

THE HIDDEN COSTS OF BRAZILIAN JOURNALISM: PRECARITY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS

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ABSTRACT

The crises and transformations affecting journalism over the past decade have shaped journalists' work in multiple ways — both generally and with specific consequences for women. This article examines how dimensions of labour casualisation and work-related risks disproportionately burden Brazilian women journalists and how this affects their physical and mental health. The analysis is based on a comparison between men and women, assessing working conditions, health outcomes, and the forms of violence experienced as a result of professional activity. The study draws on data from *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro* (Profile of the Brazilian Journalist; Lima et al., 2022), a demographic survey conducted with 3,100 respondents between August and October 2021. The principal finding indicates that the scenario is challenging for both genders, with women experiencing the effects of the sector's crisis with particular intensity across all dimensions. This may contribute to the process of defeminisation of Brazilian journalism — or the reduction in the number of women in the profession — over the past decade. Women were found to be more vulnerable to work-related health problems and to forms of violence arising from interpersonal relationships with colleagues and managers, which professional routines and practices may obscure. In contrast, male journalists are more likely to be exposed to external aggressors.

KEYWORDS

women journalists, labour casualisation, journalism and gender,
crisis in journalism, *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro*

O CUSTO OCULTO DO JORNALISMO BRASILEIRO: PRECARIIDADE E VIOLÊNCIAS CONTRA MULHERES NA PROFISSÃO

RESUMO

As crises e transformações do jornalismo na última década afetaram, de diversas formas, o trabalho dos jornalistas, em geral, e das mulheres, em particular. Neste artigo, observamos que dimensões da precarização e riscos ligados ao trabalho sobrecarregam mais sobre as jornalistas brasileiras e como isso afeta a sua saúde física e mental. A investigação é feita a partir da

comparação entre homens e mulheres, observando as condições de trabalho, a saúde e quais as violências sofridas por conta da atividade laboral. Fazemos isso com base na análise dos dados da pesquisa *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro* (Lima et al., 2022), um estudo demográfico que ouviu 3.100 pessoas entre agosto e outubro de 2021. O principal resultado demonstra que o cenário é negativo para ambos os gêneros, mas com as mulheres a sofrerem com particular intensidade os efeitos da crise do setor em todos os âmbitos, o que pode impulsionar o processo de desfeminização ou diminuição do número de mulheres jornalistas, verificado na última década no país. Observou-se que as mulheres estão mais vulneráveis a problemas de saúde relacionados com o trabalho e a violências decorrentes do relacionamento interpessoal entre colegas e chefias, as quais podem ser mascaradas pelas rotinas e práticas profissionais; enquanto os jornalistas acabam mais expostos a agressores externos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

mulheres jornalistas, precarização do trabalho, jornalismo e gênero, crise do jornalismo, *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro*

1. INTRODUCTION

With a population of approximately 212.5 million, Brazil is characterised by extensive cultural, ethnic, environmental, and social diversity. Despite this, Brazilian journalism fails to reflect these characteristics — both in its organisational composition and in the coverage it produces. Only a limited segment of the population — White, male, and middle- or upper-class — is represented in hegemonic media discourse, which remains dominated by large, family-owned, patriarchal conglomerates (O. Bandeira et al., 2023). Likewise, the diversity that shapes Brazilian society is not mirrored in the composition of journalistic teams across most media organisations, where a predominantly White, middle-class, and heteronormative profile prevails (Lima et al., 2022; Mick & Lima, 2013).

This lack of diversity and representation directly affects power relations within news organisations: structural inequalities related to ethnicity, class, age, territory, and gender are deeply embedded, with gender being one of the most salient markers identified in studies of the profession in Brazil. Although women constitute the majority of media professionals, they remain underrepresented in leadership positions and encounter glass ceilings and other invisible barriers throughout their careers (Moura & Santos, 2022; Steiner, 2017) — a pattern that reflects broader social contexts and other professional fields (International Labour Organization & Özyeğin University, 2024). Journalism studies still require further development to examine how these structural disparities are intensified and/or how they exacerbate labour precarity among those working in the profession.

In recent years, there has been a marked erosion of formal employment in journalism worldwide. There has been a significant reduction in job positions, instability in career trajectories (Accardo, 1995; Gollmitzer, 2019; Steiner & Chadha, 2022), occupational illness (Deuze, 2023), and incidents of violence (Lesue et al., 2021; Slavtcheva-Petkova et al., 2023). Professionals in the field often accept greater flexibility of working conditions

as a means of remaining employed (Hirata, 2011), while irregular and exhausting working hours are perceived as intrinsic to the profession, reinforcing a romanticised view of journalism and obscuring its proletarianisation (Guilhermano & Fonseca, 2021). This context has increased the physical and mental costs of work, negatively affecting quality of life (Bulhões & Renault, 2016; Lima, 2018). Casualisation of labour in journalism is also manifested in reduced autonomy and declining production quality (Nicoletti, 2020; Quintanilha, 2023).

