and shedding light on the dark corners of society. However, the reality of Indonesia's freelance journalist sector, which often struggles with severe economic challenges, has put this important function at risk.

The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) has conducted an in-depth survey on the well-being of freelance journalists in Indonesia to delve deeper into the impact of economic pressures on the quality of work and integrity of journalists. The research, funded by the USAID MEDIA project and supported by Internews in Indonesia, is a tangible manifestation of AJI's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the critical role of the press in maintaining a healthy democratic balance.

This document is not only a survey report, but also a reflection on the dynamics and complexities of the Indonesian journalism profession, especially freelance journalists, in the midst of increasingly tough economic challenges. AJI has collected data and opinions from various freelance journalists operating in all corners of Indonesia. The data accessible here are not simply numbers, but part of the real stories that depict the struggles of journalists in carrying out the responsibilities of journalistic work in typically challenging conditions.

The results of this study can illustrate important aspects of freelance journalists' lives, from how they get jobs, the impact of economic pressure on journalistic decisions, to the efforts taken to survive. More importantly, the results reveal the economic impact of sexual harassment on female journalists, highlighting the vulnerable position of women in media organizations. They may be victimized more than once as a result of this restrictive situation.

All of this is not meant to make you depressed or angry, but rather to emphasize the importance of creating a work environment that supports the most vulnerable workers in the media operating system, as well as concrete measures to reduce economic pressures that can undermine freelance journalists' independence and integrity. As a former freelance journalist in a large media organization, I can personally understand this economic vulnerability caused by a variety of external factors beyond our control.

The welfare of freelance journalists is not only about a decent salary, but also about ensuring they can carry out their responsibilities without fear of becoming mired in conflicts of interest that are detrimental to society. The results of this study can demonstrate the impact of economic pressures on the risks to journalism's quality and the integrity of its journalists. By providing narratives from diverse perspectives, we may gain a better understanding of

the challenges that freelance journalists face and take concrete steps to create positive change.

Through this research, AJI invites all of us to better understand and appreciate the work of freelance journalists as irreplaceable contributors to our democracy. The results of this study should serve as a foundation for us to take necessary action to jointly establish an environment where freelance journalists can work independently, safely, and with dignity.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this research, including the research team and the journalists who shared their experiences, as well as the AJI team for facilitating and analyzing the data. All these efforts are steps towards a stronger and more sustainable democracy, allowing the press to continue to serve as a loyal watchdog.

May this research serve as a call to action and a guide in our collaborative efforts to respect and protect the vulnerable workers who help maintain our democracy.

Thank you,

**Eric Sasono**

Chief of Party USAID MEDIA, Country Representative Internews di Indonesia

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Background

Journalism is a lifelong profession and will always exist as long as the media company does. Therefore, media companies' policy of hiring journalists with the type of employment agreement for a specified period of time or PKWT is inappropriate.

At least, for now, PKWT cannot be applied to permanent jobs. The reference to this matter is in the Job Creation Law's derivative, namely Government Regulation Number 35 of 2021 concerning Employment Agreement for a Specified Period of Time, Outsourcing, Working Time and Rest Time, and Termination of Employment.

Article 5 of the government regulation explains that PKWT is made for jobs that are estimated to be completed in not too long time, jobs that are seasonal, or jobs related to new products, new activities, or additional products that are still in trial or exploration.

However, contrary to this, media companies at the local, national, and international levels, in practice, often make the status of journalists as PKWT or contract employees. In fact, with the nature of work that is permanent and will always exist as long as the media company exists. Journalists should be hired using an employment agreement for an unspecified period of time or PKWTT, allowing them to be permanent employees.

Recently, the application of PKWT status for journalists has become more widespread. The term PKWT also has variants of designations such as contributor, stringer, correspondent, and freelancer. In this research, the term freelance journalist will be used.

Freelance journalists are paid by the company according to the number of news, photos, or videos published in the media. However, some get paid according to working hours. Meanwhile, in Government Regulation Number 36 of 2021 on Wages, it is referred to as a wage based on output unit and time unit.

The research also found that a dozen percent of respondents had PKWTT or permanent employee status. However, this status is like a trick by the media company. This is because these journalists do not receive monthly wages, benefits, and so on like other permanent employees. Instead, they are paid on an output unit, namely per item of news published.

Ironically, the salaries received by freelance journalists in Indonesia, whether based on output unit or time unit, are still far from prosperous, often falling

below the provincial minimum wage. The news value per piece given by companies is also still far below the cost of production. As an illustration, from the results of this survey, it was found that there was still news valued at IDR 2,500 per piece and an income of IDR 100,000 per month.

The small income often makes freelance journalists work multiple jobs, and work for more than one media company. In addition, not a few do work outside the journalism profession. To survive, they have to prioritize their expenses, rely on family donations, or go into debt. This survival model is a cycle of poverty that jeopardizes the quality of journalism as well as the lives of journalists and their families.

## 2. Methodology

### a. Data Collection Methods

This research used three data collection methods: online surveys, focus discussions, and in-depth interviews, supplemented by documentation studies using various related literature.

An online survey was conducted with freelance journalists to find out the working conditions, employment relationships, working time, working space, income, and expenses of freelance journalists.

In the initial plan, the survey was expected to collect information on working conditions and salaries from at least 100 people with a composition of 60 percent men and 40 percent women.

The survey was conducted via Google form from February 21, 2023, to April 10, 2023. As a result, 430 online forms were filled out and of these, only 428 forms could be processed. Respondents represented 68.9 percent male, 30.6 percent female, and 0.4 percent were non-binary.

Focused discussions were conducted twice with resource persons from Jakarta and outside Jakarta. This discussion involved five resource persons.

Focused discussions included resource persons from outside Jakarta and Jakarta, on May 9, 2023, and June 28, 2023. They were conducted for two hours and three hours respectively via the Zoom app with freelance journalists working for multiplatform, online mass media, radio, and television.

The discussion with participants outside Jakarta featured nine resource persons. They came from Papua, Medan, Aceh, Maluku, Malang, Padang, Pekanbaru, Balikpapan, Polewali Mandar, and Ternate. Focused discussions with resource persons from around Jakarta were attended by fifteen

participants with eight journalists from Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi or Jabodetabek.

In-depth interviews were originally scheduled with ten interviewees in Jabodetabek. As we considered the information from the two focus groups to be sufficient to cover the information needed for this research, interviews were eventually conducted with only three interviewees. Four interviews were conducted via Zoom Meeting and Google Meet. One interview was conducted face-to-face on August 11, 2023.

Documentation studies were conducted to obtain an overview of Indonesian press corporations and the work of journalists in press corporations.

#### **a. Information Sources**

The sources of information for this research are male and female freelance journalists spread across Indonesia who work as:

- a. Print journalists
- b. Television journalists
- c. Radio journalists
- d. Digital journalists
- e. Photographers

#### **b. Work Team**

- a. Sedane Labour Resource Center (LIPS)
- b. Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) Indonesia

#### **c. Objectives**

- a. Mapping the working conditions of freelance journalists in press corporations
- b. Mapping the news value and salary system of freelance journalists in press corporations

#### **d. Output**

1. The availability of data and information on the working methods and working hours of freelance journalists in the media industry, including multi-platform mass media
2. The availability of data on journalists' income and expenses in the mass media industry
3. The availability of a concept of working conditions and fair wages for freelance journalists in the mass media industry

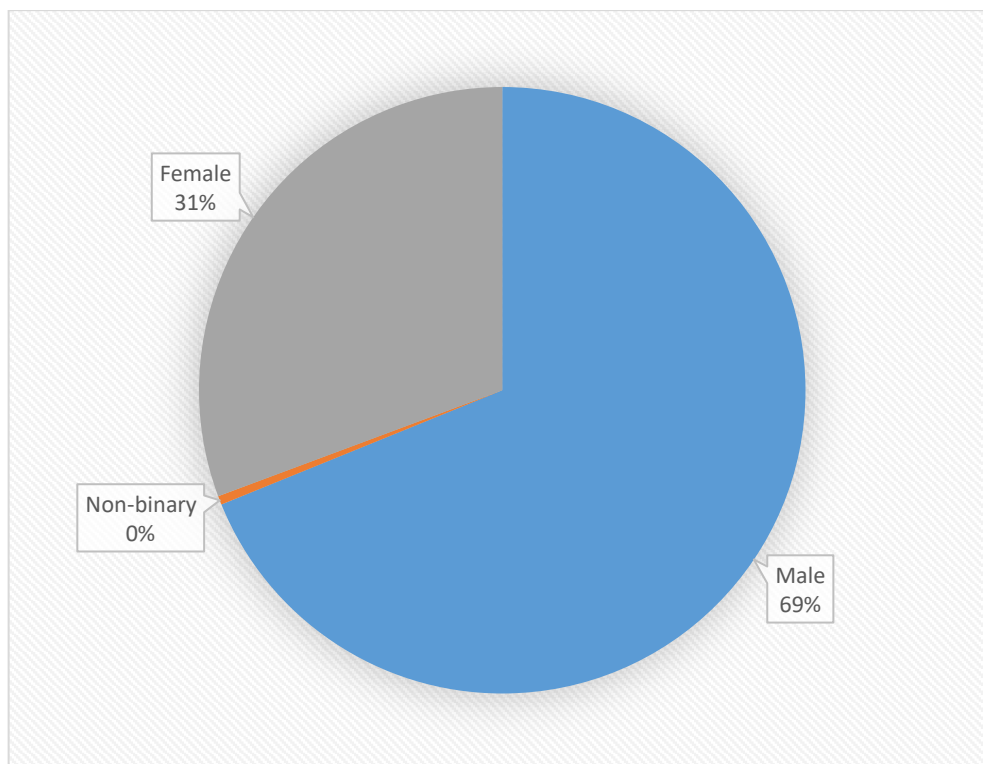
## FINDINGS: EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS, WAGES, EXPENSES, AND RIGHTS OF FREELANCE JOURNALISTS

### 1. Respondent Profile

Of the 436 completed forms, 428 could be processed. Respondents were 68.9 percent male, 30.6 percent female, and 0.4 percent non-binary. Respondents were spread across 134 cities and regencies in 32 provinces, stretching from Aceh, Java, Kalimantan, and Riau Islands to Papua.

The largest age range was 26-35 years old at 57.7 percent. Followed by ages between 36-45 years old at 27.8 percent, and 18-25 years old at 11.4 percent. The respondents were mostly undergraduates, 72.4 percent. The rest were high school graduates at 15.4 percent, associate degrees at 7.2 percent, and postgraduates at 4.9 percent.

Chart 1 Gender

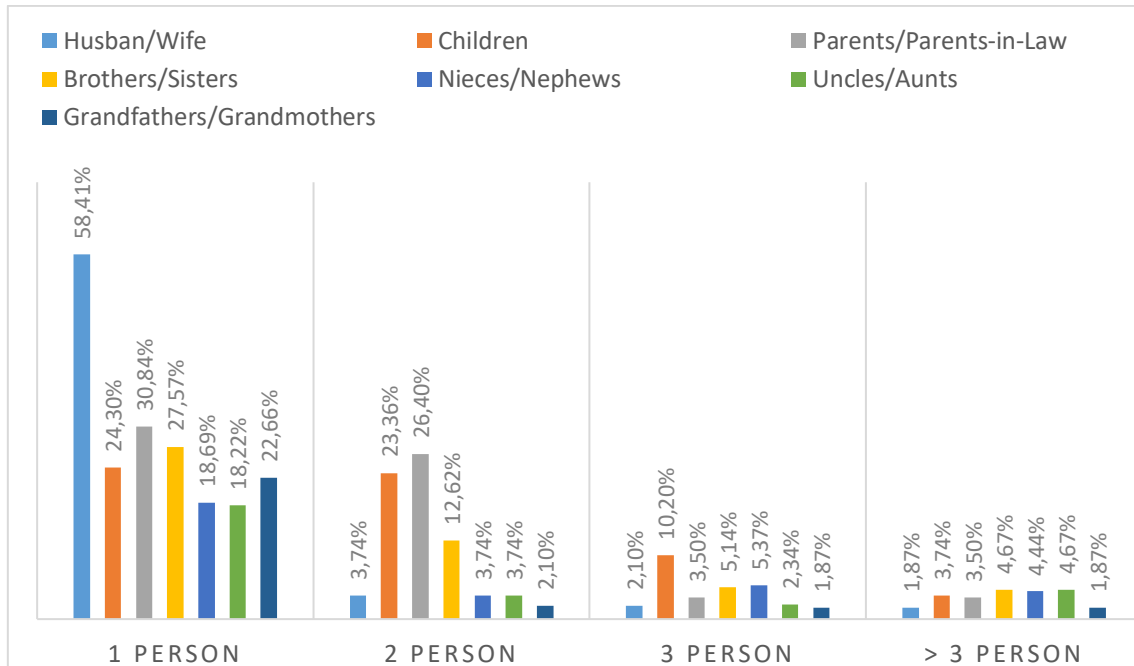


This survey shows that freelance journalists do not only support themselves. They have at least 1 to 3 dependents.

The types of dependents range from nuclear family to extended family. Most dependents are one person, either wife or husband, children, parents or in-laws, younger siblings or older siblings.

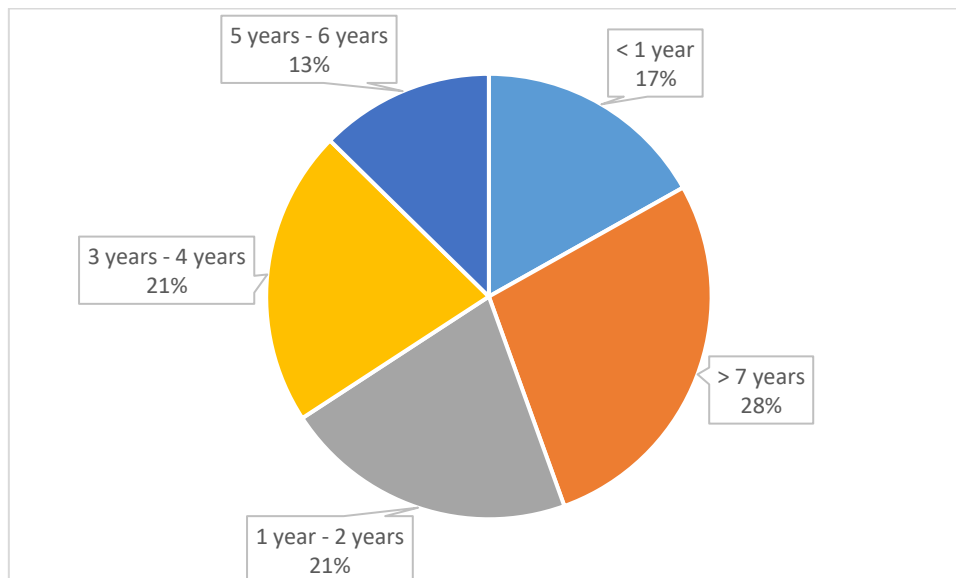


Chart 2 Number of Dependents



The lowest period of employment of journalists is under one year, 17 percent, and the longest is over seven years, 28 percent. This means that being a freelance journalist is not a temporary phase but is experienced over many years with a recurring contract duration, and the nature of the work is permanent.

Chart 3 Period of Employment

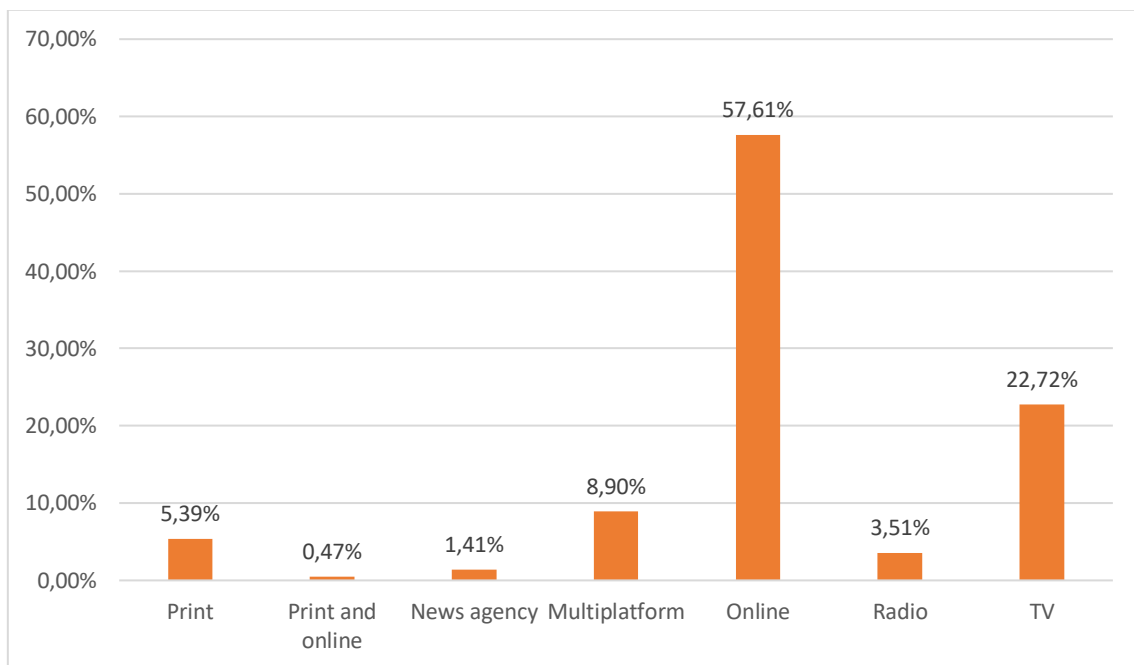


Only 23 percent of all respondents have their own houses, and only 0.7 percent use the company's dorms. The remaining 32.2 percent live with their parents or in-laws, 5.3 percent with relatives, and 25 percent rent a house or room. If the

residences of parents, relatives, rented rooms/houses, and dormitories are combined, then the number of those without a place to live exceeds 50 percent. Thus, despite years of work, most freelance journalists struggle to have a place to live.

57.6 percent of these freelance journalists work for online media, 22.6 percent work for television, 8.8 percent for multiplatform, and 5.3 percent for print media.

*Chart 4 Types of Media*



The media companies where journalists work are mass media published online, on radio, on television, and multiplatform. The content is also local, national, and international. The media are either privately owned, state-owned, or owned by non-profit communities.

In this survey, there are 137 business units with mass media names that differ from their corporate names where journalists work. For example, AJNN.net is the name of the mass media, and the business unit is PT Aceh Jurnal Nasional; Suara.com is the name of the mass media, and the business unit is PT Arkadia Media Nusantara.

Of the 137 businesses, there are 10 holding companies where most freelance journalists work, namely: Kompas Gramedia 24 percent, PT Trans Corpora 13 percent, Lembaga Radio Televisi Republik Indonesia 10 percent, and PT Global Mediacom 11 percent. There is also PT Elang Mahkota Teknologi Tbk 9 percent, LKBN Antara 9 percent, Jawa Pos Group and Media Group 7 percent each, PT Tempo Inti Media 6 percent, and PT Arkadia Media Nusantara 4 percent.

The characteristics of the press corporations in this survey are as follows. First, the mass media that are incorporated in one holding company. The holding company is part of a large business group that controls the financial, banking, mass media, fashion, retail, property, entertainment, and restaurant businesses. For example, PT Trans News Corpora and Berita Satu.

PT Trans News Corpora which is part of the PT Chairul Tanjung Corpora or CT Corp business group. CT Corp is a giant business that controls the business fields of finance, banking, mass media, fashion, retail, property, entertainment, and restaurants. Berita Satu is part of the Lippo Group. Lippo Group's businesses include real estate, retail, hospitals, healthcare, education, investment, and banking.

Second, mass media owned by the Indonesian government or outside Indonesia, such as LKBN Antara, Xinhua, Anadolu Agency, and Voice of America.

LKBN Antara is an Indonesian government-owned news agency that broadcasts national and regional news through <http://www.antaraneews.com>. Antara's main services include text, photos, and multimedia news. Antara also provides other services in the form of marketing cooperation with other media such as Reuters and Bloomberg.

Anadolu Agency is a mass media owned by the Turkish government. It has branches in various countries. Voice of America is an international multimedia news agency owned by the United States Government.

Xinhua is a Chinese government-owned news agency spread across 108 countries. On the Xinhua-news.com page, it is stated that Xinhua provides information services in the form of text, images, multimedia, and multiplatform which are available in eight languages: Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, and Japanese.

Third, local media that are networked or affiliated with national media, such as Radar Sulbar and Harian Rakyat Aceh, which are part of the Jawa Pos Group.

Fourth, local mass media that cooperate with larger mass media, such as Jawa Pos Group and PRMN (Pikiran Rakyat Media Network). On the JawaPos.com portal, it is mentioned that Jawa Pos Group controls 200 media spread across various regions under the name Radar. Apart from issuing printed mass media, Jawa Pos Group also provides online features in multimedia and multiplatform formats.

PRMN is a press corporation that provides text, image, and multimedia news by opening a network with local media called media partners. PRMN also integrates print and digital media under the name [pikiran-rakyat.com](http://pikiran-rakyat.com).

Fifth, mass media that is managed by non-profit organization communities, such as Project Multatuli and Mongabay.

Project Multatuli is an online mass media available in Indonesian and English that presents in-depth reports based on research and data.

