

# VOICES FROM EXILE

THE SAFETY NEEDS OF MYANMAR WOMEN JOURNALISTS



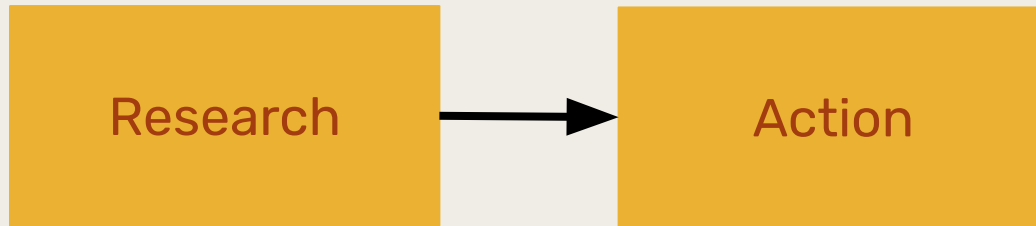
A REPORT BY

**exile hub**



# Objective

Gather evidence on the living and working conditions of exiled Myanmar women journalists in Thailand (and see what can be changed), in order to foster a healthy and free media community.



# Methodology

Guided by practices of Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR)

**Desk Research**

**Focus Group  
Discussions**

**Survey**

**Stakeholder  
Interviews**

# Focus Group Discussions

25

Participants

21

women

4

men

- Women journalists with no prior experience in safety training (one FGD each in Chiang Mai and Mae Sot).
- Editors-in-chief (one FGD in Chiang Mai).
- Experts specializing in journalist safety, encompassing professionals in psychology, law, and human rights advocacy (one FGD in Chiang Mai).

# Interviews

10+  
Responses

Democratic Voice of Burma	Internews
The Irrawaddy	Deutsche Welle Akademie
Frontier Myanmar	International Media Support
Myanmar Now	Burma News International
Mizzima	Myanmar Women in Media

# Survey Demographics

79

Responses

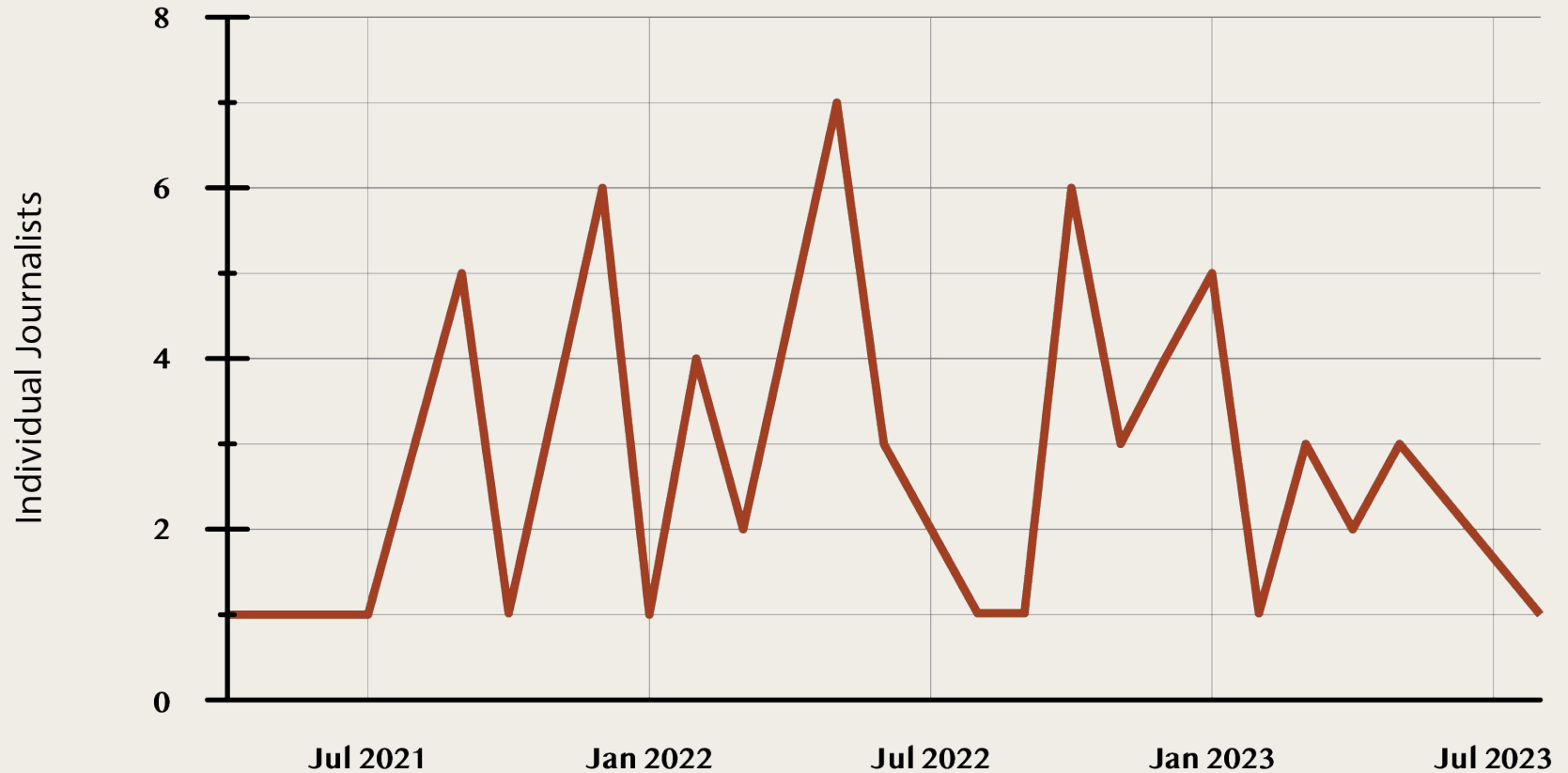
32

Media  
Orgs

- Respondents ranged from founders and managing directors to journalists and freelancers.
- An average age of **30 years old**.
- **Over half** said they are married, in a partnership, or relationship, and **over a quarter** reported having children.
- 47 respondents (59.5%) were employed full time, 22 (27.8%) were employed part time, and 10 (12.7%) were unemployed at time of responding to survey.
- 50.7% of respondents live in Tak Province, 40% in Chiang Mai Province, and the rest in Mae Hong Son and Bangkok Province.