This “new normal” (Örnebring, 2018) is embedded in everyday journalistic routines and practices, affecting both professionals with informal contracts (freelancers, self-employed workers) and those with more stable arrangements, such as permanent employees¹ or public servants in the Brazilian context. This state of insecurity — characterised by high pressure and instability — has expanded globally, particularly in Global North countries, where precarity, once associated only with informal work, now also affects contracts traditionally considered more secure (Rick, 2024; Steiner & Chadha, 2022). This condition undermines rights and weakens journalism as a social practice.

These factors also directly influence the journalism market’s capacity to attract and retain professionals (Bastin, 2016), as they are key determinants of career choices. In a context marked by numerous challenges — where many enter the profession but few manage to remain and thrive — “it is more important than ever to understand who is working in journalism, under what circumstances the work is conducted, and what kind of work is produced” (Deuze & Witschge, 2016, p. 17).

Although studies on journalists’ labour have improved understanding of the issue, there remains a need to examine how labour precarity affects different professional profiles, particularly those considered minority or more vulnerable, such as freelancers, women, LGBTQIAP+ individuals, immigrants, and Indigenous people. This article analyses data from the *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro 2021* (Profile of the Brazilian Journalist 2021; Lima et al., 2022)² survey to investigate the extent to which labour casualisation disproportionately affects women journalists in Brazil and the mechanisms through which this occurs. The study is guided by the following research questions: (a) which dimensions of labour casualisation and work-related risks most strongly impact women journalists in Brazil?; and (b) how do these working conditions affect the physical and mental health of women journalists?

This study makes an original contribution by disaggregating data from the *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro* by gender, revealing specific inequalities faced by women journalists — such as greater labour casualisation and increased exposure to health risks — that do not appear in the original report’s aggregated analysis (Lima et al., 2022). By identifying

¹ A permanent employee is one hired in accordance with the Consolidation of Labour Laws, a set of regulations governing formal employment in Brazil. Employees under this regime are entitled to paid annual leave, a 13th-month salary, a maximum 44-hour working week, at least one paid rest day per week, overtime pay, and unemployment insurance in cases of dismissal without just cause after six months of employment (Decreto-Lei N° 5.452/1943, 1943).

² The authors of this article are members of the *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro* research team (principal investigator, co-principal investigator, and a researcher involved in data collection and analysis). Therefore, this study is an analysis of their own data.

these differences, the article enhances understanding of women's working conditions in the profession and provides evidence to inform academic and social debates on gender inequalities in journalism.

To this end, we examine indicators of working conditions, health, and exposure to risks among both female and male respondents. The article is structured into four sections that successively review the relevant literature, present the research methodology, and describe and discuss the results.

2. GENDER AND LABOUR CASUALISATION IN JOURNALISTS' WORK IN BRAZIL

In Brazil, studies on working conditions indicate a persistent climate of job insecurity and uncertainty regarding career prospects. Journalists frequently receive low wages, face intense competition, work long hours, have inadequate infrastructure, experience stress, and suffer occupational illness (Figaro et al., 2013; Lima et al., 2022; Mick & Lima, 2013; Pontes, 2017). The number of workers operating on a demand basis is also increasing (Nicoletti & Figaro, 2024), including freelancers who register as legal entities or individual micro-entrepreneurs to be engaged — they function as employees but bear the costs of running a business and lack statutory labour protections (Lima et al., 2022). Furthermore, journalists are frequently targeted with aggression as a result of their professional activity (Federação Nacional dos Jornalistas, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024). Newsrooms have been downsized, and remote or hybrid work is becoming the norm (Figaro et al., 2021). This reduces everyday interaction among colleagues, hindering the socialisation of practices, experiences, ethical conduct, and professional networks — elements essential for maintaining professional culture (Charron & Bonville, 2004/2016).

These multiple risks related to financial, physical, psychological, and digital insecurity, as well as uncertainty about the future, create a scenario of structural precariousness in the profession (Nicoletti, 2020), which also affects journalists' health (Heloani, 2003, 2006; Reimberg, 2015). This process, described by Druck (2011) as the social precarisation of labour, highlights how market vulnerabilities intersect with social and economic inequalities, producing a cohort of professionals who are vulnerable and have limited prospects for career development. This, in turn, fosters feelings of resignation, emotional detachment from work (Dubet, 2006/2014; Sennett, 1998/2015; Standing, 2011/2014), and the erosion of both collective and individual identity (Alves, 2013; Antunes, 1999, 2005). Within this context, it is essential to investigate which dimensions of labour casualisation and work-related risks most acutely affect women journalists in Brazil, and how these conditions impact their physical and mental health.

Although women constitute the numerical majority in the profession (Lima et al., 2022), they continue to work in a field governed by masculinised³ values, reflected in the unequal allocation of assignments, wage disparities, and high rates of harassment.

