

Analytical material

# MEDIA EXPERIENCE IN COVERING GENDER- SENSITIVE RECOVERY IN UKRAINE



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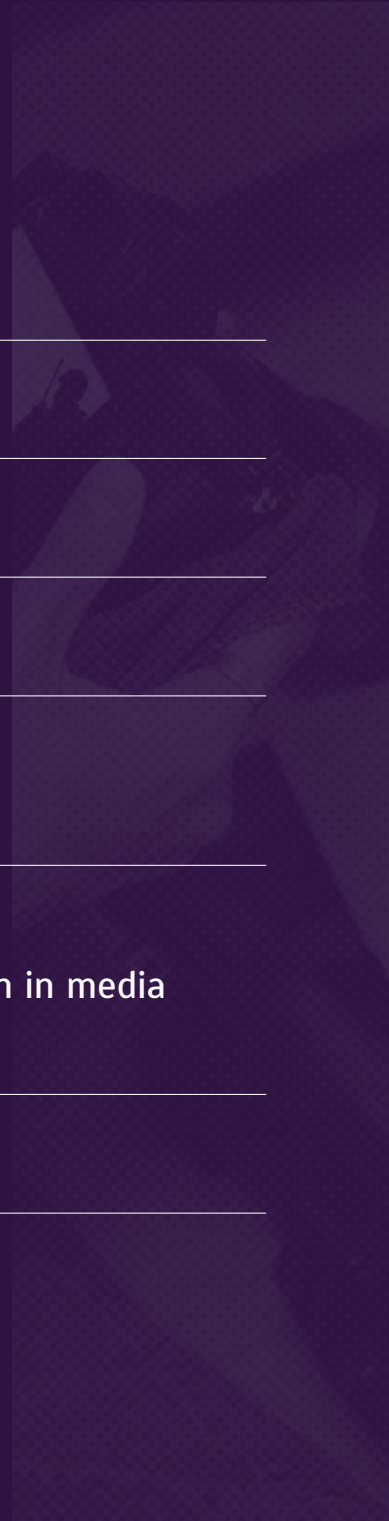
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# ABOUT THE STUDY

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, recognizing the media's «huge potential for social change,» called on EU member states and media companies to take measures to support gender equality discourse in the media.<sup>1</sup> The media is not merely a mirror of society; it has the power to influence and shape societal norms and consumer consciousness through the distribution of content.

As gender-sensitive recovery aims to address the needs of various groups of women and men, including ensuring their equal participation in rebuilding war-torn regions and communities, it's crucial to assist Ukrainian media in presenting materials about reconstruction with appropriate perspective.

This study was conducted to investigate the challenges faced by journalists when covering the topic of rebuilding Ukraine, and to determine whether attention is given to gender-sensitive recovery in such coverage.

1 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2013\)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender equality and media](#)



# SUMMARY

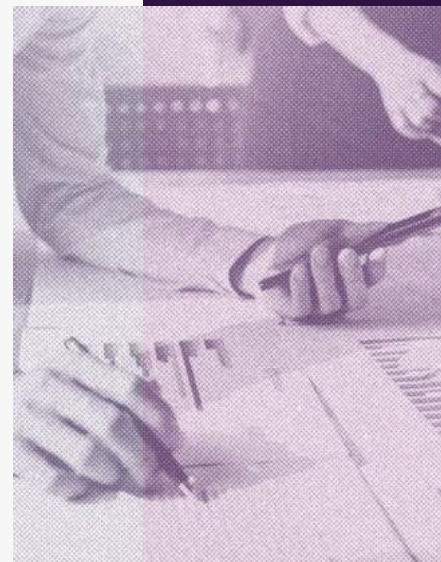
## 01.

**117 male and female respondents from 94 Ukrainian editorial teams participated in the survey.**

## 02.

**The vast majority of the interviewed journalists, 73% to be precise, reported personal involvement in the preparation of materials on the topic of recovery.**

At the same time, there is a tendency among journalists to interpret the process of "recovering Ukraine" differently. We can assume that this is a consequence of unclear communication on the part of stakeholders. For example, it is challenging to define reconstruction beyond its physical dimension, as it encompasses not only construction and infrastructure but also social, cultural, and educational aspects. Some journalists believe that since the war is still ongoing, it is premature to discuss restoration / recovery. Additionally, some editorial offices indicate that they do not consider the topics they cover as being related to recovery, mistakenly believe that this topic is more typical for media outlets in frontline territories.



## 03.

**The most common genre for covering the topic of recovery among the surveyed media is news.**

Almost half of those who cover recovery most often use this form of presentation. It is worth noting that in journalism, "news" mainly involves prompt, concise information, without extensive commentary, analysis, or in-depth immersion into the issue. As a rule, news does not include different angles or approaches to information delivery. This suggests that it is advisable to utilize comprehensive analytical and artistic-journalistic genres to cover the topic of recovery, taking into account gender perspectives.

## 04.

**Among all respondents, 43% indicated that they encountered difficulties when covering the topic of recovery.**

The most common issue reported by respondents was the unwillingness of authorities at various levels to provide information or their lack of communication. It is interesting to note that local media professionals highlight the lack of communication with government and parliamentary representatives regarding the recovery of Ukraine, particularly in the social sphere. Additionally, they mention the unavailability of government documents outlining plans for Ukraine's recovery, including those related to the topics and sub-topics specified in the survey. It seems appropriate to localize the topic of recovery to specific regions and communities. Local media journalists should pay attention to communicating with local authorities to inform their local audience.