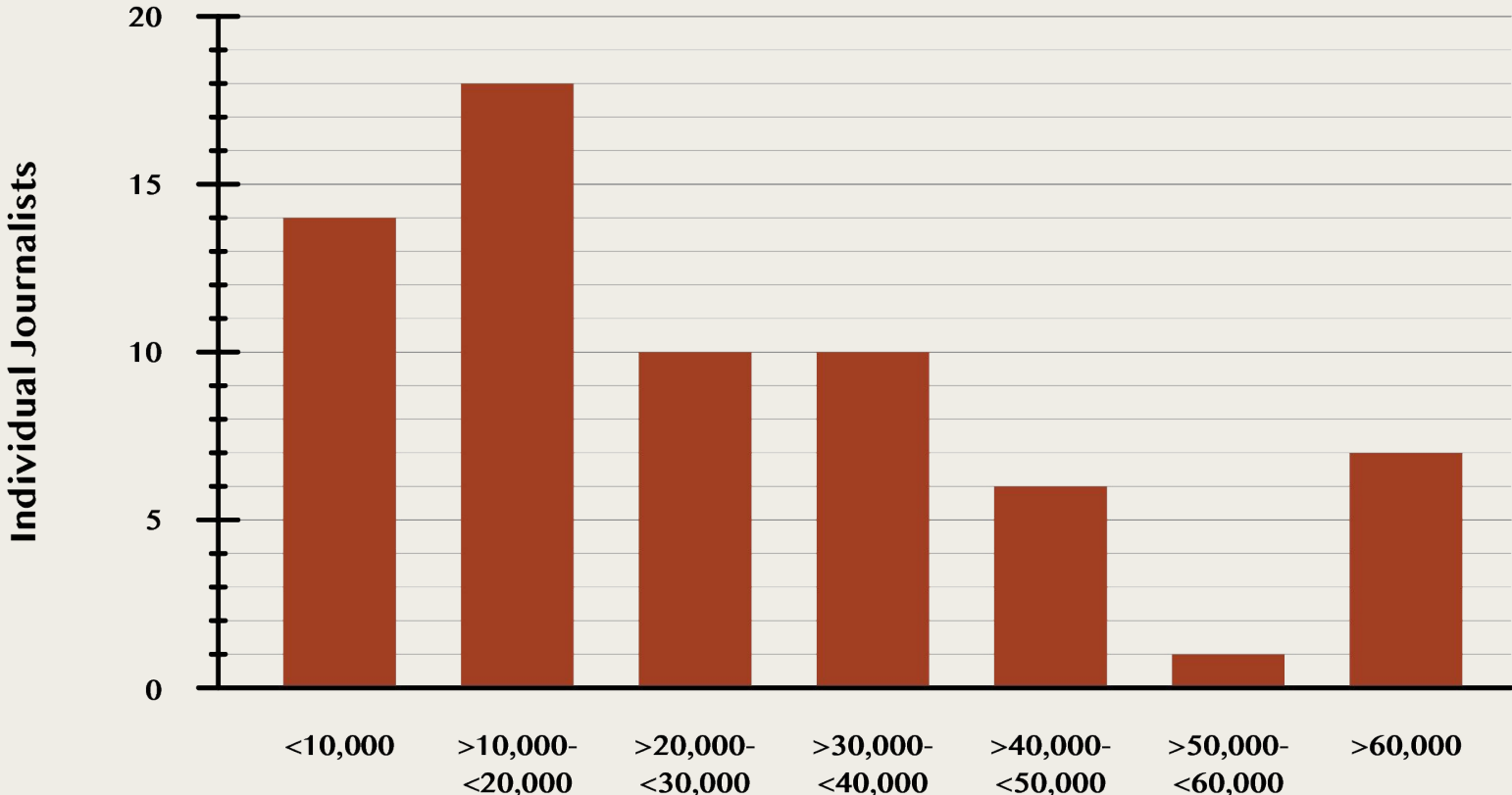
# Relocation

# *Date of Arrival in Thailand*

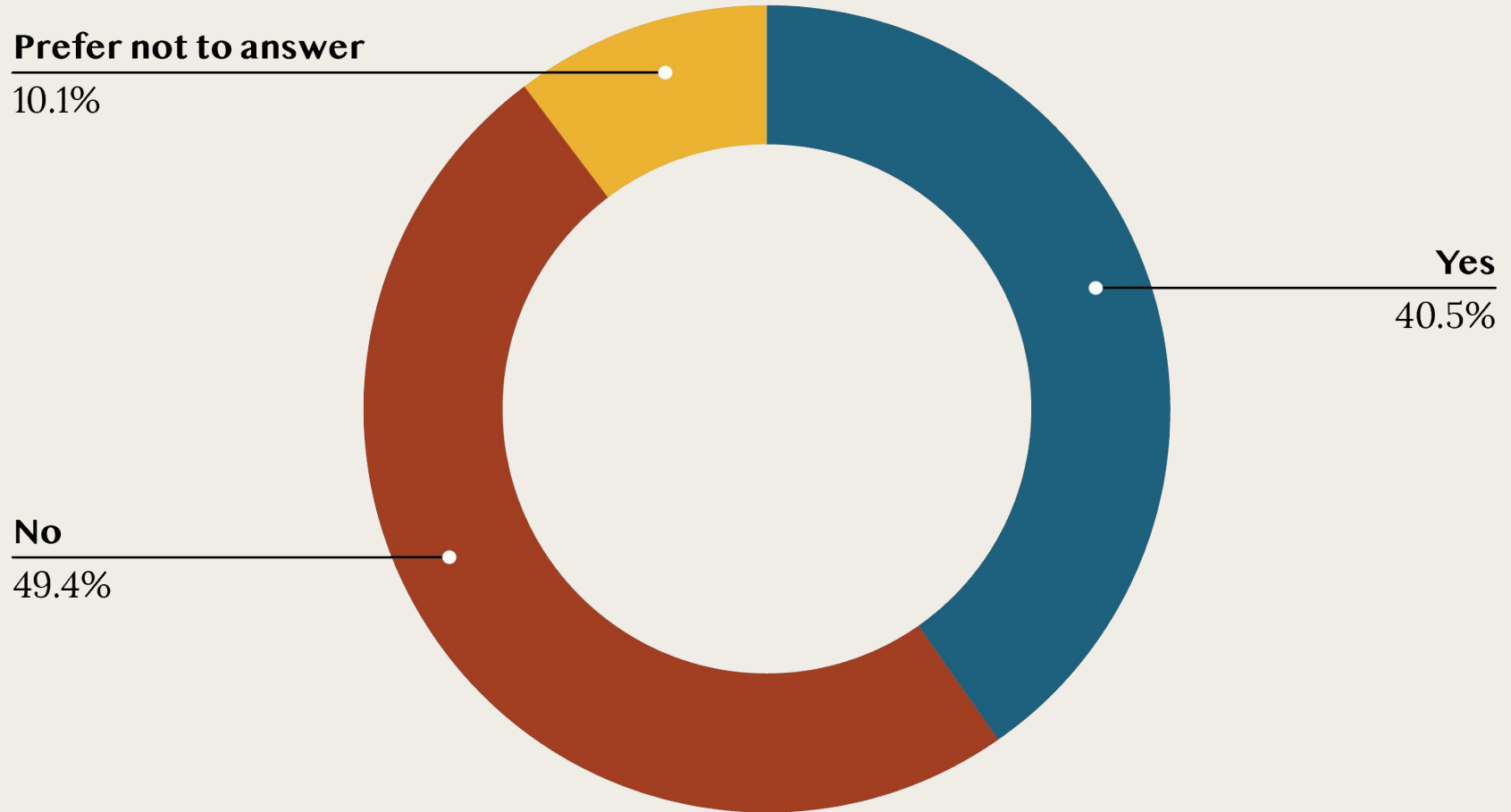




# How much did your relocation to Thailand cost in Thai Baht?

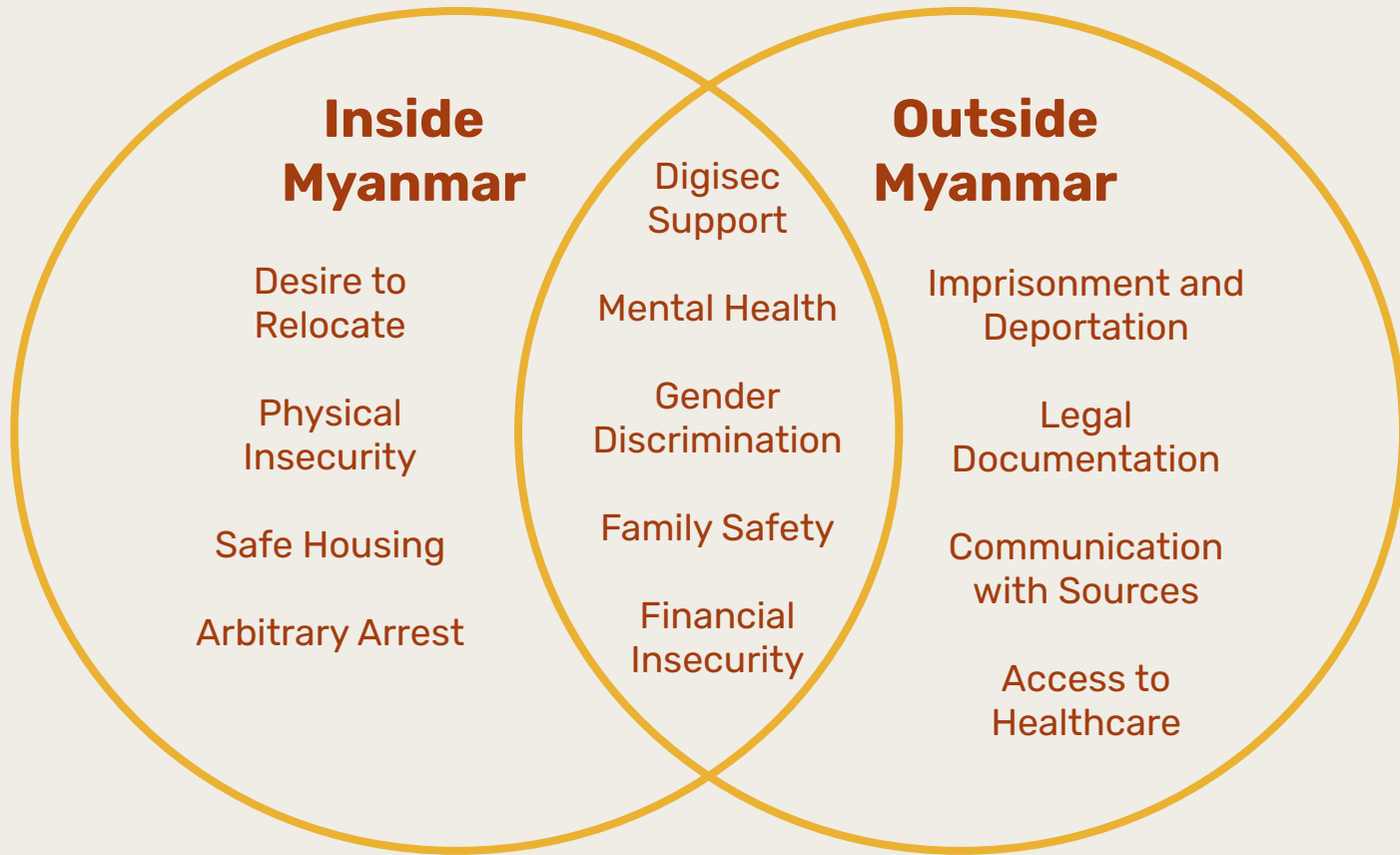


