

ANALYSIS OF MEDIA REPORTING ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN 2024



“JOURNALISTS AGAINST
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN” GROUP

no!



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About the group

“Journalists Against Violence Against Women”

The **Journalists Against Violence** group gathers journalists, editors and media workers who advocate for responsible, ethical and gender-sensitive reporting on violence against women and femicide. Founded with the idea that media have a key role in shaping public opinion and social attitudes, the Group contributes through its work to the fight against the normalization of violence and sensationalism in media reporting on gender-based violence. Through regular media analyses, trainings and public reactions, members of the Group point out harmful media practices, but also highlight examples of good journalism that places women who have experienced violence at the center of attention, protects their dignity and encourages society to change.

The **Journalists Against Violence** group operates through collective and solidarity-based work, guided by the principles of ethical and trauma-informed journalism. Over the past years, they have produced guidelines that help journalists report professionally and compassionately on violence against women. Through partnerships with photographers and designers, the journalists have also prepared a database of photographs and illustrations for ethical visual representation of violence against women, available as a free resource to all media. By creating a safe space for gathering and knowledge exchange, the Group has also encouraged networking among journalists in countries of the region.



I was deeply moved by the dynamic that developed within the team of researchers, who had not known each other before. They are there to motivate one another. As for the trends shown by the analysis, I believe they have always been — and still are — a reflection of the state of the media landscape, which confirms the thesis that the condition of a society is best seen in how it treats women.

One of the editors of the analysis

The annual media reporting analyses conducted by the Group aim to provide insight into dominant trends and practices in reporting on cases of violence against women, to show the most common mistakes and examples of sensationalism, and to highlight quality and professional media approaches to this topic. The demanding yet valuable nature of this analytical process — both for violence prevention and for strengthening networking among Group members — is reflected in the impressions of the journalists who worked on this analysis. Finally, the analysis serves as a basis for further activities, training sessions and public interventions of the Group, with the goal of improving the way the media report on this serious violation of women's human rights — in the interest of those exposed to violence, their families and society as a whole.

The activities of the group “Journalists Against Violence Against Women” are supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Serbia.



It turned out that everything I had known about this topic was indeed true. The media should take on the role that is naturally theirs — to inform and educate — yet the situation is often the opposite, as demonstrated by articles in which all journalistic codes have been violated. While working on the analysis, I once again realized how deeply patriarchal the society we live in is, and understood that every effort invested in informing citizens is extremely important. It is, in fact — a mission.

One of the authors of the analysis

After reviewing more than a thousand media reports, my main impression is that the problem of gender-based violence in our media is, in fact, not treated as a problem at all. Texts in which the victim is described as an unfortunate woman are dominant, with horrifying descriptions of injuries. News about the abuse or murder of women serves solely to fill space and, unfortunately, still to chase cheap clicks. Very rarely are there texts that speak about the phenomenon itself, about all its layers, about women's poverty as one of the causes of enduring violence, about the impunity of gender-based violence, institutional failures, or inadequate prevention and protection mechanisms.

One of the authors of the analysis

Analyses of Media Reporting on Violence Against Women by the Group “Journalists Against Violence Against Women” – a brief retrospective

“How can I ask for help when she has already been judged by journalists and everyone who reads this.”

“It doesn’t say whom I could call, or who could defend me.”

“...it makes me feel like someone understands what I am going through.”

“The text confirms that violence is punishable by law, and the victim’s behavior cannot be a reason or an excuse for violence.”

Quotes from the publication “How Women Read You?”

The analysis before you was conducted as part of the regular activities of the group “Journalists Against Violence Against Women” and represents the continuous engagement of the Group’s members.

During the first discussions among journalists within the Group in 2017–2018, we considered the need for our work not to be based solely on impressions of unethical media portrayals of violence against women, but rather on concrete data that would more precisely guide our advocacy for change. Therefore, alongside the [Guidelines for Media Reporting on Violence Against Women](#), a methodology for monitoring media reporting was developed, which — with certain updates — we continue to follow today.

The indicators we established, both for the analysis and for the Guidelines, were developed on the basis of in-depth discussions among Group members, our professional experience working on this topic, and important documents such as the [Serbian Journalists' Code of Ethics](#), the publication [“How Do Women Read You?”](#) — which offers insight into how women who have survived violence perceive media reporting on this issue — as well as the principles of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma in London.

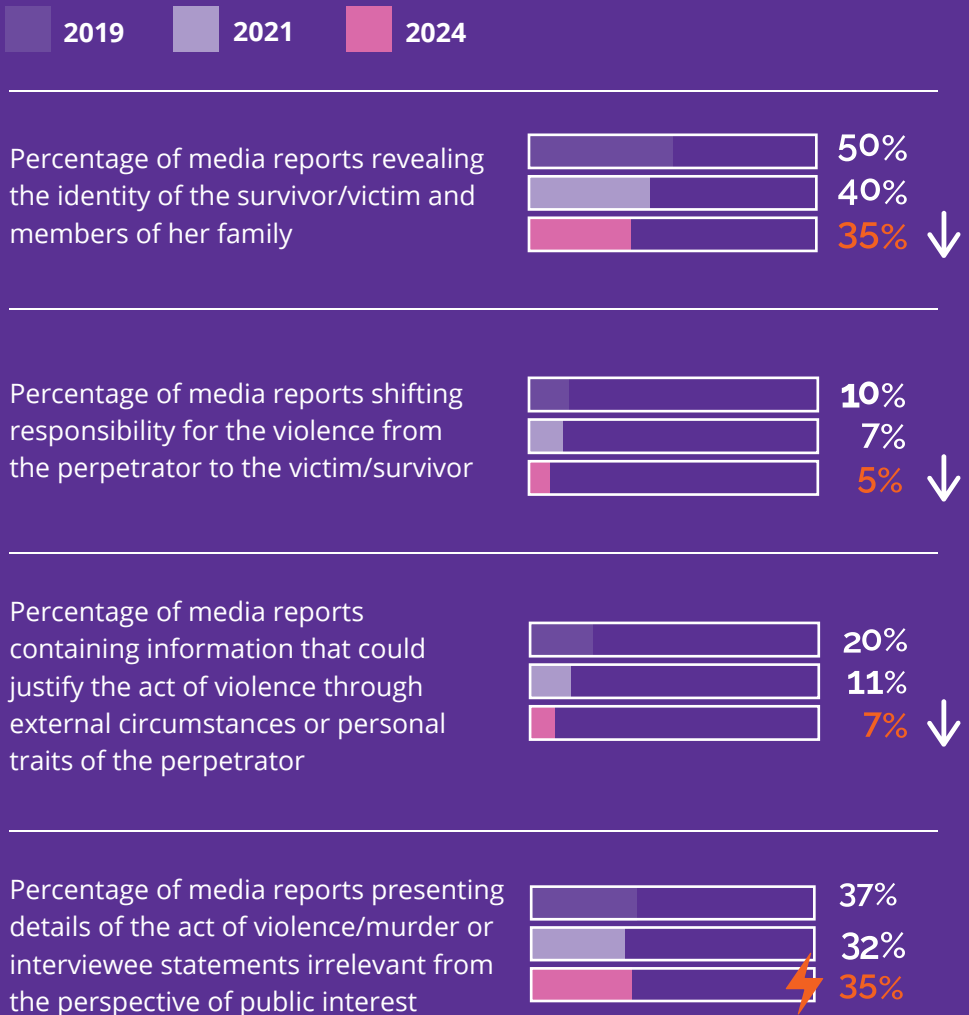
The Group's first analysis was conducted for [2019](#), followed by the analysis for [2020](#). During this period, the media content analysis on the misuse of firearms for male violence against women, [“A Portrait against a Landscape”](#), was also produced. It established a starting point for the Group's further work on this issue, with the aim of raising awareness through concrete activities and cooperation with media, and reducing the risk of firearm misuse for violence against women, domestic violence, and other forms of gender-based violence.