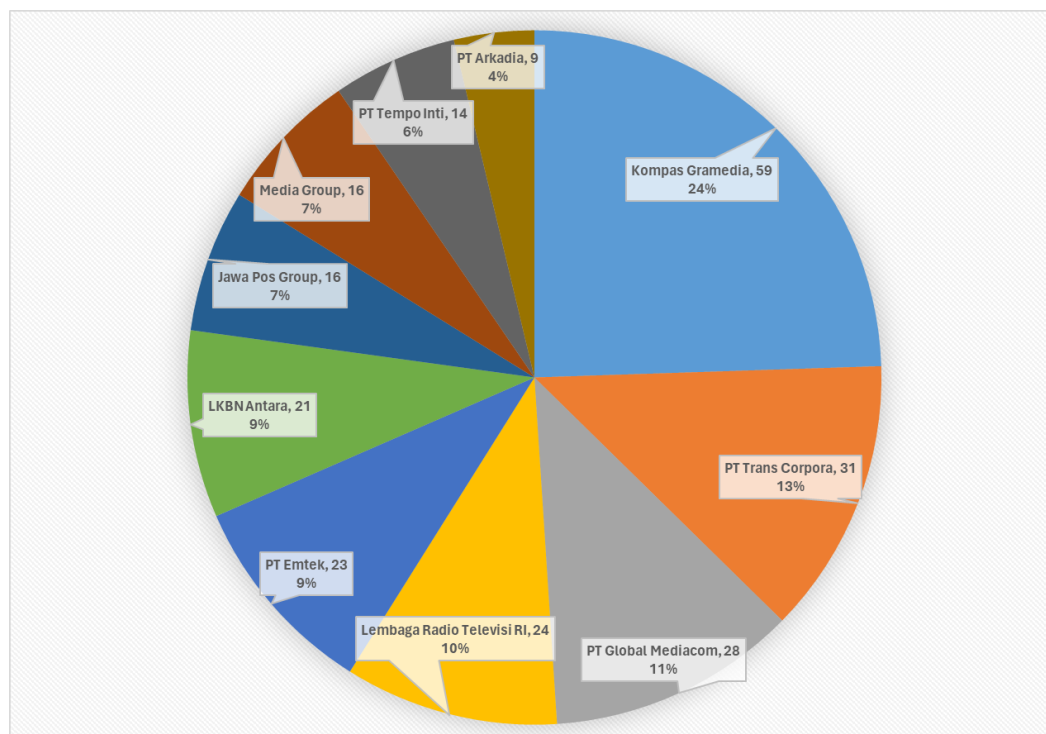
Jaring.id is an online portal managed by the Indonesian Association for Media Development (PPMN). Jaring.id presents investigative reports in Indonesian.

Fifth, international mass media, such as Reuters and Associated Press.

The company published through the reuters.com portal is the media and news division of the Thomson Reuters company. Reuters provides national and international political, business, and financial news in the form of text, photos, and multimedia.

The Associated Press is an English-language news provider in the form of text, video, multimedia, and multiplatform.

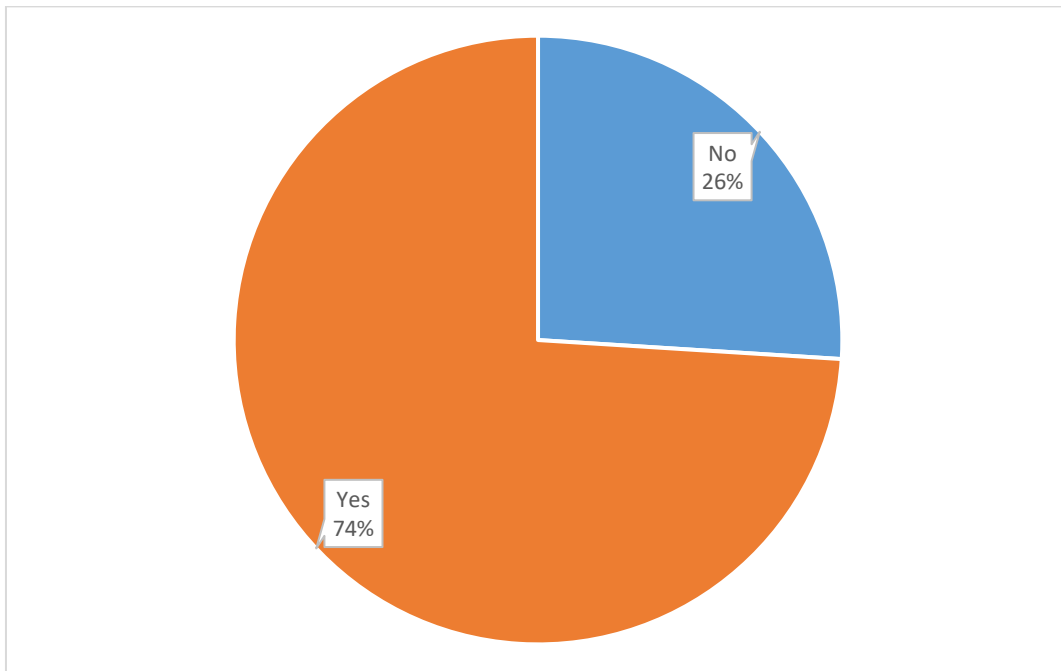
*Chart 5 Ten Holding Companies of the Press Corporations*



As many as 74 percent of respondents are members of professional organizations or journalist unions. The majority of respondents (58%) said that their journalist organizations or unions fight for journalists' wages and working conditions. However, as many as 26 percent of respondents said journalist

organizations or unions still need to improve their functions to defend the rights of freelance journalists.

*Chart 6 Member of Journalist Organization*



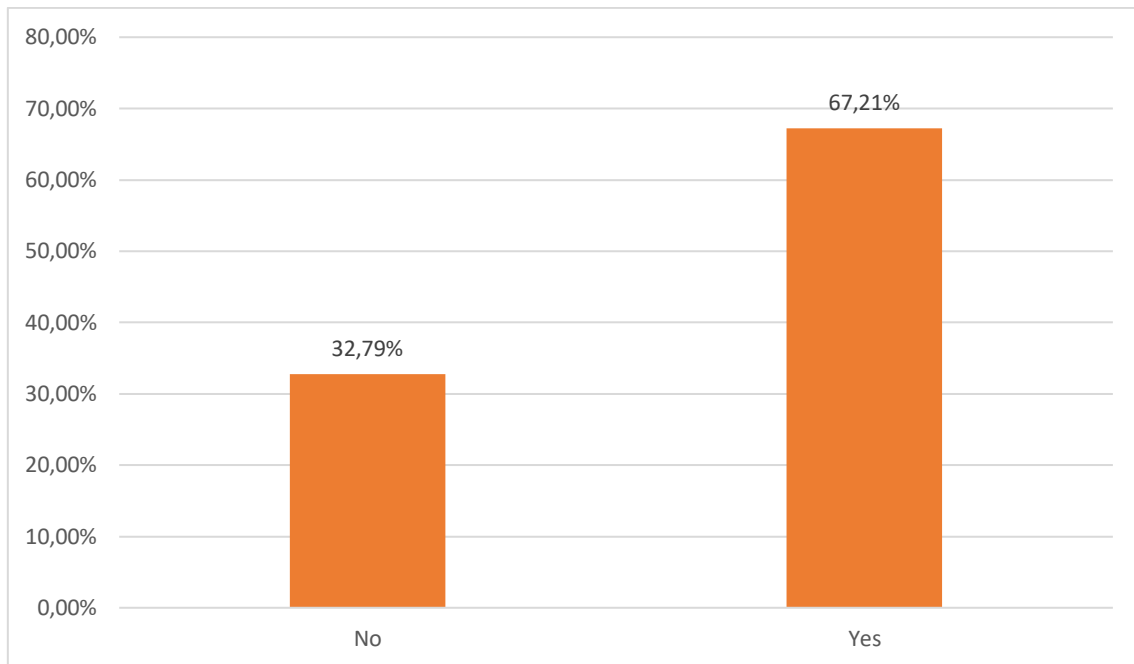
## **2. Employment Relationship**

The survey found no evidence of third-party recruiting, either paid or free, as is common in the manufacturing industry. Freelance journalists can work in press corporations by applying through a network of friends, online platforms, or coming directly to the office as much as 69.7 percent, requested by media companies 34.5 percent, and recommended by friends 4.4 percent.

After being hired, freelance journalists are given assignments. Not all assignments are outlined in a work agreement. Only 67.2 percent of freelance journalists signed a work agreement. Of those who have signed a work agreement, only 43 percent received a copy of the contract. Journalists who did not sign a work agreement received work orders verbally, by email, or via short message application services.

Despite not having a copy of the contract/work agreement, the respondents had evidence of employment relationship, namely from pay slips at 14.52 percent and work order (SPK) at 10.54 percent. However, 59.9 percent did not provide an answer as to how their employment relationship was proven.

Chart 7 Employment Agreement



The survey found two types of employment agreements. As many as 52.6 percent of journalists have an employment agreement for a specified period of time or contract. As many as 11.2 percent have an employment agreement for an unspecified period of time or permanent, 3 percent said they did not know their type of employment relationship, and 0.2 percent had a partner employment relationship.

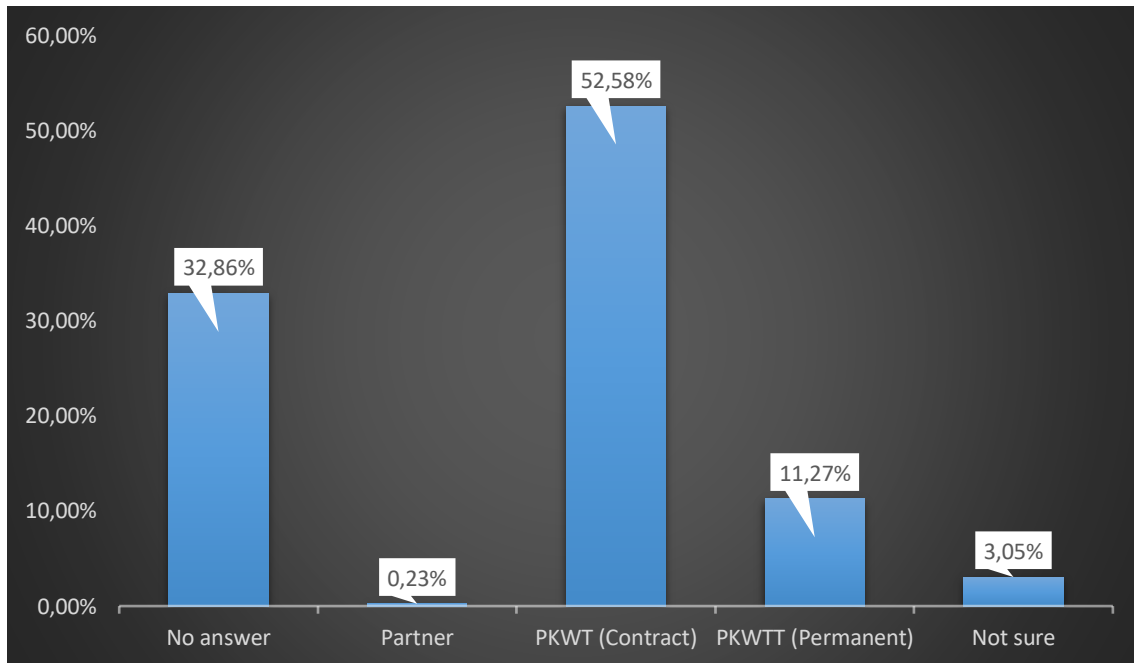
However, it should be underlined that the PKWTT or permanent worker status experienced by 11.2 percent of respondents seems like a trick by media companies. This is because these journalists do not receive monthly wages, benefits, and so on like other permanent employees. Instead, they are paid on an output unit, namely per item of news published.

One example is a source with permanent journalist status in Bojonegoro, East Java. He has worked for two years in a local multiplatform press corporation as a permanent worker. His wage is determined based on the news published. The price of straight news is Rp12,500, the price of in-depth reporting is Rp15,000, the price of photographs is Rp15,000, the price of audio is Rp12,500 and the price of audio-visual is Rp27,500. With an average monthly wage of Rp1.5 million or below Bojonegoro's minimum wage of Rp2.2 million.

Another example is a source from Lampung who works for a national press company. He has been a permanent employee for 4 years and is paid based on output units. Straight news costs Rp35,000, in-depth reporting Rp75,000, and photographs Rp15,000. His average monthly wage is Rp800,000, which is below Lampung's minimum wage of Rp2.9 million.

Unlike freelance journalists who have contractual employment relationships, freelance journalists with permanent employment relationships have little choice to send news to other media because their names are bound by the press company where they work.

*Chart 8 Employment Relationship in Employment Agreement*



Of the number of employment agreements for a specified period of time or contracts, 54.2 percent did not mention the duration of the contract. However, 35.7 percent mentioned that the duration of the work agreement was carried out every year. Another 4.3 percent had a two-year contract. In fact, as many as 0.9 percent said the work agreement depended on news delivery.

Of the total journalists who signed a work agreement, only 43 percent received a copy of the contract. A total of 4.9 percent did not receive a copy of the work agreement and 51.9 percent did not answer.

The above overview shows the vulnerable situation of freelance journalists. They only get work orders, wages based on views, and recurring contracts. Government Regulation Number 35 of 2021 concerning Employment Agreement for a Specified Period of Time, Outsourcing, Working Time and Rest Time, and Termination of Employment, does not require employers to provide a copy of the contract to workers.

However, in the bond of employment, journalists need contracts and copies to know the scope of work and protection of their rights. Through a copy of the contract, journalists can avoid arbitrary treatment by press corporations.

Only 18 percent of respondents said that they received compensation when their employment was terminated. The amount of compensation that follows the laws and regulations is 11 percent and is determined by the company at 5.6 percent.

Chart 9 Right to Severance Pay

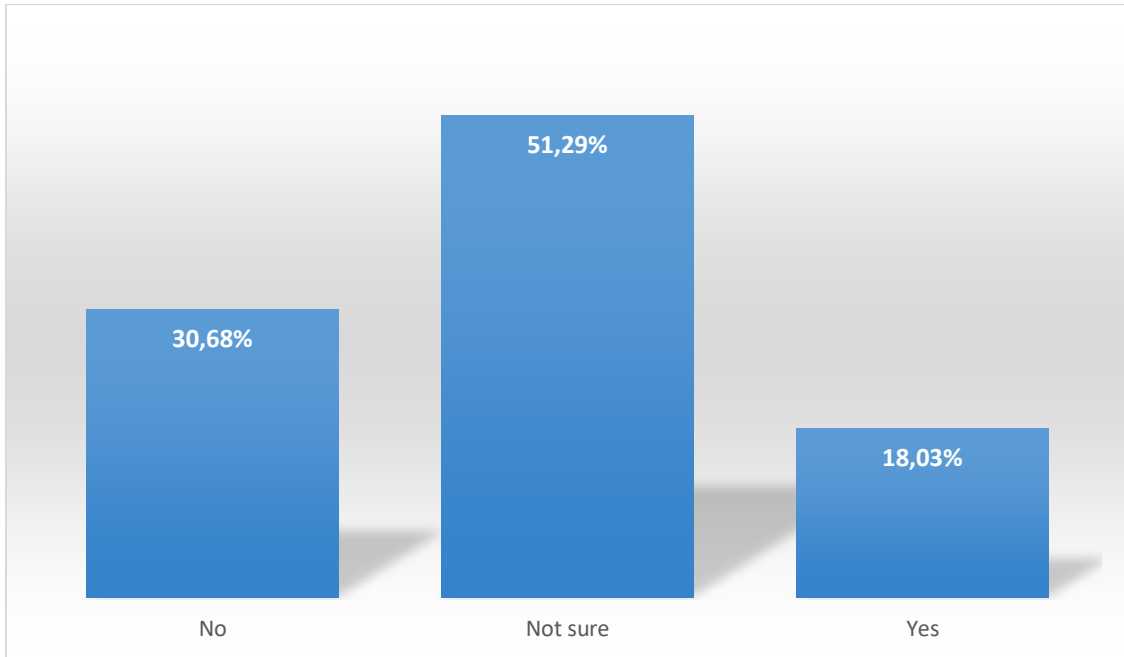
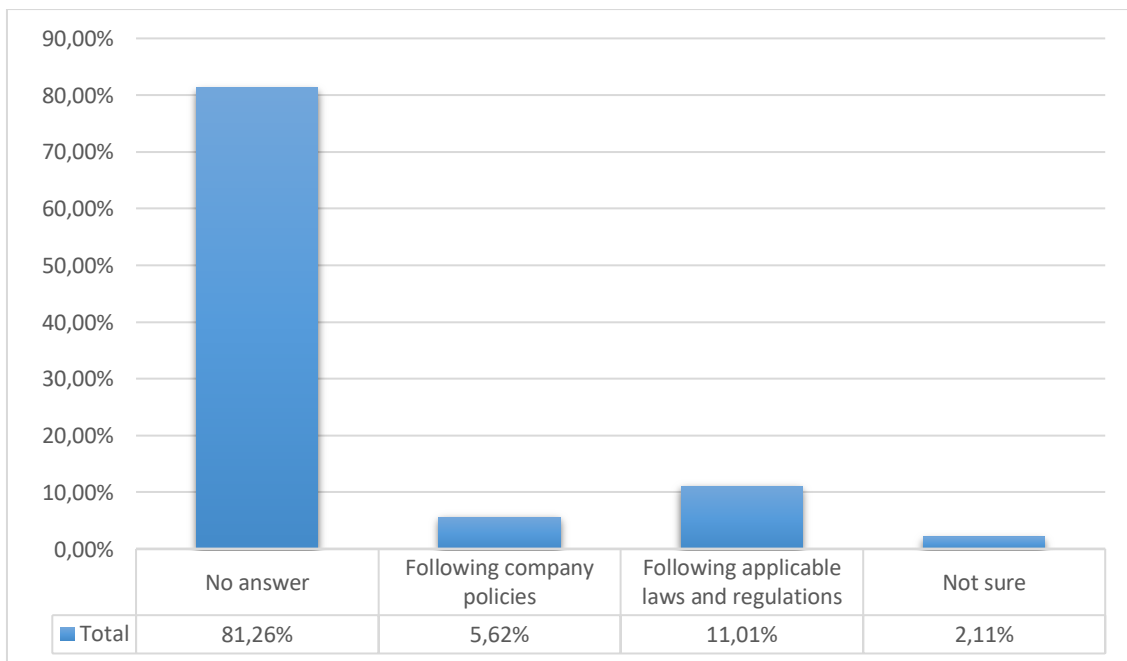


Chart 10 Severance Pay



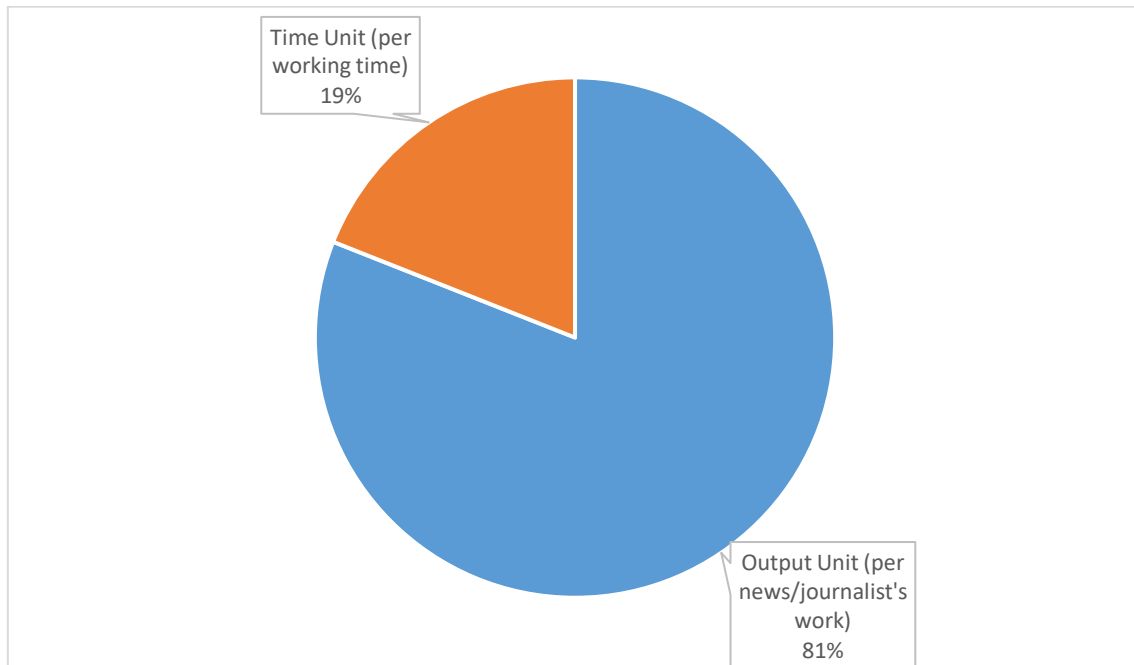


### 3. Wages, Work Facilities, and the Price of Journalistic Works

#### a. Wage system

A total of 81 percent of journalists' wages are based on output units on the basis of calculations per news story or per journalist's work published. A total of 18.9 percent is calculated based on time units.

*Chart 11 Types of Wages*



The output unit wage system for freelance journalists does not take into account how much journalistic work is produced but is based on the number of news stories that have been published. There is also a type of wage based on views after the news is published.

To convert the number of views into wages, press corporations have their own calculation methods. However, some say their wages are based on advertisements and are uncertain. In general, freelance journalists are informed of the price of their journalistic work and are allowed to recapitulate the number of works that have been published.