## 05.

**The second most common issue among media professionals is the challenge of finding experts on the topic.**

We are referring to the difficulty journalists face in locating such experts, which represents a subjective assessment rather than an actual lack of experts. One female respondent highlighted the importance of paying attention to gender balance in the representation of the expert community within the topic of recovery.



## 06.

In sub-topics related to gender-sensitive recovery, media coverage often focuses on social services for internally displaced persons. The second most common sub-topic is the provision of social services for individuals with disabilities and older adults.

## 07.

Less often, the focus shifts to individuals who have undergone traumatic experiences such as captivity, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), combat exposure, or deportation. The relatively lower frequency of coverage on this topic in the media can also be attributed to the sensitive nature of such stories, which often require a nuanced and professional approach. Media professionals would benefit from training and guidance on how to effectively work with individuals who have experienced trauma.

## 08.

An overwhelming majority of 69% of respondents indicated that they consider gender sensitivity components in recovery crucial for their audience and are willing to integrate these aspects into their materials. Additionally, three-quarters of respondents, or 75%, admitted to lacking knowledge about gender-sensitive recovery.

## 09.

**Revealing the topic of gender-sensitive recovery through data journalism seems promising.**

This requires gender-disaggregated statistics in various fields, both at the national and community levels. It is important for authorities to compile and disseminate statistics across various domains, at both national and community levels. This would enable the creation of publications based on this data, particularly in the genre of data journalism.

## 10.

**It is important to understand that the topic of gender-sensitive recovery should not only be treated as a separate issue but also integrated thoroughly into journalistic materials.**

This requires enhancing the gender sensitivity of journalists and the media, which includes the ability to recognize existing gender differences, identify gender discrimination in society, address manifestations of inequality, and incorporate these aspects into their materials.

## 11.

It should be further emphasized that gender equality and non-discrimination are fundamental journalistic standards, enshrined in Article 15 of the Code of Ethics of Ukrainian Journalists, and duly referenced in the new Law of Ukraine "On Media."



# BACKGROUND

The new Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA3) for the period from 24 February 2022 to 31 December 2023, jointly undertaken by the World Bank, the Government of Ukraine, the European Commission, and the United Nations and supported by other partners, highlights challenges faced by Ukraine's media sector among other issues.

In particular, Ukrainian media outlets and journalists have continued their operations, providing access to information amidst financial pressures, particularly for local media due to decreased advertising revenue. The war has presented considerable difficulties for the media sector, affecting the right to seek, receive, and impart information, with UNESCO recording 14 journalist deaths since the invasion's escalation.<sup>2</sup>

A 2022 study by the NGO "Women in Media" titled *The Situation of Women Journalists and Other Women Media Workers in Ukraine*, reveals that women in the media face heightened risks due to physical and economic threats. They also experience increased workloads both in their socially significant roles and outside working hours, especially when caring for relatives endangered by the hostilities in Ukraine. The war further limits the space for advocating equality policies, which may erroneously appear less relevant. However, statistics indicate that discrimination and violence tend to escalate during such periods.

The majority of surveyed female media professionals reported experiencing discrimination or violence in the workplace. Common issues included psychological abuse, sexism, and career discrimination. While the main sources of these problems were often the subjects of the stories they covered, colleagues and media managers were also frequently cited as sources of such mistreatment. When female journalists have to interact more frequently with the military due to Russia's escalating armed aggression in Ukraine, the risks of discrimination increase. This is because the army remains one of the most patriarchal institutions in society.

<sup>2</sup> [UKRAINE Third Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment \(RDNA3\) February 2022 – December 2023](#)

Dangerous working conditions in war further narrow career opportunities for women due to the stereotypical attitude towards women as primarily a mother, "weaker" and so on. Formalized policies of non-discrimination and gender equality are often absent from editorial offices, even in tolerant groups.<sup>3</sup>

According to the new joint assessment, Ukraine's needs for reconstruction and recovery are estimated at USD 4,486 billion. A separate section of the assessment was dedicated to gender aspects of the impact of war and priorities for ensuring a gender-sensitive and inclusive recovery of Ukraine.

**As the UN Women Ukraine highlights, the war has a significant impact on women, girls, and the LGBTI+ community. These groups have distinct needs and priorities that must be addressed in the recovery process<sup>4</sup>:**

- Women make up the majority of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and predominate among Ukrainians seeking to return to Ukraine. As of October 2023, out of 3.7 million IDPs, 56% are women. Of the 4.6 million people who returned to their places of permanent residence, 93% are women.
- In 2024, 14.6 million Ukrainians need humanitarian assistance, 56% of them are women and girls.
- Women earn 18.6% less than men for jobs of equal value, and their representation in the labor force is 15.1% lower than that of men. Job shortages are particularly noticeable among women aged 25 to 44.
- UN Women estimates that women spend 16 hours a week more than men on unpaid housework, and the potential financial implications of an increase in women's unpaid childcare work from February 2022 amount to \$772.5 billion.
- As of April 2023, women accounted for 72% of all registered unemployed.

3 [The Study of NGO "Women in Media The Situation of Women Journalists and Other Women Media Workers in Ukraine](#)

4 [UN Women in Ukraine "According to the new joint assessment of Ukraine's needs for recovery and reconstruction \(RDNA3\), it is estimated at 486 billion US dollars"](#)

Other challenges to gender-sensitive recovery include an increase in women's unpaid work caring for other family members, an increased risk of gender-based violence, and a decrease in women's participation in formal decision-making processes.

