SURVEY REPORT ON THE SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO NIGERIAN JOURNALISTS DURING COVID-19

May 2020



Executive Summary

The existential threat of COVID-19 also known as the novel Coronavirus has left health care systems globally to grapple with various issues. In Nigeria, ever since the index case was discovered and reported on 27 February 2020, journalists and by extension the media have tried to accurately inform citizens on the pandemic, reporting original stories, identifying gaps in government's efforts, correcting misconceptions about the virus through fact checking efforts, and helping citizens make informed decisions.

Just as frontline health care workers have been exposed to contracting the virus while doing their jobs, journalists who cover stories in the midst of movement restrictions and lockdowns have also been considerably exposed. However, unlike the health care workers who are compulsorily required to use personal protective equipment (PPE) while on duty, there has not been a clearly defined and acceptable protocol for journalists especially from media owners other than the general preventive information passed to the general public.

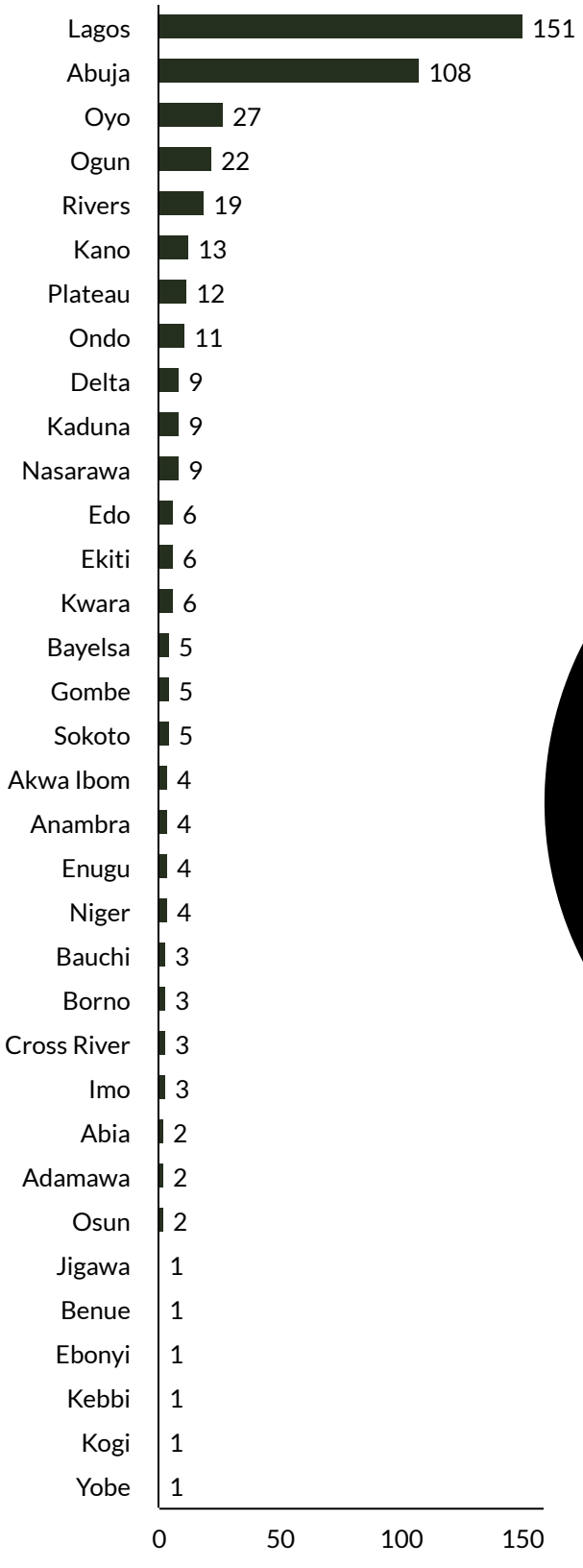
Hinged on this perception, a coalition of civil societies, including the Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism (WSCIJ), Enough is Enough (EiENigeria), International Press Centre (IPC), the International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR), and Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism (PTCIJ) carried out a survey between April 27 and May 1 to assess the support available to journalists for their safety in covering the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria with the aim of identifying the gaps and sharing the results with stakeholders towards possible interventions.