³ By symmetry with the conceptual distinction adopted here for women's work, one could use "masculinisation" to refer to the quantitative predominance of men in certain professions, and "masculinised values" to denote the qualitative effects of this process, such as norms, practices, and organisational culture (Kikuti Dancosky, 2023; Kikuti Dancosky et al., 2022).

Barriers to accessing leadership positions persist (Moura & Santos, 2022; Steiner, 2017), despite the recent increase in female representation in middle management — a development that often comes at a considerable cost to these professionals' health and well-being (A. Bandeira, 2019). This situation reveals a persistent gender segregation within the professional hierarchy, both horizontally — across thematic areas, sectors, and specialisations — and vertically — access to power and decision-making (Damian-Gaillard & Saitta, 2016; Moura et al., 2018; Rocha, 2019).

Lelo (2019) systematises these inequalities across four dimensions: (a) sexual division of labour, (b) organisational cultures, (c) professional cultures, and (d) production routines. The sexual division of labour has been a structuring feature of capitalism since its inception (Federici, 2004/2017) and continues to be evident across numerous contemporary occupations and professions. Its effects are exacerbated by individualism and intense competition, which are characteristic of neoliberal ideology (Dardot & Laval, 2009/2016; Gago, 2018). In journalism, this division manifests in the challenges women reporters face in reconciling their professional responsibilities with family obligations. Careers often demand sacrifices of rest and personal time, obstructing women's ability to maintain stable positions within media organisations, as many must adjust their professional tasks to accommodate a double workload.

Organisational cultures refer to the habitual ways in which work is structured, shaping journalists' everyday practices. Lelo (2019) highlights male homosociality — the tendency to assign more prominent roles to colleagues of the same gender and to share contacts and information exclusively among themselves. Those who do not conform to the idealised model of masculinity in newsrooms are disadvantaged in the allocation of tasks (Veiga da Silva, 2014). In the case of women managers, any perceived shortcomings are often attributed to the “femininity” of the office-holder.

Within professional culture, women are often assigned topics considered less “weighty” (soft news), traditionally associated with cultural subjects and aspects of the “femininity” stereotype (entertainment, fashion, beauty, lifestyle). In contrast, more substantial stories with greater public impact (hard news) are entrusted to their male colleagues (Veiga da Silva, 2014).

Finally, in terms of production routines, violence against journalists in Brazil is a problem that affects the profession as a whole but is particularly severe for women, due to the cruelty of misogyny. According to the Brazilian Federation of Journalists (Federação Nacional dos Jornalistas, 2021), in 2020, rates of violence more than doubled compared with the previous year (an increase of 105.8%, or 428 incidents). They remained high in subsequent years, despite a significant decline from 2023 (Federação Nacional dos Jornalistas, 2022, 2023, 2024). For women journalists, experiences of harassment, intimidation, or threats — both online and offline — are more common (Barton & Storm, 2014; Mazotte & Toste, 2017; Posetti & Shabbir, 2022).

3. METHODOLOGY

This article analyses data from the *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro 2021* (Lima et al., 2022), a representative study designed to examine issues related to employment status, working hours, contract type, area of practice, political positioning, working conditions, health, and safety of journalists in Brazil. The research was coordinated by the Federal University of Santa Catarina and conducted in partnership with the Journalists' Work and Identity Research Network, affiliated with the Brazilian Association of Journalism Researchers (<https://site.sbpjor.org.br/>). The study involved 17 volunteer researchers from all regions of the country, with the support of the main national professional organisations in the field⁴.

This was the second edition⁵ of the online questionnaire, distributed via SurveyMonkey. The first edition was conducted in 2012 (Mick & Lima, 2013) and used a sampling plan that yielded 2,731 valid responses. The 2021 edition sought to assess changes in the sector over a decade and to deepen understanding of issues related to the casualisation of labour and the health of journalists (Lima et al., 2022). A total of 6,650 valid responses were collected in the second edition, between 16 August and 1 October 2021. From this database, a stratified random sample of 3,100 respondents was selected, proportionally distributed according to the regional distribution of journalists across the country (North, Northeast, South, Southeast, and Centre-West), thereby ensuring regional representativeness. Cases included in the final sample were selected through random sampling using SPSS software (Table 1).

⁴ Brazilian Federation of Journalists, Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism, Brazilian Press Association, Journalism Profession Association, Brazilian Association of Journalism Researchers and Brazilian Association of Journalism Education.

⁵ The study was designed to be conducted at 10-year intervals, with a mid-term follow-up five years after each survey. This follow-up involves a quantitative, longitudinal assessment of career trajectories, re-interviewing the same respondents from the most recent profile survey to determine their current professional situation. The research was partially funded by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, with the majority of the researchers participating voluntarily.