NGO "Women in Media" in its 2023 study ["An Underestimated Threat: Gendered Disinformation about Ukrainian Women Journalists"](#) concluded that Russia uses the strategy of gender disinformation in Ukraine to silence journalists and to form a certain negative view of gender equality and the role of women in democratic societies. Due to the lack of attention to the problem of gender disinformation by the state, specific institutions, and partly the media, women who are exposed to information attacks are forced to deal with the problem and its consequences one-on-one. This can lead to a decrease in the level of women's involvement in socio-political processes in the long run.<sup>5</sup>

It is also important for context to understand that the staff of most editorial offices does not comprise a large number of employees. This is stated in the study of the NGO "Women in Media" titled ["Gender Balance in Decision-Making in Ukraine's Media Organizations"](#). The size of editorial offices affects not only gender representation but also the burden on female managers. Often, in small teams, the same person combines several leadership positions at once due to a lack of personnel and resources in the media. Some respondents pointed out that it is the low incomes in the media that cause editorial offices to consist mainly of women who hold senior positions.<sup>6</sup>

Halyna Kotliuk, coordinator of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Gender Democracy Program, draws attention to the fact that when it comes to recovering damaged homes or building new ones, it is very important to consider a gender-sensitive approach that ensures that the needs of women with children, LGBTQ+ communities, people with disabilities and older people are taken into account. Without this infrastructure, the volume of unpaid labor, mainly performed by women, will increase, thus further burdening women.

5 [The Study of NGO "Women in Media "An Underestimated Threat: Gendered Disinformation about Ukrainian Women Journalists"](#)

6 [The Study of NGO "Women in Media "Gender Balance in Decision-Making in Ukraine's Media Organizations"](#)

Care must therefore be taken to ensure that social infrastructure is restored to meet the needs of women in communities. In addition, attention should be paid to the needs of victims of gender-based violence, most of whom are women.<sup>7</sup>

**National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 for the period up to 2025<sup>8</sup> identified the main target groups most affected by the war. First of all, they are:**

- internally displaced persons, 60% of whom are women;
- survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and human trafficking;
- women and men who have returned from captivity;
- persons with disabilities, older people, and other low-mobility groups living near and in combat areas;
- women and children who were returned to Ukraine after their deportation;
- family members of combatants, military personnel, prisoners of war, missing persons, and dead.

Women's Information Consultative Center emphasizes that the gender perspective on Ukraine's recovery entails ensuring that all opportunities, institutions, services, and resources are accessible to everyone, irrespective of gender (girls, boys, women, and men). Moreover, it's essential to challenge and eradicate stereotypes about women and men, ensuring they do not dictate societal roles and expectations (gender inclusion). Gender inclusion in recovery is ensured through a transformative process across various areas, achieved by introducing tools for expert participation and influence, as well as providing access to resources. The transformation of the recovery process involves removing structural barriers that previously limited or denied access for certain groups of people (girls and boys,

7 [Heinrich Böll Foundation "Recovery Ukraine requires a gender-sensitive approach"](#)

8 [On approval of the National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security until 2025](#)



women and men) to specific opportunities, institutions, services, and resources.<sup>9</sup>

In Ukraine, there exists a the Platform for Gender Mainstreaming and Inclusion in Recovery chaired by Olha Stefanishyna, Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration under the Commission for Coordination of Interaction of Executive Bodies on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men. That platform was established by Cabinet Resolution No. 784 dated September 2, 2020. It provides for the application of a gender approach to all priority areas of recovery (energy, transport, agriculture, infrastructure, IT industry, human capital).<sup>10</sup>

9 [Olha Suslova / WICC](#)

10 [First meeting of the Platform for Gender Mainstreaming and Inclusion in Recovery chaired by Olha Stefanishyna takes place / Government Portal](#)

# METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted by the NGO "Women in Media" through a survey in the form of a questionnaire from February 08 to February 20, 2024. The questionnaire was distributed online to various media communities, specifically targeting Women in Media, the Commission on Journalistic Ethics, and the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, and was also published on the pages of media about media outlets such as Detector Media, the Institute of Mass Information (IMI), the ZMINA Human Rights Center, and others. The survey results are analyzed and distributed in a generalized form, and all responses are confidential.

**The survey involved 117 female and male respondents from 94 Ukrainian editorial offices and 6 freelancers.** The majority are women, with 106 respondents, while men account for 11 respondents.

## Distribution of responses by gender:

Women: 91%



Men: 9%



The vast majority of responses came from journalists, comprising 39%, while editors accounted for 30% of the responses. Less than a quarter of the respondents are media managers, making up 22%, while 6% hold other positions within the media.