# Did you receive any relocation assistance?



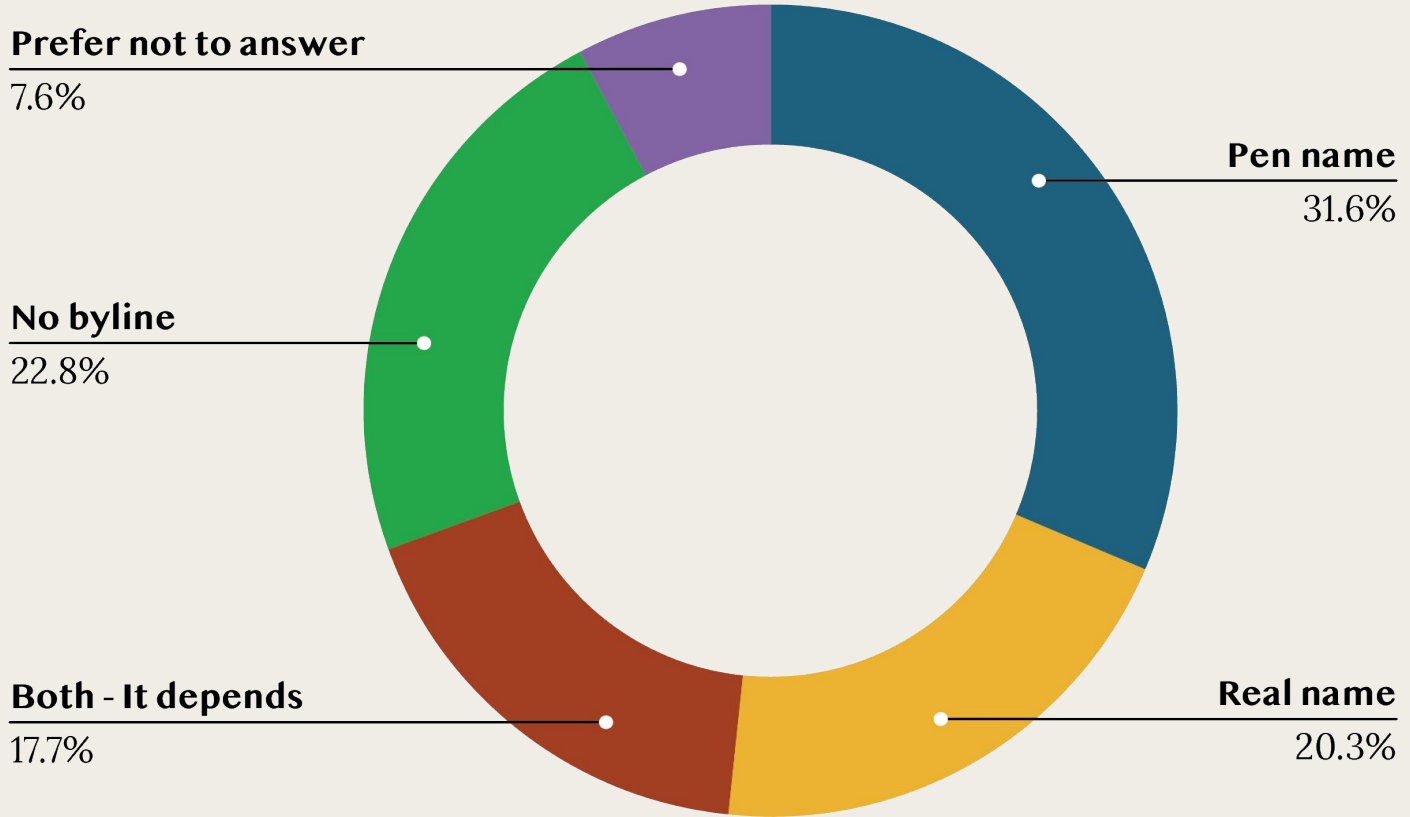
# Difficulty Working as a Journalist



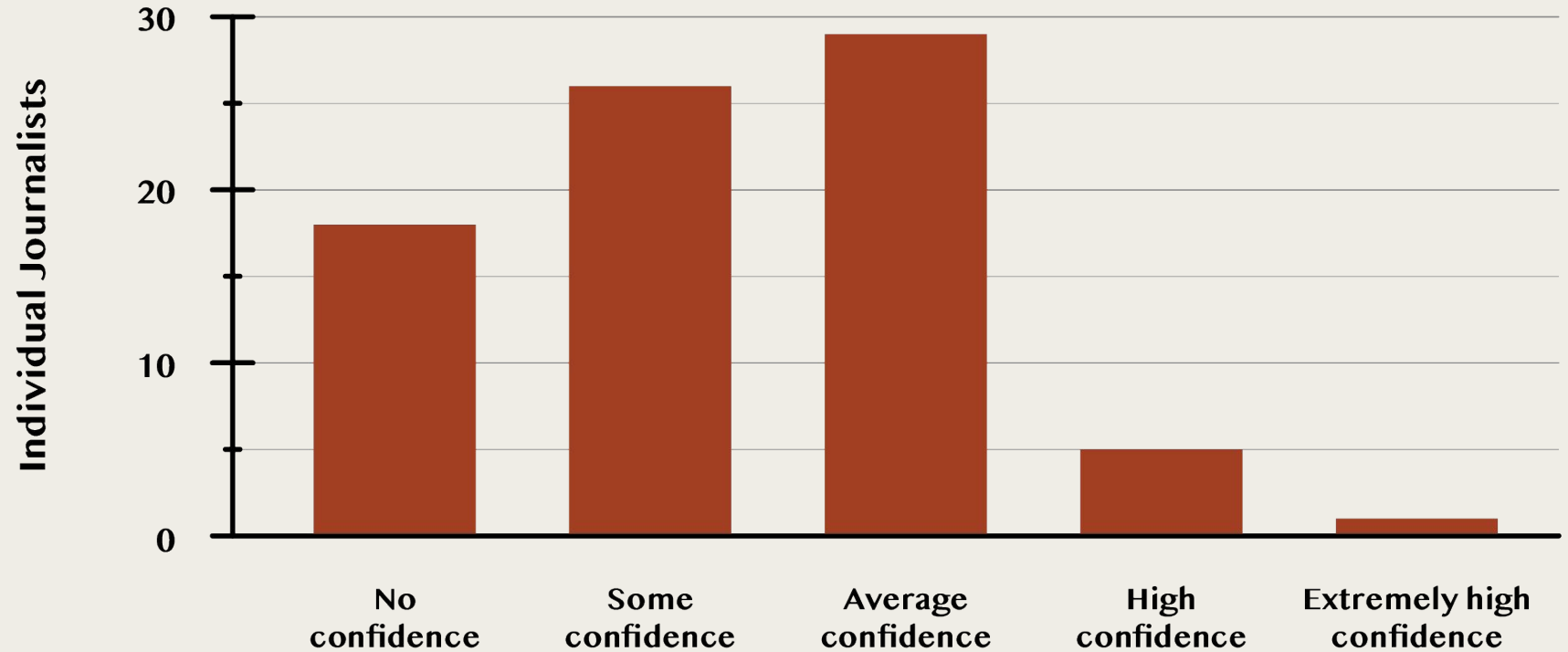


**How are the safety risks of women journalists different for those inside Myanmar to those outside?**

*Since the military coup, do you use a pen name or your real name when publishing your work?*



Select your level of confidence in your knowledge/  
skills to deal with the safety risks that come with  
being a journalist in exile.