REGION	STATE (FEDERATIVE UNIT)	RECORDS ISSUED (2000–2019)	% OF RECORDS PER UNIT	CASES INCLUDED IN SAMPLING PLAN (N)	% OF SAMPLING PLAN
Centre-West	Federal District	7,515	5.28	164	5.28
	Goiás	2,571	1.81	56	1.80
	Mato Grosso do Sul	2,409	1.69	52	1.69
	Mato Grosso	1,391	0.98	30	0.98
Northeast	Alagoas	1,055	0.74	23	0.74
	Bahia	4,269	3.00	93	3.00
	Ceará	2,992	2.10	65	2.10
	Espírito Santo	3,164	2.22	74	2.39
	Maranhão	1,420	1.00	31	1.00
	Paraíba	1,712	1.20	37	1.20
	Pernambuco	3,372	2.37	73	2.37
	Piauí	1,063	0.75	23	0.75
	Rio Grande do Norte	1,415	0.99	31	0.99
	Sergipe	1,371	0.96	30	0.96
North	Acre	505	0.35	11	0.35
	Amazonas	1,246	0.87	27	0.87
	Amapá	216	0.15	5	0.15
	Pará	1,478	1.04	32	1.04
	Rondônia	926	0.65	20	0.65
	Roraima	416	0.29	9	0.29
	Tocantins	816	0.57	18	0.57
Southeast	Minas Gerais	16,099	11.30	360	11.61
	Rio de Janeiro	15,288	10.73	343	11.06
	São Paulo	52,998	37.21	1,132	36.51
South	Paraná	6,244	4.38	136	4.38
	Rio Grande do Sul	5,728	4.02	125	4.02
	Santa Catarina	4,611	3.24	100	3.24
	Not reported	133	0.09	-	-
Total		142,424	100	3,100	100

Table 1. Sampling plan design based on the number of journalist records from 2000 to 2019

Note. Prepared based on data from the Ministry of Labour's records and responses collected through the online survey of the *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro 2021* (Lima et al., 2022).

As journalism in Brazil lacks a regulatory council or professional body responsible for monitoring the practice and its self-regulation — a challenge for research of this kind⁶ — the distribution of journalists by state and region was estimated using the

⁶ Professional registrations issued by the Ministry of Labour serve as a reference point. However, a portion of journalists work without registration, and there is no record of those who leave or abandon the profession. Furthermore, public access to the list of registered professionals is restricted by law. Other sources, such as the Annual Social Information Report/General Register of Employed and Unemployed Workers systems, are imprecise because they only cover workers with formal employment contracts. Finally, using the total number of journalism graduates as a parameter is also inadequate, as it does not account for the high proportion of graduates who do not enter the profession.

number of professional journalist registrations issued by the Coordination of Professional Identification and Registration of the Ministry of Labour between 2000 and 2019. The sampling plan represented 2.18% of the total of 142,424 registered journalists, resulting in a 95% confidence interval with a 2.5% margin of error.

The *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro* aims to identify individuals who self-identify as journalists, regardless of their field of activity. To this end, the questionnaire includes specific sections for three distinct profiles of journalists active in the country:

- Media work (individuals whose primary employment is in the press, whether in journalistic companies, independent journalism initiatives, journalist collectives, or as freelancers);
- Non-media work (individuals who identify as journalists but work outside the press, in related areas such as press offices, organisational communication, or content production for social media);
- Academics (individuals who self-identify as journalists based on their training and/or professional experience but work as teachers in journalism or communication).

This approach respects the specificity of the Brazilian journalism market, where academic training in the field is a key factor in professional self-identification. Furthermore, in a context marked by labour market instability and income insecurity, journalism graduates often hold multiple jobs simultaneously, both within and beyond the media sector.

This article evaluates the three professional profiles mentioned above from a gender perspective. All data analysed compares the groups of women and men. A small group of respondents (nine) did not identify as either male or female. For this analysis, only the two statistically representative groups were considered⁷.

To examine more closely the working conditions of women journalists, the data were analysed using three groups of indicators:

- Labour conditions: type of employment contract, salary (remuneration and capacity to cover monthly expenses), working hours (regular and overtime);
- Health: work-related stress, medically diagnosed mental health conditions (such as depression, burnout, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress), and medically diagnosed repetitive strain injuries or work-related musculoskeletal disorders, both associated with labour activity and considered indicators of physical health;
- Exposure to risks: workplace violence (moral, sexual, and verbal harassment, coercion, surveillance, and self-censorship) and external work-related violence (online attacks, attacks on family members, physical assault).

The following section presents the main results obtained from cross-tabulations of gender, labour conditions, health, and exposure to risks. In the discussion section, interpretative and descriptive analyses of the observed patterns are provided, outlining potential conclusions and avenues for further research.

⁷ This, however, does not diminish the importance of subsequent qualitative studies aimed at understanding the specific consequences of casualisation in journalistic work for this group.

4. RESULTS: GENDER AND WORK IN BRAZILIAN JOURNALISM

4.1. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Brazilian journalism is predominantly female. In 2021, 57.8% of respondents to the *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro* were women, of whom 68.4% self-identified as White, and 62.3% were aged 40 or under. However, among those working within the media (which includes the majority of respondents, 57.7%), this pattern shifts somewhat. When the data are disaggregated by gender, a marked disparity is observed: while almost 70% of men work in the press, only 49.7% of women hold positions in this sector (Table 2). The majority of women journalists in Brazil work in other areas of communication or in academia. Thus, it can be inferred that work within the Brazilian press is masculinised, whereas other areas employing journalists show a female predominance.