The next analysis was conducted for [2021](#), when the topic of reporting on firearms became an integral part of the research methodology. At that time, we were already able to identify certain trends, as well as observe the contribution of the Group's work — including media training sessions that are continuously held between analytical cycles — given that certain unethical media practices had significantly decreased (see [Table 1](#) for more information).

After 2021, a pause was made in regular annual monitoring of media reports. The reasons for deciding to conduct the analysis on a three-year basis include the fact that continuous observation over a longer period facilitates the identification of trends and changes, as well as considerations of economic and time efficiency. The analysis is based on all media content about violence against women published across all types of media during the year, which requires significant human, time, and financial resources.

Six-Year Trends in Media Reporting on Violence Against Women

Below is a table presenting key data monitored over a six-year period, through a total of **37,510** analyzed media reports:



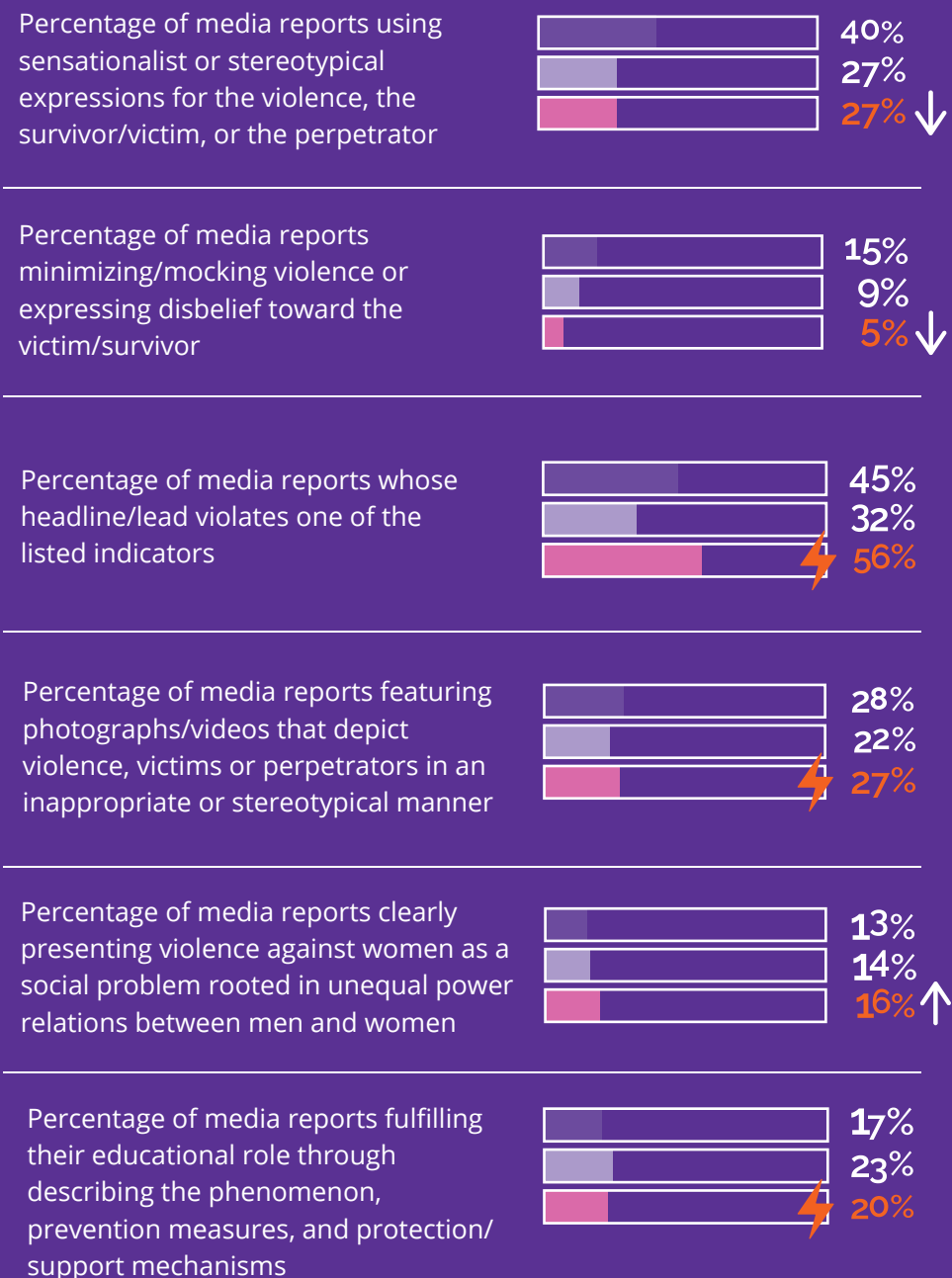


Table 1. Six-Year Trends in Media Reporting on Violence Against Women

Profile of an Average Media Report on Violence Against Women

Based on the summarized data on media reporting on violence against women in 2024, a profile of the average media report on this topic can be outlined:

The media report is most often published on an online news portal and refers to a current case that has just occurred in Serbia. It represents a combination of a statement issued by a competent institution and minimal original contribution by the journalist. Most often, it does not contain statements from interviewees; if it does, these are either anonymous sources or representatives of non-governmental organizations that provide assistance and support to survivors. The media report concerns physical violence and/or femicide. The history of violence is not visible, while institutional sanctions are frequently mentioned. The article contains many irrelevant and unnecessary details for the public. The title is sensationalist, accompanied by traumatizing or disturbing photographs. Violence against women is not presented as a social problem rooted in historically unequal power relations between men and women, and the media report does not have an educational function.



ANALYSIS OF MEDIA REPORTING ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN 2024

Methodology and Sample

The analysis of media reporting on violence against women for the period **from January 1 to December 31, 2024**, included all media reports from electronic and print media, as well as online portals. The material was collected through regular press clipping services provided by the agencies Ninamedia and Ebart, using the following keywords:

Violence against women

Domestic violence

Sexual violence

Murders of women

Perpetrators of violence against women

Based on these keywords, the researchers analyzed only content referring to the phenomenon of *gender-based male violence against women*. By the phenomenon of gender-based male violence against women, we mean all forms of violence committed by men against women because of the victims' sex, that is, because they are women. The relationship between the perpetrator and the survivor/victim may vary: an intimate partner relationship (including marital and non-marital, current or former, living in the same household or separately), a family relationship (e.g. father-daughter, son-mother, son-in-law-mother-in-law), a superficial acquaintance, or even no prior relationship at all (for example, in cases of stalking by an unknown man). Therefore, although the press clippings, for example, also included content addressing domestic violence more broadly (such as violence of a father against a son), such content was not included in the analysis unless the perpetrator was a man and the survivor/victim a woman.

The methodology and observed patterns have not substantially changed compared to previous analytical cycles, precisely in order to facilitate continuous monitoring. However, this analysis also offers several additional insights that were not included before: for the first time, we recorded information regarding the location of the

reported event (whether the case occurred in Serbia or abroad), whether the case was current or older, whether the published content was original journalistic work or a reproduction of institutional statements, as well as who the interviewees were — that is, whose voices the media provided visibility to and influence in shaping the narrative about this social problem.

Note on terminology: The term “survivor” refers to women who have been exposed to violence. The term “victim” refers to women who were killed. The experience of experts who work directly with persons in situations of violence shows that the term “victim” can provoke negative emotions and rejection of being labeled as such, whereas the term “survivor” is empowering.