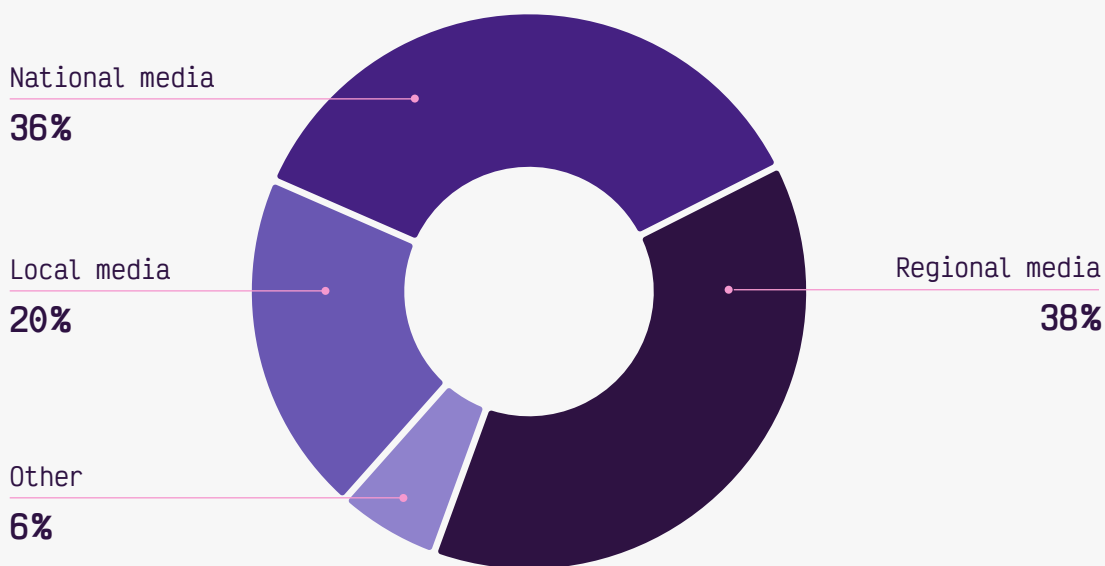
## Respondent's role at the editorial office

38%	30%	22%	9%
Journalist	Editor	Top manager	Other

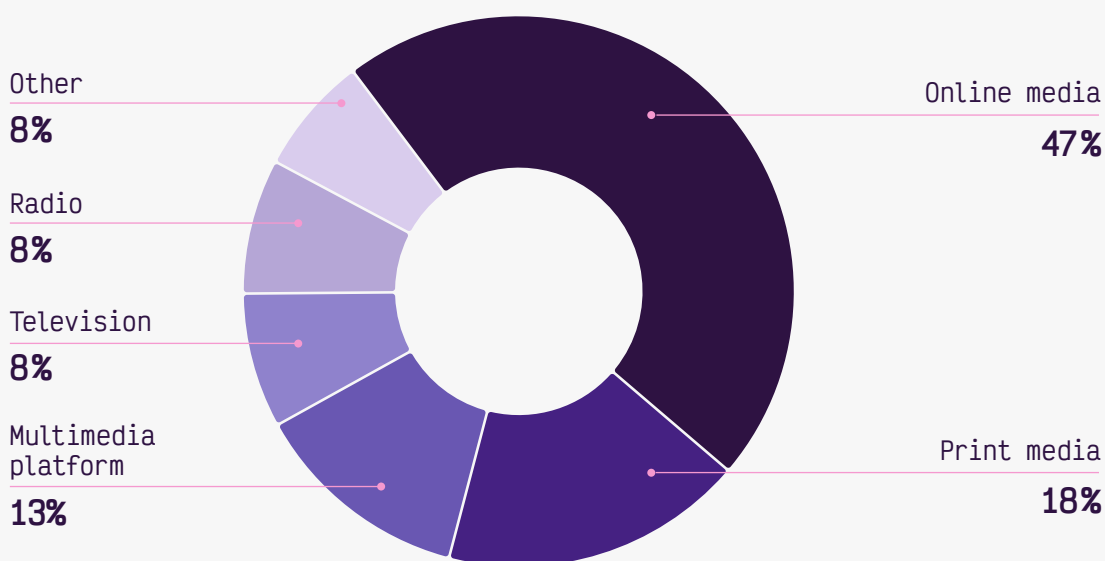
Almost an equal number of responses were provided by representatives of regional media and national media, each accounting for 38% and 36%, respectively. Media professionals from local media accounted for 20% of respondents.

Almost half of the respondents work in online media (47%), followed by print media (18%), editorial offices of multimedia platforms (13%), and television and radio (8% each).

### Geography of media outlets



### Distribution of responses by media type



## **Section 1**

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# **HOW MEDIA COVER THE TOPIC OF RECOVERY**

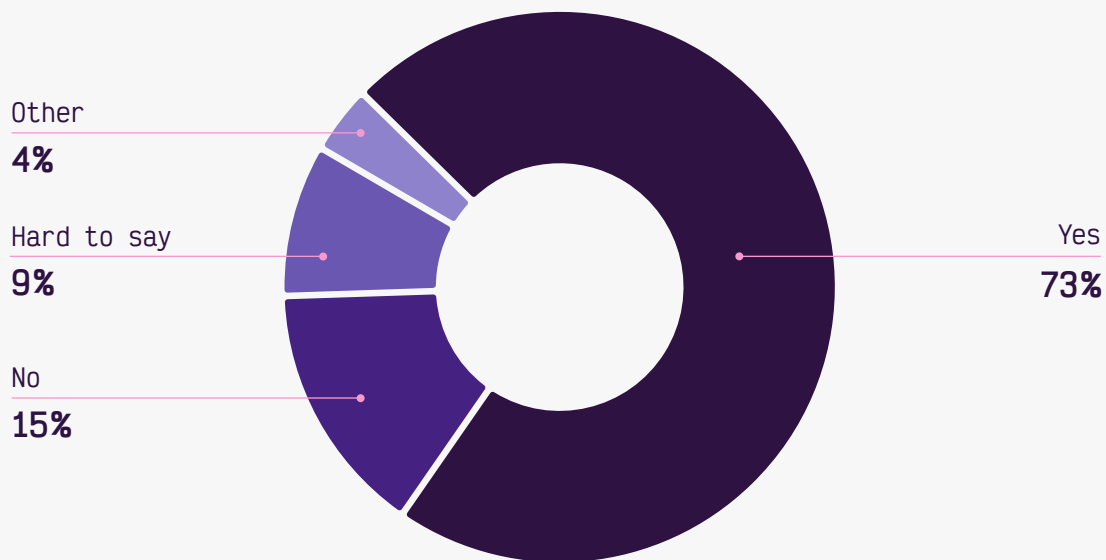


The vast majority of respondents, 73% to be precise, reported personal involvement in the preparation of materials on the topic of recovery. 15% did not participate in the preparation of such materials. Another 9% indicated that they found it challenging to answer this question.

