



ІНСТИТУТ МАСОВОЇ
ІНФОРМАЦІЇ

RPT-IMI Project “Supporting Independent Journalism in Ukraine by building freelance journalists’ resilience and ability to work safely and responsibly”

funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund

1 December 2016 to 30 November 2018



Analysis of Baseline Survey

Introduction

This analysis of the challenges facing freelance journalists in Ukraine has been conducted by the Rory Peck Trust and the Institute of Mass Information within the parameters of the project “Supporting independent journalism in Ukraine by building freelance journalists’ resilience and ability to work safely and responsibly”, funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund. While the situation in Ukraine for journalists in general is regularly monitored, this analysis represents the first research of its kind looking specifically at the experiences of local freelance journalists. These findings will inform the activities implemented within the project and the analysis will form a baseline to measure project impact.

Aim

To conduct research into the working conditions and experiences of freelance journalists in Ukraine where these concern their safety and protection.

Methodology

A simple questionnaire¹ in an electronic format was used to gather data for this baseline survey in order to minimise external influences on participants’ responses. Participants were sent a link to the online questionnaire and submitted their responses anonymously. The questionnaire consisted of 28

¹ See Appendix 1

questions developed by the Rory Peck Trust in partnership with the Institute of Mass Information. Questions were linked to key project objectives and designed to gather as much baseline information as possible against which to later evaluate the project. Participants required no more than 10-15 minutes to complete the survey. For the more sensitive questions (e.g. those relating to sexual harassment etc.) participants were given the option to select 'Prefer not to answer' to ensure that they did not feel any pressure to give information that might make them feel uncomfortable.

Response analysis

Responses were gathered in a database and analysed by Iryna Zemlyana, coordinator for the project with the Rory Peck Trust's partner organisation in Kyiv, the Institute for Mass Information (IMI). Iryna works as an analyst and safety trainer for IMI and manages their research programme.

Results

The survey was live for three weeks during February 2017. Links to the online questionnaire were sent to freelance journalists from all 20 regions of Ukraine who had previously undertaken training with IMI or rented bulletproof vests through the organisation's safety equipment library. 101 journalists completed the online survey, 50 of whom were female and 51 male. Following preliminary analysis, it was understood that 5 initial respondents were not currently working as freelance journalists and their data has therefore been disregarded in the following analysis. In total therefore, 96 freelance journalists completed the survey (47 male, 49 female).

1) Media platforms

Respondents were asked to indicate their preferred journalistic platforms with the vast majority of respondents indicating that they worked mainly for online media.

Media platform	% respondents
Online	61%
Print media	21%
TV	16%
Radio	1%
Other	1%

2) Journalistic professions

Respondents were also asked to indicate their profession. In response to this question, most journalists identified themselves as online journalists (45%). 20% of freelancers identified themselves as video journalists and 13% as photographers. 20% of respondents wrote exclusively for print publications. 2% identified themselves as 'other'.

3) Topics covered

Respondents worked on a range of journalistic topics and were usually not limited to reporting on one particular subject. 70% of freelancers covered two or more thematic areas.

Topics covered	% respondents
Social issues	27%
Conflict	18%
Politics	16%
Human rights	14%
Economics	10%
Tabloid	6%
Investigative	4%
Culture	3%
International	1%
Sport	0.5%
Crime	0.5%

4) General employment and work conditions

Survey results indicated that 49% of freelancers work on the basis of oral contracts with their commissioning editors.

Respondents were also asked which media organisations they worked for. Many media organisations and news organisations were mentioned, however the following platforms were mentioned most frequently:

- 1+1
- AFP
- Agravery
- Al Jazeera
- Anadoly Agency
- BBC Ukraine
- Bird in Flight
- Delo.ua
- Gazeta.ua
- Investigation-Info
- Left Bank
- New Eastern Europe
- New York Times
- Newspaper 'Day'
- Platform
- Publiv TV
- RBC Ukraine

- STB
- Texti.org.ua
- The Spiegel
- The Ukrainians
- The Washington Post
- Ukrainian Week
- Urban Space radio

Only 36% of freelancers were able to make a living from their journalistic work. The average fee paid to freelance journalists for an individual piece of work, regardless of type (i.e. including written articles, photographs and film) is 1367 Ukrainian Hryvnia (UAH) – approximately \$55². The minimum fee paid for a single piece of work was 150 UAH (\$6) and the maximum was 5000 UAH (\$200).

64% of freelance journalists need to take additional part-time jobs outside of their profession to supplement their journalistic salary. According to the survey results, freelancers earned a minimum daily wage of 40 UAH (\$1.60) and a maximum daily wage of 2500 UAH (\$100) in these supplementary jobs. 77% of those taking additional jobs explained that they had to do this because they didn't earn enough money through their journalism.

Supplementary work	% respondents
NGOs	17%
Commercial photography / videography	17%
Monitoring and analysis	13%
Teaching	13%
PR & marketing	12%
Transcription	7%
Publishing	6%
Other areas	15%

5) Work in dangerous environments

Over one third of the respondents had experience covering conflict. 33% of freelancers responding the survey had worked covering the conflict in Ukraine and an additional 2% had also covered conflicts abroad.