The amount of wages based on output units, 66.2 percent is determined by the company, 73 percent are paid monthly, and 1.6 percent every two weeks. Some received wages per week and per day. Each is 1.6 percent.

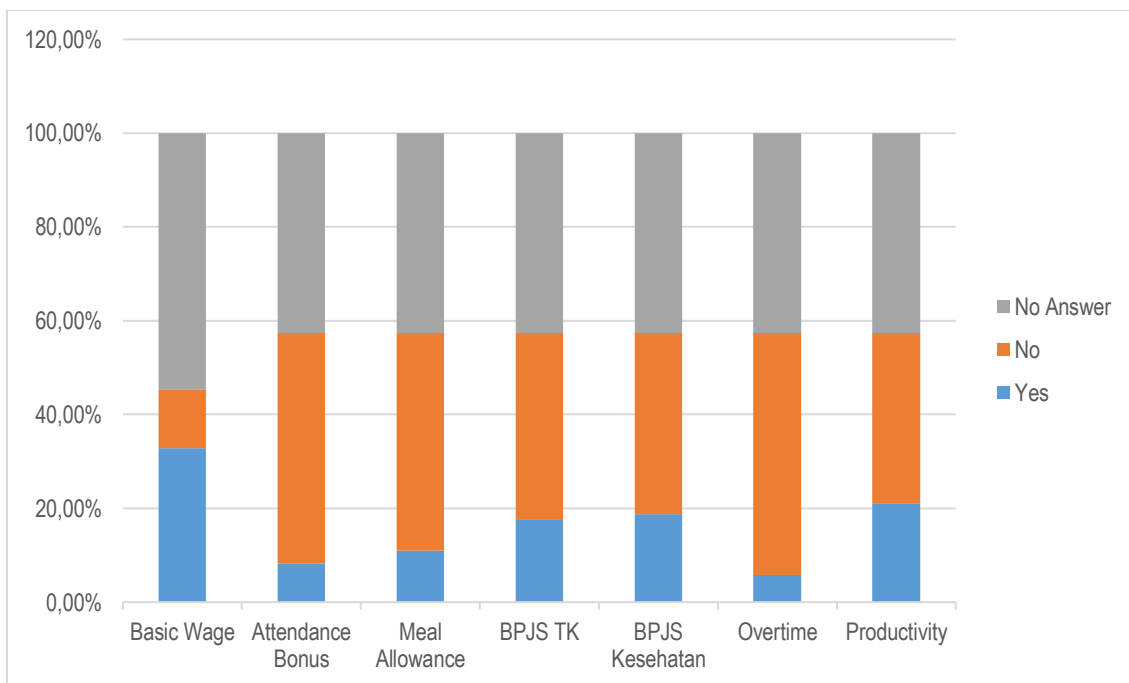
For freelance journalists who are paid based on time units, 14.9 percent of the wage rate is determined by the company, 3.9 percent by agreement, and 81 percent did not answer.

The payment method of wages based on time units is paid per month as much as 17.5 percent. A total of 81.0 percent did not answer how their wages were paid. The rest answered that wages are paid weekly and daily.

Journalists who are paid by the time unit are calculated based on working time and use the minimum wage as a reference for wages. However, some are calculated by the hour. The smallest hourly wage is Rp4,444 and the largest is Rp3.5 million.

A total of 57 percent of journalists received a wage slip. A total of 42.6 percent did not receive a wage slip. The remaining 0.2 percent did not answer.

Chart 12 Wage Component in Wage Slip



The basic wage on the wage slip, excluding allowances, has the smallest amount of Rp200,000 and the largest amount of Rp18.4. However, the average amount of basic wages was between Rp2.5 million and Rp3.5 million.

On the wage slip, respondents received details of monthly wages. Only 32.7 percent of respondents mentioned basic wage in the slip, attendance bonus 8 percent, meal allowance 11 percent, National Social Security Agency for Employment (BPJS Ketenagakerjaan) 17 percent, BPJS Kesehatan 18.7 percent, overtime 5.8 percent, and productivity 21 percent.

The smallest meal allowance is Rp12,000 and the largest is Rp2.4 million. The range of meal allowances is between Rp50 thousand and Rp500 thousand.

The smallest position allowance is Rp2 thousand and the largest is Rp1 million. The average allowance is in the range of Rp100 thousand to Rp500 thousand.

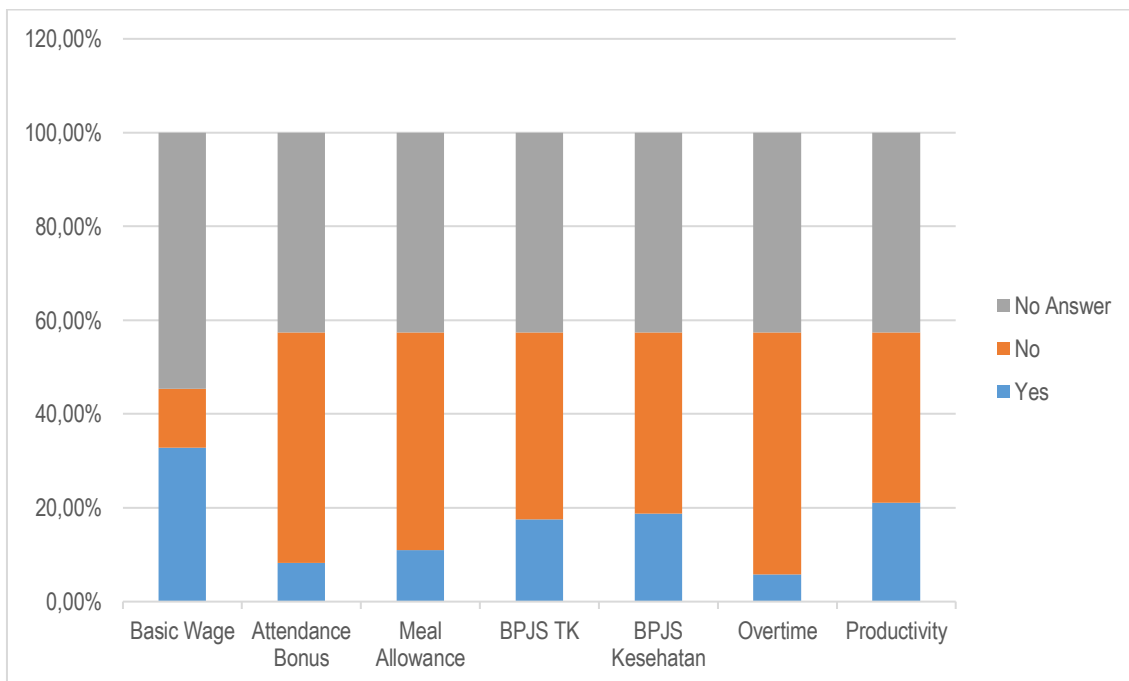
The smallest period of employment allowances is Rp10,000 and the largest is Rp3.3 million. The range of period of employment allowances is between Rp250,000 and Rp2 million.

The smallest overtime pay calculation is Rp10 thousand and the largest is Rp9 million. The range of overtime pay varies from Rp50 thousand to Rp2 million.

The smallest transport allowance is Rp10 thousand and the largest is Rp3.6 million. The range of transport allowance is between Rp50 thousand and Rp300 thousand.

The smallest insurance premium is Rp25 thousand and the largest is Rp25.2 million. On average, journalists receive insurance premiums in the range of Rp50 thousand to Rp100 thousand.

Chart 13 Components of Wages



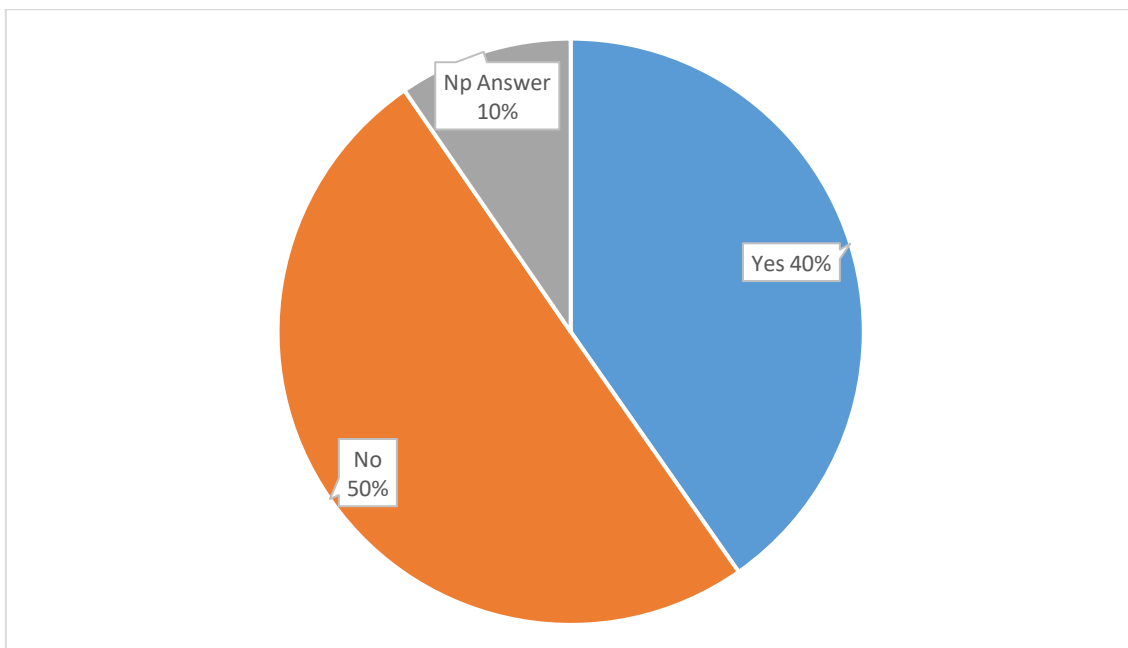
However, 50.1 percent said they only received a monthly wage with no other benefits. As many as 89.9 percent of respondents said they did not receive insurance premiums, 89.9 percent did not receive meal allowances, 94.6 percent did not have position allowances, 87.59 percent did not receive transport allowances, 93.44 percent did not receive overtime pay, and 93.68 percent did not receive period of employment allowances.

In addition to not receiving allowances, 50 respondents said they did not receive additional non-wage benefits such as bonuses and holiday allowances.

The overview above shows that, with the wage value determined by the corporation, the wage conditions for freelance journalists do not meet the wage provisions as stipulated in the laws and regulations. Thus, the value of wages for freelance journalists might be very low.

However, up to 40% of respondents mentioned obtaining additional non-wage benefits. The form of additional wages or non-wage income is in the form of religious holiday allowances or THR 11.2 percent. There were also those who received annual bonuses, holiday allowances, productivity/performance allowances, compensation for work facilities 3.2 percent, and communication allowances or credit 3 percent.

*Chart 14 Religious Holiday Allowances and Bonuses*

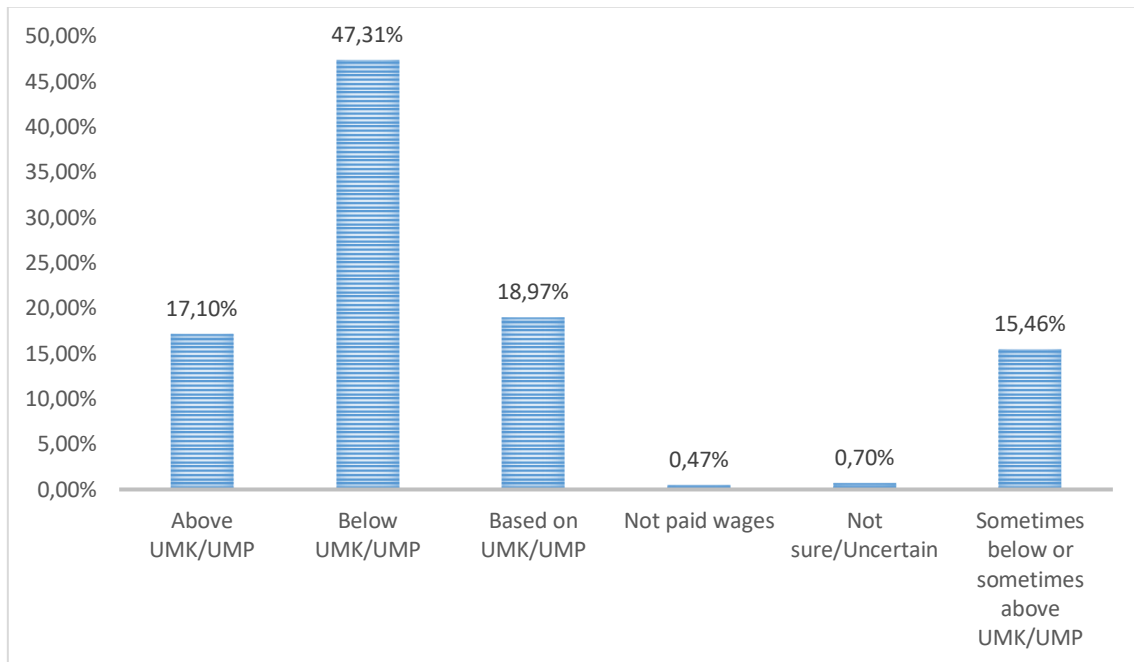


Only 17 percent of respondents claimed to receive monthly wages above the minimum wage. As many as 47.3 percent of respondents said their wages were less than the minimum wage, 18.9 percent said their wages were at the minimum wage, and as many as 15.4 percent had uncertain wages, and even received no wages because they only received commissions from the number of advertisements.

The lowest total wage per month was IDR 200,000. The data was found from national television contributors in East Java and local online mass media contributors in Central Java. Whereas, journalists working in international non-

profit mass media earn the most, about USD 1500 or Rp22,240,500.<sup>1</sup> The average wage of many freelance journalists (8.6 percent) was IDR 2 million, Rp1.5 million was received by 7.9 percent, and IDR 3 million by 7.7 percent.

*Chart 15 Comparison of Wages with UMK/UMP*

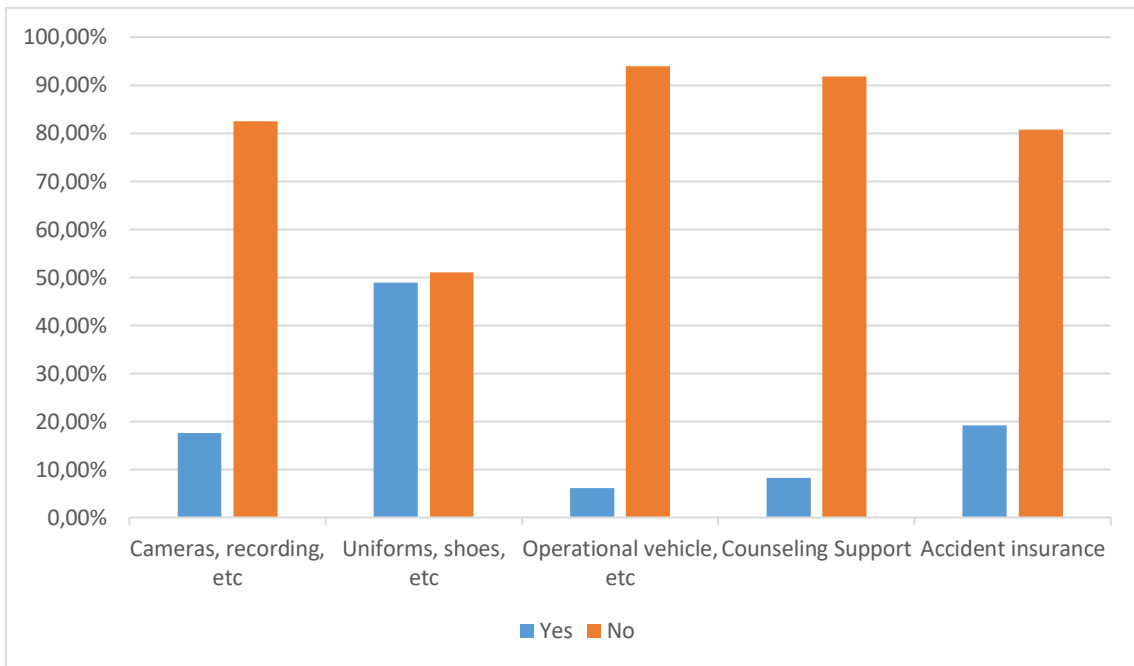


Most freelance journalists have to produce news at their own expense. They do not receive any work support. As many as 93.9 percent did not receive operational vehicle support, 91 percent did not receive counseling support, 82.4 percent did not receive camera and recording facilities, and 80.8 percent did not receive accident insurance.

A total of 48.9 percent of respondents received support for work facilities in the form of uniforms, shoes, and others. There were also those who received accident insurance, as many as 19.2 percent.

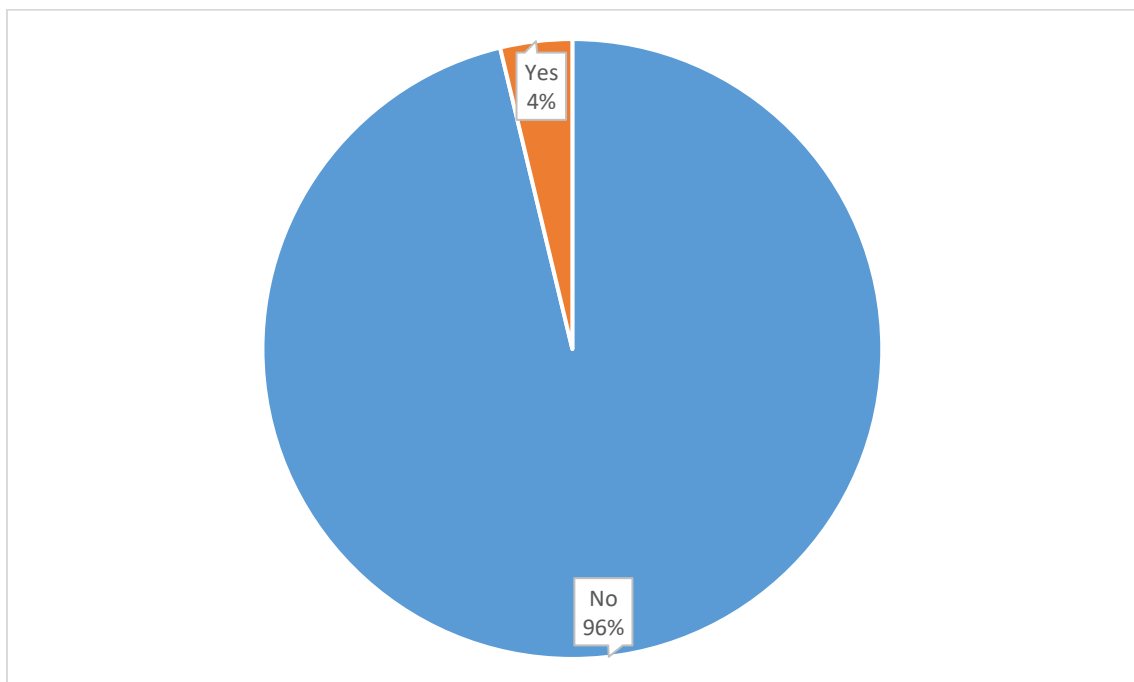
<sup>1</sup> Bank Indonesia USD rate as of April 28, 2023, selling rate 1 USD IDR 14,824,75, buying rate 14,677,25.

Chart 16 Work Facilities



Only 3.7 percent of journalists experienced illegal payroll deductions. This type of cut is like a punishment because it is related to job performance, inability to achieve news targets, COVID-19, and company finances declining.

Chart 17 Illegal Payroll Deductions

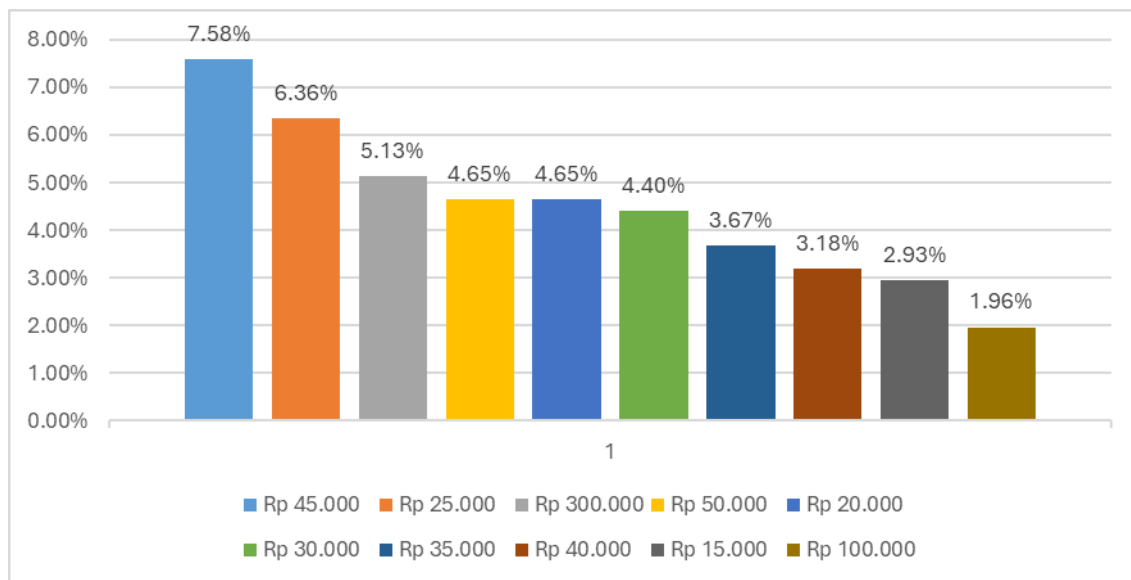


## b. The Price of Journalistic Works

### a. Straight News

The lowest rate of news in the form of straight news is Rp2,500 and the highest is USD200 or around Rp2,965,400.<sup>2</sup> The average journalistic work in the form of straight news is in the range of Rp25 thousand to Rp300 thousand per broadcast.