One of the comments under the "Other" response stated:

“The war is still ongoing. Recovery discussions are just beginning. More prevalent topics include the losses, the deaths of military personnel, and the consequences of the war.”

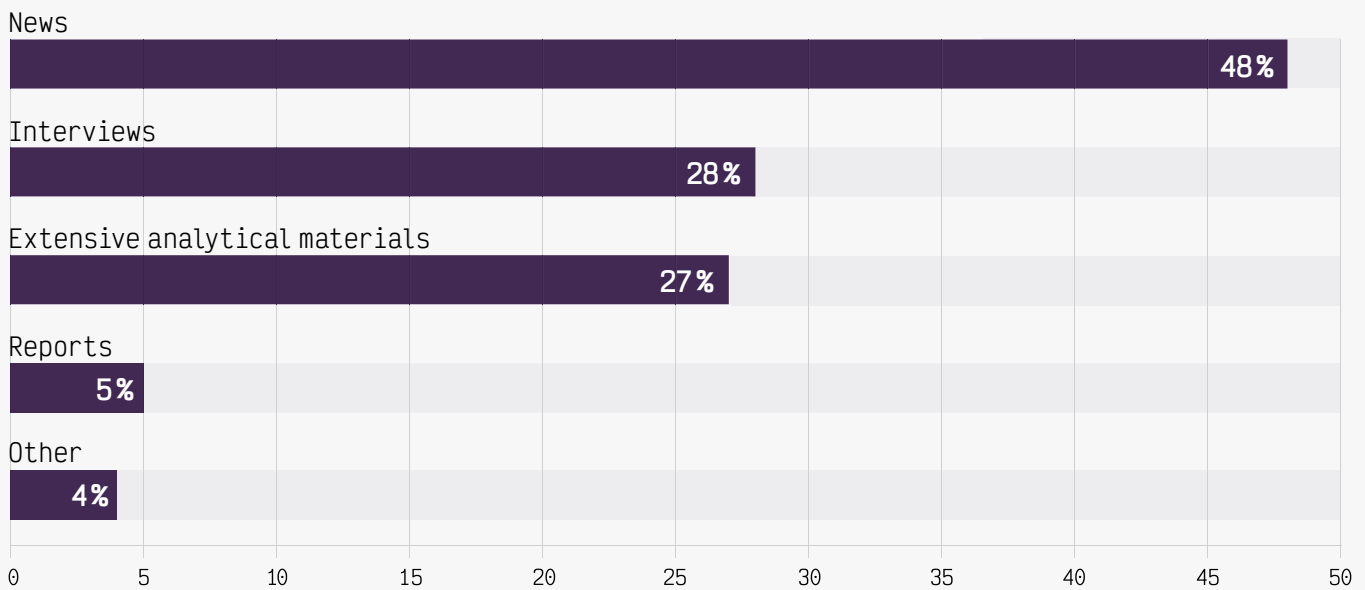
Did you personally make any materials about the recovery?



The most common genre for covering the topic of recovery among the surveyed media is **news**. Almost half of those who cover recovery most often use this form of presentation.

Almost an equal proportion of media outlets frequently use the genres of **interviews** and **analytical articles** for recovery topics, at 28% and 27%, respectively. Another 5% talk about recovery via **reports**. Other genres are used by 4% of respondents who cover the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine.

## Which genres did you use to create materials about recovery?



\* in this question, respondents could select multiple options

An editor from regional media in the Vinnytsia region commented:

“We need to focus more on recovery in a broader context, not just the physical rebuilding of structures and housing. We should also address recovery as an existential topic that encompasses the social sphere and contributes to development and modernization.”

Among all respondents, **43% mentioned that they encountered difficulties when covering the topic of recovery.** The most common issue reported by both female and male respondents was the **unwillingness of government representatives at various levels to provide information or their lack of communication.**

“The main issue is the lack of communication with government and parliament representatives concerning Ukraine's recovery, particularly in the social sphere. There's a noticeable scarcity of official documents outlining Ukraine's recovery plans, including the topics and sub-topics mentioned in the survey,”

