



REPORT EMBARGOED UNTIL 10AM EST 4/11/18

ONLINE HARASSMENT PREVALENT IN JOURNALISM

From the Women’s March to the Oscars, stories of harassment have taken the world by storm. Women from all industries are standing up and speaking out against the horrors they have faced. In the Center for Media Engagement’s (CME) most recent study, we discovered that the world of journalism is no exception and that sometimes those doing the reporting are also the ones with personal experiences of harassment.

Women journalists face a threat of online harassment as they do their jobs and engage with their audiences via social media. Unlike that received by their male counterparts, this harassment is more likely to target women based on their gender or sexuality. CME conducted a study to understand how women journalists deal with this harassment and what influence it has on their ability to do their jobs.

Between the spring of 2016 and fall of 2017, we conducted interviews with 75 female professional journalists who either work or have worked for news organizations in Germany, India, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The two main questions we sought to answer were:

- To what extent – if any – does online harassment influence how women journalists do their jobs?
- What strategies do women journalists use to prevent this harassment or deal with it once it has occurred?

The following results from our interviews stand out:

- Most of the female journalists we interviewed had experienced negative audience feedback that went beyond mere critiques of their work and, instead, often took the form of harassment, targeting them personally with a focus on their gender or sexuality.
- Women journalists we interviewed in India, the U.K., and the U.S. felt strong pressure to engage online, so they often felt they had no choice but to face the harassment.
- Some had developed specific strategies for preventing harassment, including limiting what words could be typed on their Facebook pages or being more careful to include a variety of voices in a story to head off abuse.

Our study suggests that online harassment is a widespread issue and that steps need to be taken by news organizations to help their journalists combat this harassment.

“This is a serious problem. Women journalists are putting themselves at risk as they do their jobs,” said Gina Masullo Chen, lead researcher on the project and Assistant Director of the Center for Media Engagement. “Our findings show that women journalists need and want news organizations to do more to help them deal with online harassment.”

About the Center for Media Engagement

The Center for Media Engagement envisions a vibrant American news media that more effectively empowers the public to understand, appreciate, and participate in the democratic exchange of ideas. Learn more at mediaengagement.org