Chart 18 Top Ten Highest Rates for Straight News

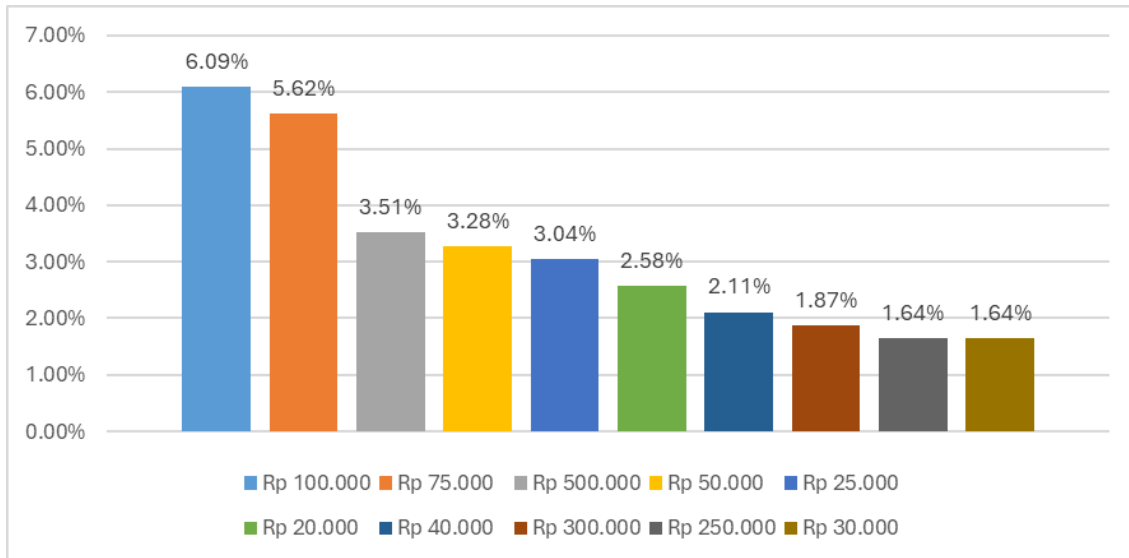


### b. In-depth Reporting

The rates for in-depth coverage vary from the smallest of Rp10,000 to the largest of USD350 or around Rp5,189,450. The average rate of in-depth coverage varies from Rp300,000 to Rp2 million.

<sup>2</sup> All dollar values in this survey refer to the Bank Indonesia dollar rate. Bank Indonesia USD rate as of April 28, 2023, selling rate 1 USD IDR 14,824.75, buying rate 14,677.25.

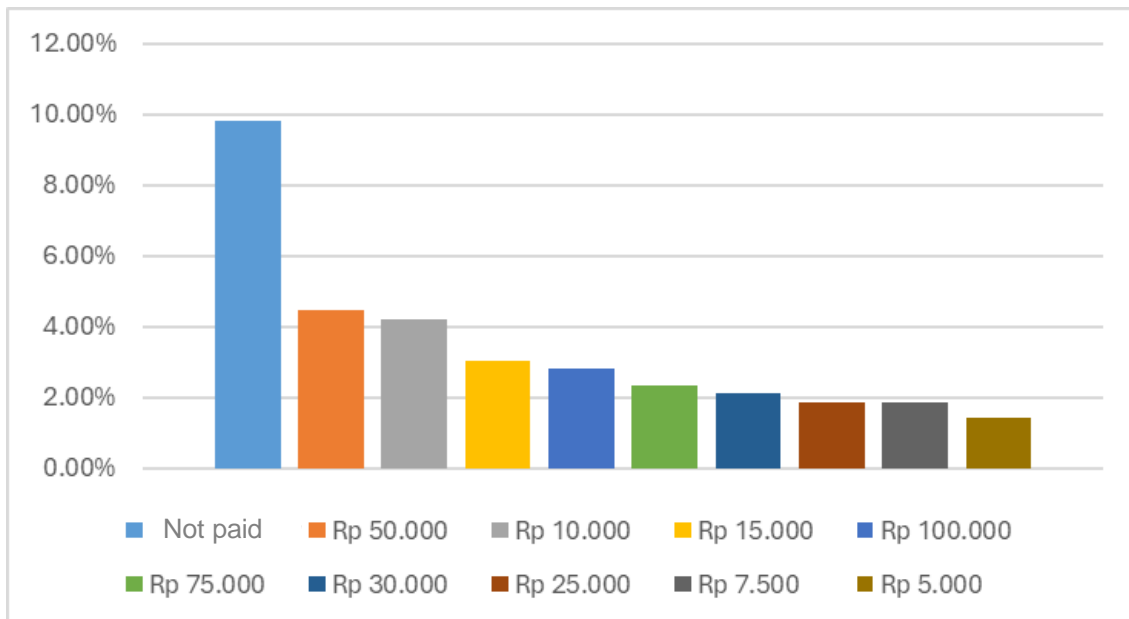
Chart 19 Top Ten Highest Rates for In-depth Reporting



**c. Rates for Photographs**

The lowest photograph price range is Rp5000 to USD300 or around Rp4,448,100. Other variations of photograph rates are in the range of Rp10,000 to Rp150,000. However, as many as 9 percent of respondents said photographs were not valued. Unvalued photographs were in the top ten categories answered by respondents.

Chart 20 Top Ten Highest Rates for Photographs

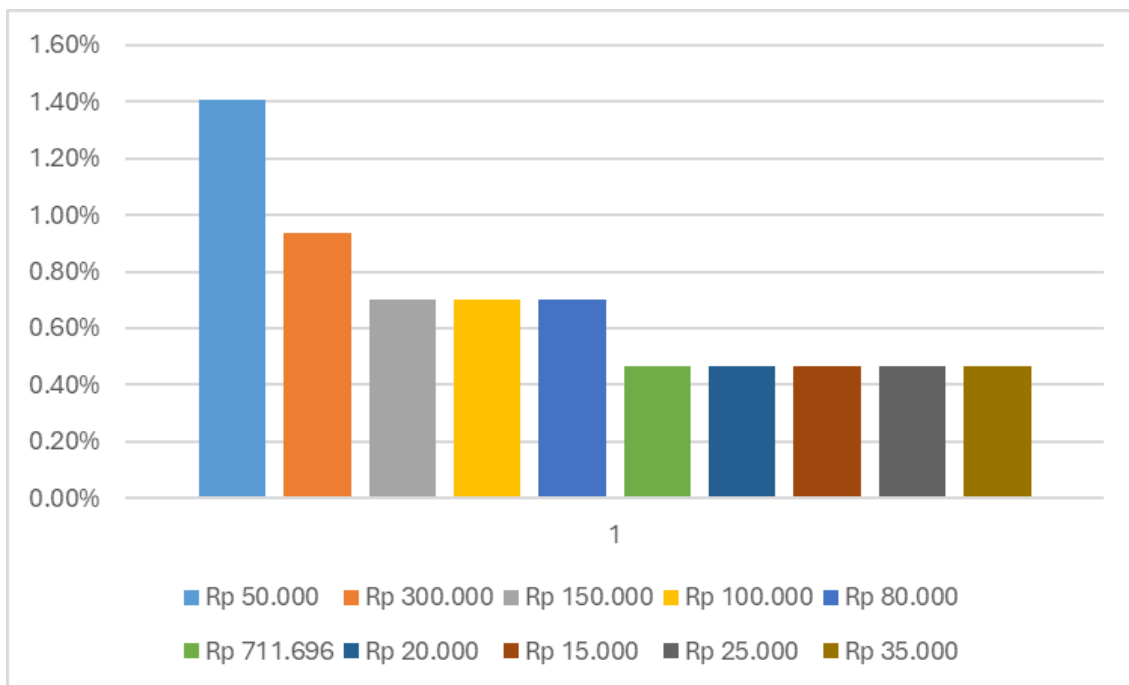




#### d. Rates for Audio

Meanwhile, the audio rate for radio news is around Rp12,500 and the highest is USD 48 or around Rp711,696.<sup>3</sup> The average price of journalistic work in the form of audio is around Rp100 thousand.

Chart 21 Top Ten Highest Rates for Audio

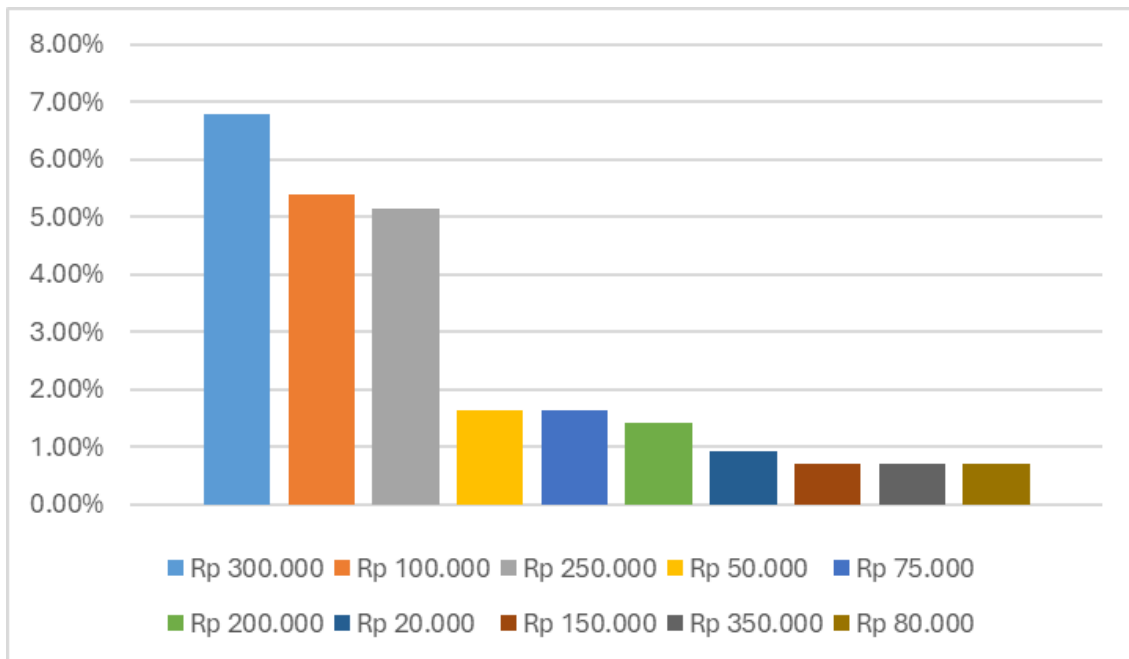


#### e. Rates for Audio-Visual

The lowest price for audio-visual news is Rp15,000 and the highest is Rp3.5 million. Other prices are in the range of Rp150 thousand and Rp300 thousand.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Chart 22 Top Ten Highest Rates for Audio-Visual



#### 4. Working Conditions: News Submission, Working Time, and Violence

##### a. News Submission and Working Time

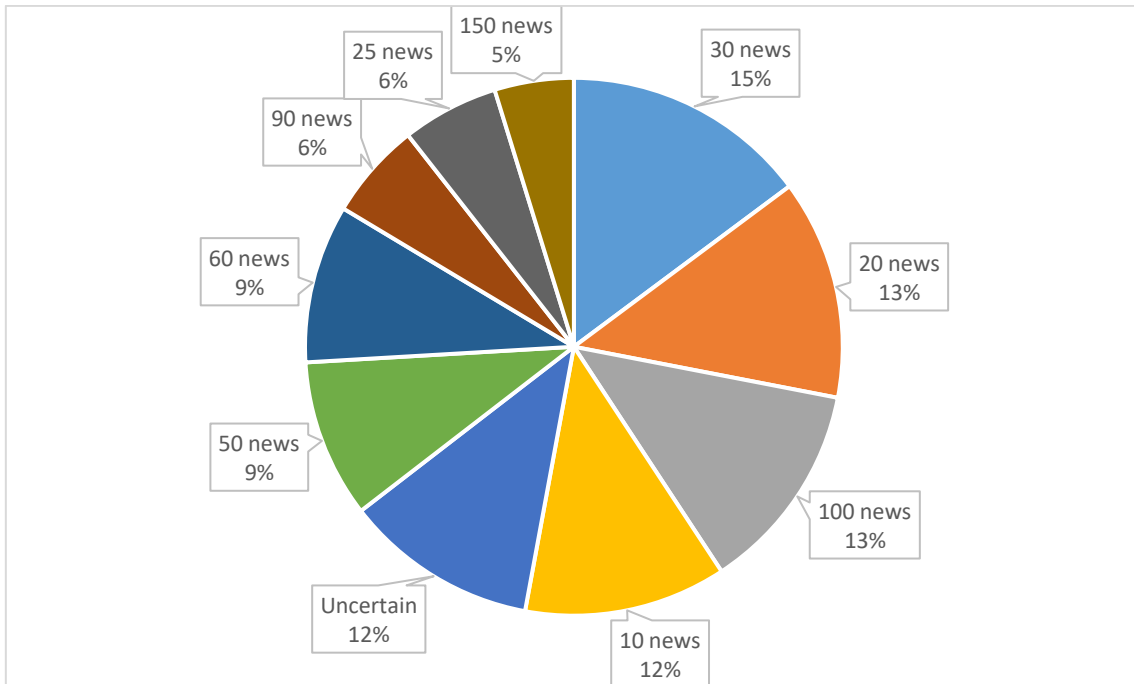
According to 82.4 percent of respondents, press corporations do not set targets for news production per day. Only 17.5 percent have a news submission target. Unlike the manufacturing work system that controls workers through achieving targets, freelance journalists are controlled by the type of news that is worth publishing or not.

As a result, because freelance journalists are paid based on views, they must try to produce as much news as possible. They also have no bargaining power when editors assign coverage of an event outside working hours and under any circumstances. One of the journalists in this survey mentioned having received a work order while doing Tarawih prayers.

Per month, freelance journalists must send at least one news story and no more than 50 news stories. Spread out, each freelance journalist has different news targets. As many as 6.5 percent said they had to deliver 30 news stories per month, 5.8 percent 20 news stories, and 5.6 percent 100 news stories.

To achieve this news submission, they work eight hours or more. A total of 65.4 percent mentioned that they work more than 8 hours per day. Only 34.5 percent worked under 8 hours per day.

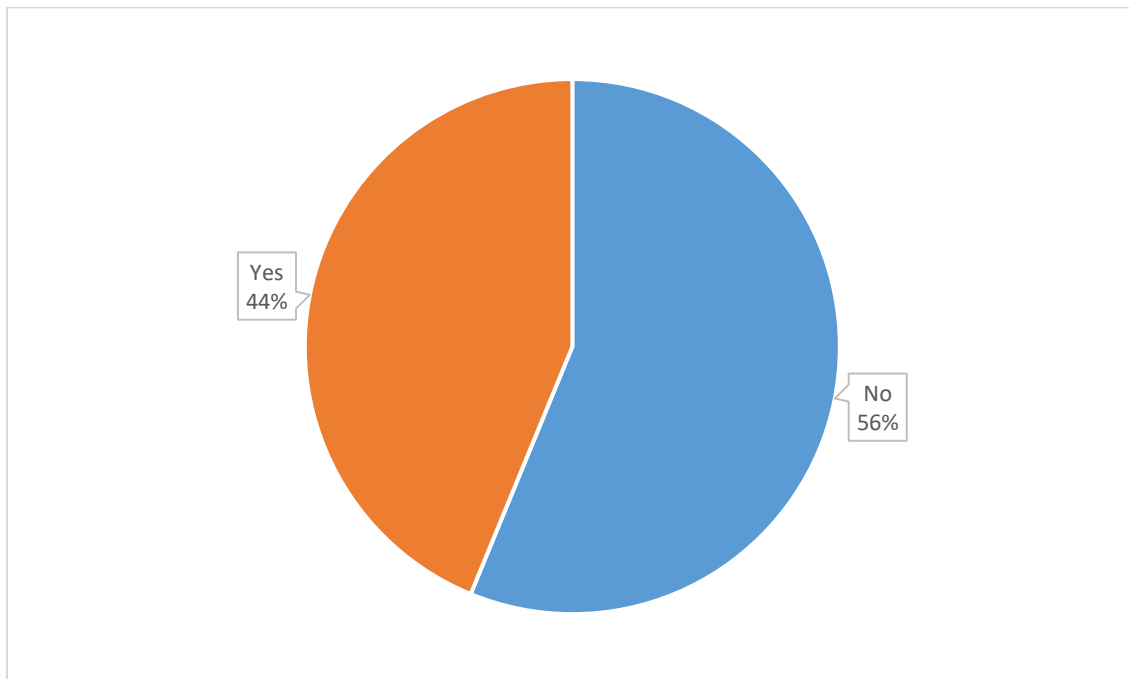
Chart 23 News Submission per Month



**b. Violence During Coverage**

A total of 56 percent said they experienced violence and 43 percent said they did not experience violence when reporting.

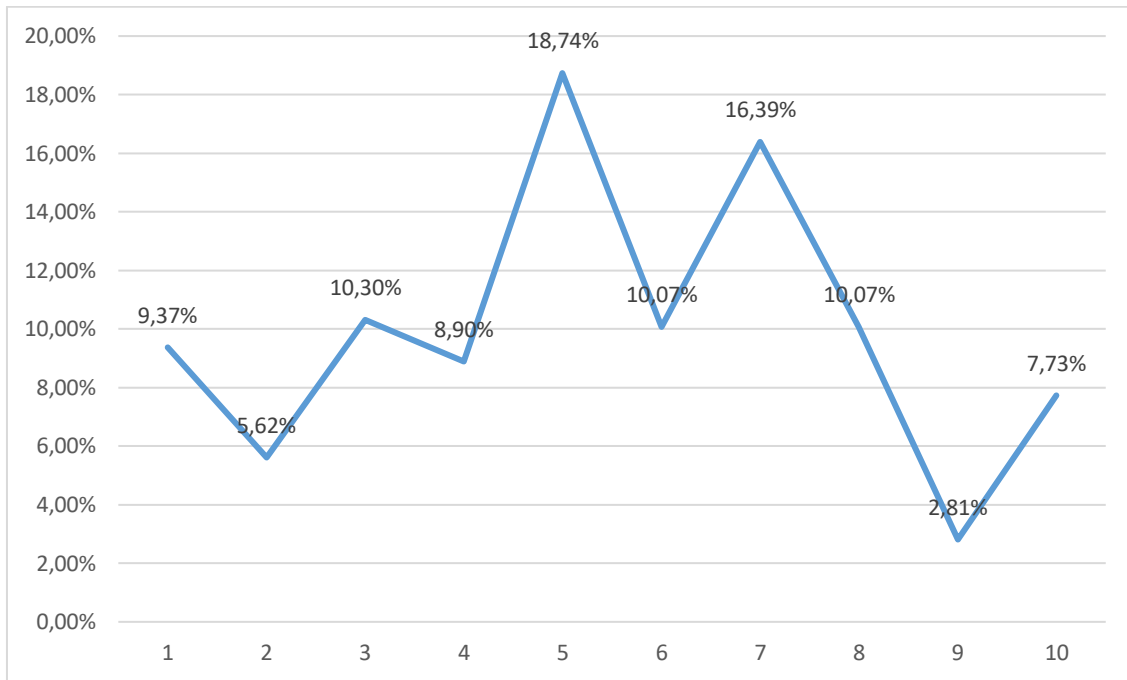
Chart 24 Violence During Coverage



### c. Mental Abuse

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 representing the lowest stress level and 10 being the highest, 18.7 percent and 16.3 percent of respondents reported stress at levels 5 to 7. This means that freelance journalists experience mental stress that is close to depression.