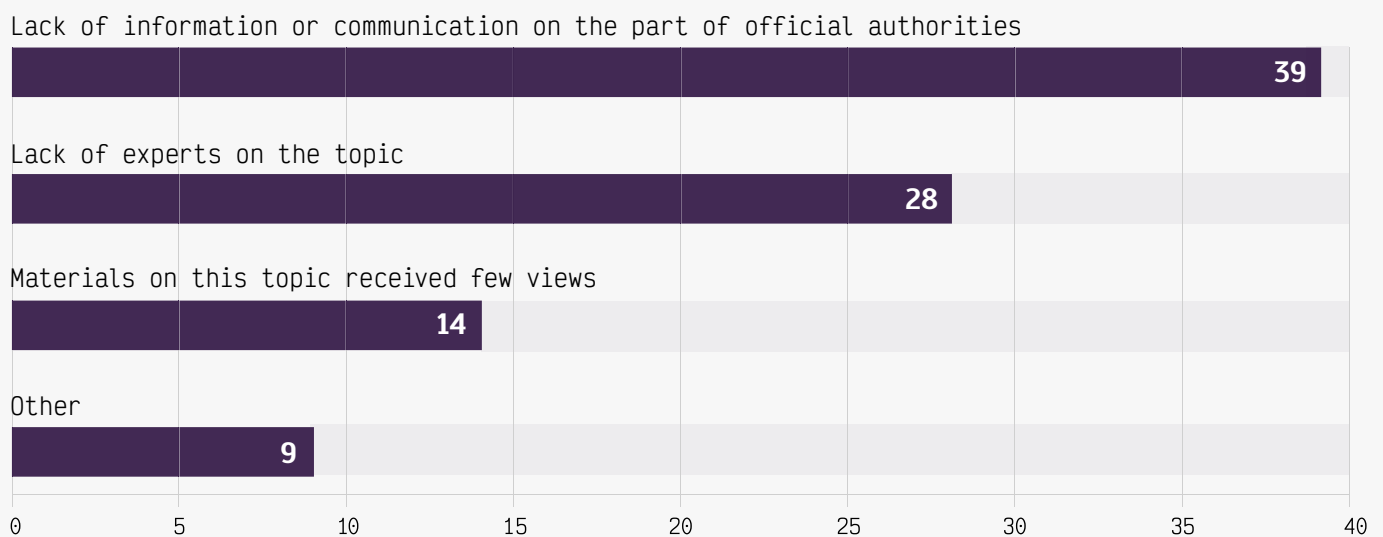
believes the editor of a local media outlet in the Dnipropetrovsk region.

The second most popular problem among media professionals is the lack of experts on the topic. Less than 10% of all respondents (and 16% among those covering the recovery topic) believe that a challenge is the low audience demand and limited views for materials on recovery.

“*I'd like to see more platforms for freelancers and diverse projects where I can submit my work. I often face rejections, indicating challenges for journalists to get their material published. We should focus more on stories about our heroes, volunteers, the restoration of unique destroyed buildings, rebuilding people's homes, and assisting affected groups. Many stories and articles end up just sitting in journalists' drawers,*”

commented a freelance journalist.

## ■ The most common difficulties in covering the topic of recovery



## Other difficulties in working with the recovery topic include:

- Lack of interesting, non-banal characters and stories;
- Lack of interest from the material's author in the topic;
- Difficulties in accessing the frontline or occupied territory;
- Obtaining timely expert comments for news is challenging;
- It is challenging to define reconstruction beyond its physical dimension, as it encompasses not only construction and infrastructure but also social, cultural, educational, and other aspects.

One female respondent drew attention to the fact that it is also important to pay attention to gender balance in the representation of the expert community in the topic of recovery:

*"We need to remind our colleagues about the importance of maintaining gender balance. We can initiate a mini-project featuring a series of interviews with female experts."*

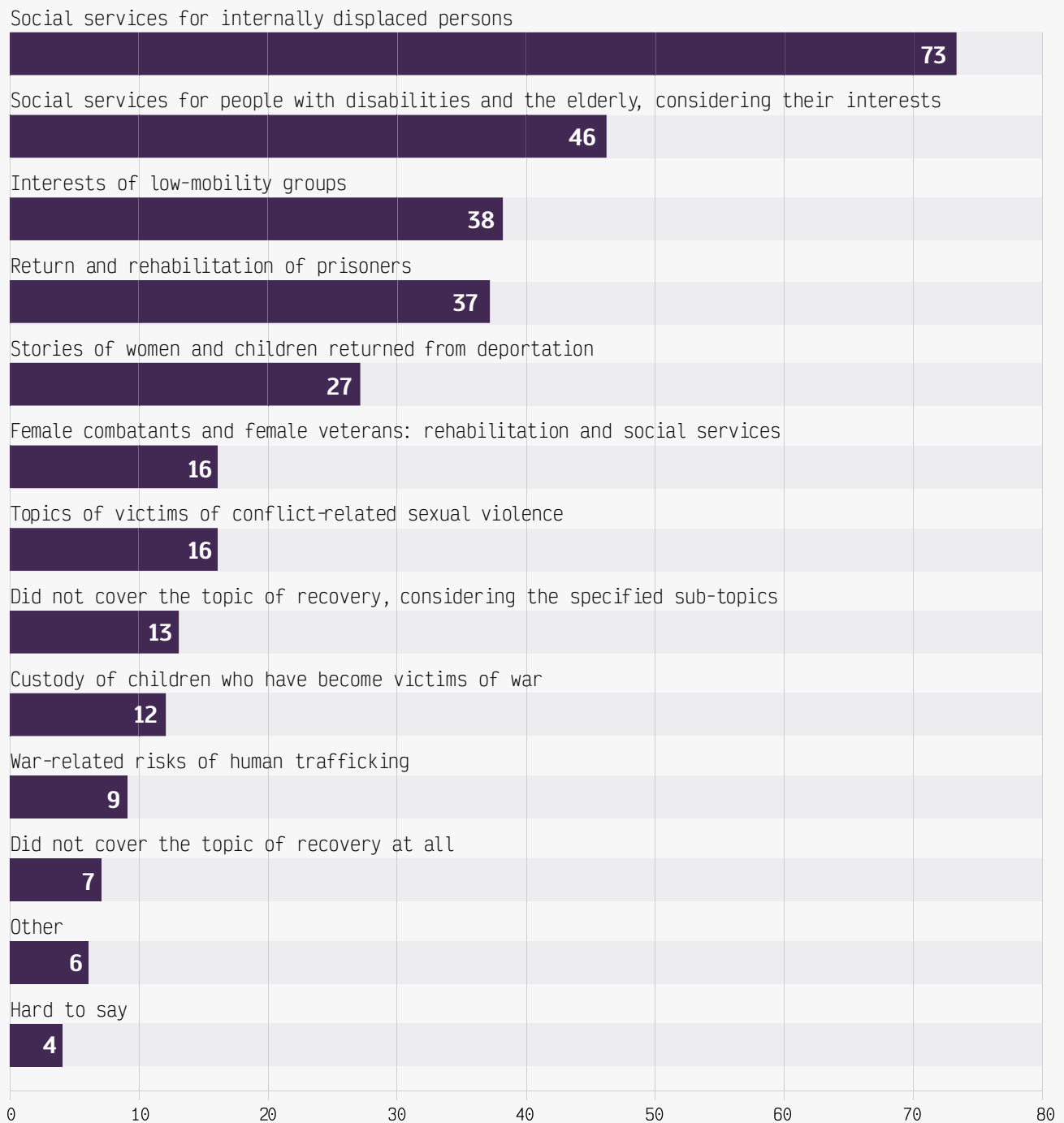
In sub-topics related to gender-sensitive recovery, media coverage often focuses on **social services for internally displaced persons**.