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS FOR 2024

General Data – Rare Reporting Without a Concrete Trigger

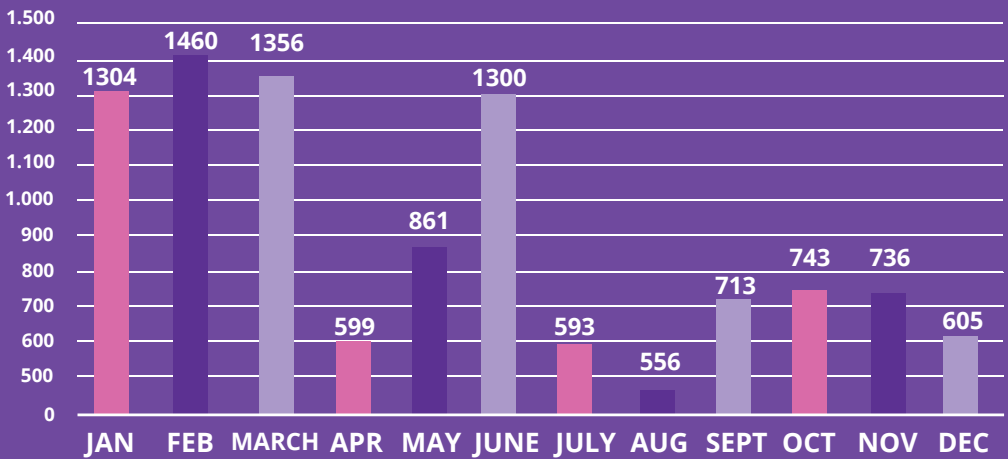


During the observed period, a total of **10.826** media reports on the topic of violence against women were analyzed, which amounts to an average of **902** media reports per month.

The month-by-month analysis shows that the beginning of the year was marked by greater public visibility of this topic, thereby breaking the trend from previous years when reporting was most frequent in May (on the occasion of May 18 – the National Day of Remembrance for Women Victims of Violence) and at the end of the year (during the “16 days of Activism against Gender-based Violence” campaign).

Chart 1

Number of Media Reports by Month



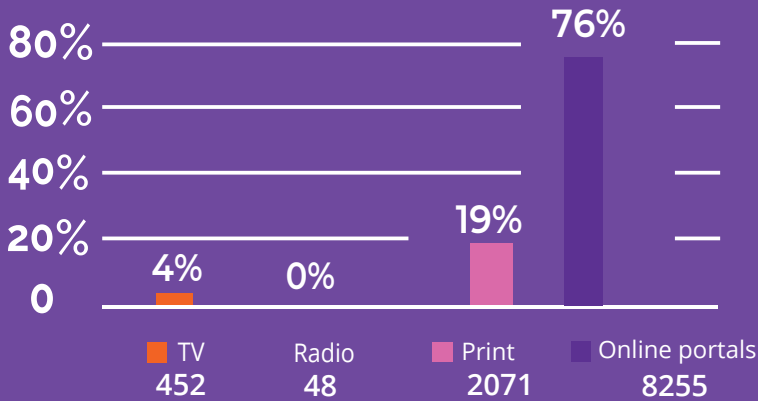
TOTAL – 10,826

As in previous years, **the topic of violence against women is overwhelmingly most present on online news portals, which published 76% of the total number of articles.**

Print media follow, covering around one fifth of the content, while TV and radio stations together account for less than 5% of media reports.

Chart 2

Type of Media



Online portals are a type of media that rely on speed and frequent publication of content that is most often informative in nature. Therefore, this finding should be considered together with the following data, which provide insight into the timeliness and specific focus of media coverage, geographic scope, and the origin of the published content.

Chart 3

What Do the Media Report On?

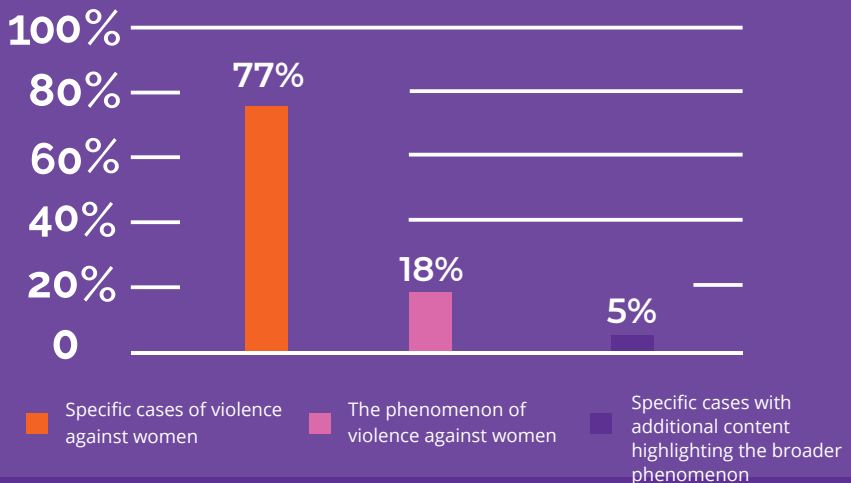
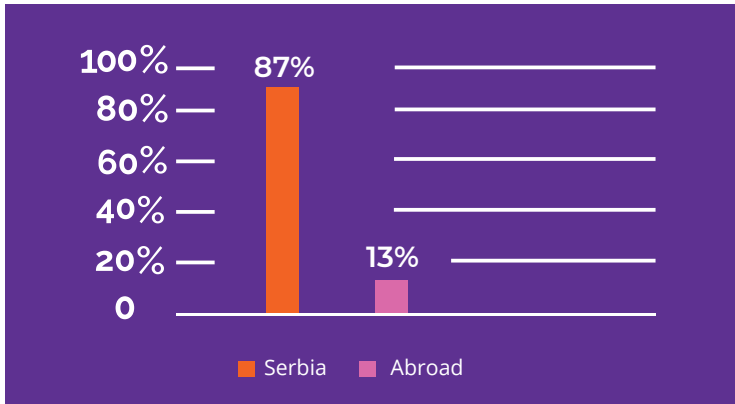


Chart 4

Geographic Location of Cases (When reporting on specific cases)



The fact that as many as three quarters of media reports referred to specific cases of violence against women clearly shows that the media rarely devote attention to this issue without an immediate cause. This is influenced by editorial policies and often an insufficient level of knowledge among journalists on how to present the issue from a broader, phenomenological perspective.

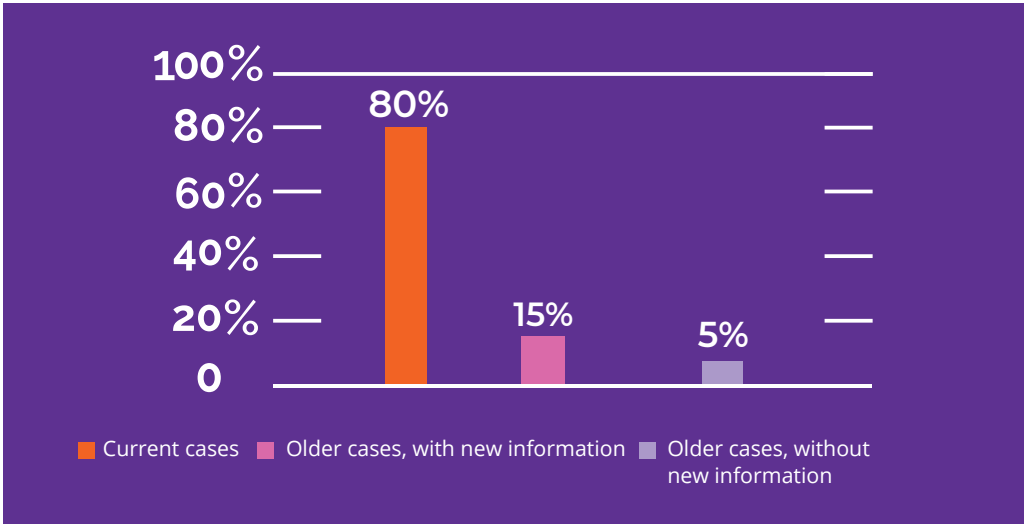
The greatest room for improvement is visible in the finding that only 5% of reports used a specific case of violence as an opportunity to provide the public with a broader picture of the problem, to report statistics, offer expert discussions on recognizing violence, point to available support and protection services, and similar information. The findings show that numerous cases of violence that attracted significant public interest could have served as an entry point for discussing prevention and survivor protection. However, this potential was largely left unused.

The majority of media content concerning specific cases referred to violence against women that occurred in Serbia — as much as 87%.

Regarding reporting on cases abroad, the story from France about Gisèle Pelicot — a victim of long-term sexual abuse, by dozens of men, organized by her husband after drugging her — received the most attention. In addition, the media reported on individuals of Serbian origin in the diaspora, whether perpetrators or victims.