For the Coalition:
Motunrayo Alaka
WSCIJ Executive Director/CEO

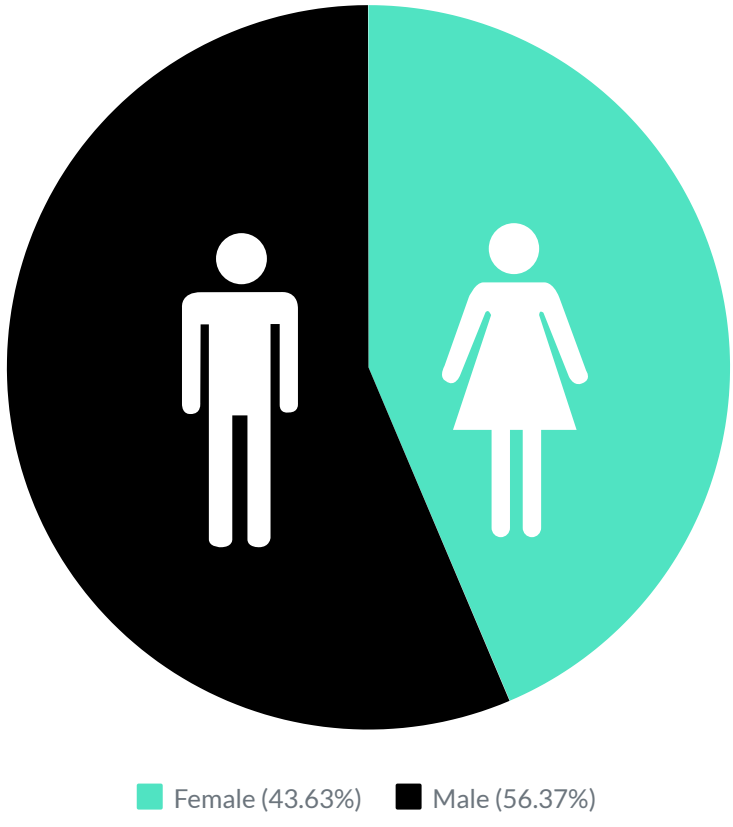
Quantitative analysis of responses

The survey was completed by different journalists from over 70 media organisations (broadcast, print and online) and resident in 33 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The states without any response in the survey are Katsina, Taraba and Zamfara.