	FEMALE	MALE
Media	49.7%	68.7%
Outside the media	42.3%	24.7%
Academia	7.9%	6.6%
Total	100%	100%

Table 2. Where Brazilian journalists worked in 2021, broken down by gender

Note. Prepared based on data from the *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro 2021* (Lima et al., 2022).

The proportion of journalists aged 41 or older is 45.2%. In this age group, men are the majority across all sectors, indicating greater career longevity. Women, in contrast, are concentrated in younger age groups, with 62.3% aged 18–40, suggesting lower retention in journalism. Regarding marital status, 36.9% of women are married or in a stable partnership, compared with 46.1% of men. The majority of journalists in Brazil do not have children, with this proportion being higher among women (64%) than men (58%).

Despite being younger, Brazilian women journalists are more highly qualified than their male counterparts: 93% have completed higher education, of whom 54.5% hold postgraduate qualifications, including specialisation, master's, doctorate, or postdoctoral degrees. Among men, 43% pursued further studies after completing their undergraduate degrees.

4.2. LABOUR CONDITIONS

To analyse evidence of precarious work, the following indicators of labour conditions were considered: type of employment contract, working hours, salary, days off, and overtime.

The type of contract allows for an assessment of whether workers are predominantly formal or informal — that is, whether they are covered by legal protections, which vary from country to country. In Brazil, for example, having a formal employment contract

under the Consolidation of Labour Laws or holding a permanent position as a public servant provides legal guarantees in cases of illness, dismissal, leave, 13th-month salary, and retirement. By contrast, self-employed individuals, freelancers, service providers, or micro-entrepreneurs must arrange their own social protections (micro-entrepreneurs receive some social security coverage but are not considered formal employees). However, a formal contract does not guarantee high-quality employment, nor does it shield one from casualisation — and this is precisely what the *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro* reveals. In 2021, 56.3% of participating journalists held formally contracted, stable jobs. Women were slightly more prevalent in unstable positions, although the difference was not statistically significant.

In Brazil, journalistic work is regulated by law: five hours per day, six days a week, with up to seven hours daily permitted if additional remuneration is stipulated in the contract. In practice, however, a considerable number of Brazilian journalists exceed these limits: 43.3% of men and 41.6% of women. In both groups, the remaining respondents work up to eight hours per day.

Although women work slightly shorter hours than their male colleagues, they undertake more overtime: 74% of women regularly work beyond their contracted hours, compared with 68.3% of men. In both cases, this is an important indicator of labour overload, with potential medium- and long-term consequences for professional performance, and physical and mental health.

Among those working in the media, for example, the combination of lower contracted hours and higher levels of overtime among women may be explained by their underrepresentation in leadership positions or by the higher proportion of men in the press. Another possible explanation is that many women require more flexible schedules and positions that allow them to balance work with domestic responsibilities and caregiving.

Within the media sector, 47.6% of men occupy leadership roles (such as editorial chiefs, coordinators, or directors) or positions with some influence over decision-making (editors, columnists, anchors). By contrast, 37.4% of women journalists hold management positions, while 53.1% occupy the “shop floor” of the newsroom in roles such as reporting, production, and layout (Table 3). Due to the specificities of each sector, it was not possible to determine the hierarchical level of those working outside the media or in academia.

	FEMALE	MALE
Journalists overall	53.1%	45.7%
Reporter	41.2%	33.0%
Photojournalist	0.3%	2.7%
Video journalist	0.2%	1.8%
Correspondent	0.5%	0.4%
Illustrator	0.0%	0.1%
Producer	7.1%	5.2%
Social media manager	3.6%	1.9%
Layout designer	0.2%	0.6%

Sub-editor/Deputy with mid-level decision-making authority	25.5%	31.2%
Editor (including executive and assistant editors)	20.9%	25.9%
Consultant	0.9%	0.4%
Columnist	1.1%	1.6%
Editorialist	0.0%	0.9%
Anchor	2.6%	2.4%
Leadership/high decision-making power	11.9%	16.4%
Coordinator	4.8%	5.2%
Head of newsroom	2.9%	5.1%
Director/manager	4.2%	6.1%
Other	9.6%	6.3%

Table 3. Primary role reported by media workers — breakdown by gender

Note. Prepared by the authors based on data from the *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro 2021* (Lima et al., 2022).

These factors help explain one of the main gender inequalities observed in the study, as indicated by the analysis of the indicators: “salary — remuneration and capacity to cover monthly expenses”. In 2021, 62.7% of women earned up to five minimum wages (R\$ 5,500.00), compared with 54.5% of men in the same lower salary brackets (Table 4). In other words, women journalists have lower incomes despite being the group with the highest level of professional qualifications.

