LEGAL PRESSURE ON JOURNALISTS AND EDITORIAL LEADERSHIP

2026

Concerns about legal pressure

45% say that fear of legal pressure directly affects their work.

- Even more thorough fact-checking
- Even more careful wording in media and interviews
- Consulting an editor or manager in advance

Editorial leadership

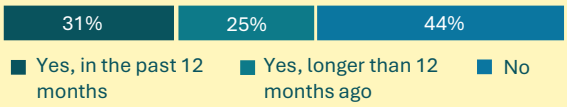
97% consciously consider the legal risks associated with the work of journalists

Definition of legal pressure

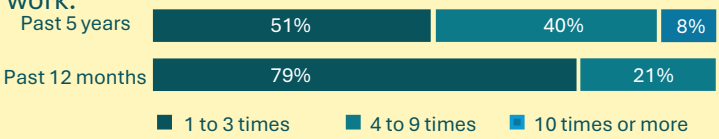
The use of legal measures, such as legal demand letters (to prevent publication, demand a correction, or have publications removed) or threats of litigation, aimed at intimidating a journalist, silencing them, or forcing them into self-censorship.

Experience with legal pressure

56% have at some point experienced some form of legal pressure in connection with their work.



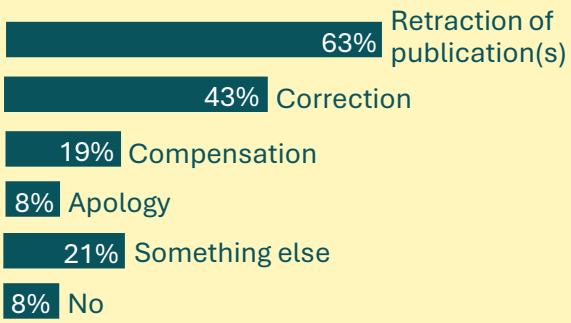
Legal pressure: how often?



By whom was legal pressure exerted?

- **50%** private individuals
- **25%** companies
- **8%** government

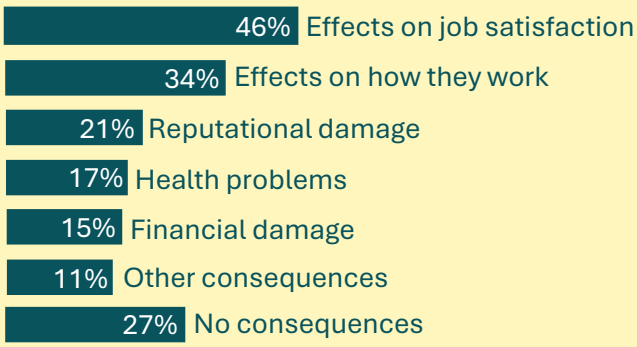
Were any demands made?



What was the response?

- **49%** made no changes
- **31%** (partly) met the demands
- **3%** sought legal assistance
- **46%** responded in another way

Consequences of legal pressure?



Ipsos i&O

PERSVEILIG

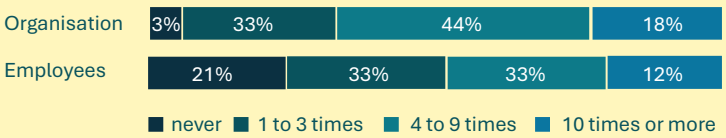
Commissioned by PersVeilig, Ipsos I&O conducted this study among journalists and editorial leadership. The questionnaire was distributed via email to members of the NVJ (Dutch Association of Journalists) and VVOJ (Dutch-Flemish Association for Investigative Journalists), through an open link on social media, and among PersVeilig's network. The study was carried out between 2 June and 28 June 2026. In addition, six in-depth interviews were conducted with journalists and senior editors who had personally faced legal pressure.

LEGAL PRESSURE ON JOURNALISTS AND EDITORIAL LEADERSHIP

2026

Experience with legal pressure – Editorial leadership

Legal pressure: how often?