# **Gender Discrimination & Bullying**

# Gender Discrimination

**Sexual & Verbal  
Harassment**

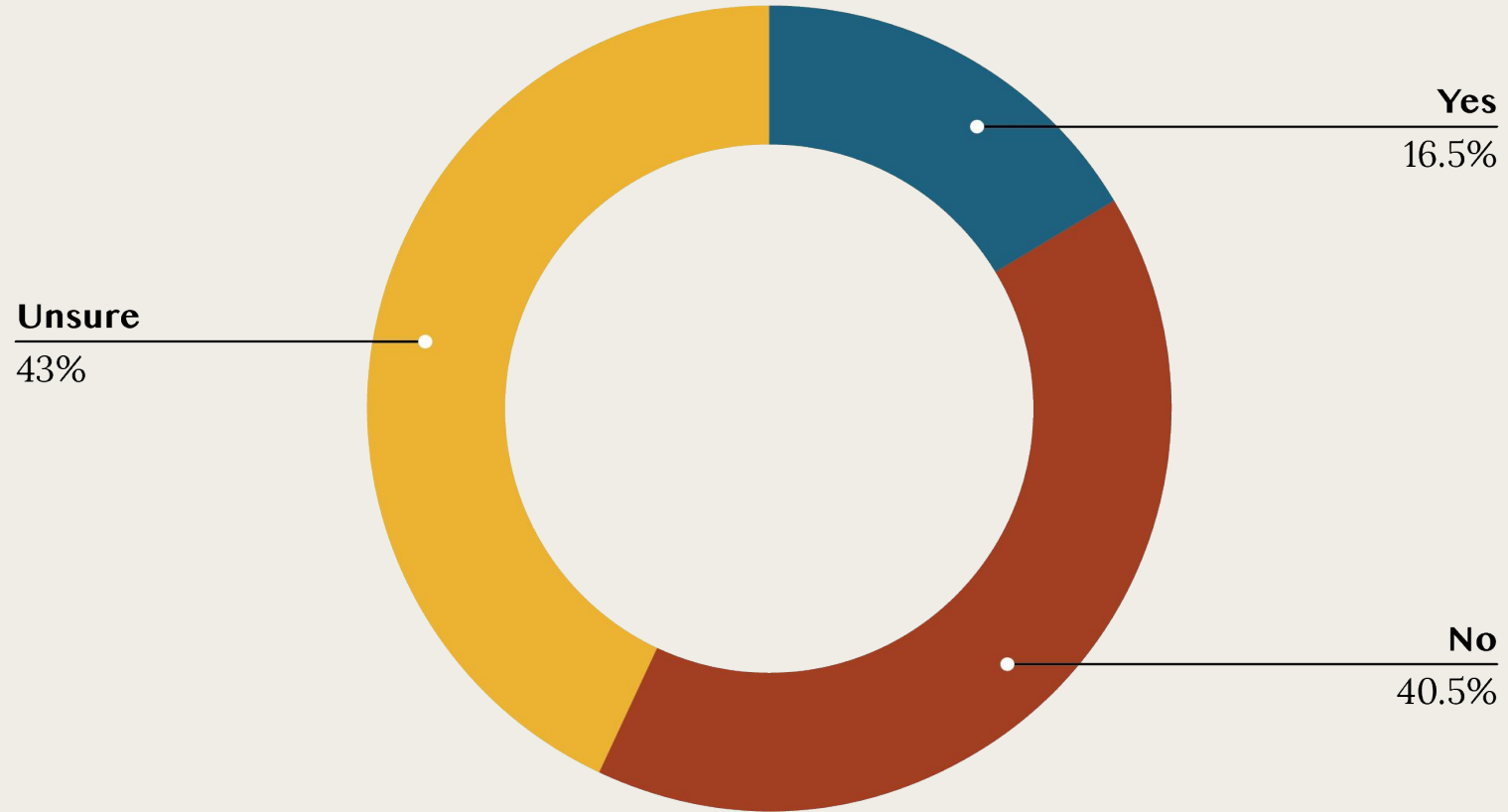
**Lack of Maternity Care**

**Risk of Being Fired**

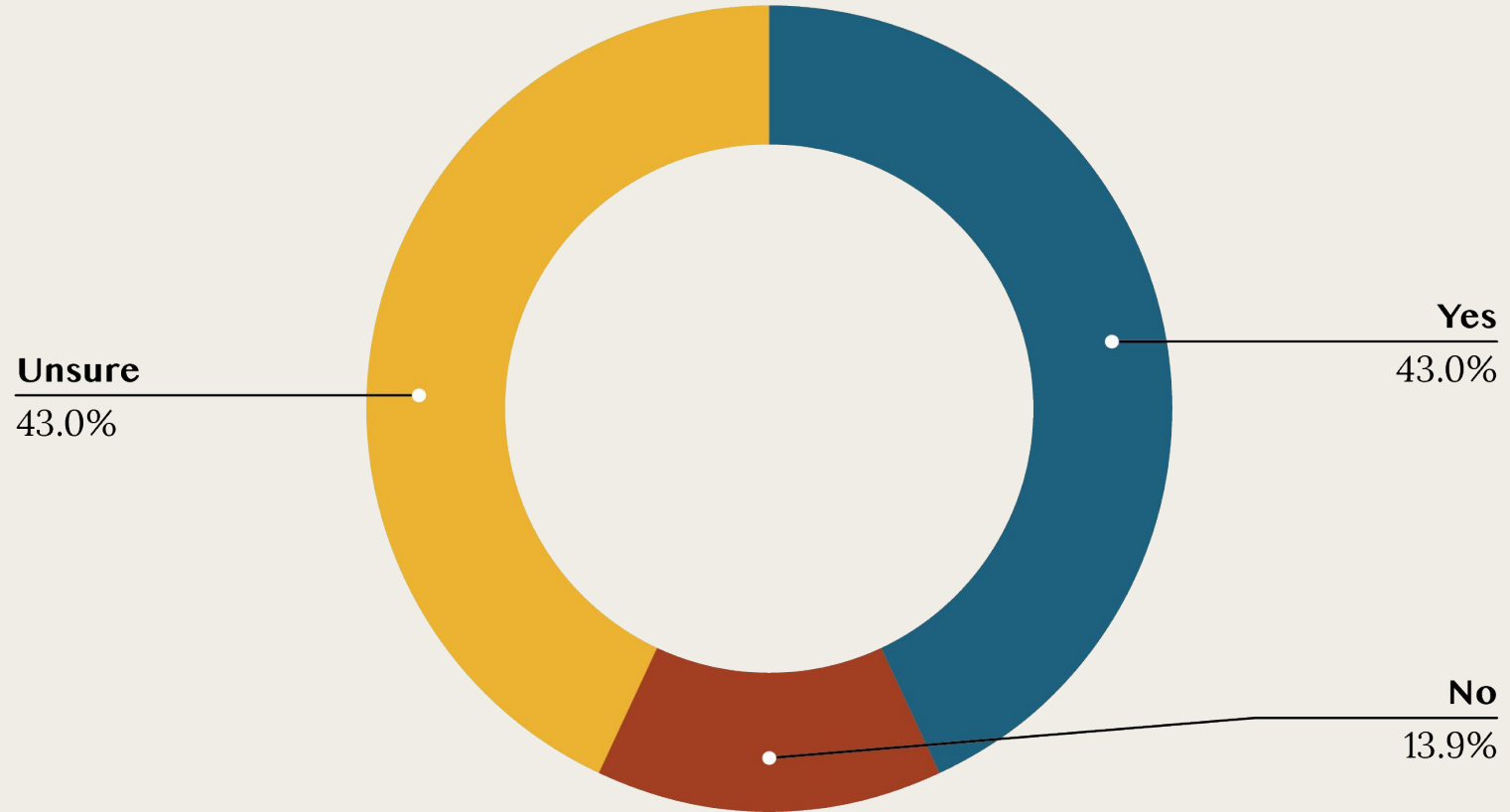
**Expected to Complete  
Domestic Work**



*Does your current or most recent media house have a workplace harassment policy?*



*Does your current or most recent media house have a human resources (HR) policy?*