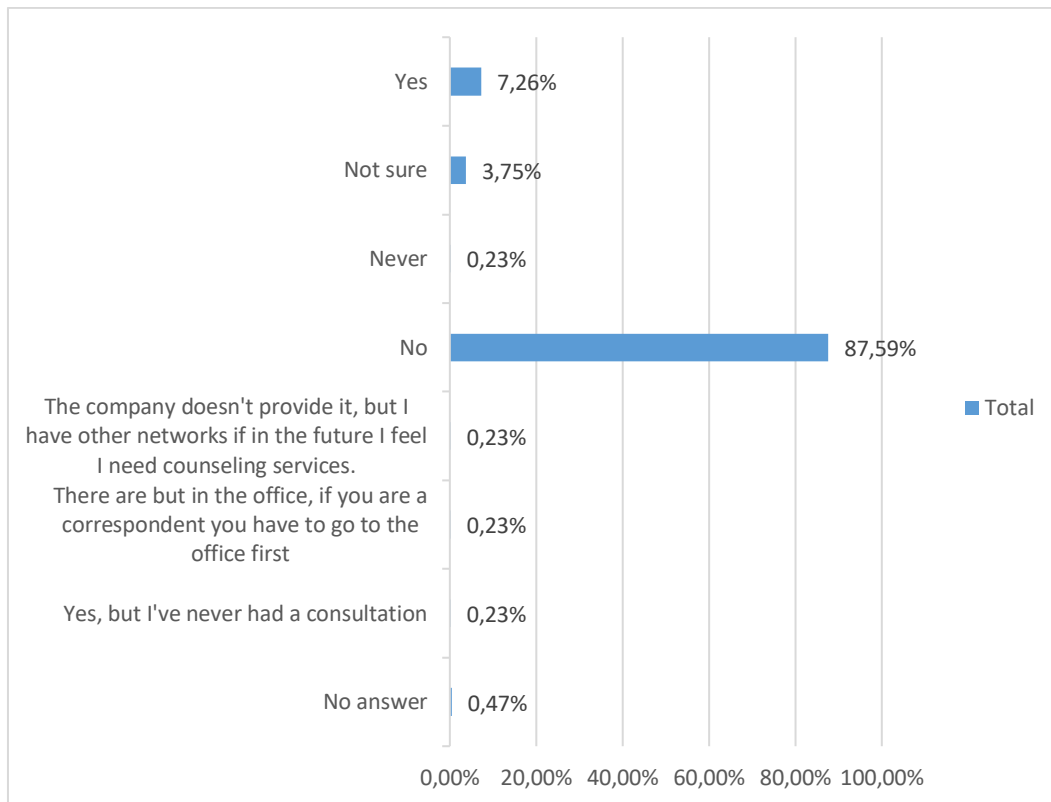
*Chart 25 Stress Level of Freelance Journalists*



### d. Right to Receive Counseling

A total of 87.3 percent of freelance journalists said the company did not provide counseling services, 7.4 percent said counseling services were available, and 3.7 percent said they did not know about counseling services provided by the company. Variously, the respondents mentioned the right to counseling provided by the company but had never accessed it.

Chart 26 Right to Receive Counseling



## 5. Income and Expenses

### a. Income

This section will show the income of freelance journalists outside the company where they work and from other sources.

The survey shows that to cover their daily needs, freelance journalists have to work in various ways. These include working for other press corporations, working outside of journalistic work, or cutting expenses.

One of the tactics to boost their income, 27 percent of freelance journalists work for other media either as editors, photographers, or send straight news and in-depth reporting.

There are around 107 press corporations that are used as a source of income for the freelance journalists mentioned in the survey. The mass media are local, national, and international.

Journalistic works published by freelance journalists are at least one and no more than 300 every month. However, on average, freelance journalists produce 10 to 50 journalistic works every month.

Freelance journalists might earn as little as Rp100,000 and as much as Rp11 million from other press corporations.

Chart 27 Working for Other Press Corporations

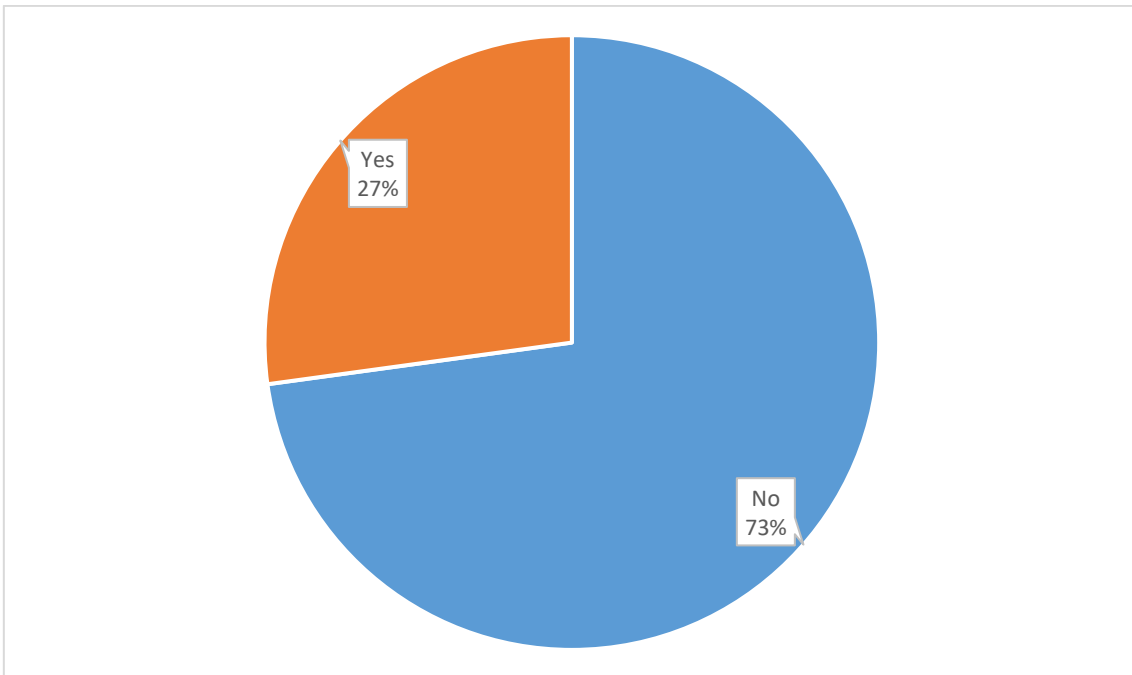


Chart 28 Ten Main Media for Additional Work

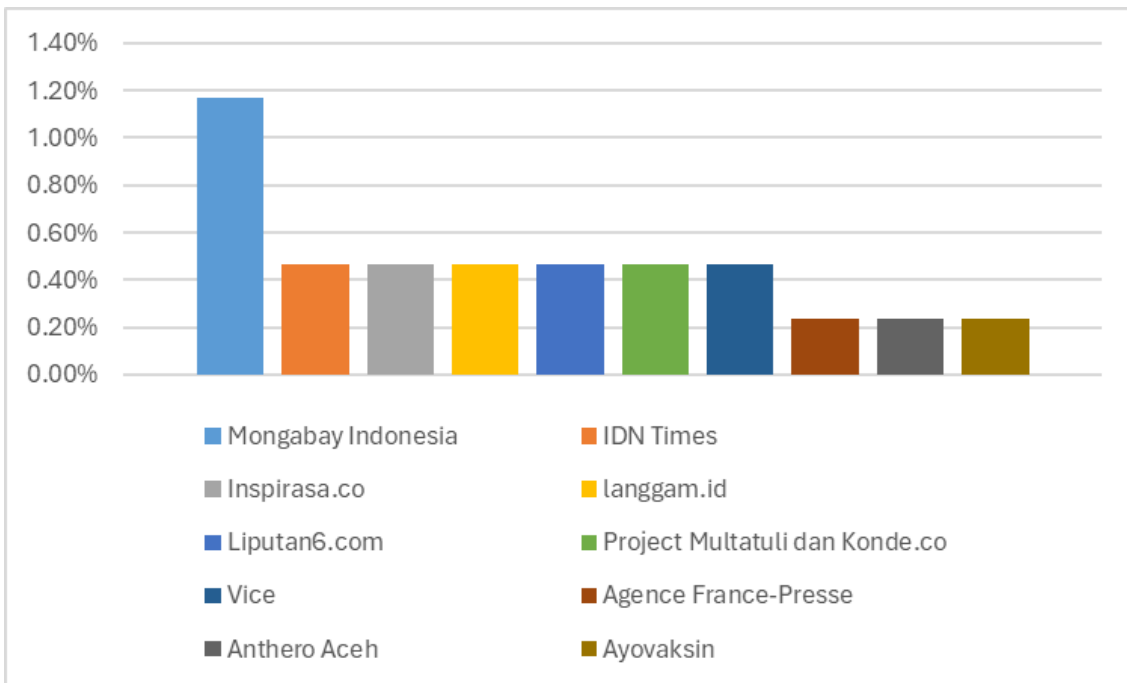
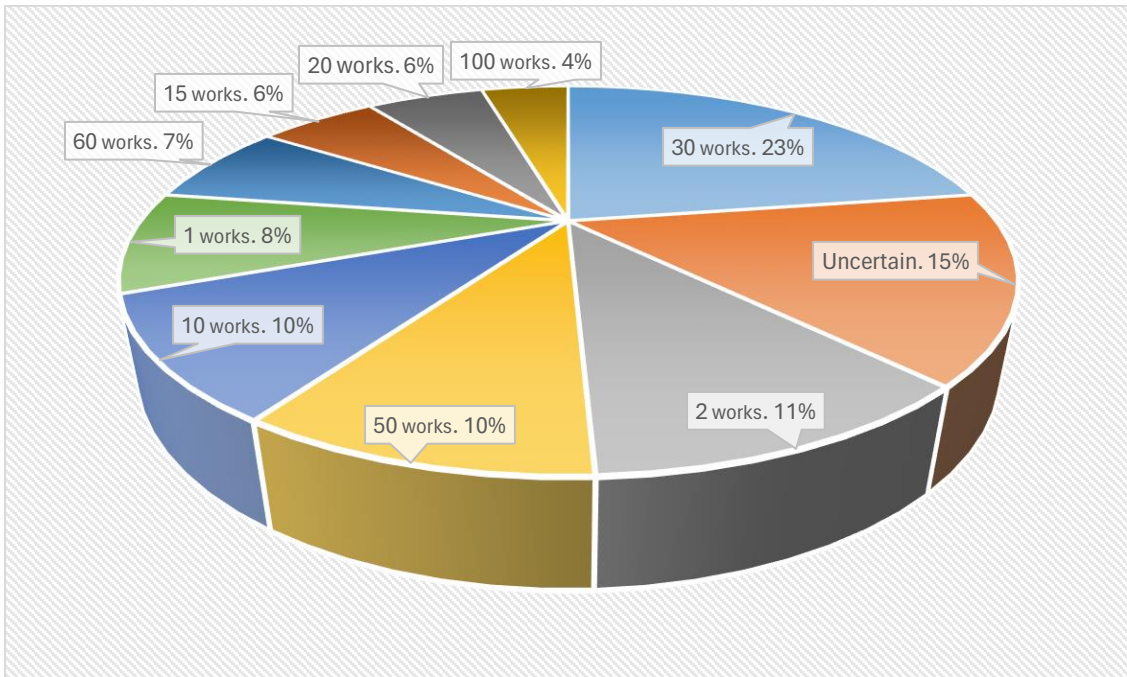


Chart 29 Ten Journalistic Submissions to Other Media



Of course, not all journalists have the opportunity to work in other press corporations. This survey shows that 73 percent of journalists do not work in other press corporations. For this reason, journalists seek alternative careers, such as being an MC (master of ceremonies), active in the community, trading, and so on. The amount of income from other businesses reached 28 variations of answers.

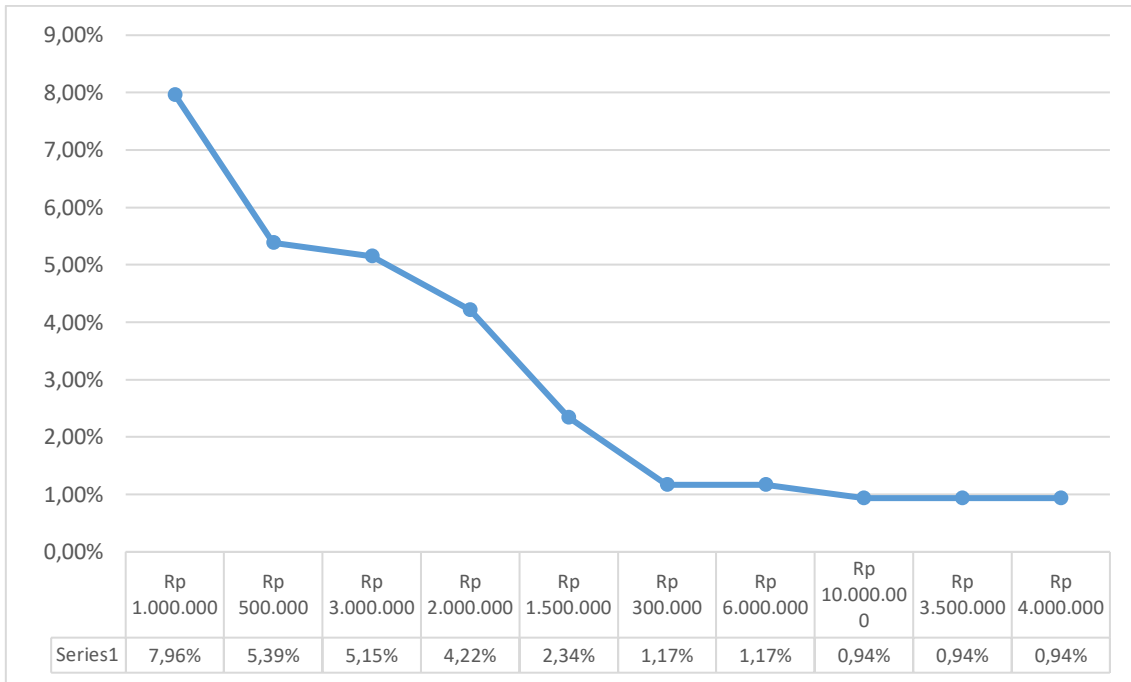
The smallest income from a non-journalism business is Rp400,000. The largest income was IDR 30 million.

Table 2 Table Five Average Income Per Month 2023

Work Area	Income from Workplace	Income from other press corporations	Income outside Journalistic works	UMP 2023
DI Yogyakarta	Rp 2.000.000	Rp 2.000.000	Rp 3.000.000	Rp 1.981.782
Central Java	Rp 1.500.000	Rp 3.000.000	Rp 1.000.000	Rp 1.958.169
DKI Jakarta	Rp 3.000.000	Rp 4.000.000	Rp 4.000.000	Rp 4.901.798
East Kalimantan	Rp 2.500.000	Rp 3.500.000	Rp 1.500.000	Rp 3.201.396
South Sumatra	Rp 1.000.000	Rp 5.000.000	Rp 8.000.000	Rp 3.404.177

However, this survey also found that not all freelance journalists have the opportunity to earn additional income, both in and outside of journalistic work. Therefore, as described below, their income depends on other sources, such as relying on provisions from relatives and reducing their daily needs.

Chart 30 Top Ten Income from Other Businesses



The combined amount of income from family members is in the range of Rp100 thousand to Rp25 million per month. Meanwhile, regular provision from the family is in the range of Rp100 thousand to the largest of Rp4 million per month.

Chart 31 Top Ten Income from Family Members

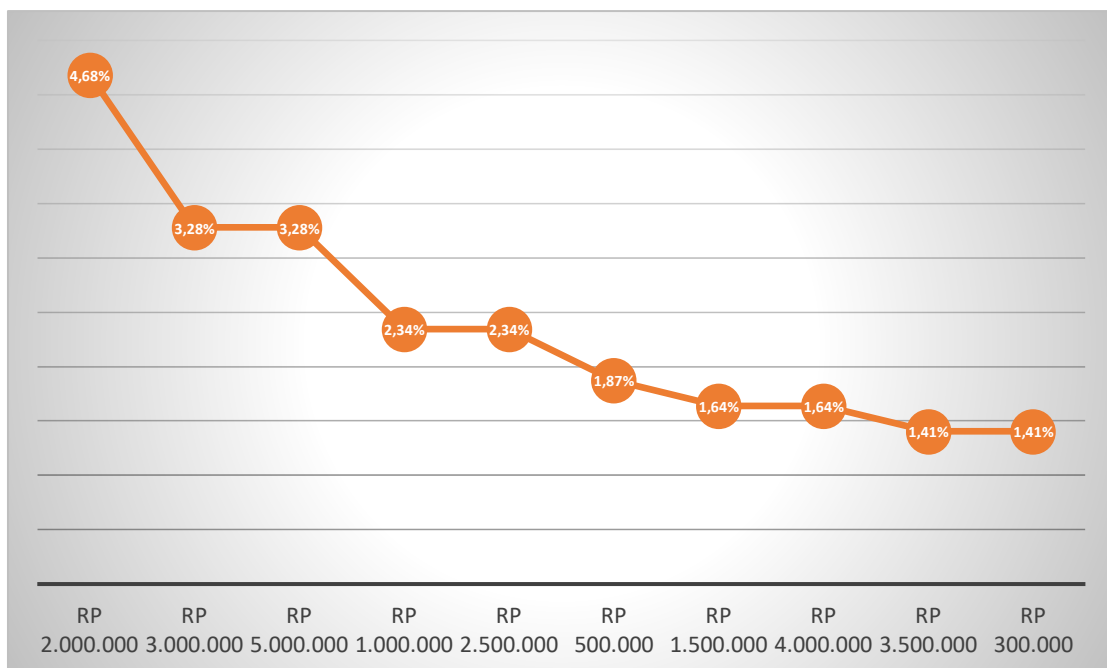
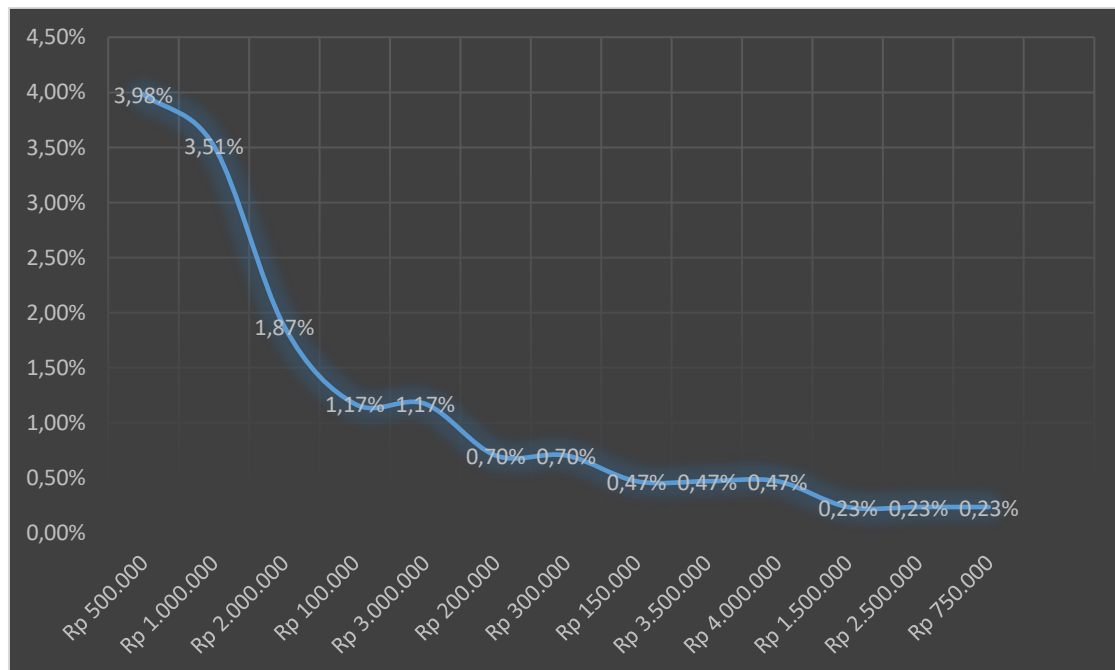




Chart 32 Routine Provision from Family



### b. Expenses

The survey listed the amount of spending based on daily and monthly needs. Respondents were then asked to rate their spending based on priority and appropriateness.

The largest average monthly expenditure was on durable goods, such as work facilities and infrastructure. This amounted to Rp3.2 million per month. This was followed by Rp1.6 million in housing spending and Rp850 thousand in consumption.

Journalists set spending priorities by considering their income. The top five spending priorities are daily expenses such as consumption at 91 percent, followed by transportation and communication at 85 percent, education at 77.3 percent, and expenses for dependents at 71 percent. The figures for housing and personal needs only put 69 percent and 66 percent, which means those needs are suppressed.

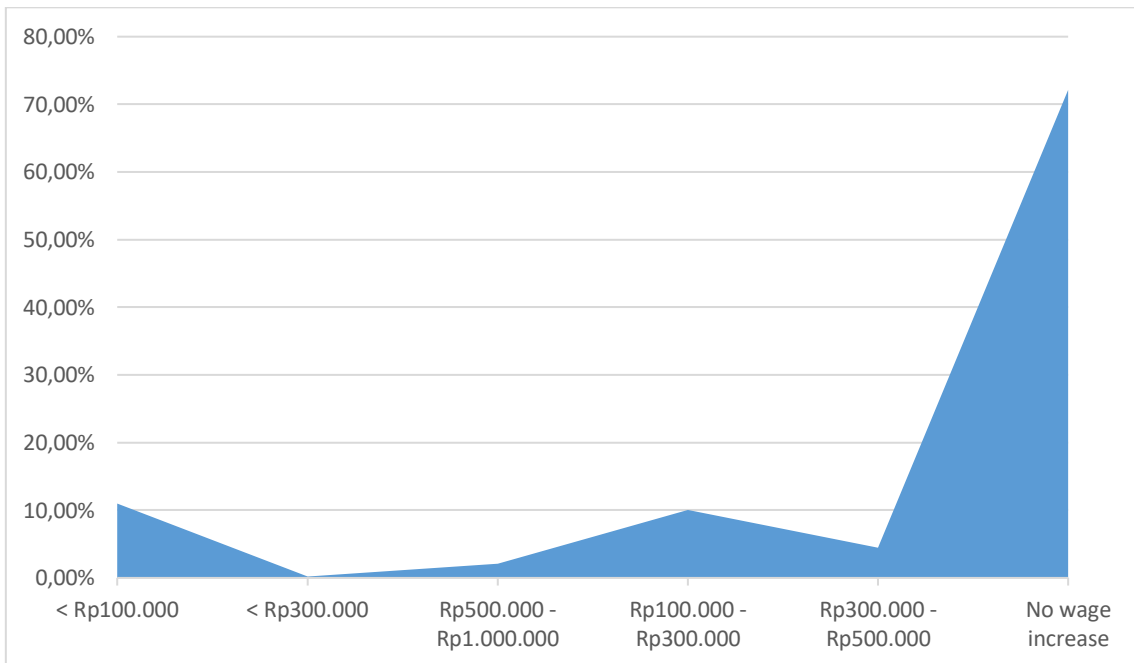
On average, 53.0 percent to 68.69 percent of respondents reported that their spending was adequate. From 26.87 percent to 42 percent, respondents believed the spending was inadequate. Respondents who said their spending was very adequate were very small, in the range of 3.74 percent to 6.78 percent.