State of Residence

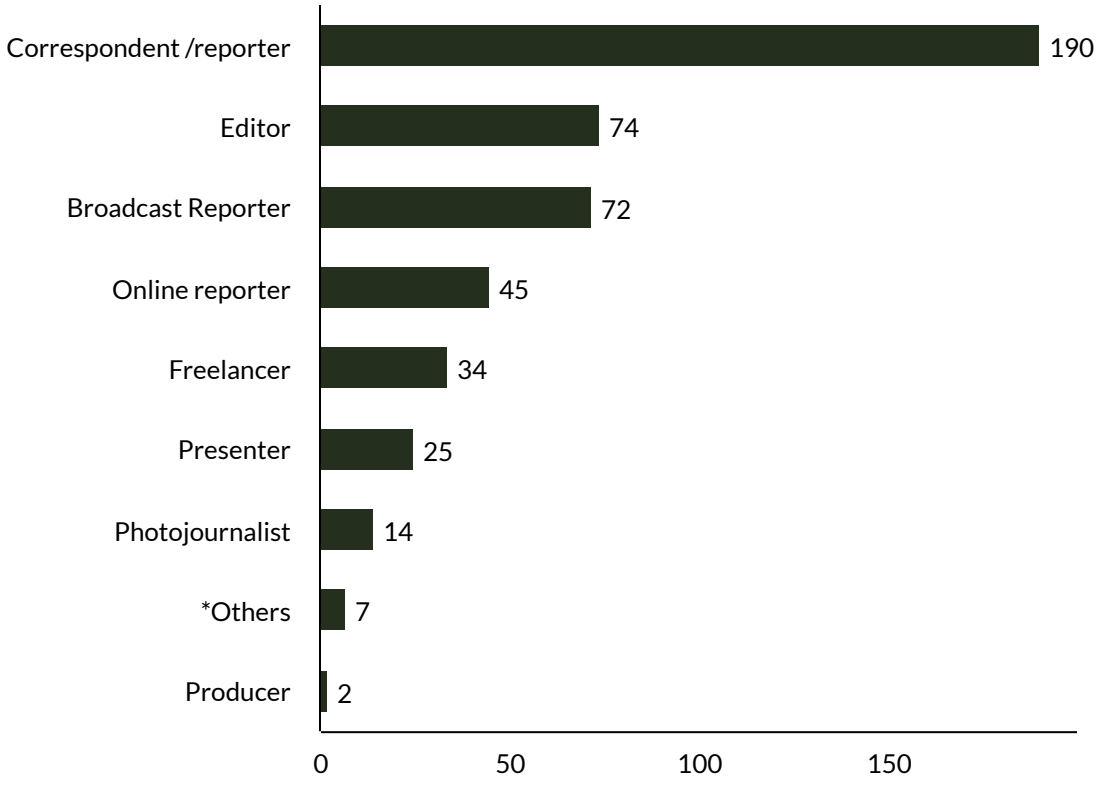


Gender



The results of the survey show that more than three-quarters of the respondents have been on the field to cover stories since the COVID-19 outbreak. Of the lot, only a third have received some form of support from their employers to protect them. Majority of the support received by the journalists are in the form of provision of specialised equipment to ensure social distancing on the field. These include hand gloves, hand sanitisers and additional monetary allowance separate from salary to procure protective items or to serve as hazard allowance.

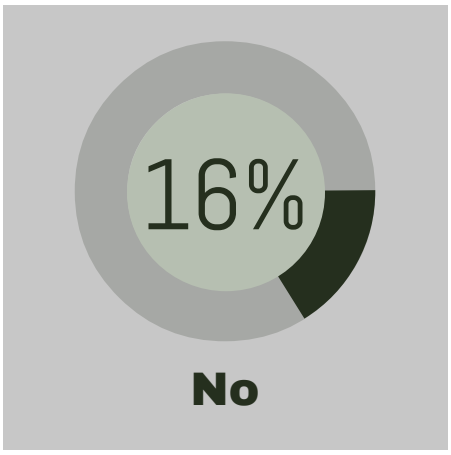
What type of Journalist are you?

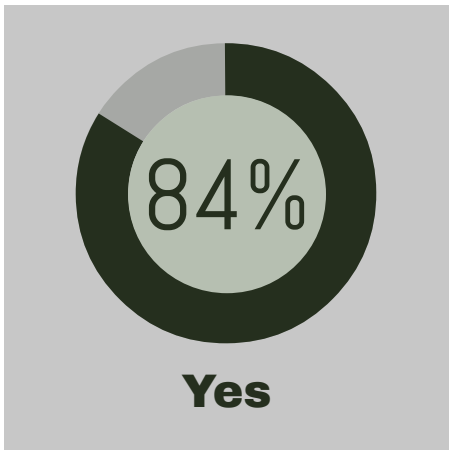


*** Responses such as consultant, post production, graphic designer, public relations, confidential secretary and so on (18 in total) were removed from the total number of 481 responses as they cannot be categorised as journalists. Therefore, 463 responses were analysed.*

**This comprises of 1 response each for several other types of journalists which include: newscaster, cameraman, sub-editor, web editor, student journalists and so on.*

Have you been on the field covering stories since the outbreak of COVID-19?