Chart 5

Timeliness of Media Reports on Specific Cases



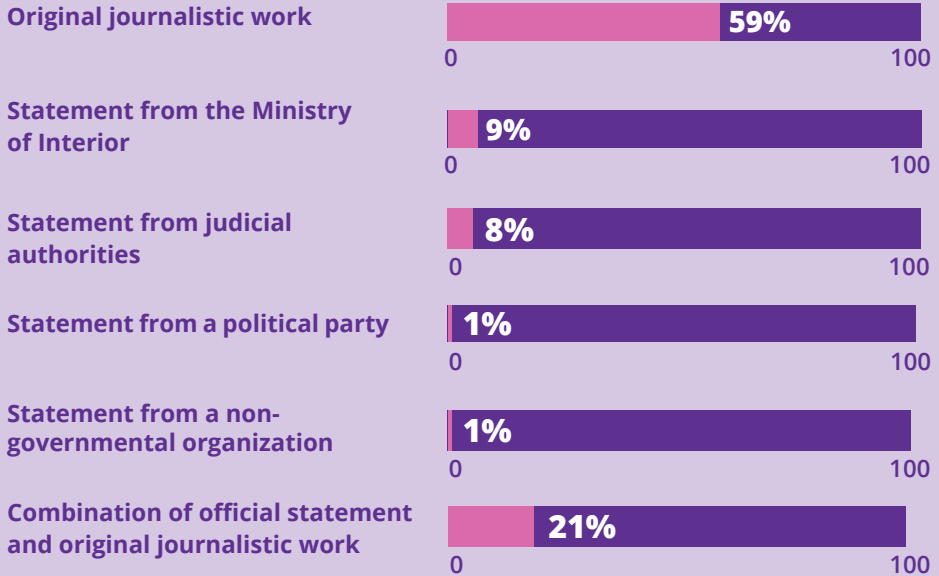
By examining **the timeliness of reported cases**, the aim was to determine how often media revisit older cases and whether they do so to provide new information (e.g., the conclusion of a perpetrator’s trial, updates about a survivor’s current life, etc.).

The data show that current cases are clearly in focus (80% of media reports focused on incidents that occurred during the observed year), while older cases are covered less frequently. When media do return to older cases, it is more often to provide new information.

However, there are situations in which media revisit older cases, most commonly mass murders and cases that attracted significant public attention, on their anniversaries. In such instances, there is often no clear purpose other than repeating sensationalist narratives about a “crime to remember,” “a horror story” or an “unprecedented family tragedy.”

Chart 6

Origin of Media Content



Regarding **the origin of media content**, nearly two thirds of media reports were original texts written by journalists, while one fifth combined official press releases with the journalist's own contribution. In the remaining cases, media content consisted exclusively of press releases - most often from the Ministry of Interior and judicial authorities. Statements from political parties and NGOs each accounted for 1% of published articles. Although the analysis also recorded statements from international organizations (such as the United Nations) and independent institutions (such as the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and the Ombudsman), their presence was not statistically significant enough to be included in the chart.

Interviewees on the topic of violence against women

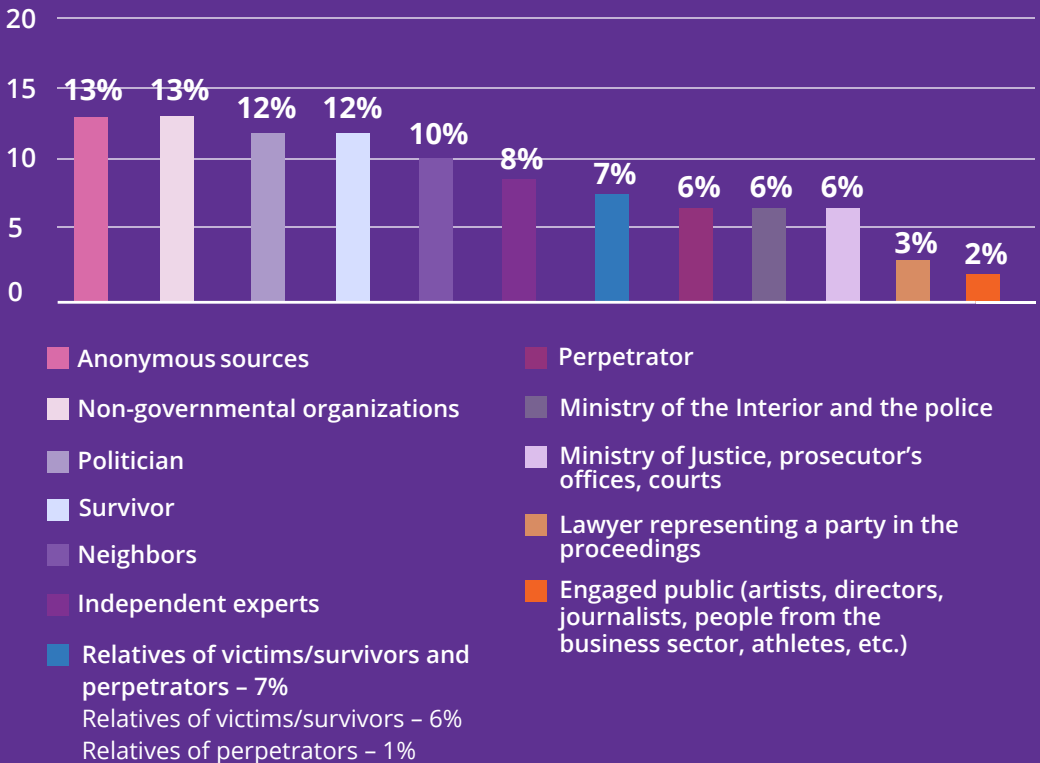
"as our anonymous but well-informed source claims"

In this year's analysis, we decided to examine who the most frequent interviewees are when it comes to violence against women, that is, who the most common sources of information on this topic are, as they consequently shape the narrative around it.

In the majority of media reports (60%), there were no statements from interviewees. However, where the media did report statements, a great diversity of sources can be observed.

Chart 7

Interviewees / Sources



An extremely concerning finding is that anonymous, unattributed sources are at the top of this list (13%). As our analysis shows, anonymous sources can be grouped into two categories: those said to come from institutions and those said to come from the environment of survivors/victims and/or perpetrators. The Code of Journalists of Serbia, in Chapter VIII, states that the media are obliged to respect a source's request for anonymity. However, the guideline related to this provision states: "Unnamed sources should be used only when there is no other way to obtain information or data of exceptional public importance." The use of anonymous sources raises suspicion that the statements and information may be fabricated, and one of the first lessons in journalism is that anonymous sources should not be relied upon because they lack credibility. Through a detailed review of media content, this analysis of media coverage of violence against women has shown that there is **no justification for such a high percentage of content relying exclusively on anonymous sources**, especially since in most cases these are not investigative and/or analytical articles. Rather, the content relates to specific cases of violence and typically provides details that are irrelevant to the public interest. Therefore, such a high percentage of unattributed sources contributes to low levels of audience trust in the statements presented, as there is no accountability for what is said publicly, which justifiably leads to suspicions of disinformation. At the same time, anonymous sources contribute to the trivialization of the problem itself, placing it within the framework of "he said-she said" claims instead of framing it as a social problem that can be addressed through prevention and through a professional, sensitive, and consistent approach. Consequently, all of this may lead to a reduced motivation among survivors to speak out and report their experiences, out of fear of trivialization, disbelief, ridicule and undignified discussions of the trauma of violence.

Examples of Anonymous Sources in the Media in 2024



- "an anonymous source from the investigation"
- "a source familiar with the investigation"
- "a source close to the investigation"
- "a source from the police"
- "our source from the prosecutor's office"
- "a female resident of the village"
- "an employee of the local community office"
- "an acquaintance of the married couple"
- "the victim's hairdresser"
- "a distant relative"
- "the wife of the victim's nephew"
- "a source who knew the murdered woman"
- "an eyewitness to the event"

Immediately after anonymous sources, the most frequent interviewees on the topic of violence against women are **non-governmental organizations that provide assistance and support to survivors (also 13%)**.