The second most popular sub-topic concerns providing **social services for people with disabilities and older individuals**, while also considering their interests in the recovery processes.

The third most frequently mentioned topic is **considering the interests of low-mobility groups**. With nearly the same frequency, there's coverage of the issue of the **return of prisoners and the rehabilitation** of those who have returned from captivity.



## Subtopics highlighted in the context of recovery



From the media's perspective, the most visible are the requests and interests of individuals particularly in need of social protection. This group predominantly includes individuals who have been forced to leave their homes, people with disabilities, older individuals, and those with limited mobility. Less frequently, these are individuals who have endured challenging and traumatic experiences, such as captivity, sexual violence (CRSV), combat, and deportation. The relatively lower frequency of this topic in the media can also be attributed to the nature of such stories, which tend to be smaller and require delicacy and professional expertise to handle effectively.

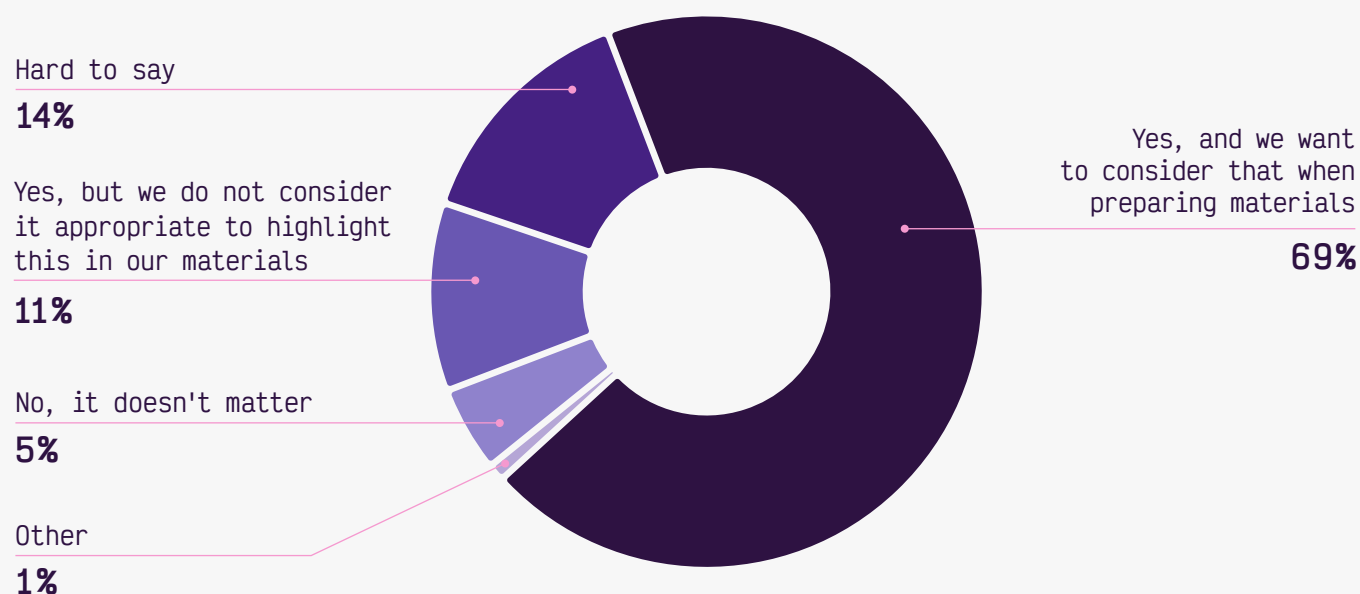
## Section 2

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# **THE IMPORTANCE OF ADOPTING A GENDER- SENSITIVE APPROACH IN MEDIA COVERAGE OF RECOVERY**

The vast majority, 69% of respondents, stated that they consider gender-sensitive components in recovery to be important for their audience. The next most popular response was "hard to say," chosen by 14% of respondents. Meanwhile, 11% believe that the gender-sensitive component is important but do not deem it necessary to emphasize it in their materials. Another 5% do not consider the gender component in recovery important for the audience of their media.