The spending priority figures show that freelance journalists are trying to "tighten their belts" by reducing other expenses. Freelance journalists are forced to economize and adjust expenses to income.

**c. Pay Raise**

As many as 72.1 percent of freelance journalists said there was no pay raise in a year. Only 11 percent of respondents said they had received a pay raise. The pay raise was between Rp100,000 to Rp300,000.

*Chart 33 Annual Salary Increase*



A total of 43.7 percent of respondents said their wages should be Rp5 million and up to Rp7 million by 34.9 percent of respondents. Meanwhile, 13.4 percent of respondents said their wages should be Rp7 million to Rp10 million. A total of 34.8 percent of respondents said the pay raise should be above 10 percent, 30.2 percent of respondents wanted a pay raise of 3 to 5 percent, and 18.5 percent of respondents said the pay raise should be 8 to 10 percent.

*Chart 34 Proper Salary*

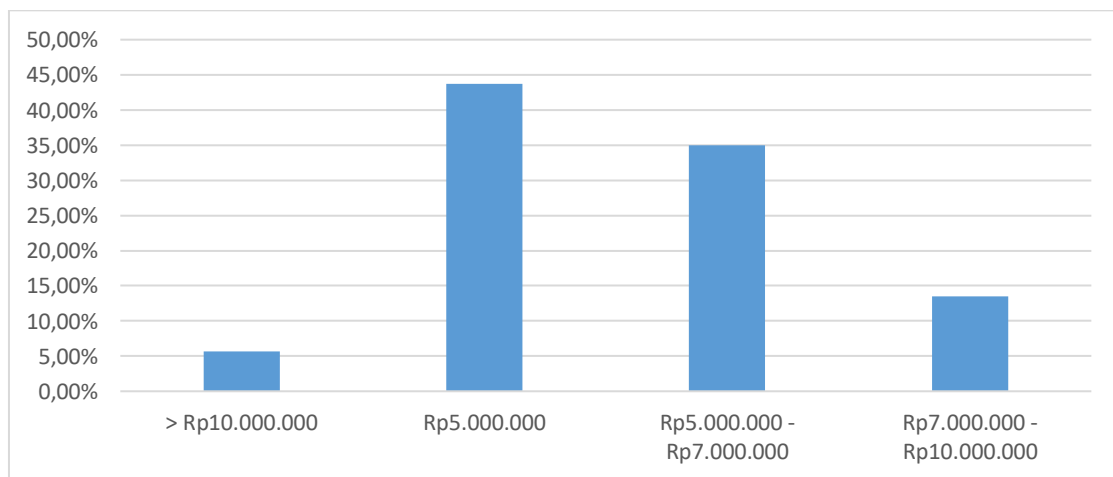
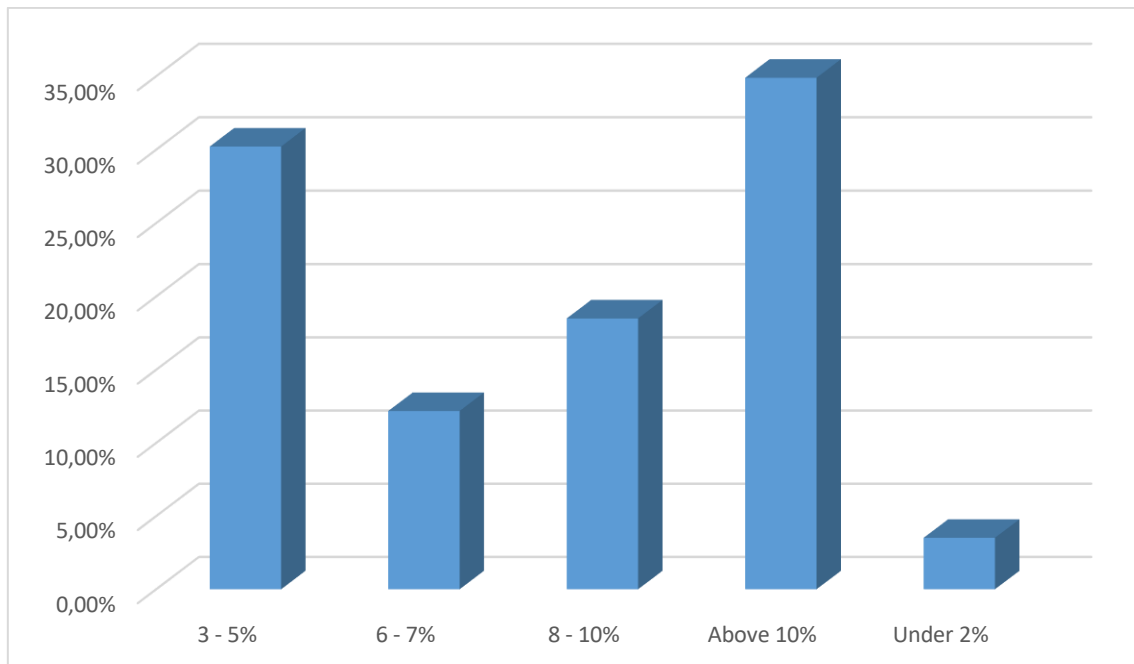


Chart 35 Required Amount of Increase per Year



## 6. Women's Rights

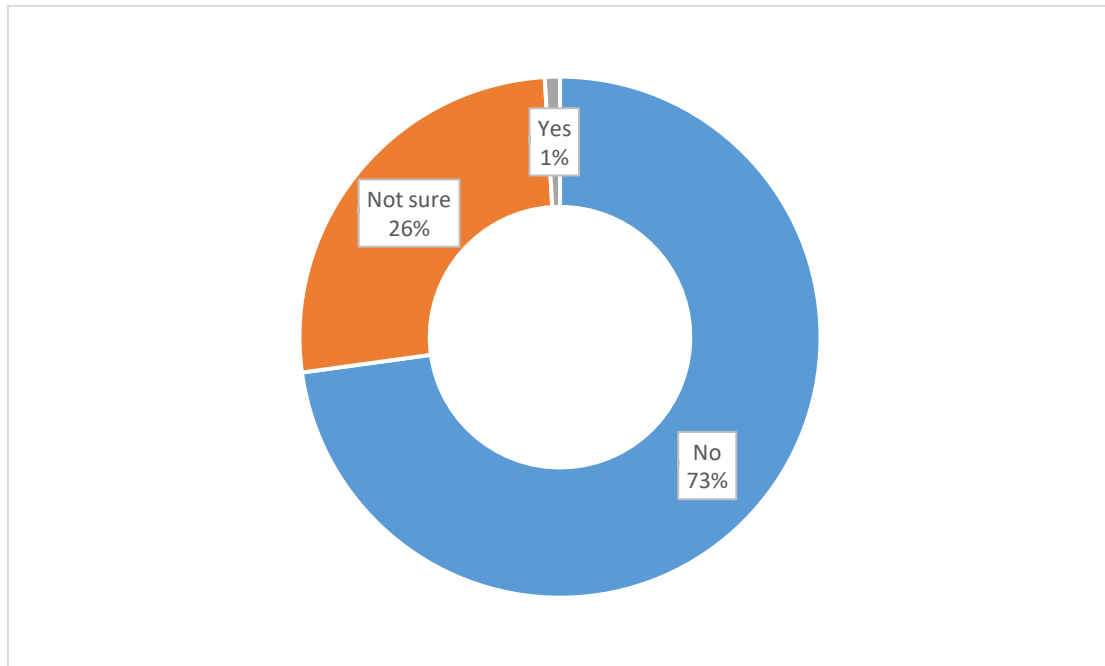
Laws and regulations prohibit companies from committing violence in the form of discrimination or harassment against women in the areas of employment and wages. Regulations also specifically recognize women's rights, such as menstrual leave, maternity leave, prohibition of termination due to marriage or childbirth, and miscarriage leave rights.

A total of 72.8 percent said there was no difference in wages between males and females. The remaining 26 percent said they did not know, and 1 percent said there was a difference in wages between male and female workers.

As will be seen below, there is no difference in the minimum wage. However, if we consider wages to be fixed and non-fixed benefits, we can see that there are wage gaps between men and women.

Differences in the wages of male and female workers can be seen in the form of wage uniformity or the loss of wage rights when women take leave. For example, the loss of wages when on leave due to menstruation on the first and second day. In this context, women are paid less than men.

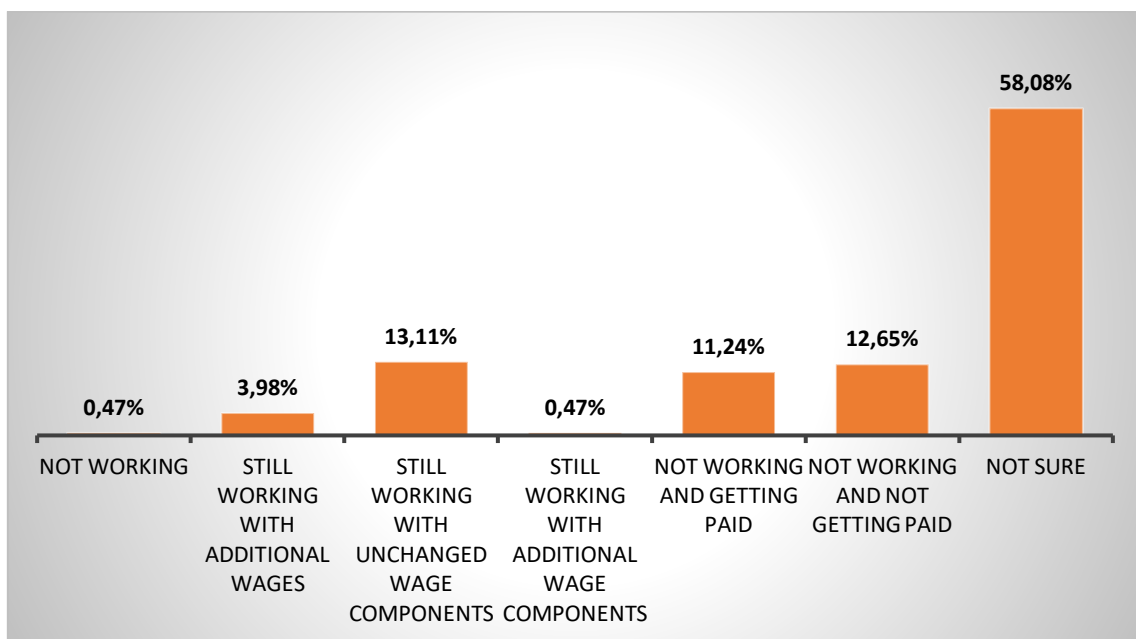
Chart 36 Male and Female Pay Gap



**a. Right to Menstrual, Marriage, Maternity, and Miscarriage Leave**

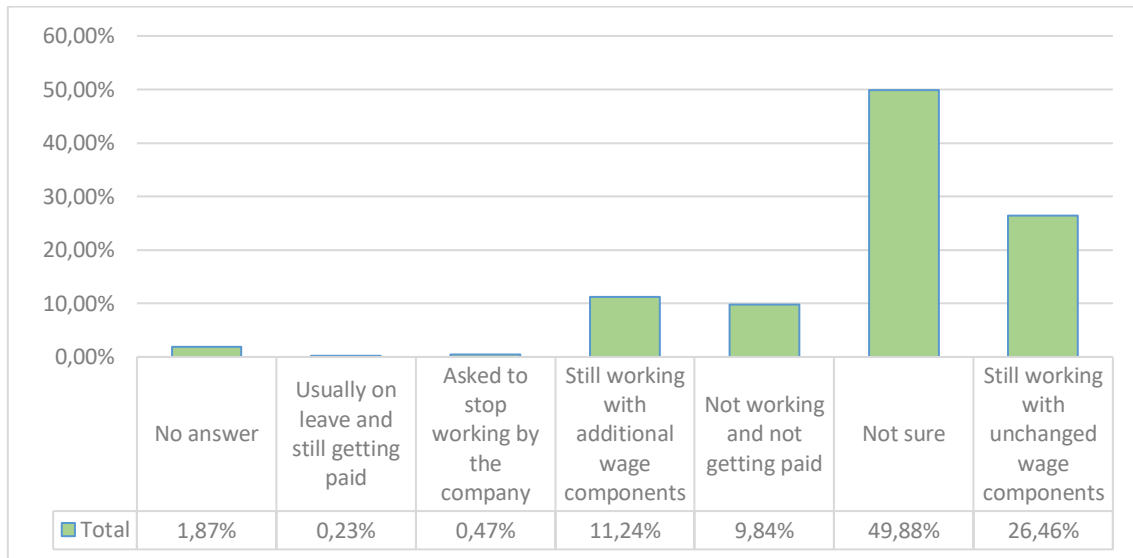
When women menstruate on the first and second day, only 11.2 percent of women have the right to leave with pay. As many as 3.9 percent said they continued to work with additional wages. Meanwhile, 13.1 percent of women claimed that when they menstruate on the first and second days, they continue to work with no reduction in pay. As many as 12.6 percent said they did not work and did not get paid.

Chart 37 Menstrual Leave Right



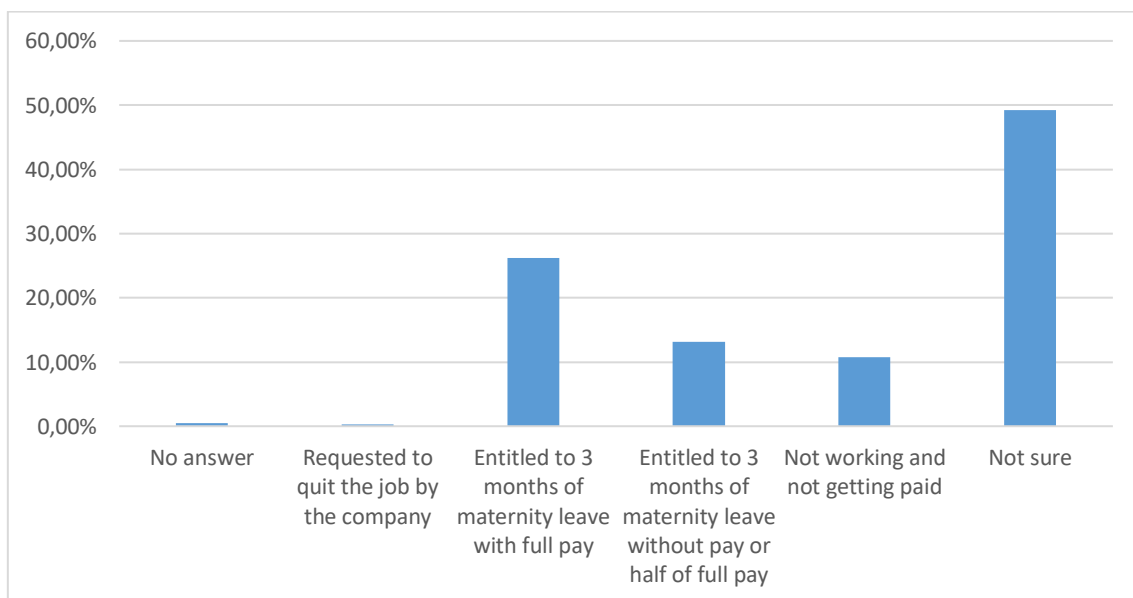
When women got married, only 0.2 percent said that they received leave and were paid. Another 0.4 percent said they were asked to continue working and 9.8 percent of respondents said they were on leave from work but did not get paid. Only 11.2 percent of married women continued to work and received an additional wage component.

Chart 38 When Female Freelance Journalists Get Married



Respect and protection for women's rights is still very low. When women give birth, there are still press companies that ask women to stop working, according to 0.2 percent of respondents. Another 10.7 percent of respondents said they did not work and received no pay, while 13.1 percent of respondents got leave but only received half pay. Only 26.2 percent of women who gave birth were entitled to paid maternity leave.

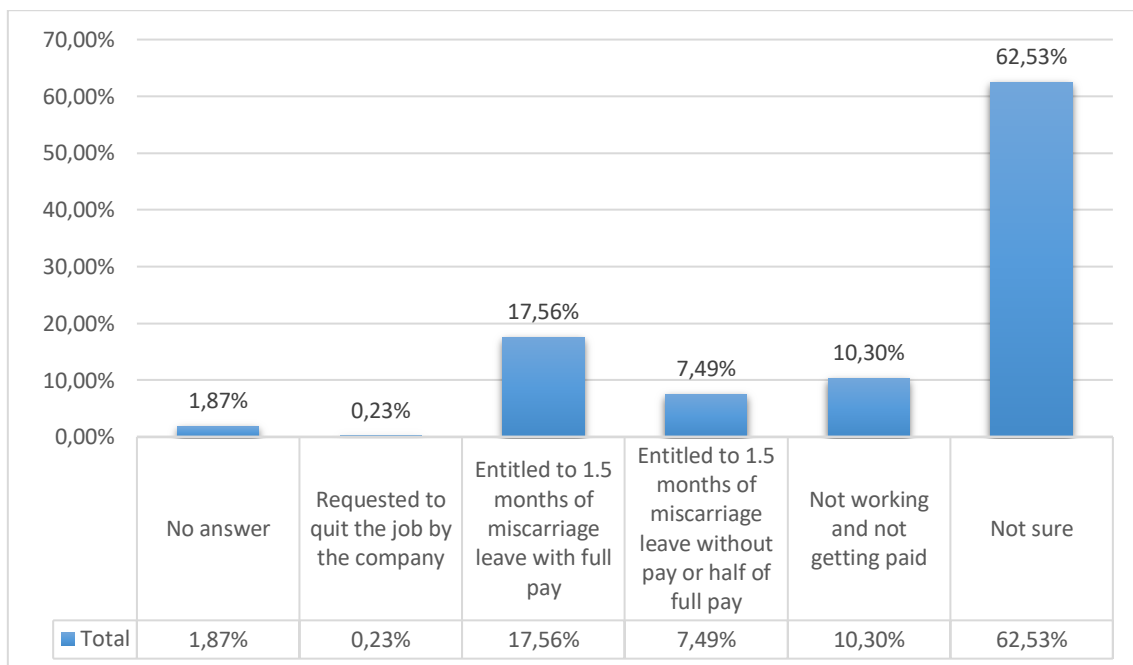
Chart 39 Maternity Leave



In the aspect of attention to the rights of women who experience miscarriages, there is no respect and protection. Ironically, according to 0.2 percent of respondents, there are press corporations that ask freelance journalists to quit their jobs.

There were also, as many as 7.4 percent of respondents, who said women were given miscarriage leave but did not get paid. Another respondent, 7.4 percent said that women who miscarry get leave but only get half pay. Only 14.5 percent of female freelance journalists get full-pay leave.

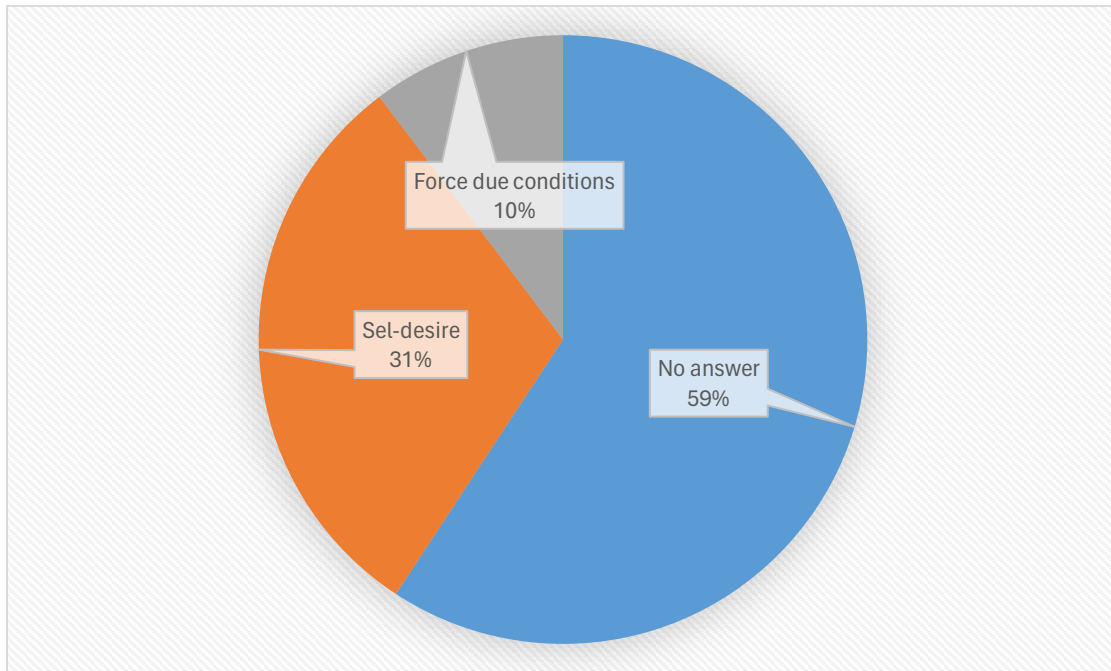
*Chart 40 Right to Miscarriage Leave*



## 7. Reasons for Becoming a Freelance Journalist

As many as 59 percent did not give a reason for becoming a freelance journalist. Another respondent, 31 percent, answered that the reason for becoming a freelance journalist was their own desire. There were also those who said they were forced, 10 percent.