When it comes to the voices of survivors, they appear in 12% of media reports. However, the analysis shows that they did not always have control over the narrative being presented - at times, their words were taken from social media, from court proceedings, and in some cases from institutions (for example, “the victim’s statement to the police”). This is also a factor that significantly affects survivors’ motivation to reach out, both to institutions (out of fear that their statements may become public) and to the media, which could otherwise approach the story in a sensitive manner and contribute to raising public awareness. The act of violence itself represents an act of establishing power and control over the victim. Therefore, repeatedly depriving survivors of control over their own stories and experiences of violence significantly slows their recovery process.

The voices of perpetrators appear in half that percentage (6%), but they are also present. **Compared with other interviewees, a significant share of media reports also convey statements from politicians (12%)**. It is important to note that this category includes individuals from both the governing party and the opposition. Only representatives of the Ministry of the Interior (MoI), the Ministry of Justice (MJ), and the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs were recorded as separate categories, given their direct responsibilities in the protection and support of survivors. Unlike the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice, statements from the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs were not present to a statistically significant degree. During 2024, within the category “Politicians,” a particularly prominent figure was the minister without portfolio responsible for gender equality, the prevention of violence against women, and the economic and political empowerment of women.

A significant percentage (10%) also consists of statements from neighbors (including named acquaintances, passers-by and eyewitnesses).

As for independent experts, their statements appear in 8% of reports. It is important to emphasize that this category does not necessarily include individuals with credible expertise and knowledge on the issue, and this finding should therefore be interpreted in a broader sense. The category includes psychologists, social workers, lawyers, university equality commissioners, as well as various criminologists, private detectives, and journalists covering specific cases. For this reason, statements coming from these professions should be viewed with some caution, as they do not always imply an adequate level of understanding of the issue of violence against women. In some cases, recorded statements contained open prejudice or minimization of the problem, as well as demeaning remarks toward specific victims.

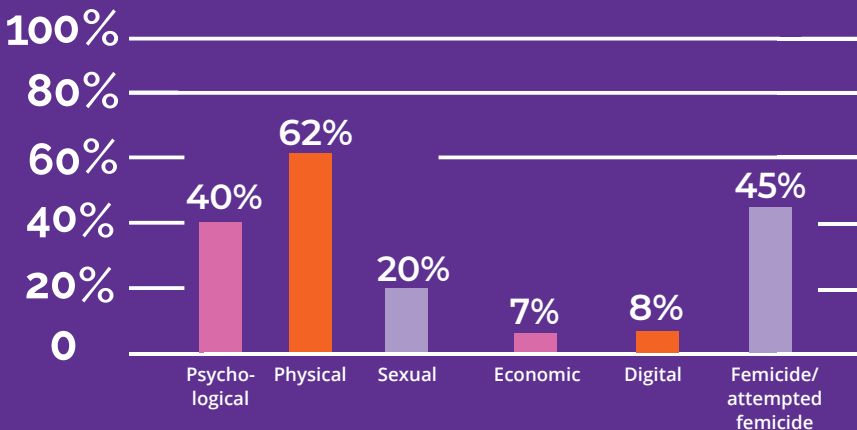
Data on the Types of Violence and Cases Reported by the Media

“Male perpetrators most often killed the victims with knives, firearms, strangulation, but also a DRILL!”

As a regular part of the analysis, we monitored which types of violence the media most frequently report on. As in previous analyses, this one also shows that **physical violence is the most visible in the media (appearing in two-thirds of media reports)**, while almost every second report referred to **femicide or attempted femicide**. Around one fifth of the media content addressed sexual violence, while less than 10% referred to digital and economic violence—leaving significant room for improvement in raising public awareness and knowledge about these forms of violence against women.

Chart 8

Types of Violence Reported by the Media



One of the most notable observations of our researchers is that in a significant majority of media content, the type of violence is not explicitly stated. Therefore, the data in the table above were obtained by interpreting (often unnecessary) details provided in the media reports.

It is particularly concerning that **economic violence remains largely unrecognized** and is rarely explicitly mentioned, even in content that addresses the phenomenon of violence against women. This trend has negative consequences for the public, given the educational role of the media, since it is precisely through media coverage that victims can recognize that they are experiencing economic abuse.

Information the public receives from content on physical violence most often relates to the arrest or detention of the perpetrator and the way in which the woman was physically harmed. Other disturbing details are still frequently present in media reports: the exact length of the weapon mentioned in the headline, the specific body part injured, and detailed descriptions of the victim's health consequences.

Regarding femicides, media coverage of these cases is still most often treated like any other form of crime, rather than being framed as the most extreme consequence of a broader social and gender-based problem.

Chart 9

Information on the History of Violence in Media Reporting on Specific Cases



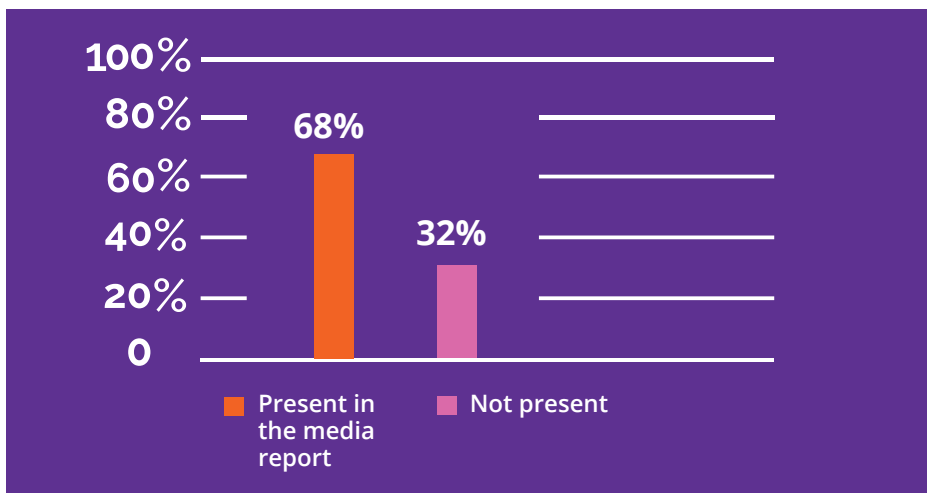
The history of previous violence is mentioned in slightly more than one-third of the media reports analyzed. It is important, however, to take into account several hindering factors. If earlier reports of violence did not result in protective measures or criminal sanctions, that information is subject to personal data protection laws and is therefore not publicly available.

By contrast, information about previously issued criminal convictions is public (as judgments are delivered “in the name of the people”), but in practice, such information mostly appears only in media reports on femicide cases. Even then, the media rarely investigate institutional accountability further, which is partly a result of the socio-political context, in which institutions remain relatively closed to communication with the media.

NOTE: For journalists reporting on femicide, it is also important to consider the following: even when a source provides information that there had been no prior violence or reports of violence, this most often refers only to the absence of physical violence. However, physical violence is not among the top three risk factors for femicide. The key risk factors are: jealousy/control, the woman’s decision to leave the perpetrator, and the fact that the perpetrator possesses a weapon (most often a firearm). Therefore, it is important that the media understand, and educate the public, that femicide does not necessarily occur as the culmination of long-term physical violence. It can happen without any prior physical abuse, and it is entirely possible that no physical violence preceded the femicide at all. These insights demonstrate how crucial it is to write about violence against women as a broader social phenomenon, rather than solely reporting on individual cases.

Chart 10

Information on institutional sanctions



As much as 68% of media reports include information about institutional sanctions. This most often refers to previously issued restraining orders or orders preventing contact or approach, or the removal of the perpetrator from the survivor’s home. The problem, however, lies in the source of this information—in a large number of cases, it comes from relatives, friends, or even the survivor herself. Criminal sanctions, that is, court judgments, are represented in media content mainly through prosecutor’s office statements or (more rarely) court announcements, when a judgment is issued. Here again, there is a clear tendency of the media to report only on individual cases, usually by relaying official statements, instead of providing broader context or using the case as an opportunity to report on the phenomenon as a whole.