Do you consider the gender sensitivity component important to your audience in recovery processes?

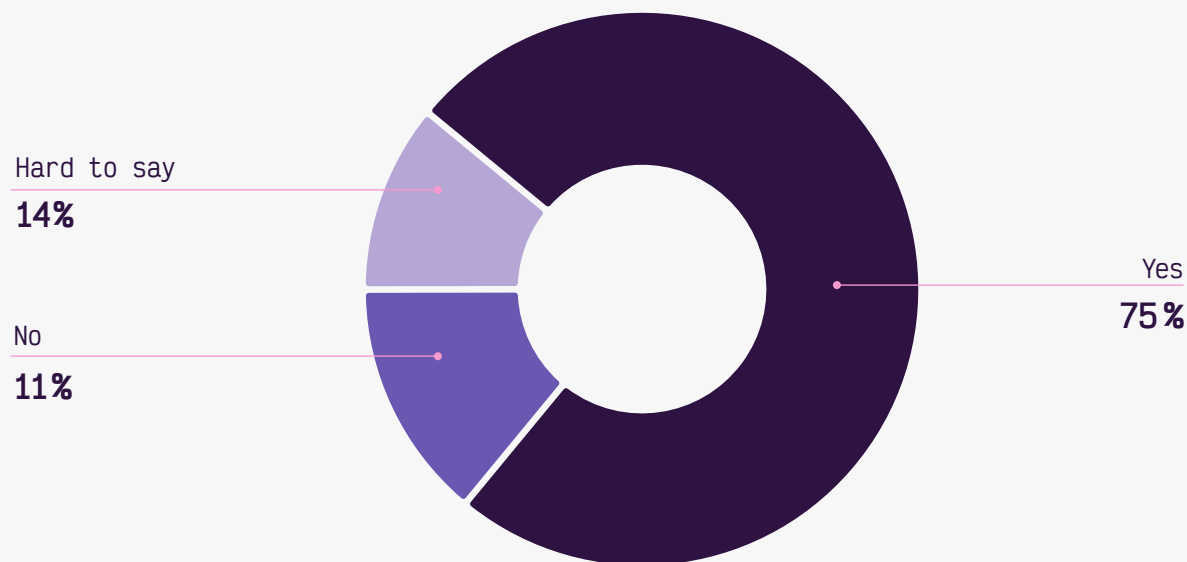


“I am interested in the topic of gender sensitivity in recovery processes. Currently, I work on a project from the Volyn Press Club that deals with gender-sensitive journalism. Every time I discover something new that I knew almost nothing about a year ago. Our readers are already used to and normally perceive feminatives,”

— noted the editor of the print media of the Poltava region.

**Three-quarters of respondents, i.e. 75%, said that they lack knowledge about gender-sensitive recovery. Only 11% do not lack knowledge, and 14% do not have a clear answer to this question.**

**Do you feel that you need more knowledge about gender-sensitive recovery?**



“*I would like to attend appropriate trainings to improve my knowledge of the topic.*”

“*I am personally interested in how this topic can be revealed and explored in data journalism. Therefore, I will be happy to receive any materials and advice in the community regarding the gender component.*”

“*There has always been limited gender training and inclusion of a gender component in publications. For many years, society, the church, and proponents of "traditional" views have portrayed feminism and gender issues negatively. It's time for change.*”

After completing the questionnaire, respondents had the opportunity to leave detailed comments about their understanding of the topic, queries, and reflections. Here are some comments that reflect the difference in media professional's approaches and requests:

“ *"The topic is highly relevant and intriguing. However, I personally feel that it might be beneficial to educate both society and specialists, as well as many media professionals, about what it entails, why it's important, and its significance."*

“ *"Our media is based in Ivano-Frankivsk, so we haven't focused on recovery topics or classified the subjects we cover as recovery-related. We've perceived this as more relevant to media outlets in frontline territories. However, I believe that after completing this questionnaire, our perspective will shift."*

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Organize an awareness campaign, press conference, or discussion for journalists emphasizing the importance of communicating about Ukraine's recovery, even amidst the ongoing martial law. This initiative could encompass a series of events like seminars, training sessions, and round tables in collaboration with representatives from various initiatives focused on Ukraine's recovery. For example, to communicate the importance of taking gender-sensitive recovery into account in the "Recovery Window" project.
- "Define the term "recovery," detail its components and scope, and offer explanations and recommendations to journalists on incorporating gender-sensitive recovery topics into their materials.
- Post relevant information about gender-sensitive recovery on the official websites of state and local government bodies. Collaborate with the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy to direct executive bodies at different levels to publish recovery plans on their platforms and engage with communities, particularly through partnerships with the media.
- Ensure the collection and use of gender-disaggregated statistics in the processes of recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine. Encourage the use of such information by journalists, by stimulating data journalism (*through competitions, providing international technical assistance to the media*).
- Announce and hold an all-Ukrainian contest of journalistic works on gender-sensitive recovery.
- Introduce the practice of highlighting positive experiences of gender-sensitive recovery, in particular at the level of territorial communities, the practice of involving various groups of women and men in the formation of recovery programs and projects.