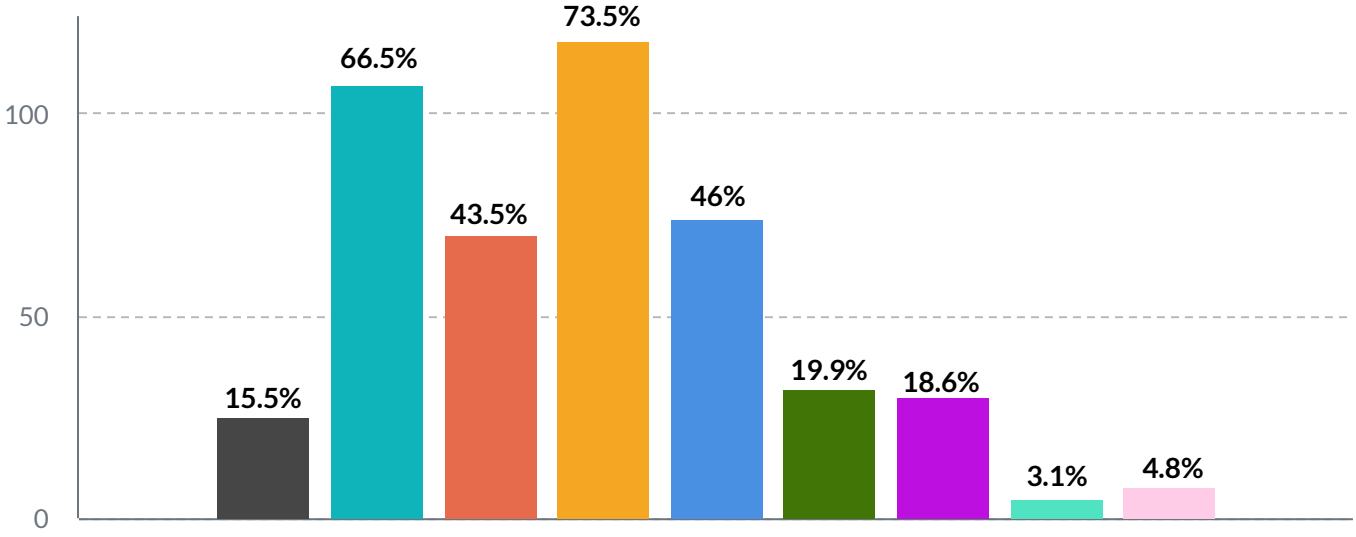




Has your employer provided any support to protect you while on assignment since the outbreak of COVID-19?