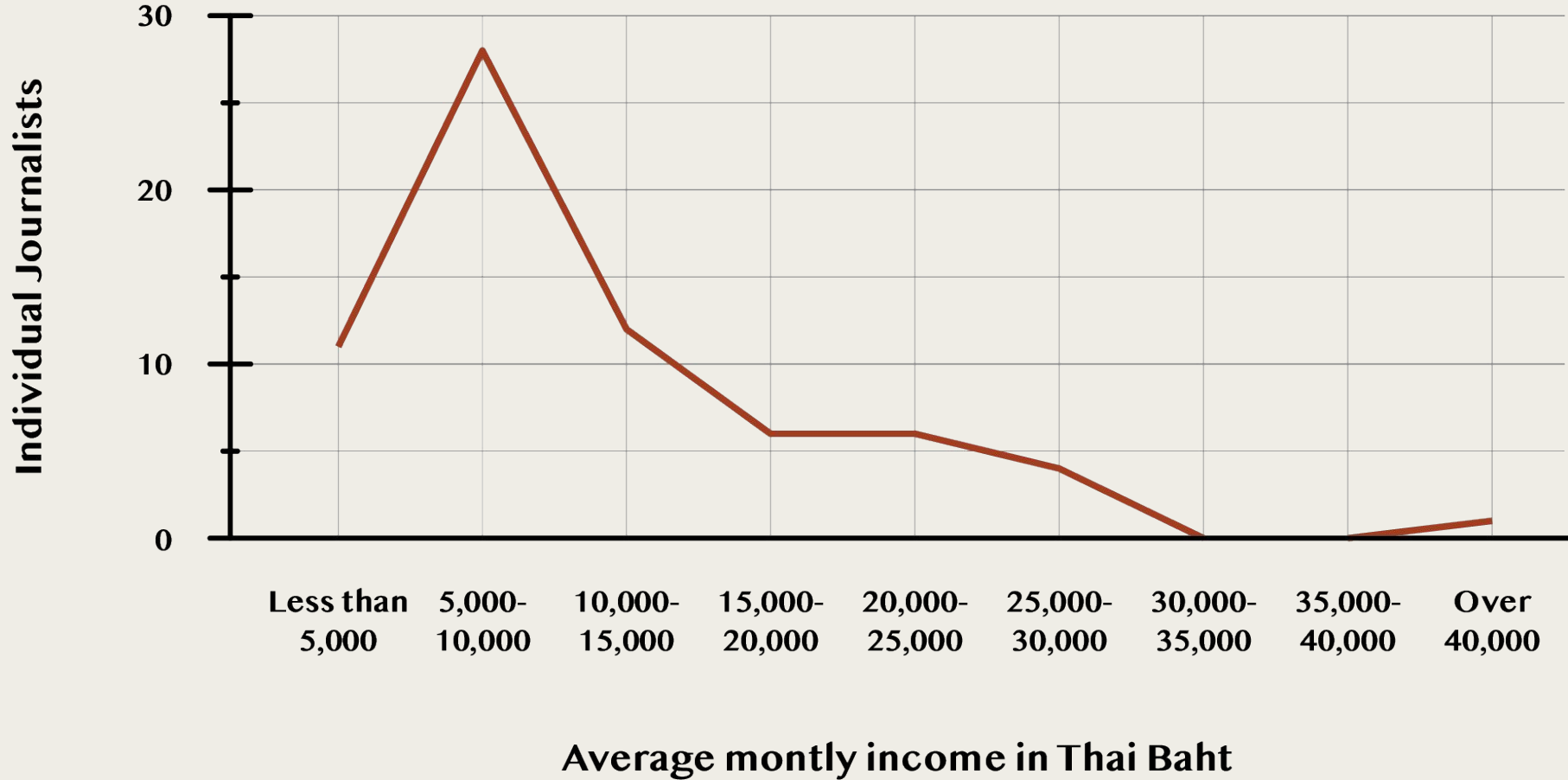


# Mental Health

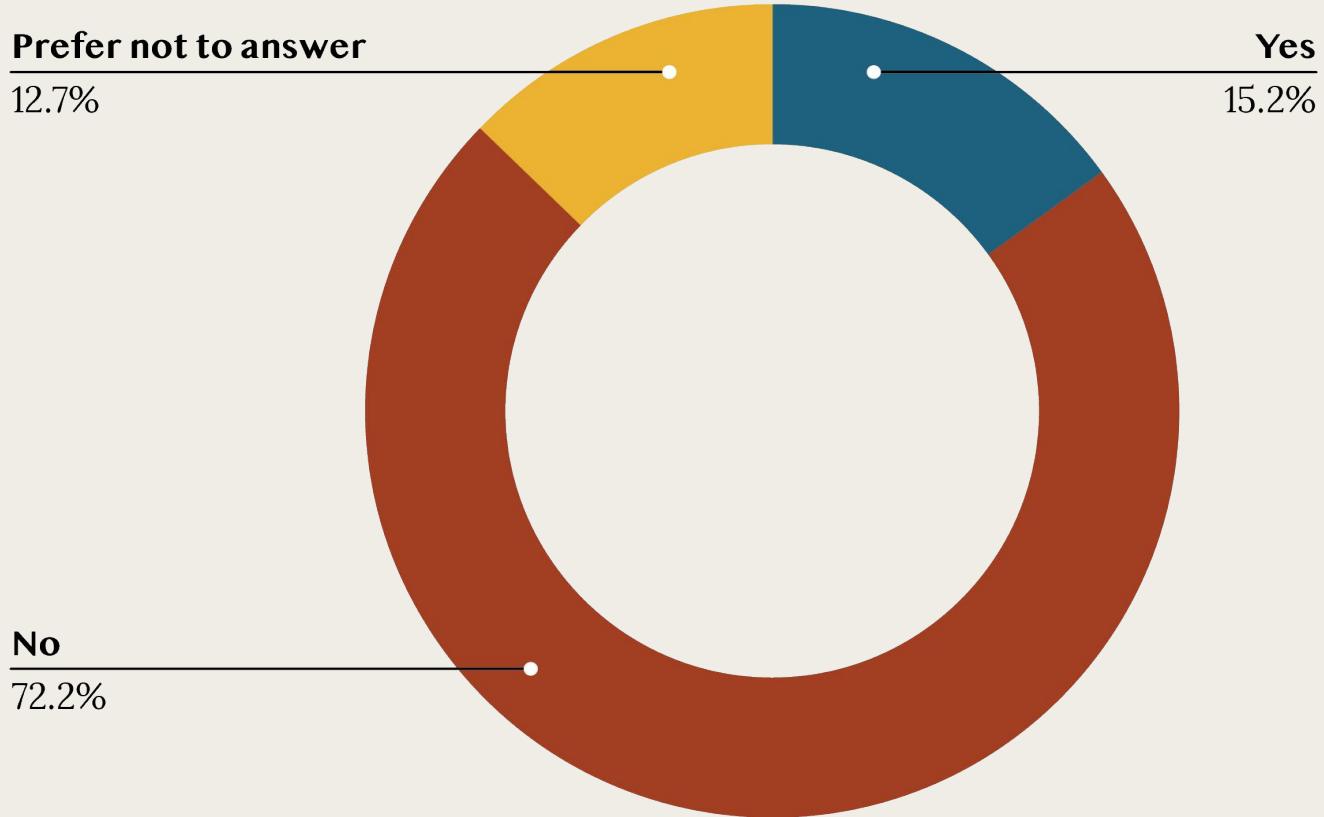
- **62** out of **79** journalists surveyed self reported poor mental wellbeing
- **13** out of **79** reported emotional burdens/distress as seriously affecting them;
- **7** reported cultural differences and discrimination as a matter of concern for them.
- In the FGDs, journalists mentioned that their mental health would improve when the material conditions improve.