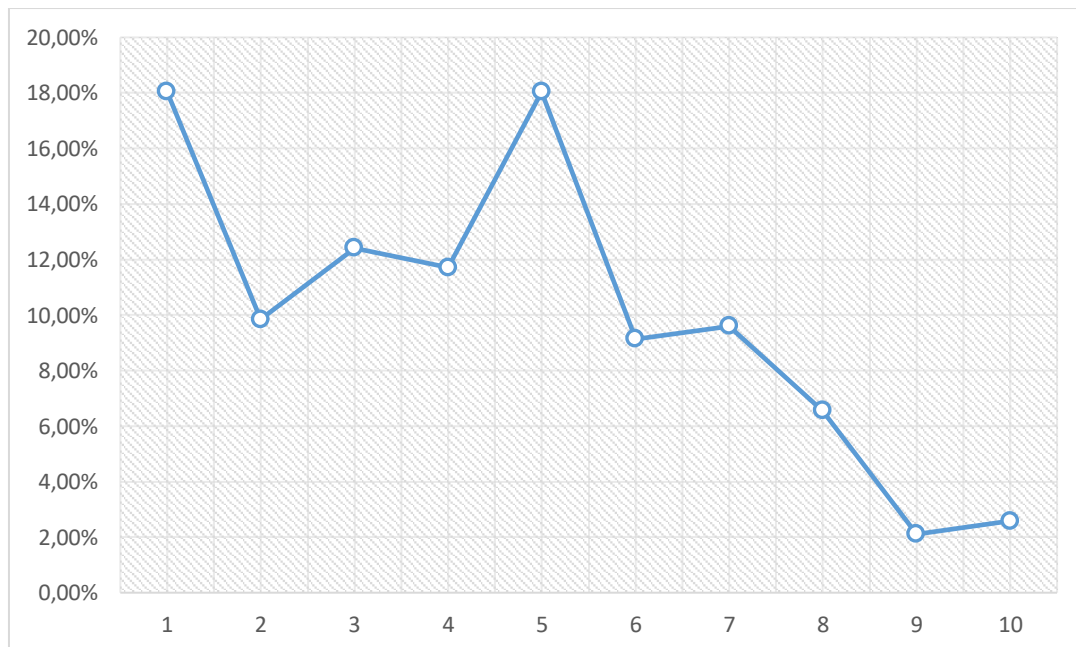
Chart 41 Reasons for Becoming a Freelance Journalist



#### a. Salary Satisfaction

Most respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the value of the wages they received. The dissatisfaction rate is represented by respondents with numbers 1 to 5. Dissatisfaction with wages is quite high, represented by 10 to 18 percent of respondents. While the satisfaction rate is represented by numbers 5 to 10. The satisfaction rate for wages is represented by 2 to 9 respondents.

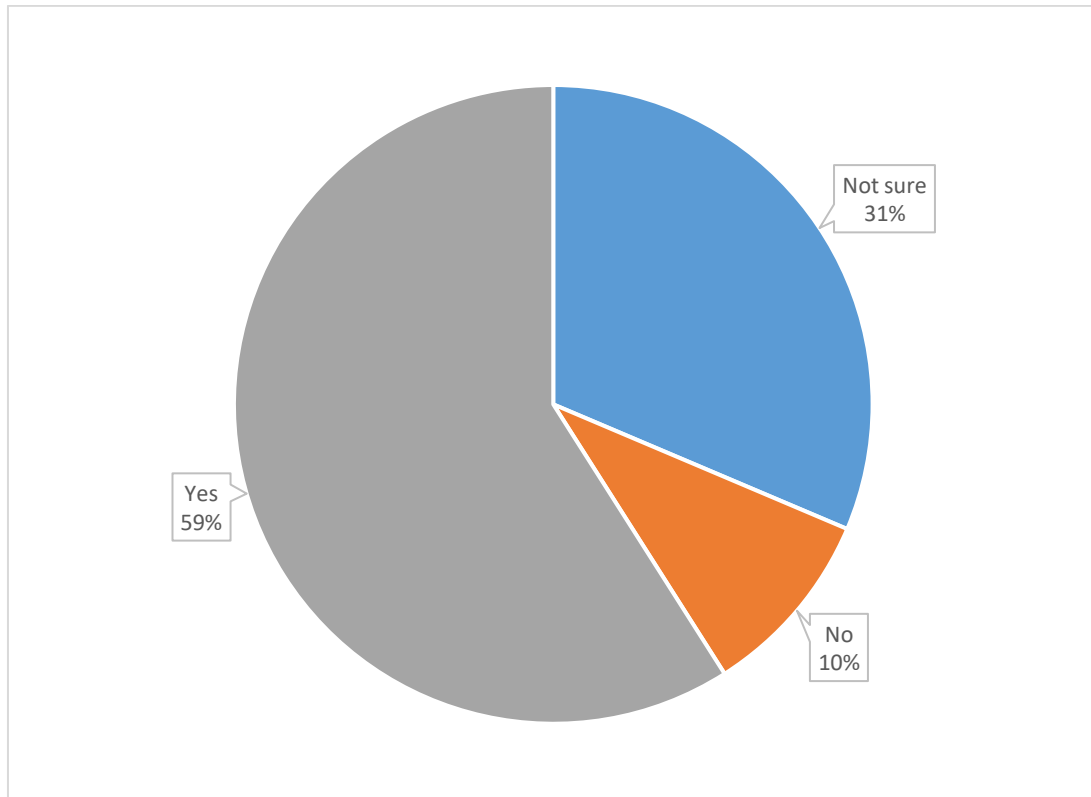
Chart 42 Salary Satisfaction



**b. Job Satisfaction**

A total of 59.1 percent said they were satisfied and wanted to continue working at their current press corporation. Meanwhile, 31.3 percent were unsure, and 9.5 percent were not satisfied with their current workplace.

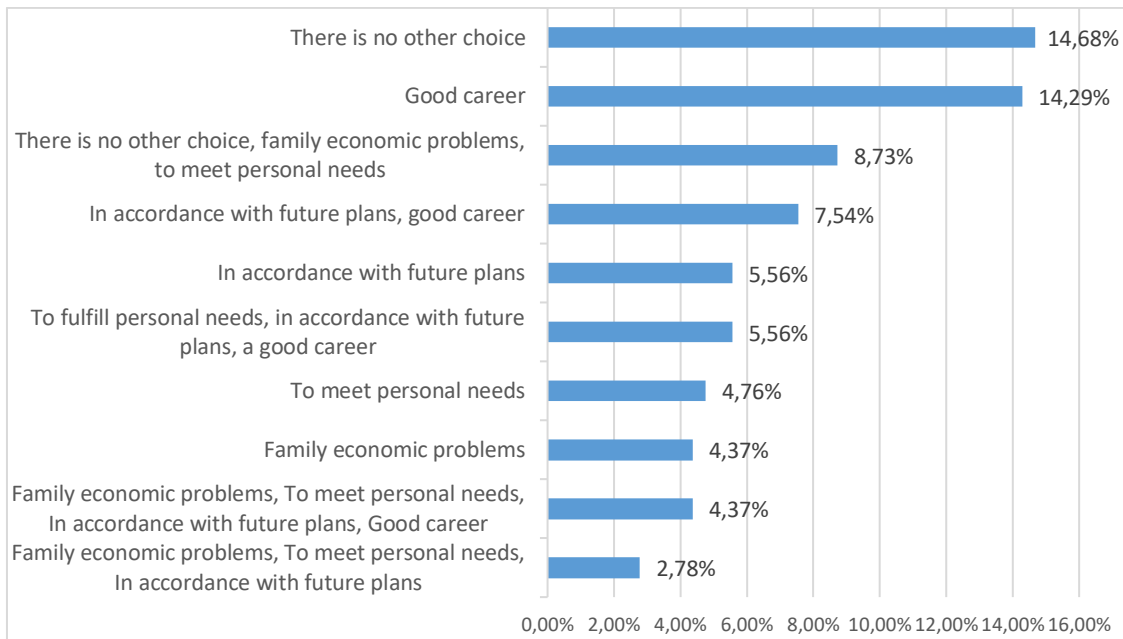
*Chart 43 Job Satisfaction*



The top ten reasons why respondents were satisfied with their workplace were related to the fact that there were no more job options, there was a career path, and it was the type of work that was planned.



Chart 44 Ten Reasons for Satisfaction



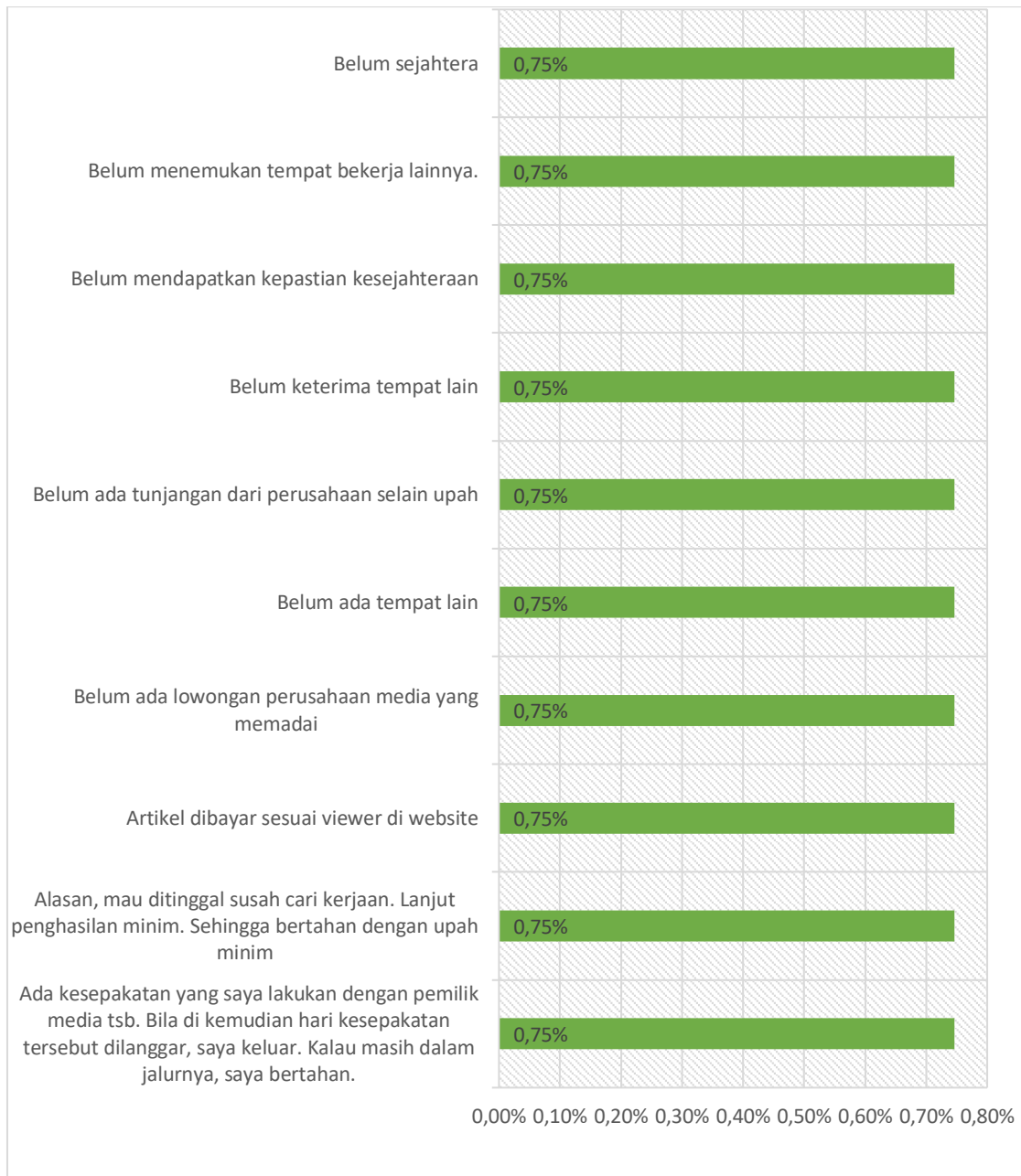
The reasons for dissatisfaction with the current workplace were related to low wages at 26.8 percent; no career path, low wages, minimal facilities at 19.5 percent; and, due to low wages, minimal facilities at 7.3 percent. The reasons for dissatisfaction are dominated by issues of career path, wages, and work facilities. Other variations of reasons relate to overwork and health problems.

Chart 45 Ten Reasons for Dissatisfaction



Respondents answered that they were unsure of their current workplace for a variety of reasons including wages and job security.

*Chart 46 Ten Reasons for Indecision*



## BEHIND THE FREEDOM OF FREELANCE JOURNALISTS

This section will go over the findings of surveys, focus groups, and in-depth interviews on freelance journalists' working conditions, wages, and news value.

There are various reasons for becoming a freelance journalist. However, the findings of the survey, focus discussions, and in-depth interviews reveal that

freelance journalists work in vulnerable conditions. They have no income certainty, low protection, and working hours that exceed normal working hours.

In order to cover their daily needs, freelance journalists have to deal with additional work or reduce their expenses. The strategy of increasing income by working as a journalist or in other professions has a negative influence on time, workload, and the quality of journalistic work. The side job sector also does not provide guaranteed wages and job security.

### 1. Editorial Violence to Risky Coverage

JR, a 26-year-old woman, received a message via WhatsApp at midnight from the HRD (Human Resource Development) department where she works. The message stated that her work contract was not renewed because she was considered unproductive. JR sued. "Don't you know that I am facing a KS (sexual violence) case!" JR said, imitating the message she sent to the HRD at her workplace.

The recipient of the message flinched. JR continued with her message. "You said there would be rolling. You said there would be assistance," she said, demanding. JR explained that as a female journalist with contributor status, she felt discriminated against by her office. "It's not that I'm competing, but I'm treated differently," she said.

JR said, that as of December 2022, she signed a work agreement to work for five months as a contributor to a national online media. JR was assigned to cover political and legal news.

During the three months of work, JR was able to produce 8 to 10 articles every day. Each article was valued at Rp30,000. From her work, she can pocket around IDR 3 million per month. In fact, the 2023 DKI Jakarta UMP is IDR 4.9 million. According to her, with the workload and scope of work, especially in Jakarta, she deserves a wage of IDR 5 million to IDR 7 million.

JR admitted that she realized that the wages of freelance journalists could only support a quarter of the cost of living in Jakarta. Moreover, JR must send money regularly to her parents in East Java. "Sending money to the village is uncertain. Fortunately, at that time there were no big sudden needs. But, at least I send Rp1 million per month," she added. As a result, she said she had gone into debt through online applications or *pinjol*. Until now, she still has debts from *pinjol*.

The Central Bureau of Statistics' 2018 cost of living survey states that the per capita expenditure of DKI Jakarta residents is Rp4.4 million. Meanwhile, the average household expenditure is Rp16.8 million.

Meanwhile, this survey found that the average expenditure for freelance journalists per month for men was Rp9.9 million. While women are Rp10.4 million. Women's daily and monthly needs are higher because men do not experience menstrual and birth cycles, which require new expenses.

To cover her needs, JR looks for other income. "Sometimes pitching news or writing in-depth articles to other media. Sometimes I join fellowships, and research assistants, and fill out surveys, including jobs outside of writing. Sometimes I also do voice-over or English lessons. I take all the jobs," she explained.

Since being exposed to cases of sexual violence or KS, JR admits that her productivity has decreased due to deep trauma. According to her, her unproductivity is not without cause.

JR said she experienced an attempted rape. The perpetrator of KS, said JR, was another journalist known at the place of coverage. She reported the case to the office where she works for assistance and rolling. But, there was no response. She also complained about her case to a journalist organization. "There was a discussion. But 'there's something' that I can't tell you. I stopped reporting."

Her case is now being handled by a women's legal aid organization in Jakarta. The case is ongoing. JR is considering the proposal of her legal counsel. JR's legal representative suggested that JR urge the perpetrator of sexual violence to be imprisoned and fired from work.

JR realized that as a woman with the status of a contributor, her rights were not protected. In fact, she can be discriminated against in her workplace. She is also aware that the work area of female journalists is prone to violence.

This survey shows that freelance journalists only receive wages when the news is published. For equipment and working facilities, they have to bear their own costs. JR's explanation reinforces the survey findings. In the survey, it was mentioned that only 17.5 percent of respondents received support for work facilities, such as cameras, recording devices, and others. In the focus discussion, it was revealed that the most expensive cost of being a freelance journalist is equipment.

Relying on the help of fellow journalists is also experienced by JX, a 23-year-old woman. As a freelance journalist for a national online mass media working in the Banten area, she feels lucky to have friends who give her rides, "In the field, I like to ride the motorcycles of fellow journalists".

"For the equipment, a cell phone or camera is like our wife, it's very important. We bring our own," says AT. He is a freelance journalist who works at the Bakrie Group press company.

A different experience was experienced by JX, who said that as a female journalist, she faced the risk of harassment. She also regretted her company's policy of not paying women who skip work due to menstruation. Likewise, when there is a termination of employment, there is no compensation.

Women are particularly vulnerable when they experience menstruation, marriage, giving birth, or miscarriage. The survey found that the principle of 'no work no pay' is a common practice for female journalists. Women lose the right to menstrual, marriage, maternity, or miscarriage leave.

Meanwhile, RY, a freelance journalist in West Sulawesi who works for one of the national radio stations, shared her experience with sexual violence after returning from reporting from a location distant from her residence. The traumatic incident was experienced in January 2023.

RY then reported the sexual violence to the radio company where she worked and to the police. Unfortunately, the incident experienced by RY was not responded to well by her office, and even tended to ignore it. RY was then advocated by AJI. RY's incident reinforces the risk of sexual harassment and violence that women journalists are vulnerable to.

## 2. The Illusion of Freedom but Lack of Protection

The survey showed that 31 percent of the total respondents chose to become freelance journalists because it allows them to manage their time more freely, escape the demands of meeting daily news targets, and channel their idealism. However, there are also those who become freelance journalists because they have not had the opportunity to work as full-time journalists.

In a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with participants from Jakarta and outside Jakarta, it was revealed that freelance journalists are increasingly becoming a trend in the mass media. They do not know exactly why press corporations are increasingly keen to recruit freelance journalists. FGD participants are worried that this trend of freelance journalists will make the condition of journalists worse. For example, in the event of an employment dispute, journalists are not protected because it is difficult to prove their employment relationship because they do not have a copy of the contract.

After studying at a State Islamic University in Serang Banten, FR was offered by a friend to become a contributor to one of the national online media. FR was

assigned to report on events in the Lebak Banten area. "This is a national media, maybe the career path will increase," he said hopefully.

Previously, when he was a student, he had worked in local media in Banten as a contributor for eight months. From his experience, he felt more suited to being a journalist than a photographer or videographer. After all, FR's friends are writers.

FR makes straight news articles 60-80 articles per month. The price is Rp45,000 per article. However, not all articles are published on the news portal. From his work, he earns Rp2 million per month. Lebak's minimum wage is Rp2.9 million, while Bogor Regency's minimum wage is Rp4.5 million.

Every day, he commutes from Bogor Regency to Lebak on the commuter line. He leaves at 7 a.m. and returns around 4 p.m. In a day, FR spends 12 hours. On Saturdays and Sundays, he is free. However, he emphasized that at any time he must be ready to be assigned outside working hours. FR benefited from the relatively cheap transportation cost from Bogor to Lebak.

"Because I think like this. While I'm still at a productive age, it's okay to earn less than the minimum wage. The important thing is to learn first, and have experience first. Later that experience can be applied in the coming years. Maybe in the next five years in the same media or not. It can be upgraded. I enjoy it first," said FR.

Despite his low income, he feels he deserves to earn IDR 5 million per month. This is because his activities as a journalist cause him to spend more.

"Now I'm happy. More freedom. The news products have more quality and are not rushed by deadlines," said TD. He is a freelance radio journalist. Previously, he had a permanent job at the same company. Then TD changed his working status to become a freelance journalist. Although the income from freelance journalism cannot cover his needs, he has the opportunity to channel his work elsewhere as a journalist or non-journalist.

In fact, the freedom of a freelance journalist is very limited. They must occasionally be willing to be assigned outside of working hours without being counted as overtime. They must be ready to go to the field when the office requests it. The survey found that 65.4 percent of respondents work more than 8 hours per day.

"We went home and finished our work. Suddenly at 10 pm, there is an event like an earthquake or tsunami, and we have to go down again," said FR.

"If you're a regular, you have to submit news at 09.00 in the morning. We don't, we're free. There are news targets for the regular ones, but not for us. However,

if there is an incident at night, we are the ones who are called. We get a call at two in the morning. After sending the news, it turned out that our news was not published," said TA, another freelance journalist.

Every day, this 36-year-old man submits 7 to 10 works. However, only 4 to 5 pieces are published. "We send news that is good enough to be published. How come they are not published? We're a bit upset too because it was published in other media," said TA complaining.

