

# Staying sane in maddening times. Journalism, mental health and the pandemic

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Small sample of 73 journalists

Surveyed in June 2020

63 response rate (higher than expected)



All respondents worked for large established news media.

Average of 18 years experience. In good physical health.

Only 4 percent were specialist health reporters.



70 percent suffered some levels of psychological distress.

26 percent have clinically significant anxiety (worry, insomnia, poor concentration, feeling on edge)



# Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Found in war correspondents and journalists covering natural disasters and terror attacks.



# The global frontline



11 percent of journalists covering Covid 19 report symptoms of PTSD, which include recurrent intrusive thoughts and memories of a traumatic COVID-19-related event, a desire to avoid recollections of the event, and feelings of guilt, fear, anger, horror and shame.



# Reporting in a time of Covid

## Misuse of Emergency Legislation

- Bypassing parliament
- Draconian “Fake News” laws
- Vastly increased powers of surveillance that will not be rolled back (source protection at risk)
- Polarised societies
- Falling trust in journalists
- Revoking visas
- Limiting access



Sixty percent report working longer hours since the pandemic and 60 percent noted more demand for stories because of the pandemic.  
Plus demands of childcare and domestic duties.



## Moral Injury

In many countries journalists say they fear they are unable to do their job properly, in the absence of reliable information. One respondent wrote: “I am more stressed out because I am unable to cover the outbreak in my country as other countries in the west have done. I feel like a hypocrite because I am only allowed to follow what the government tells me to and I am not able to shed light on how the rest of the country is handling this outbreak.”



45 percent of those surveyed knew a journalist who had fallen ill. 2 knew of a journalist who had died from the virus.



What helps?

Counselling: 52 percent of respondents had been offered some sort of access to counselling and those who received it are much less likely to have anxiety or PTSD.



Solidarity.

Support

Recognition that work, home and travel have  
changed.