# **Financial, Housing, & Legal Insecurity**

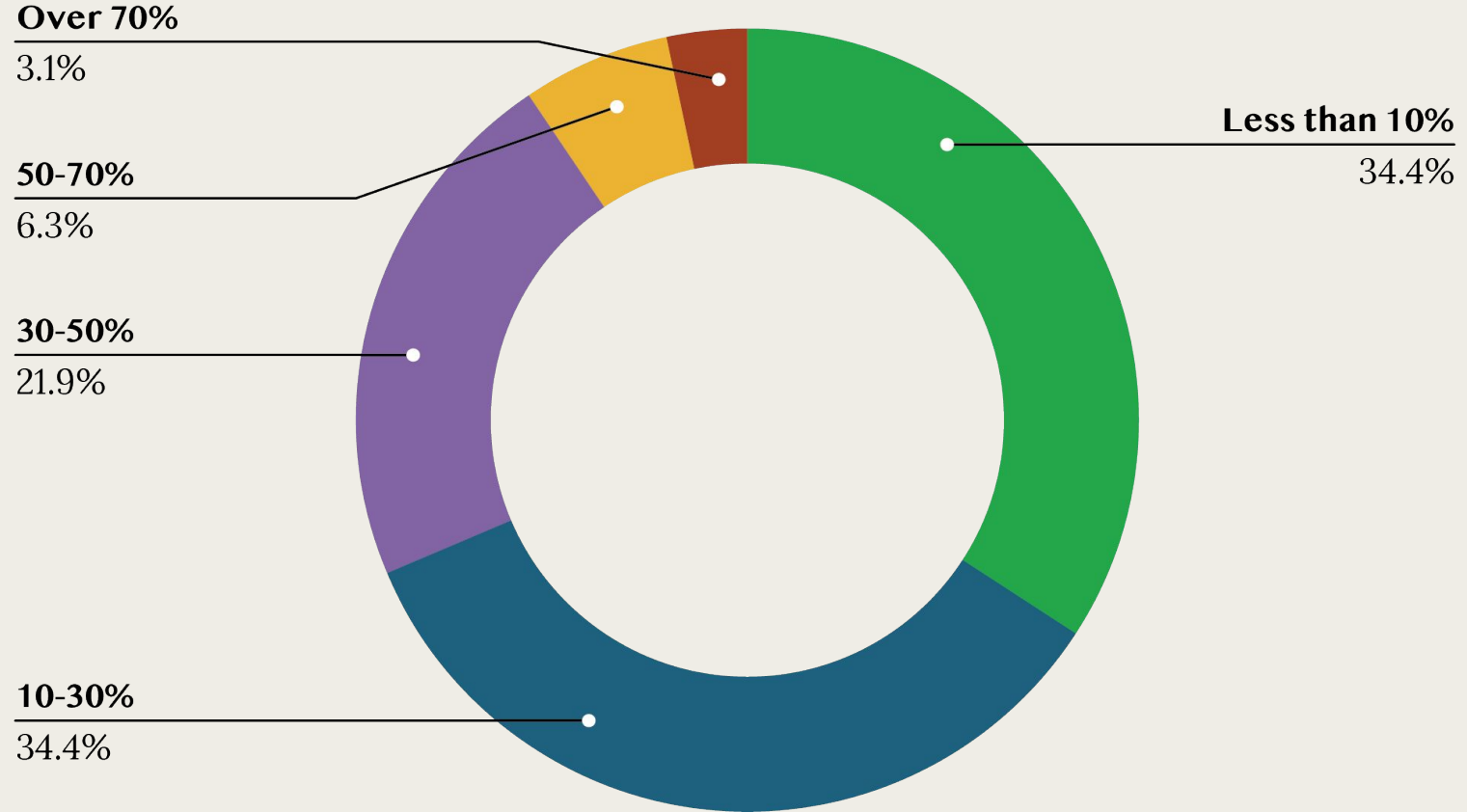
# What is your average monthly income?



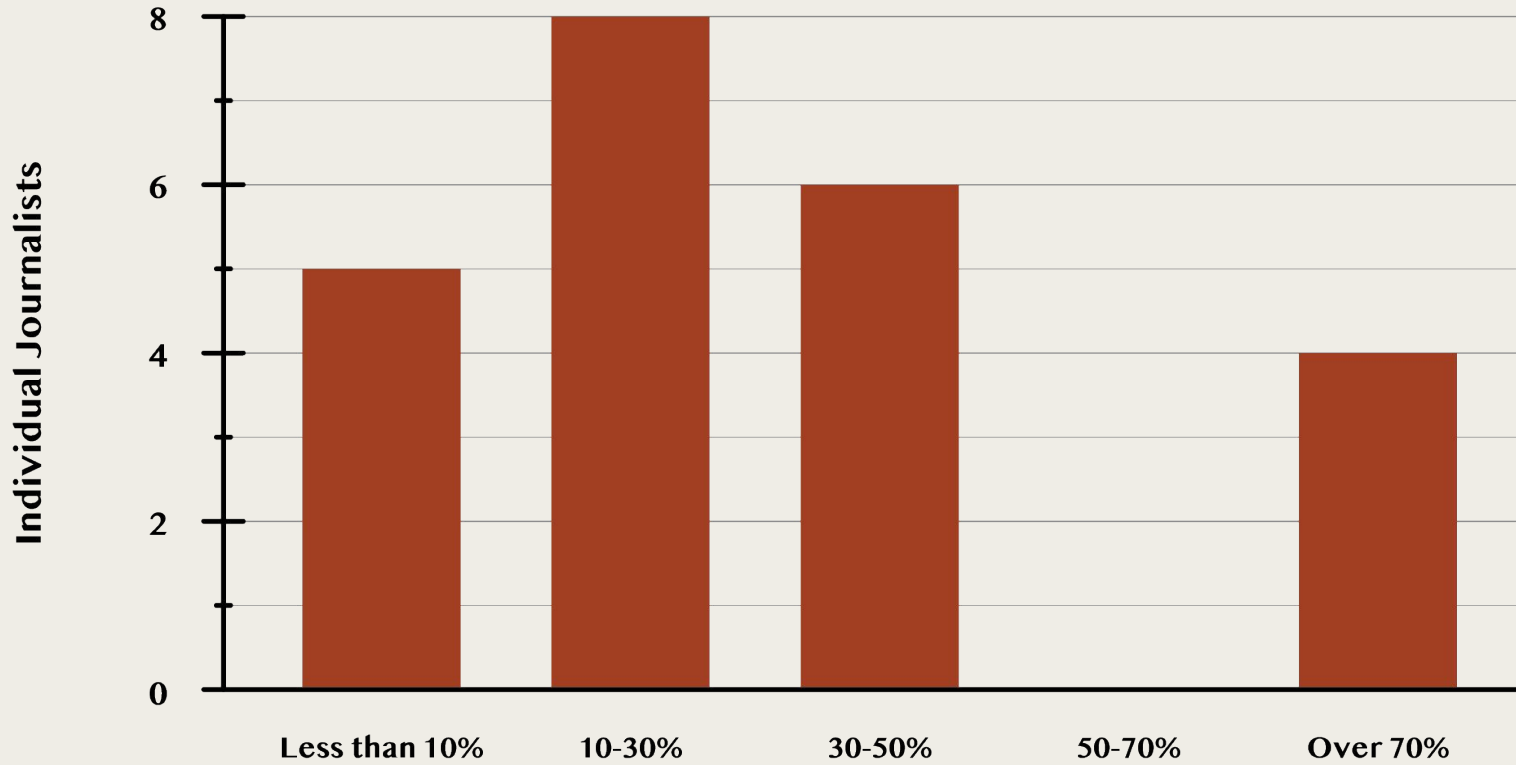
*Do you or your immediate family have any other source of income?*