In critical situations, journalists are the backbone of press companies. They are ready to be deployed at any time. However, in times of crisis, freelance journalists are the ones who are sacrificed. The FGD participants revealed that in the COVID-19 situation, there was a decrease in the number of news views, resulting in a decrease in revenue. There are those whose news prices have been reduced.

"Before COVID-19, the news price was Rp50 thousand. During COVID-19, it became Rp35 thousand, and after COVID-19, it became Rp40 thousand per news," explained FE, a freelance journalist who works in the millennial generation multi-platform mass media.

Meanwhile, TA revealed that his salaries were not paid on time during COVID-19. According to him, wage cuts only occur to permanent journalists. "In fact, there has been a reduction in broadcasts, and some have not even been broadcast at all. Like deliberately reducing expenses for contributors," said TA.

In addition to working hours that are uncertain and often longer, the work arena for journalists is often dangerous. Freelance journalists often have to deal with conflicts, natural disasters, or annoying sources. As for conflict areas, threats to journalists' safety often put them at a disadvantage.

On the one hand, they have to produce balanced news, but on the other hand, to get balanced news, there is a risk of sacrificing safety. To maintain safety, journalists rely on available sources and sacrifice news quality.

The journalists mentioned that press corporations do not provide security protection even though the value of the news is very important. So, in addition to having to bear their own costs, it is not uncommon for journalists to have to deal with the safety of their lives. In fact, quality news benefits press corporations.

TA recounts the dangerous arena as a journalist. According to him, the company does not provide protection for freelance journalists. "We take care of our own health and safety," said TA. He has been a freelance journalist for almost 5 years.

TA recounted the experience of his friend who works for a national print media. TA said that his friend reported about Tanah Abang's thugs. The thugs' supporters were angry and threatened to destroy the office.

His friend was subjected to constant terror. "He complained to the office, the office took his hands off. Finally, he asked for help from his friend to take down the news. Regular journalists are not protected, let alone us," said TA.

Meanwhile, according to TD, the level of danger for journalists is not only in the field. The type of work is risky as well. "Sometimes we get stressed because of deadlines and pressure in the field. All of that has affected our lifestyle."

TA supports TD's opinion. The lifestyle of journalists is indeed awful. "Journalists' diseases are typhoid and stomach acid," he said.

"I once had a coronary heart disease. This is a risk of the job," TD said. According to TD, although the company provides health protection, the ecosystem of journalists' work is dangerous. Many journalists have to deal with the law and civil militias in the field.

In addition to low wages and long working hours, freelance journalists are also vulnerable to violence when carrying out their work. The survey found that 56 percent of the respondents had experienced violence.

The findings confirm AJI Indonesia's 2022 Report. According to the report, the number of violence in 2022 increased by 61 cases from 2021. The forms of violence include physical violence, destruction of work tools, digital attacks, verbal violence, censorship, arrest, and criminal reporting, as well as gender-based violence.

### **3. Distributed, but Undervalued Works**

TD is lucky because his salary is not based on the number of views. As long as he can deliver the news, TD gets a monthly wage. ED, a 27-year-old man, was forced to become a freelance journalist after graduating from university. "If I had been hired in an office, I wouldn't have become a freelance journalist," said ED. He explained that he once applied for a job at a banking company but was not accepted.

"My first wage was Rp3500 a month. The second month's wage was Rp400,000. That's because the calculation is based on the number of views," ED joked bitterly. During the job interview, ED received training. During the training, ED was told by his office that he was a contributor with an internship status.



Currently, ED has left his workplace. Of course, without severance pay. "In the past, I applied. Then I got an ID card. Now, I just leave it. If I don't send news and it isn't published, it means no money."

The survey found that 81 percent of freelance journalists are paid based on an output unit with a calculation basis per news or per journalistic work published. There are also those who are paid based on the number of views, as experienced by ED.

From the focus group discussion, the answer was that each media company has its own policy regarding wages. In general, there is a similarity in that freelance journalists are paid on a per news published or output unit basis, with monthly payments.

However, there are also media companies that apply wage and non-wage benefits, such as transportation allowances, achievement rewards, and annual rewards. However, there are also companies that do not provide benefits. Journalists are only paid based on published news.

All focus group and in-depth interview participants mentioned that they were told the price of their articles, including how to recapitulate the number of articles published to be converted into wages. Unfortunately, they cannot bargain for the price of the news. This condition shows the very weak bargaining position of freelance journalists before media companies.

Output unit wage is a wage defined by the results of the work agreed upon between the worker and the employer. However, because the amount of wages depends on the number of news publications with prices determined by the company, the total income of journalists is potentially uncertain. Although it is calculated based on output units, according to PP 36/2021, the benchmark for calculation is the minimum wage. Thus, journalists' wages should not fall below the minimum wage on the grounds that they are not published or have low views.

This survey found that only 19 percent and 17 percent of the total freelance journalists were paid above and in accordance with the minimum wage. Across the board, respondents in the survey said their wages were uncertain, below the minimum wage, and even unpaid.

Apart from the very small wages, they also do not receive additional non-wages such as holiday allowances or bonuses. "The wage or honorarium that I have is without any frills. Everything has been given at the beginning. There is no bonus," said TD.

A source from a local media in Aceh said he got Rp20,000 per news story. In a month, he earns around Rp1.5 million to Rp3 million, even though Banda Aceh's

minimum wage is Rp3.5 million. In a year, there are additional non-wage benefits in the form of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha allowances.

"If it is not published in our press company, we also submit the same news to other media. We just changed the lead. The content is the same," said TA. Unfortunately, in this way, TA had to disguise his name. He also realized that this method reduced the quality of the news.

The situation is different for independent radio journalists. She said the price of audio news was Rp25,000. She believes that at that price if she gets news, it will be enough to fulfill her daily needs in Polewali Mandar, West Sulawesi. "The problem is, the basis of news on the radio is events. We don't always get the news, and sometimes the location is far away, so getting the news takes time," said YR, a 26-year-old woman.

Due to the low price of news, freelance journalists are being driven to boost their news production. The company does not cover the costs associated with producing the news. So, even though the price of news is sufficient, if the cost of getting the news is expensive, the value of the wage decreases.

This painful phenomenon befalls Papuan journalists. One news item costs Rp400 thousand there. He obtains 10 or more stories every month but must pay for internet access. Sometimes there are residents who have exclusive photos or images that they have to buy. Finally, they have to spend their own money to pay for the photos or videos.

JX also shared the complaints of his friends. According to him, his friends have been working as freelance journalists for years. They are worried about their future. "They are senior journalists and their wages are very small. Sometimes I hear the story 'Will I get a pension?'," said JX, imitating his friend's complaint.

JX stated that the welfare and quality of journalists are related. One of them is by refusing envelopes from sources. "If they are prosperous, journalists will have more freedom to improve their journalistic capacity," said JX.

#### **4. Surviving on a Minimum Wage**

When all needs are considered, the wages received by journalists can only cover a quarter of the needs of a decent life. The survey calculated that journalists should have an income of Rp9.8 to Rp10 million per month in order to meet their daily needs. In the survey, journalists said their wages should be in the range of Rp5 million to Rp10 million with an increase of 3 percent to 10 percent per year.

The number was calculated using 9 items of need for male freelance journalists and 10 items of need for female freelance journalists. Female journalists have items of need that cannot be compromised in exchange for other needs.

At some periods of the year, such as Eid al-Fitr or Christmas, the types of needs will increase due to the need to return home, buy new clothes, consumption, pay zakat, and provide red packets to relatives, coupled with the increase in prices at that time. At certain times, the needs of freelance journalists also doubles. The survey revealed that 60 percent of freelance journalists do not receive holiday allowances or bonuses.

Journalists must be inventive in order to maintain their income. The focus discussion revealed four prominent ways to earn income. First, breaking down news to be published in the same or different media. This is usually done by freelance television or radio journalists.

Second, sending news to other media, both those that have already been published and those that failed to run in the previous media. Third, produce as much news as possible. The second and third methods are usually done by journalists in online media.

This survey found that freelance journalists also work in other media. At least, the journalists work in two mass media. "From income, it is less than regular journalists. The difference can be a million. So they 'cheat' with other media," said TA.

Another tactic to increase income is to work in non-journalism fields. As told at the beginning of this article, JX journalist does various jobs to survive.

"I usually organize activities with the community. The committee is compensated. Sometimes they are called to be moderators or speakers. So, there is income," said JX.

Another way is to rely on additional income from family provision or by reducing needs. As for meeting household needs, freelance journalists combine income with their families. "For domestic matters, we can work together," said JX. She still lives with her extended family. Although JX feels the need to own a motorcycle, she has not been able to purchase one.

As a result of insufficient wages, it is difficult for journalists to have a place to live. Despite the fact that 27.5 percent of freelance journalists have worked for more than 7 years, only 23.8 percent have purchased their own homes, and 12.8 percent are actively paying home-ownership installments.

The rest of the freelance journalists live with family, in dorms, or rent accommodation. "Because there is no wage slip, it can be difficult to submit applications to the bank," said JX.

This survey estimates that the average journalist will get into debt if they do not increase their work. The amount of debt ranges from less than Rp200 thousand to Rp2 million. ED said that some of his friends were in debt. "Typically, motorcycle loans. For me, because I still live with my parents, I am not in debt."

The experience of juggling work to cover daily needs is not unique to JR and JX. Abdul Manan in *Journalists' Living Wage: AJI's Living Wage Survey in 16 Cities in Indonesia (2011)* mentions that journalists look for side jobs to support their daily needs. Some of them work outside of journalism work, such as being a driver's license broker, and private laborer, trading various needs, attending as many conferences as possible, and being political consultants.

## CONCLUSION

1. The survey found that the majority of freelance journalists, 57.7 percent, are of productive age. They have a relatively high level of education, with 72.4 percent having undergraduate degrees. As many as 28 percent of respondents have worked for more than seven years. This means that being a freelance journalist is not a temporary phase, but is experienced over the years with a recurring contract duration, and the nature of the work is permanent.

Most freelance journalists work for online media, as many as 57.6 percent. They not only support themselves but have various dependents ranging from 1 to 3 people.

However, only 23 respondents already own a house, and only 0.7 percent utilize company dormitories. The rest are either staying at family homes or renting a house/room.

2. The survey found that 52.6 percent of journalists have an employment relationship for a specified period of time or contract status, and 11.2 percent are unspecified or permanent workers. However, it should be underlined that permanent status is like a trick by media companies. This is because these journalists do not receive monthly wages, benefits, and so on like other permanent employees. Instead, they are paid on an output unit, namely per item of news published.

As for contract workers, more than 50 percent did not mention the duration of the contract, and only 43 percent received a copy of the contract. This means that freelance journalists are vulnerable because they have no proof if media companies act arbitrarily.

3. The wage system of most freelance journalists, as many as 81 percent, is based on output units on the basis of calculations per news or per journalist's work published. The wages of the remaining 18.9 percent of freelance journalists are calculated based on time units.

However, as many as 50.1 percent said they only received monthly wages without any other benefits. Some of them do not receive insurance premiums, do not get meal allowances, do not have position allowances, are not given transport allowances, overtime pay is not calculated, and do not receive period of employment allowances.

This means that the wage conditions for freelance journalists do not meet the provisions stipulated in Government Regulation Number 36 of 2021 on Wages. This is a derivative regulation of the Job Creation Law, which workers believe is even worse than the Manpower Law.

4. The price of news is quite diverse, ranging from straight news, in-depth reporting, photographs, audio, and audio-visual. However, when compared to the minimum wage, only 17 percent of respondents claimed to be paid more than the minimum wage. As many as 47.3 percent of respondents said their wages were below the minimum wage, 18.9 percent of respondents said their wages were at the minimum wage, and 15.4 percent of respondents had uncertain wages. In fact, some of them do not get paid and only get a commission from the number of advertisements.

The survey also found that the lowest monthly wage of freelance journalists was Rp200 thousand. The data was found from national television contributors in East Java and local online mass media contributors in Central Java. Meanwhile, the highest wage is USD 1500 or around Rp22,240,500 for journalists working in international non-profit mass media. On average, 8.6 percent of freelance journalists receive Rp2 million. The remaining 7.9 percent received Rp1.5 million, while the last 7.7 percent received Rp3 million.

5. According to 82.4 percent of respondents, press corporations do not set targets for news production per day. Only 17.5 percent have a news submission target. However, freelance journalists must send at least one news story and at most 50 news stories.

To achieve the news submission, freelance journalists work eight or more hours per day. A total of 65.4 percent of respondents mentioned working more than 8 hours per day. Only 34.5 percent of them work under 8 hours per day.

This condition is exacerbated by the politics of published news wages. They cannot determine which news can definitely be published or not. In reality, although the time given by the office is flexible, freelance journalists must be ready at any time to get assignments, especially if there is breaking news or major events.

6. The survey results also showed that 87.3 percent of respondents said their company did not provide counseling services, 7.4 percent said counseling services were available, and 3.7 percent said they were unaware of the company's counseling services. In fact, 35 percent of respondents said they experienced mental stress that approached the level of depression.

7. Freelance journalists have to do everything they can to cover their daily needs. This issue arose in 27 percent of respondents who concurrently work for other media, either as editors, or photographers, or sending straight news or in-depth reporting.

Indeed, the majority of respondents, 73 percent, do not work for other press corporations. Some of them pursue other professions, such as being an MC (master of ceremonies), active in the community, trading, and others. The rest

have to combine their income with that of other family members or rely on regular family assistance.

8. Media companies lack respect and protection for women's rights. This can be seen in the policies on menstruation, women giving birth, and miscarriage. The survey results show that only 11.2 percent of women get paid leave when menstruating on the first and second days.

As for women giving birth, only 26.2 percent received maternity leave with full pay. As for the rest, only 14.5 percent of female freelance journalists have the right to leave with full pay.

This survey also shows that the needs of female freelance journalists are greater than men. The number of women's expenses increases because they have special circumstances such as menstruation, maternity, or miscarriage. Unfortunately, this survey clearly illustrates that the rights of female freelance journalists are also marginalized starting from the newsroom.

9. Ironically, there were only 31 percent of respondents who became freelance journalists because they wanted to, and 10 percent because they were forced to. In addition, most respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the value of wages received.

However, 59.1 percent of respondents said they were satisfied and wanted to continue working at the current press company. Meanwhile, 31.3 percent of respondents were unsure, and 9.5 percent were dissatisfied with their current workplace.

## RECOMMENDATION

From the conditions captured through this survey of freelance journalists, there are several things that need to be considered as recommendations. The points are as follows:

1. The government should guarantee that journalists' work is categorized as PKWTT or permanent employment. This is because the work of journalists is permanent and will continue to exist as long as media companies exist.
2. The government guarantees that freelance journalists get the rights stipulated in Law Number 13 of 2003 on Manpower. Or, at least, while waiting for the verdict of the Job Creation Law lawsuit at the Constitutional Court, the government protects the rights of freelance journalists under Government Regulation Number 35/2021 on PKWT and Government Regulation Number 36/2021 on Wages. These two regulations derived from the Job Creation Law actually harm many Indonesian workers, including journalists. Therefore, conditions under these provisions should no longer be normalized.

3. The Ministry of Manpower together with the Press Council can develop journalistic work pricing that can guarantee the welfare of journalists. Starting from straight news rates, in-depth coverage rates, photograph rates, audio rates, and audio-visual rates. This includes regulating the minimum wage quota provided by media companies. This is done so that freelance journalists can earn wages in accordance with the minimum wage or above the minimum wage.
3. The Press Council enforces regulations on press corporation standards and verification to guarantee the welfare of journalists.
4. Media companies should fulfill all the rights of freelance journalists in accordance with the provisions of the Labor Law, or at least the Government Regulations on PKWT and Wage. Companies should also provide the rights of female journalists, which have been neglected so far, such as menstrual leave, maternity leave, and miscarriage leave.
5. Journalists are aware of their rights as media workers in accordance with the provisions of the Labor Law, the Government Regulations on PKWT, and the Government Regulation on Wage. A good understanding of workers' rights can prevent journalists from becoming victims of exploitation by unscrupulous media companies.
6. Journalists form or join labor unions, either at the company level or across companies. Unions can serve as a forum for journalists and media workers to negotiate with companies to obtain rights above normative provisions.

**Thank You**



## APPENDIX

## 1. Details of Average Real Expenditure

<b>The largest average real expenditure of</b>			
Item	Respondents	Range	Average
<b>Consumption</b>			
Rice	41,63%	Rp50 - 150rb	100,000
Cooking oil	41,45%	Rp50 - 150rb	100,000
White sugar	61,59%	< Rp50rb	50,000
Coffee/tea/milk	50,82%	< Rp50rb	50,000
Side dishes	30,91%	Rp50 - 150rb	100,000
Vegetables	37,47%	Rp50 - 150rb	100,000
Fruits	36,53%	Rp50 - 150rb	100,000
Spices	37,00%	Rp50 - 150rb	100,000
Mineral water	43,33%	< Rp50rb	50,000
Eating out	33,02%	Rp50 - 150rb	100,000
			<b>850,000</b>
<b>Housing</b>			
Living space	17,10%	Rp500 rb - 1 jt	700,000
Electricity	43,33%	< Rp200rb	150,000
Clean water	45,43%	< Rp200rb	150,000
Garbage and security fees	53,63%	< Rp200rb	150,000
Gas	64,40%	< Rp200rb	150,000
Internet	44,03%	Rp200 - 500rb	300,000
			<b>1,600,000</b>
<b>Transportation and Communication</b>			
Gasoline	43,33%	Rp300 rb - 600 rb	500,000
Public Transportation	16,39%	< Rp300 rb	250,000
Vehicle maintenance	58,31%	< Rp300 rb	250,000
Credit/internet quota	69,79%	< Rp300 rb	250,000
			<b>1,250,000</b>
<b>Education</b>			
Stationery	30,91%	< Rp100 rb	90,000
Reading books	26,70%	< Rp100 rb	90,000
Magazines/Tabloids/ Newspapers	21,31%	< Rp100 rb	90,000
E-learning	17,80%	< Rp100 rb	90,000
			<b>360,000</b>
<b>Personal needs</b>			
Toiletries	39,81%	< Rp100 rb	90,000
Medicines	49,41%	< Rp100 rb	90,000

Supplements/Vitamins	48,01%	< Rp100 rb	90,000
			<b>270,000</b>
Women's special needs			
Pads/tampons	76,34%	< Rp100 rb	90,000
Menstrual pain relievers	38,35%	< Rp100 rb	90,000
Pap smear	3,75%	< Rp100 rb	90,000
Cosmetics	31,30%	Rp100 - 200 rb	150,000
			<b>420,000</b>
Recreation	23,19%	< Rp100 rb	90,000
TV subscription	18,97%	< Rp100 rb	90,000
Travel	30,68%	Rp100 - 250 rb	200,000
Hanging out with friends	40,98%	Rp100 - 250 rb	200,000
Durable goods (per year divided by 12 months)			
Kitchen appliances	48,71%	< Rp500 rb	400,000
Electronics	17,10%	< Rp500 rb	400,000
Furniture	20,14%	< Rp500 rb	400,000
Laptop/mouse, dll	26,00%	< Rp500 rb	400,000
Shoes	54,10%	< Rp500 rb	400,000
Clothes/Uniforms	46,14%	< Rp500 rb	400,000
Bags	47,54%	< Rp500 rb	400,000
Tax	42,39%	< Rp500 rb	400,000
			<b>3,200,000</b>
For Children			
Education	20,37%	Rp250 - 500 rb	300,000
Pocket money	32,32%	Rp250 - 500 rb	300,000
Parenting	7,49%	Rp250 - 500 rb	300,000
			<b>900,000</b>
Sending to parents	31,38%	Rp250 - 500 rb	300,000
Social contribution	57,38%	< Rp100 rb	90,000
Labor union dues	40,75%	< Rp100 rb	90,000
<i>Arisan</i>	18,50%	< Rp100 rb	90,000
Vehicle installments	11,01%	Rp500 rb - 1 jt	700,000
Regular medical treatment	22,48%	< Rp200 rb	100,000
Debt repayment	12,18%	Rp200 - 500 rb	300,000

## 2. Prioritization of Needs

Type of need	Prioritized	Less Prioritized	Not Prioritized
Consumption	90,89 %	7,24 %	1,87 %
Housing	69.16%	16.12%	14.72%
Transportation & Communication	85.05%	12.62%	2.34%
Education	77.34%	15.19%	7.48%
Personal needs	66.36%	25.93%	7.71%
Recreation	30.37%	49.30%	20.33%
Durable goods	43.22%	41.59%	15.19%
Dependents	71.03%	20.09%	8.88%
Social expenses	40.89%	48.36%	10.75%
Other expenses	36.45%	45.09%	18.46%

## 3. General Expenses

Average general expenditure	Amount (Rp)
Consumption	850,000
Housing	900,000
Transportation and Communication	1,250,000
Education	360,000
Personal needs	270,000
Social needs	580,000
Purchase of durable goods/12 months	3,200,000
Children's needs	900,000
Various needs	1,670,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,980,000</b>
Average female expenditure	Besaran (Rp)
Consumption	850,000
Housing	900,000
Transportation and Communication	1,250,000
Education	360,000
Personal needs	270,000
Social needs	580,000
Purchase of durable goods/12 months	3,200,000
Children's needs	900,000
Various needs	1,670,000
Women's special needs	420,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,400,000</b>



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