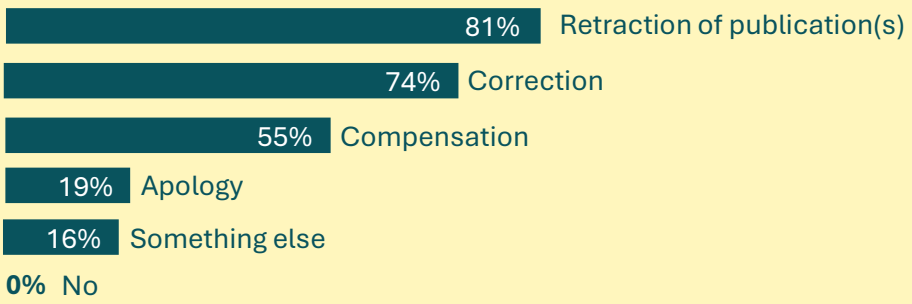
By whom was legal pressure exerted?

42% private individuals

19% companies

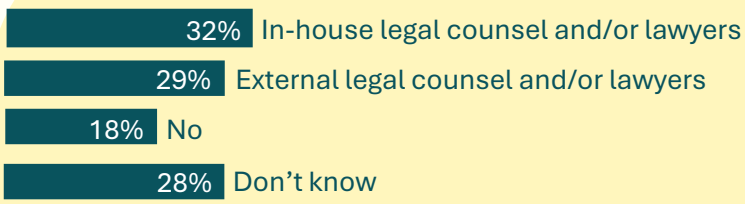
3% government

Were any demands made?

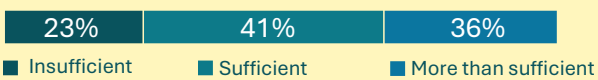


Support

Does the media company have legal counsel and/or lawyers to challenge legal pressure?



Trust in the Dutch legal system



Impact of legal pressure

45% think their employer or client takes sufficient measures

45% feel sufficiently supported against legal pressure

35% work more carefully because of legal pressure

27% say legal pressure influences work decisions

77% have <u>never</u> considered quitting journalism because of legal pressure

74% say that the government should change or pass legislation to protect journalists

What measures could the government take to protect journalists?

1. Anti-SLAPP legislation and counteracting misuse of procedures
2. Financial and legal support
3. Strengthening freedom of the press and the position of journalists

PERSVEILIG Ipsos i&O

LEGAL PRESSURE ON JOURNALISTS AND EDITORIAL LEADERSHIP

2026

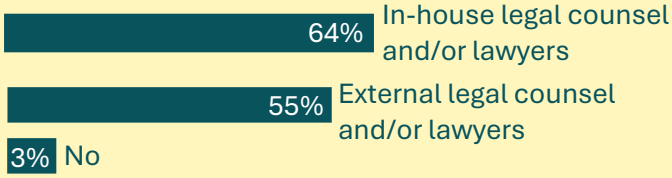
Support – Editorial leadership

Is there a procedure/protocol to report legal pressure?



82% have enough resources to challenge legal pressure

Does the media company have legal counsel and/or lawyers to challenge legal pressure?

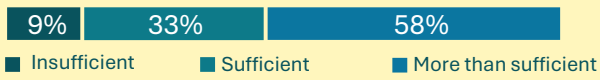


Help in challenging legal pressure

- 42% would like moral support
- 27% would like (free) legal aid or advice
- 15% would like financial support
- 12% would like other kinds of help
- 21% would not want any help
- 15% don't know

- Better anti-SLAPP legislation
- Support from the industry
- More clarity regarding their rights

Trust in the Dutch legal system



58% say that the government should change or pass legislation to protect journalists

What measures could the government take to protect journalists?

1. Protection against SLAPP cases
2. Protection against unfounded legal proceedings

Awareness of support organisations

- 75% are aware of PersVeilig and know what they do
- 17% are aware of Balie Persvrijheid and know what they do
- 15% are aware of Het Persvrijheidsfonds and know what they do
- 54% know that PersVeilig can offer support with legal pressure
- 8% have used their support

7.5 Rating of contact with PersVeilig (scale of 1-10)

Editorial leadership

- 18% are aware of Balie Persvrijheid and know what they do
- 21% are aware of Het Persvrijheidsfonds and know what they do
- 97% are aware of PersVeilig
- 63% have used their support

8.5 Rating of contact with PersVeilig (scale of 1-10)

PERSVEILIG Ipsos i&o