	FEMALE	MALE
No income	1.1%	1.6%
Up to R\$ 1,100	4.8%	3.7%
R\$ 1,101–2,200	13.3%	8.7%
R\$ 2,201–3,300	14.0%	12.9%
R\$ 3,301–4,400	13.2%	12.8%
R\$ 4,401–5,500	16.3%	14.7%
R\$ 5,501–11,000	25.8%	29.2%
R\$ 11,001–22,000	8.5%	11.7%
Above R\$ 22,001	1.7%	2.8%
Prefer not to say	1.4%	1.8%

Table 4. Monthly gross income from work as a journalist

Note. Prepared based on data from the *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro 2021* (Lima et al., 2022).

Overall, Brazilian journalists' income is insufficient to cover basic living expenses independently. For context, according to the Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies (Departamento Intersindical de Estatística e Estudos Socioeconômicos, n.d.), in October 2021, a monthly income of R\$ 5,886.50 was necessary to meet basic expenses. Only 39.1% of Brazilian journalists earned this amount, while the remainder were unable to cover their costs, either occasionally or consistently.

Among women, 63.8% were unable to meet their monthly expenses from their journalistic salary alone (either sometimes or always), with nearly 40% unable to cover basic costs under any circumstances without external support, additional work, or running into debt at the end of the month — a situation reported by 30% of men.

4.3. HEALTH

Brazilian women journalists exhibit higher levels of illness and exposure to workplace violence than their male colleagues. However, both groups are weakened and under intense pressure due to precarious working conditions, violence, and moral, physical, verbal, and psychological abuse experienced in the profession. As this is a demographic study rather than an epidemiological or mental health study, it is not possible to determine whether all reported mental health issues are directly attributable to the respondents' work. Some indicators show a direct relationship with employment conditions, but are not restricted to the individual's current occupation. Consequently, these issues may be occurring now or have occurred in the past.

According to the study, 69.8% of women report feeling stressed at work, and nearly a quarter reported having been diagnosed with a work-related mental health problem (Table 5). Within this group, there is also a higher proportion of respondents with a history of stress and depression diagnoses. However, it is not possible to determine the main cause: whether it is directly related to occupational activity.

	TYPE	FEMALE	MALE
Directly related to work	Feels stressed at work	69.8%	61.3%
	Diagnosed with a mental disorder linked to work	24.8%	13.6%
	Work leave due to repetitive strain injury/work-related musculoskeletal disorder	8.7%	5.7%
	Diagnosed with repetitive strain injury/work-related musculoskeletal disorder	23.4%	15.4%
Not confirmed to be related to work	Received a diagnosis of stress	41.1%	24.8%
	Prescribed antidepressants	38.1%	22.1%

Table 5. Professionals reporting mental and/or physical illness

Note. Prepared based on data from the *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro 2021* (Lima et al., 2022).

4.4. EXPOSURE TO RISKS

The *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro 2021* (Lima et al., 2022) sought to provide an initial overview of health and violence among journalism professionals. Beyond the high levels of illness reported across all participants, the study highlights a neglected issue in organisations that is particularly complex to investigate in depth: workplace violence. This problem becomes especially evident when the data are stratified by gender. Brazilian journalists are daily exposed to different types of risks; however, women show the highest

proportion of abuse and harassment within the workplace, while men are the majority in indicators of external violence (i.e., incidents that occur during work or as a result of it).

Almost half (45.8%) of Brazilian women journalists reported having experienced some form of humiliation or embarrassment from managers or superiors. This issue is reported more frequently by professionals working in the media (46.8%) and outside it (45.7%), with a lower — but still significant — incidence among academics (39.8%). This pattern may be related to the nature of the work, as academic activity, in theory, offers greater autonomy and decision-making freedom.

Table 6 shows that women are more exposed to violence occurring in interpersonal relationships with newsroom colleagues or direct supervisors, or with external actors connected to professional practice within their employing institution (i.e., in the workplace). In contrast, in situations related to work where the location is unspecified, or it is unclear whether it occurred during or outside working hours (i.e., work-related), men are the most exposed.

	TYPE	FEMALE	MALE
In the workplace	Sexual harassment at work	17.4%	2.8%
	Embarrassment by managers or superiors	45.8%	39.3%
	Moral/psychological harassment at work	43.1%	37.2%
	Verbal violence at work	33.8%	31.3%
	Digital surveillance/monitoring by superiors	28.2%	25.7%
Related to work	Stopped doing an activity out of fear of retaliation	34.6%	35.6%
	Online attacks or threats	23.6%	36.3%
	Work under coercion	17.3%	18.5%
	Physical aggression at work or as a result of it	2.5%	2.7%

Table 6. Professionals who reported experiencing some form of workplace violence or violence related to work

Note. Prepared based on data from the *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro 2021* (Lima et al., 2022).