These findings show that an important segment of violence against women remains insufficiently illuminated—the institutional response. There is a lack of analysis and insight into how the practices of the police, courts, prosecutors, and social service centers actually function in reality.

Media reporting on violence against women and firearms

“he followed her and fired three shots from a handgun”

Chart 11

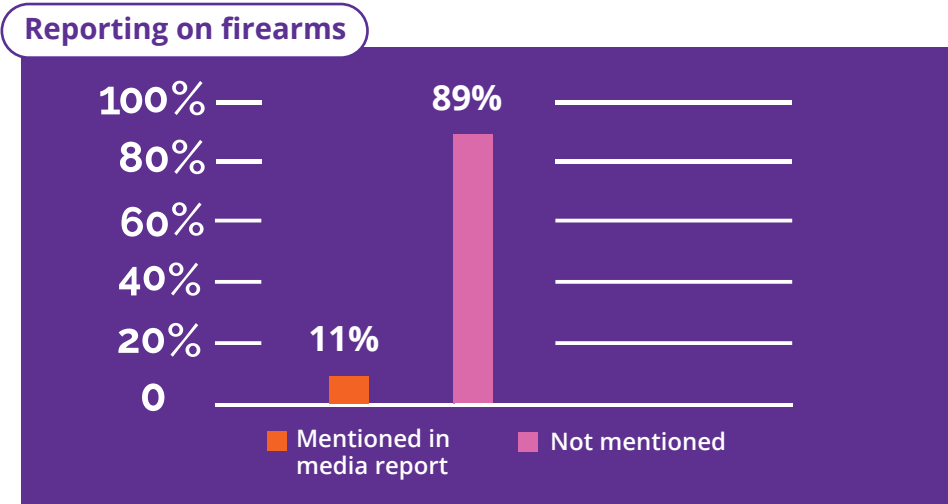


Chart 12

Information on type of firearms misuse

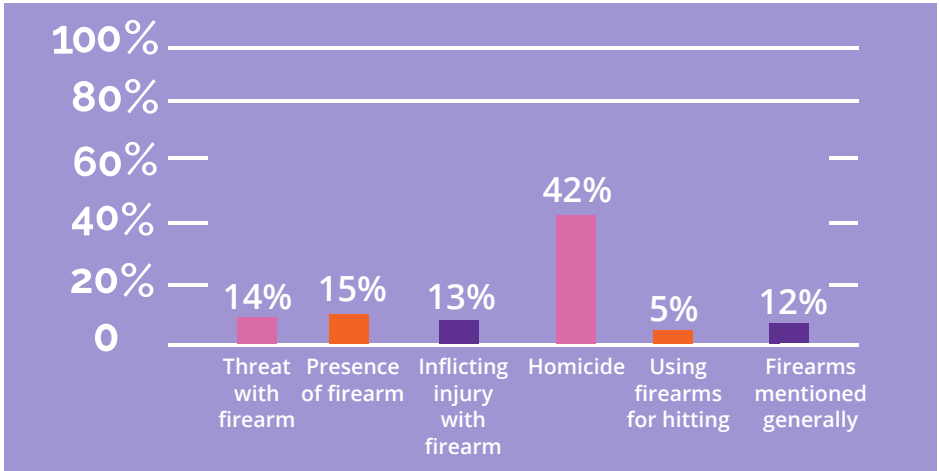
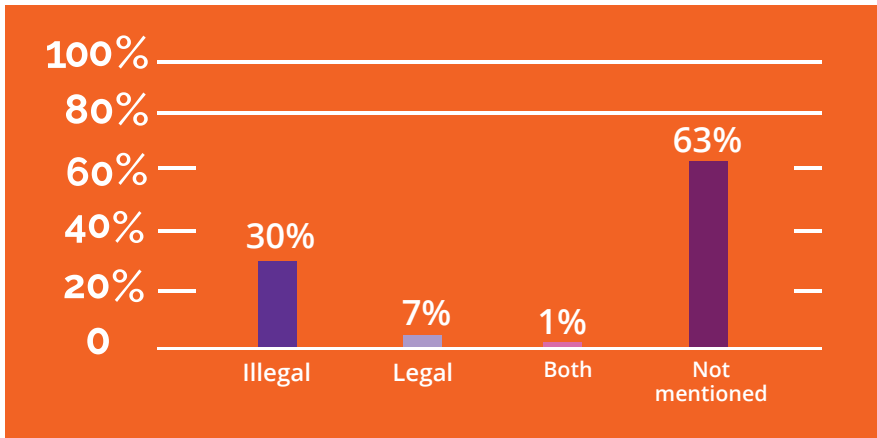


Chart 13

Information on firearm ownership



The media's incentive to report on violence against women involving firearms almost exclusively comes from the need to cover specific events, rather than from an intention to investigate and present the topic in depth. This represents another negative trend in media reporting on this phenomenon, given that the media could play an important role in preventing the misuse of firearms, as well as warning survivors about potential dangers.

However, a positive trend is that the media are paying attention to different ways firearms are misused. **Beyond being used to commit murder or inflict injury, it is important to highlight that firearms are often used for intimidation and as a form of psychological abuse (through mere presence, threats, etc.), and they can also be employed as blunt weapons.**

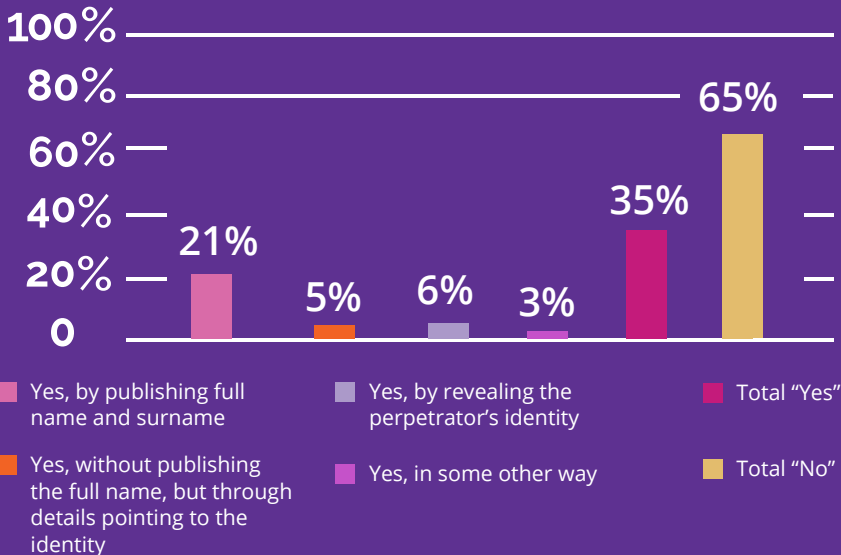
Information about the legal status of a firearm is certainly of public interest, but journalists face certain challenges in reporting these details. In 63% of analyzed media reports, this information was not provided. When it is mentioned, illegal firearms appear in 30% of content, legal weapons in 7%, and both in only 1% of media reports. The most common sources of information on firearms for the media are police and prosecutor's office statements, but these often do not include such details, and journalists do not take the initiative to request this information.

Media Reporting on Survivors/Victims and Perpetrators of Violence

"horrifying details emerged"

Chart 14

Disclosure of the Survivor's/Victim's Identity in Reporting on Specific Cases



Since its forming, the “Journalists Against Violence Against Women” group has been educating both the media and the public that revealing identity does not only mean publishing the victim’s or perpetrator’s full name. Identity can also be disclosed in other ways—through photographs, initials, information about place of residence or workplace, or through descriptions of circumstances that make the person recognizable. For this reason, the ways identity is revealed were also analyzed. The identity of victims/survivors was revealed in 35% of media content, in four different ways:

1. Full name and surname (21%)

– This is the most common and obvious way of revealing identity. This percentage includes cases where survivors themselves, consciously and with informed consent, chose to disclose their identity (for example, actress Milena Radulović).