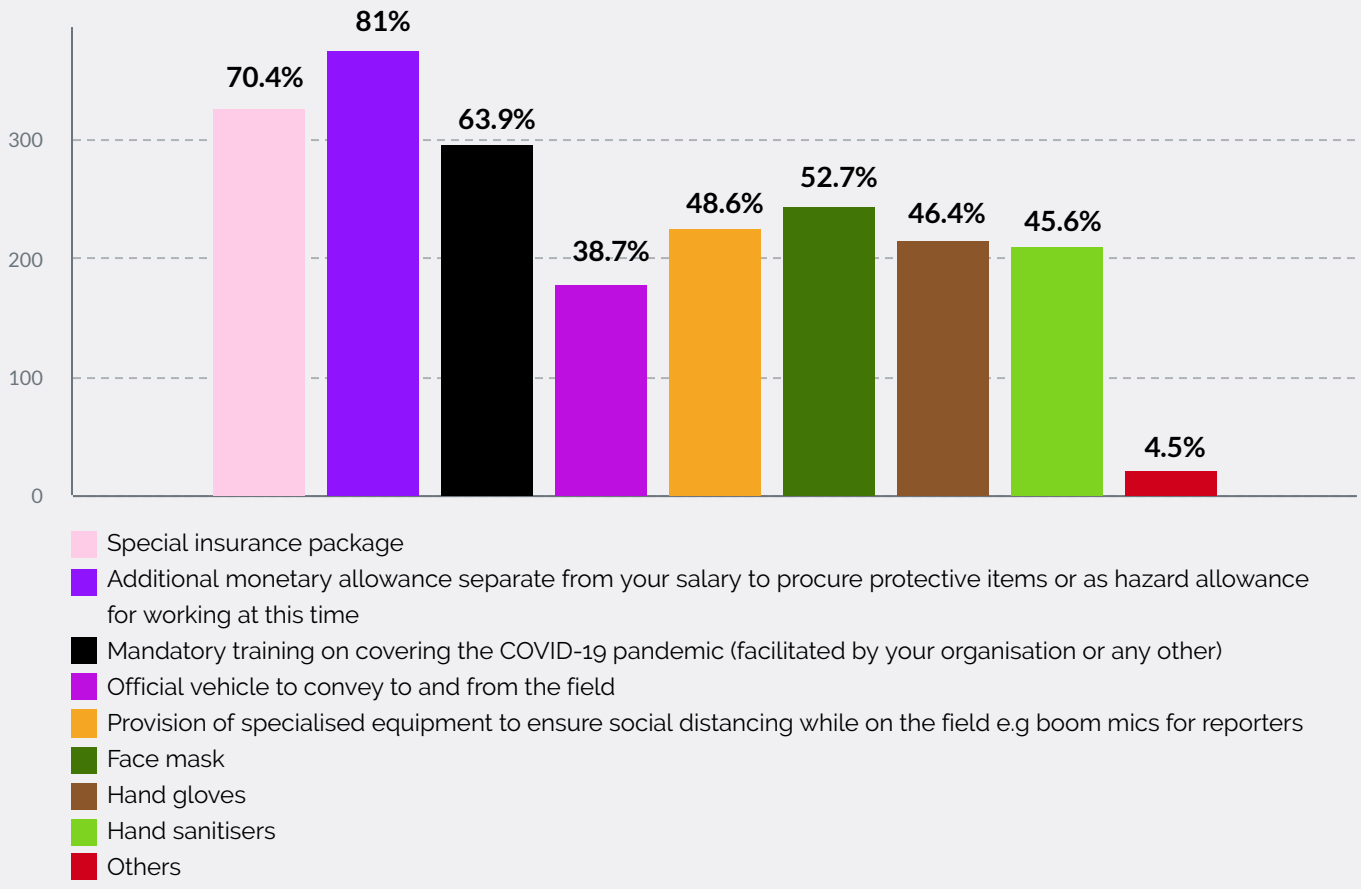


If yes, what type of support has your media house provided to protect you while on the field



- Provision of specialised equipment to ensure social distancing while on the field e.g boom mics for reporters
- Face mask
- Hand gloves
- Hand sanitisers
- Official vehicle to convey to and from the field
- Additional monetary allowance separate from your salary to procure protective items or as hazard allowance for working at this time
- Mandatory training on covering the COVID-19 pandemic (facilitated by your organisation or any other)
- Special insurance package
- Others

What support will you need that you are not being provided when working at this time?



Summary of findings

The survey revealed that the top five desired needs of journalists who responded are:

1. Additional monetary allowance separate from salary and demand for salaries owed by media owners (in some cases)
2. Special insurance package
3. Training on covering the COVID-19 pandemic
4. Provision of face masks and
5. Provision of specialised equipment to ensure social distancing while on the field.

Recommendations

Going by the findings of the survey, the following are recommended:

To Media Owners

1. Widen the scope of their support to ensure that reporters on the field are adequately insured and financially empowered (beyond salaries). This will enable the reporters to do their jobs with the confidence that they are covered in the event of any unforeseen harm in the line of duty.
2. Put workplace policy in place and follow the same to equip their journalists with specialised and personal protective equipment to help them observe social distancing while on the field.
3. Provide training to journalists on how to crowdsource information for their stories without having to necessarily go to the field.
4. Explore technological options to have guests participate remotely. In the few cases where guests need to come to the studio, media owners should put infrastructure in place to ensure the safety of their employees and guests following the directives of health experts and the government.

To Media Development /Civil Society Groups

1. Civil society organisations working in the media space should lead advocacies for the safety and support of journalists during this pandemic.

To Freelance Journalists

1. Freelance journalists should take advantage of reporting grants and other opportunities to procure personal protective equipment while covering the pandemic.



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