Proportionally, women journalists are also the most affected by digital surveillance and monitoring carried out by their supervisors (Table 6). This issue slightly affects women in the media (30%) more than their colleagues in other areas of journalism (26% outside media and 23% in teaching). This may be a consequence of remote work, which was still the reality for around 60% of participants at the time of data collection, and which required the use of management and communication apps and software that could facilitate supervisory control over employees and collaborators. Slightly over 40% of respondents had experienced some form of moral harassment at work — among teaching staff, the rate was 45%. In addition, one-third of women reported being subjected to verbal abuse. In this variable, journalists working in media and outside media were the most affected (35.4% and 33.1%, respectively). It can therefore be observed that this is another type of violence, linked to those most exposed to interactions with sources, supervisors, and clients — relationships that usually involve intensive negotiation over priorities, in addition to tight deadlines. Another data point related to the workplace that highlights

women's insecurity in these spaces is sexual harassment: overall, 17.4% reported having been victims of this type of violence while at work. Among women in the media, this rate rises by 1%.

On the other hand, work-related risks affecting journalists, whether internal or external, are proportionally similar across the two groups. Men have slightly higher rates of physical aggression at work and of practices involving self-censorship or restrictions on freedom of expression. These problems are present across all groups analysed, with a slight predominance among those working in media, where men and women have almost identical rates, with a maximum difference of 1%.

Table 7 shows the proportion of respondents who reported being targeted by online attacks or threats. Proportionally, this type of abuse affects men more, contrasting with national and international studies on the subject, in which women are usually the primary targets. In the *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro 2021* (Lima et al., 2022), it is evident that this is a more common problem among media professionals.

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE	FEMALE	MALE
Overall — all profiles	23.6%	36.3%
Media	31.8%	42.3%
Outside the media	15.0%	21.7%
Academia	18.3%	30.2%

Table 7. People who reported having experienced some form of virtual attack or threat due to their work

Note. Prepared based on data from the *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro 2021* (Lima et al., 2022).

A possible explanatory hypothesis for why threats are more frequent among male journalists is that they hold more opinion, anchor, and managerial positions, or work in news desks that tend to generate greater public disagreement, such as politics and environmental reporting, which could lead to increased exposure of their names and images online. However, additional information would be required to determine the reasons for this difference compared with other studies on the topic.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Although more than half of the participants in this study held formal employment, whether under a work contract or through public service exams, the entire group is exposed to precarious working conditions and various occupational risks. When investigating which dimensions of the casualisation of labour and work-related risks most strongly affect women journalists in Brazil, we observed that they are proportionally more subject to a generalised pattern of violence. This begins with threats to their livelihood, continues with the devaluation of professional qualifications, and culminates in physical and mental health issues, alongside multiple forms of harassment and abuse.

Within the “labour conditions” group, the indicators of precariousness that weigh most heavily on women are “salary — remuneration and capacity to cover monthly

expenses” and “working hours — particularly overtime”. In the “health” group, female journalists are more affected than their male colleagues across all observed indicators, particularly work-related stress, mental health diagnoses, and repetitive strain/musculoskeletal disorders linked to work activity. In the “exposure to risks” group, the dimensions that affect women most are those directly associated with violence within the workplace (moral, sexual, and verbal harassment, coercion, surveillance, and self-censorship).

Together, these factors reveal structural gender inequality in Brazilian society. There is a clear disregard for professional qualifications in the labour market: women have higher rates of specialisation and training but remain a minority in managerial positions or roles with medium levels of autonomy. Moreover, women’s career continuity is still conditioned by reproductive life, which can be considered an indicator of gendered violence and imposes an invisible burden. While the journalism career is brief in general, it is even shorter for women. Justifying women’s shorter tenure as simply a consequence of the profession’s dynamics obscures the structural biases against women who are — or potentially could become — mothers or married.

Another factor reflecting structural gender inequality is economic violence (when livelihood is jeopardised), which affects women far more than men. Among Brazilian journalists, women earn less and consequently have greater difficulty meeting basic expenses. Even those holding two or more jobs struggle to sustain themselves on a journalist’s salary. The high proportion of women reporting being unable to meet their expenses “frequently” or “always” is particularly concerning. This can place them in a position of heightened social vulnerability, affecting their ability to invest in education, leisure, health, or free time, and may also increase the risk of remaining in abusive relationships due to financial hardship.

This context may help to explain a shift in the profile of Brazilian journalists between 2012 and 2021, as observed by Kikuti Dancosky et al. (2022). When examining the proportion of men and women, the authors identified a decrease in the number of women working in the press (media workers), contrary to Pontes’s (2017) findings, which indicated women’s predominance in the sector, linked to their greater presence in undergraduate journalism programmes. In less than a decade, this trend was reversed, despite the proportion of women in higher education having remained stable. Kikuti Dancosky et al. (2022) argue that women are concentrated in entry-level positions in journalism, such as reporting and production, and are consequently disproportionately affected by mass layoffs. In addition, the increased workload imposed on those who remain in the sector may be unmanageable, for example, for a woman who also bears care responsibilities, leading her either to resign or to be dismissed. Finally, low wages (combined with the inability to meet basic expenses) push out of the profession precisely those who depend primarily on their income to survive, such as single mothers, Black women, and/or women from peripheral urban areas who lack family support or additional sources of income.