2. Revealing the victim’s identity by publishing the perpetrator’s identity (6%)

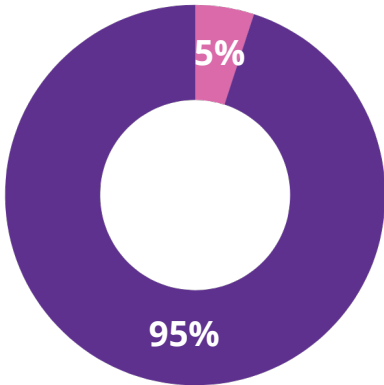
– This method of identity disclosure often causes confusion among the public, especially among those who advocate for public shaming of perpetrators. However, it is dangerous and harmful to the survivor/victim, as the survivor/victim is often in a close, marital, or family relationship with the perpetrator. Journalists should therefore pay special attention to this.

3. Through the publication of various details (5%)

– This includes details such as the name of the settlement, village, or neighbourhood where the violence occurred; in some media content, addresses are also provided. Previous analyses and research conducted by the Group, as well as numerous civil society studies, show that 80–90% of violence cases (especially those with fatal outcomes) occur in the victim’s home. Therefore, revealing the exact micro-location of the event is equivalent to revealing the victim’s identity. Special journalistic attention is needed here, as there is no fixed template for reporting. For example, if the violence occurs in a larger town, mentioning its name carries no risk of revealing identity. However, in the analysis, researchers often encountered content in which a hamlet consisting of only several houses was mentioned, and the ages of the victim and perpetrator were also provided. Along with initials, it becomes completely clear that the identity is revealed. These details often come directly from sources, such as police and prosecutor statements, so the recommendation to media outlets is not to reproduce them uncritically or without journalistic/editorial processing.

Chart 15

Shifting Responsibility for Violence from the Perpetrator to the Victim/Survivor



■ Present ■ Not present

Shifting responsibility for violence from the perpetrator to the victim/survivor is present in 5% of media content, the lowest percentage since the Group began tracking this indicator, showing a trend of decreasing occurrence of this media practice. Previous analyses recorded 10% of such reports in 2019 and 7% in 2021. However, in media reports from 2024, this phenomenon is still present, most often in the form of attempts to explain or justify violence against a woman by referring to her actions.

Quantitative analysis cannot fully capture what is clearly visible from the overall tone of such content: it is not just a description of the sequence of events, but there is also a noticeable undertone of blame directed at the victim/survivor.

Examples of Shifting Responsibility from the Perpetrator to the Victim/Survivor in 2024



"refused to sing a song"

"did not prepare anything for dinner"

"he found out she had been a sex worker in the past"

"the argument happened because of her drawing"

"refused to meet and talk"

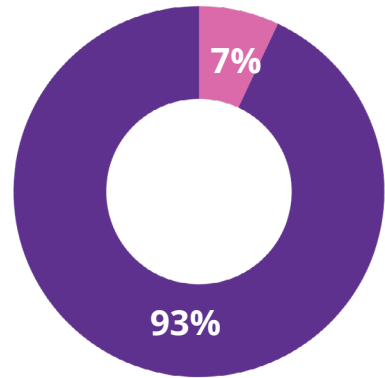
"he was angry because of her decision"

"Recorded alone in an exclusive club, wearing a black dress and her hair down. Later that evening, she reported the violence."

Justifying acts of violence by referring to the perpetrator's external circumstances or personal characteristics is also less frequently found in media reports on violence against women since the Group began monitoring and analyzing this content. While this pattern appeared in 20% of media reports in 2019, in 2024 it is recorded in 7% of reports. Nevertheless, it is still present, most often through details suggesting that the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol or drugs, had a diagnosed mental illness, or through phrases such as "he could not accept that she had left him."

Chart 16

Justifying the Perpetrator



Present Not present

NOTE: It is important to reiterate several facts that journalists must be aware of. First and foremost, alcohol and drugs are not the cause of violent behavior, as not everyone under the influence of these substances becomes violent. The same applies to people with mental health issues, and an additional problem is that this type of reporting contributes to the stigmatization of individuals with health challenges.

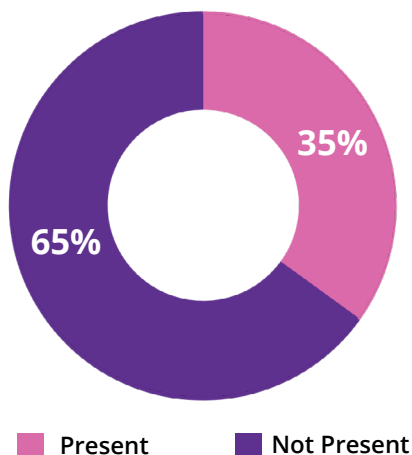
Examples of Justifying the Perpetrator by External Circumstances or Personal Characteristics in 2024



- "he was not taking his medication"
- "has a history of mental illness"
- "he changed when he lost his job"
- "he was an alcoholic"
- "he had a hard time accepting her decision (to leave him, editor's note)"

Chart 17

Inclusion of Irrelevant Details



The **percentage of irrelevant details** included in media reports is extremely high, reaching 35%. In addition to details about the act of violence itself, irrelevant details also include, for example, personal impressions of unrelated interviewees (e.g., neighbors), the victim's/survivor's sexual history, and similar information. Here, we recall the section of the [Guidelines](#) that states:

“The narrative presentation of concrete, graphic depictions of the violent scene with details should be avoided, on the one hand – because they offend the survivor’s/ victim’s dignity and put the public in a voyeuristic position, and on the other – because they give other perpetrators ideas for violent behaviour. Journalists and editors should always keep in mind that their work is read by women who are experiencing violence, and that including such details, which violate the dignity of survivors/victims, can discourage them from seeking a way out of an abusive relationship.”



Examples of irrelevant details in 2024



„he threw leftovers and napkins in her cleavage, squeezing her neck with both hands...”

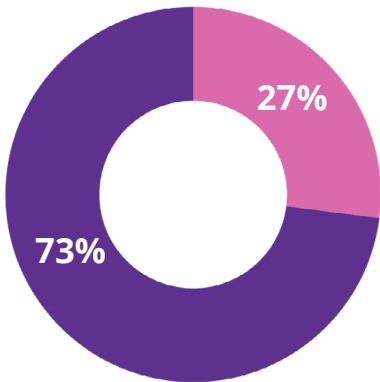
„he kicked her, she fell, he stabbed her and lifted her onto the bed with the knife still in her chest”

„she was found torn, in her own feces”

“after he raped her, he cleaned himself and the victim up with wet napkins”

Chart 18

Sensationalism and Stereotypes



■ Present

■ Not Present

Sensationalism and stereotypes

are present in 27% of media reports analyzed, which is not encouraging, as this percentage is identical to that in the previous analysis conducted in 2021. It is necessary to remind the media that stereotypical visual portrayals of survivors/victims of violence often depict them as crying, distressed, and showing visible physical signs of abuse.

In terms of language use, stereotypes appear through expressions such as “unfortunate woman,” “martyr,” and similar, while stereotypical terms for the perpetrator include “monster,” “maniac,” “psychopath,” and so on. The act of violence itself is often subject to sensationalistic interpretation through words like “horror,” “terrifying,” “gruesome,” and this is further amplified by the use of capital letters, exclamation marks and highlighting these words in bright colors, techniques designed to capture readers’ attention, even if they are not interested in the topic or the manner of reporting.

Examples of Sensationalism and Stereotypes in 2024

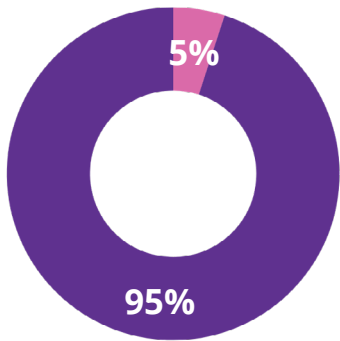
“The maniac was spotted in a bus”

„Psychopath committed rape in an elevator, then in a supermarket”

„Then the monster was finally punished”

Chart 19

Disbelief of Survivors, Minimization and Mocking of Violence



Present

Not Present

In only 5% of media reports is there **disbelief toward survivors or minimization and mocking of violence**. This pattern has been steadily declining since the Group began monitoring, and in 2024 it reached its lowest level so far (15% in 2019, 7% in 2021). A typical example of minimizing and mocking violence is a case widely reported by the media in October 2024, involving intimate partner violence in which a man injured a woman with a sharp object.