# How much of your income do you spend on police extortion per month?

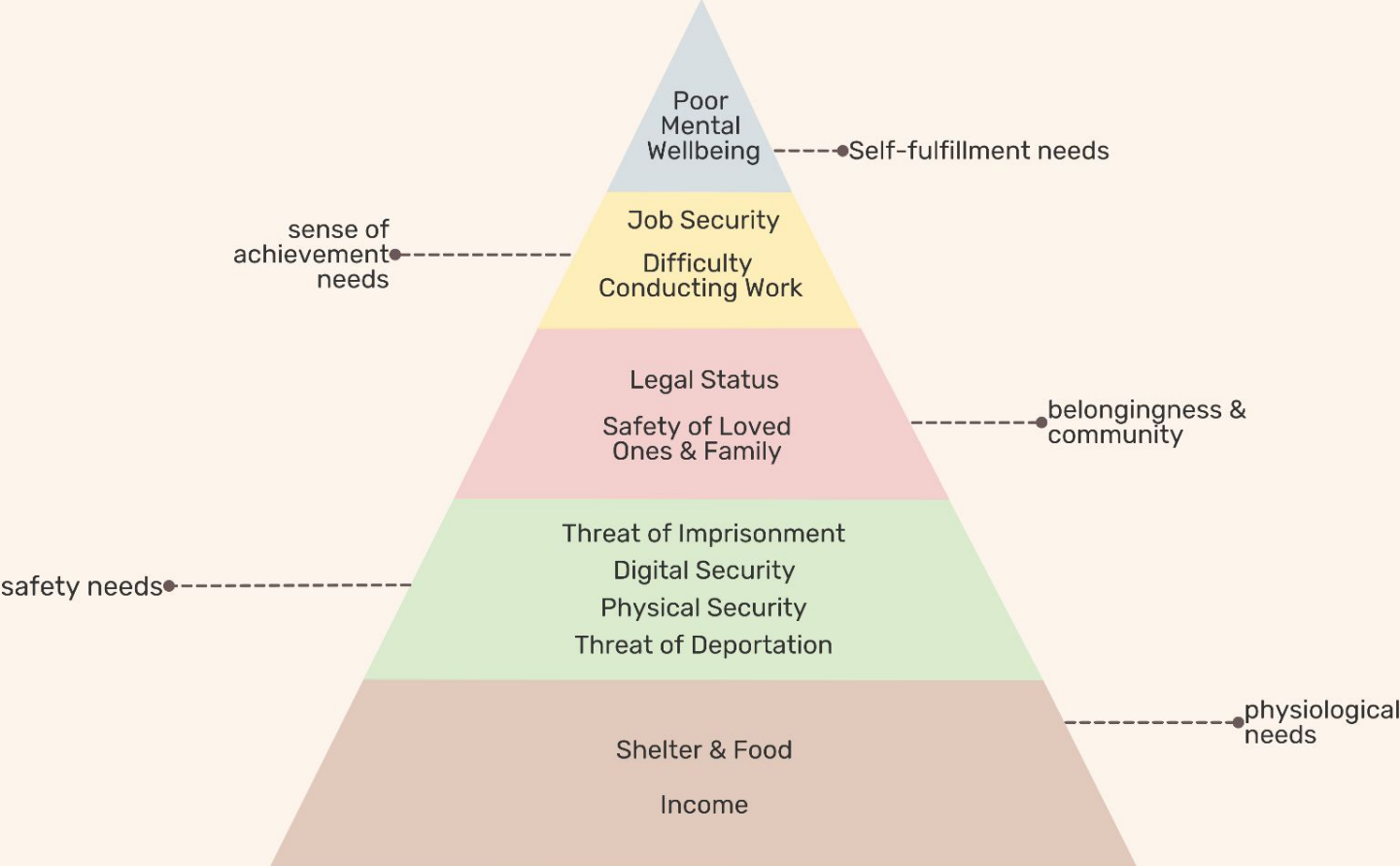


*If you have a visa or the necessary legal documentation to live in Thailand, how much of your income do you spend on the visa fees per year?*





# HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



# Interview Findings

- Media houses did have HR policies, but often not translated to Burmese and/or ethnic minority languages.
- Media houses often did not have the capacity or funding to implement gender policies.
- Media houses faced significant funding constraints from donors, and are often underfunded to the point of non-viability.
- Donors face pressure and funding cuts from back donors due to changes in global politics.
- There is a difference in understanding journalism as a profession, and journalism as revolutionary work that requires significant sacrifice.

**Sustained support of the media ecosystem, and of women journalists is vital to having a free and open society in Myanmar.**

# Recommendations for Funders

- Recognize the significance of providing **benefits and livelihood support** to journalists, through both their media organizations and independent mechanisms for freelancers.
- **Making concessions for media organizations in their overheads**, particularly for services that ensure the well-being of journalists, is fundamental.
- **Flexibility in funding** is crucial to adapting to the changing situations on the ground.
- Funders should **incentivize media organizations to implement policies** that foster equality, address harassment concerns, and provide support tailored to the specific needs of women journalists.
- Funders should consider integrating **gender-specific budgeting and programming** into the allocation of funds to local partners.

# Recommendations for Media Orgs

- **Unfair gendered expectations in the workplace**, including gender-related biases that hinder professional growth or lead to discriminatory treatment, **must be clearly defined and recognized** to prevent inadvertent abuses and ensure equitable working conditions for women journalists.
- Media organizations should regularly **update personnel handbooks and policies** to align with both local and international standards.
- Essential employment documents, such as personnel manuals, contracts, and workplace etiquette guidelines, should be **available in Burmese and ethnic minority languages**.
- Media organizations must provide ongoing support to media professionals beyond the category of journalists, particularly those working as **stringers, citizen journalists (CJs), and sources on the ground**.

# Recommendations for Support Groups

- Expansion of what work is considered “media development” must be considered.
- Further protections are needed to **safeguard sources and CJs**.
- Media support groups should consider implementing activities to integrate exiled journalists into their host communities. People need to **understand the local laws and language** of the host country and the **policing system**.
- Those surveyed throughout our research highlighted the need for **gender-sensitive tailored safety training**.
- Supporting the establishment of independent mechanisms for supporting women journalists outside of media organizations and providing **contact details for assistance in cases of sexual harassment**.
- **Audits of employers and media organizations** are needed to ensure that no gendered abuses are occurring within these groups.

# Thank You



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our website <[www.exilehub.org](http://www.exilehub.org)>

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