Of the 35% of respondents with experience covering conflict, 12% of freelancers did not have personal protective equipment or personal first aid kits. 15% did not conduct some sort of risk assessment before leaving on assignment. For those freelancers who did not report working in conflict-affected areas in Ukraine, 71% of freelancers do not conduct a risk assessment.

² Using the UAH-USD exchange rate of 0.04 current for 10 March 2017

Only 4% of freelancers surveyed have insurance and none of the freelancers working in conflict-affected areas of Ukraine are insured.

None of the freelancers surveyed use online tools or resources to plan for their assignment before travelling to the conflict area.

The minimum length of time freelancers spent continuously in conflict areas was 1 day with the maximum length of time being 48 days. Of those journalists working in conflict areas, 37% remained there continuously for more than 13 days.

Time spent in conflict-affected areas (days)	% respondents
1 to 5 days	38%
6 to 12 days	25%
13 to 24 days	6%
25 to 35 days	13%
45 days +	18%

The majority of freelancers spent an average of 1-3 days in the conflict area to complete their assignments, however a significant number of respondents (13%) spent between 7 and 10 days in conflict-affected areas per assignment.

6) Safety training, risk assessment and equipment

Of the total number of journalists surveyed, 48% had never undertaken hostile environment or first aid training.

58% of respondents indicated that they felt they needed additional training. 59% of freelancers who work in conflict-affected areas in Ukraine also responded that they would like additional training.

82% of freelancers who undertake assignments without signing official contracts with the media organisations which purchase their work indicated that their employers did not require them to undertake a risk assessment before going on assignment. 76% of employers did not provide their freelance staff with any kind of safety equipment.

For those freelancers who sign official written contracts with their employers before going on assignment, 67% are not required to undertake a risk assessment and only 22% of freelancers working in this way are offered safety equipment.

7) Threats to freelance journalists*Physical threats*

36% of freelance journalists responding to the survey had either been physically attacked or received threats of physical violence linked to their work since 2014. 12% of respondents preferred not to answer this question.

58% of those freelancers who had received threats or attacks believed that these had been a result of their work as journalists.

Types of physical threats/attacks experienced by freelance journalists	% respondents
Physical injury	10%
Interrogation	6%
Physical surveillance	6%
Arrest/detention	4%
Destruction/damage of technical equipment	4%
Kidnap	1%
Other	6%
Prefer not to answer	12%
None	52%

Digital threats

Since 2014, 60% of freelance journalists who responded to this survey had experienced online threats or attacks. Of those journalists working in conflict-affected areas of Ukraine, 53% had experienced online threats or attacks.

Types of digital threats/attacks experienced by freelance journalists	% total respondents	% those respondents regularly working in conflict-affected areas of Ukraine
Trolling	24	30
Account hacking (e.g. Facebook, Gmail etc.)	15	29
Phone tapping	10	18
Threats made by phone	5	6
Threatening e-mails	4	12
Phishing attacks	2	5

Threats relating to gender

80% of respondents stated that they had not been the victim of any threats or attacks related to their gender with 5% preferring not to answer the question. Of the 15% of respondents who responded that they had been the victims of such attacks, all were women.

Threats relating to gender	% of those 15% of respondents (all women) who indicated they had received sexually-related threats
Online sexual harassment	70%
Physical sexual harassment	30%
Physical sexual violence	0

8) Psychological issues

The survey contained a number of questions which asked respondents about their emotional experiences. These questions were targeted towards understanding the proportion of freelance journalists experiencing psychological difficulties. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they experienced a number of symptoms taken from diagnostic tools for depression used by the American Psychiatric Association³ and the UK National Health Service⁴. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder - 4th edition (DSM-IV) suggests that individuals experiencing five or more of these symptoms nearly every day may be experiencing depression⁵. While we cannot use the results of this baseline survey to make any kind of diagnosis, they indicate the extent to which inclusion of self-care and trauma awareness in our training curriculum may be useful to the freelance community in Ukraine.

Almost one fifth of freelancers indicated that they experienced five or more symptoms.

Symptoms	% respondents
Feeling tired or had little energy	14%
Having trouble concentrating on things	12%
More irritable or angry than normal	11%
Found less pleasure or interest in doing things you would normally enjoy	10%
Having trouble falling or staying asleep or sleeping too much	10%

³ <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression> [accessed 14 March 2017]

⁴ <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Depression/Pages/Symptoms.aspx> [accessed 14 March 2017]

⁵ <http://www.psnpalalto.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Depression-Diagnostic-Criteria-and-Severity-Rating.pdf> [accessed 14 March 2017]

Feeling down, depressed or hopeless	8%
Feeling that you're a failure or have let yourself or your family down	6%
Had an increase in certain physical symptoms (headaches, chest pains, dizziness, stomach aches)	6%
Experiencing problems with your relationships	5%
Using more alcohol or drugs than normal	5%
Experiencing flashbacks or nightmares of distressing events you have seen	4%
Poor appetite or overeating	4%
Thoughts that you would be better off dead or hurting yourself in some way	3%
Moving or speaking slowly or being very fidgety so that other people would notice	2%

Out of those surveyed, 31% of freelancers had sought professional psychological support and 59% had never sought professional psychological support. The remaining 10% preferred not to answer.

In response to the question "Would you like the opportunity to meet with a therapist for psychological support?", 59% of freelancers responded that they would be interested in receiving professional psychological support, 29% didn't want to take this support and 12% preferred not to answer.