However, many media outlets emphasized in headlines and text that the violence occurred after the survivor got angry because the perpetrator did not like a drawing she made. In this way, a serious act of violence is presented with a humorous undertone, which not only trivializes the violence but also illustrates the mechanism of shifting responsibility from the perpetrator to the victim.

Disbelief toward survivors is particularly evident (and almost always occurs) when the survivor and/or perpetrator is a public figure (in the domestic sphere). In such cases, media reporting often turns into a public trial, giving the perpetrator space to present “his side,” while the survivor is subjected to a campaign to destroy her reputation. In the second half of 2024, a typical example of this practice is the case of the former wife of water polo player Nikola Rađen, who reported him for violence, but media narratives focused on her past and alleged immorality, while he was depicted as a man who “found salvation in faith and turned to God.” Similarly, in 2024, singers who spoke out about past violence, such as Vesna Rivas, were treated in this way.

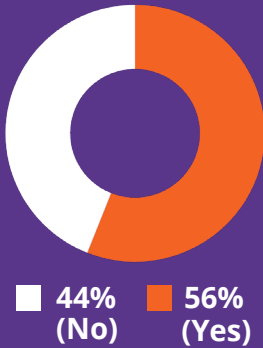
Headlines and visual equipment of media reports

"You'll end up like that woman in Bosnia"

Chart 20

Headlines Violating the Previously Mentioned Indicators

(disclosure of identity, shifting responsibility, justifying the perpetrator, including irrelevant details, disbelief toward the survivor)



While most indicators are declining, the one related to headlines is the only one showing a significant increase. In more than half—56%—of media reports, the headline or lead violated at least one of the ethical reporting indicators on violence against women. Previous analyses showed that in 2019 this was the case in 45% of content, in 2020 48%, and in 2021 32% (see Table 1). Researchers frequently encounter media content that, in terms of compliance with the indicators, is good or even flawless, yet the headline, lead, or visual presentation violates one or more indicators. This clearly highlights the need for further editorial training, as well as points to a market-driven approach to media coverage of violence against women, where clicks, readership, and viewership are sought in unethical ways.

Examples of Problematic Headlines from 2024



"Wanted to gauge the victim's eyes out, pushed his hand in her mouth and raped her"

"Ghastly violence shakes Belgrade"

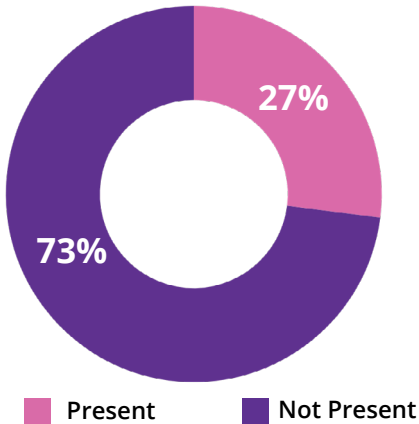
"Bloody July: The month with most rapes and killings in Serbia"

"Horrific details of Niš city elevator rape"

"Father from hell appears before judge today"

Chart 21

Inappropriate Photographs or Video Content



Inappropriate photographs and video content appears in 27% of media reports. This represents an increase compared to the previous analysis, although it is not the highest percentage recorded in previous years (2019 – 28%, 2020 – 36%, 2021 – 22%; see Table 1). The criterion for appropriate photographs and visual content is that they should be non-traumatizing and empowering for survivors, as established in the research [“How Women Read You?”](#)

– Media Reporting of Male Violence Against Women in Families and Partnerships from the Perspective of Survivors” (Belgrade, 2017). Media are recommended to avoid: graphic and literal depictions of violence, crime scenes, or injuries and “stylized” depictions of violence using actors to simulate scenes. Stylizations in which women are shown in a passive or helpless position, with staged bruises or makeup should also be avoided. While the number of such problematic images has decreased, they are still present and were marked as inappropriate in this analysis. The most frequently used images are neutral, such as police cars or flashing police lights, which are non-problematic.

In response to the findings from “How Women Read You?” and previous analyses, the “Journalists Against Violence Against Women” group made available the [NO! image and illustration database](#), which is completely free for media use.

Researchers observed that materials from this database are increasingly used, but some media continue to use depictions of violence, especially television outlets. The analysis shows that all television channels in Serbia still use problematic visuals.

Educational Role of the Media

“The greatest number of women suffer harm in the very place where they should be safest – in their own homes.”

Chart 22

Violence Presented as a Social Problem



Violence against women as a social problem is clearly indicated in 16% of media content, showing a slight improvement compared to 2021 (14%) but a decline from 2020 (20%). The Group recommends that reporting on violence against women should consider it in the context of the historically unequal power relationship between men and women. It is also important to inform the public that there are different forms of violence against women, each with specific characteristics: domestic/partner violence, sexual violence, trafficking of women, forced or early marriages, etc.

Each form constitutes a gross violation of human rights and can also be addressed in the media in the context of public safety. When violence is not clearly presented as a social problem, it remains in the “private sphere”, reinforcing the stereotype that it is merely a family conflict rather than a human rights violation and a public safety issue. Most importantly, media content must always clearly frame violence against women as a serious societal problem, not a private matter.

Examples of 2024 Articles Presenting Violence Against Women as a Social Problem

“New Day: All Faces of Violence Against Women” (TV N1, 23.02.2024)

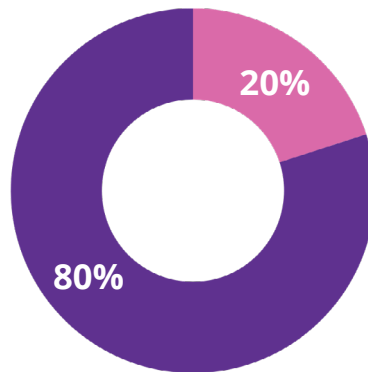
“Abusive Practice” (Nova.rs, 27.02.2024)

“Revenge Pornography Is a Crime That Goes Unpunished in Serbia: Women’s and Girls’ Lives Are Destroyed, and Authorities Do Not Respond” (Kurir, 20.10.2024)

“Coercive Control: Where the Core of Partner Violence Lies” (Vreme, 27.11.2024)

Chart 23

Educational Content in Media Reports



Present Not Present

Educational content was present in 20% of media reports in 2024, which represents another negative trend, as it was slightly higher in 2020 and 2021 (23% in both years). It is important to clarify what was considered educational content in the analysis. According to the “Guidelines for Media Reporting on Violence Against Women”, the Group established clear criteria:

- Reporting on specific instances of violence **should be placed in a broader context**, using statistical data, highlighting the prevalence of violence against women, and, if possible, describing the phenomenon itself.

- Reporting on specific instances of violence **should be supported by statements from experts** (from government or civil society), who can place each individual case in context.
- **Whenever possible**, media reports should **highlight key risk factors that increase the likelihood of a fatal outcome (femicide)** – such as jealousy, the moment a woman decides to leave or report the abuser, and whether the perpetrator possesses or has access to firearms.
- In every report, **it is necessary to mention contact information for organizations and institutions** to which survivors can turn for support.

Although there are four criteria, for the purposes of this analysis, researchers marked media content as educational if it met at least one. Most often, this referred to contact information for organizations and SOS helplines for women experiencing violence. Following these criteria, the researchers faced a challenge: some media content included contact information, yet violated many other indicators—sometimes even all of them.



Conclusion

In 2024, media reporting shows visible progress toward a more responsible, contextualized, and educational approach. **However, further efforts are needed for media to become true allies in addressing this social problem — not only information disseminators, but agents of change.**

Through ethical, compassionate and empowering reporting, media can help society, institutions and survivors to recognize patterns and risks of escalation, prevent violence, and encourage women to seek support and protection.



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JOURNALISTS AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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