Another concerning factor identified is that women journalists face a greater risk of experiencing work-related violence within workplace settings than outside them. They are more exposed to discrimination based on gender or sexuality. They are more

vulnerable to risks often rendered invisible by workplace dynamics, such as intimidation, verbal abuse, and different forms of harassment. In this sense, it is possible to observe structural forms of violence masked by professional routines that normalise harassment, discrimination, and various types of abuse.

This is consistent with studies indicating that sexual violence against women in Brazil more frequently occurs in private spaces, such as the home, and is perpetrated by individuals known to the victim. In the case of women workers, harassment may be committed by supervisors, colleagues, or sources. It can take multiple forms, ranging from attempts at “seduction” embedded in power relations, to intimidation, sanctions, the devaluation of women’s work, and even insults or other explicit forms of violence — often treated as inherent to the profession’s routine or to the “personality” of the aggressor. The failure to recognise such behaviours as harassment is one factor that may explain the perpetuation of gender-based violence in newsrooms and other journalistic workplaces. Another is underreporting, driven by fear of losing one’s job or of being discredited by colleagues and superiors (Barton & Storm, 2014; Mazotte & Toste, 2017).

Consequently, work harms those who perform it, particularly individuals who do not identify as male. When analysing “how insecure and precarious working conditions affect the physical and mental health of women journalists?”, it becomes clear that the various pressures and vulnerabilities to which women are exposed increase the risk of both physical and mental ill health. They are in a position of greater structural fragility than their male colleagues, due to a combination of factors linked to professional and financial undervaluation, gender discrimination/inequality, and exposure to violence. Women journalists experience emotional strain and constitute the group most affected by stress, harassment, and managerial control.

The data from the *Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro 2021* (Lima et al., 2022) provide an initial overview of the issue, but also highlight one of the often-invisible consequences of labour casualisation for women: work-related factors compound structural inequalities, resulting in heightened vulnerability to physical and mental ill health. Although a definitive link between ill health, violence, and labour casualisation cannot be established, these findings serve as a warning.

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND STUDY LIMITATIONS

Labour casualisation in journalism results from the consistent decline in both work quality and quality of life over recent decades. This trend intensified during the digitalisation of newsrooms and the arrival of the internet — between the 1980s and 2000s — and continues today, taking on new forms. Although precarious work affects journalists in general, it disproportionately impacts women. In this sense, precarity is gendered.

The analysed data indicate that labour casualisation in journalism affects women disproportionately, deepening historical gender inequalities. Productivist logic, the unequal sexual division of labour, and structural violence intersect, limiting opportunities, eroding professional trajectories, and compromising the physical and mental health of these professionals.

To continue this research, it is crucial to incorporate intersectional approaches into the analysis of journalistic working conditions. Factors such as ethnicity, class, territory, motherhood, and gender identity can be included to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the multiple forms of exclusion and violence faced by women in the field of communication.

Being a woman, being married, and having children seems incompatible with the profession. While this issue has been widely noted in previous research, it remains relevant to reflect on: how can this situation be reversed, forcing professionals at a pivotal stage in their careers to leave the profession or reinvent themselves, only to face a new form of discrimination — ageism — affecting mid-career professionals entering new fields? Complementary studies focusing on professional trajectories could provide further evidence on the reasons behind career transitions, helping to understand better what motivates men and women to leave the profession.

Another limitation inherent to a profile-based study like this is that, as an online questionnaire, it does not allow for a deeper exploration of nuances that may obscure recurrent, intertwined structural problems. In this sense, research on labour precarity in journalism needs to go beyond objective indicators and include subjective, symbolic, and relational aspects of work.

Formulating questions that enable a deeper understanding of violations of individual and collective human rights within the workplace — and how these affect different worker profiles — is challenging. New research could also support more in-depth analyses of diversity, media plurality, and ethical issues related to professional routines. Along the same lines, it is important to design studies that specifically consider non-binary people, whose experiences remain largely invisible, thereby broadening the connections between gender and labour casualisation.

From a methodological standpoint, several notable limitations should be highlighted: (a) as the survey relies on voluntary participation, there is a risk of some bias in the results due to the overrepresentation of certain social strata over others — despite efforts to obtain a representative and regionally balanced sample through the research network involved; (b) due to the absence of a specific database for journalists currently active in the labour market, the sampling frame was based on the available data (professional registration records issued by the Ministry of Labour between 2000 and 2019). It was not possible to filter out cases of career abandonment, death, retirement, or territorial mobility of registered journalists.

Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the study captures only a single point in time, without allowing for tracking of professional trajectories. These limitations underscore the need for complementary studies that explore subjective, intersectional, and longitudinal aspects of journalists' working conditions.

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