

Resilience under fire:

How can we best prepare
journalism students for
investigative work that
may involve online,
physical and legal threats?

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The Research

First Phase

Anonymous survey sent to investigative journalists in Italy and UK to assess the impacts of abuse and intimidation (digital, physical, and legal). Does this translate into self-censorship? And at what stage of the editorial process?

Second Phase

In-depth open interviews with 30 investigative journalists (15 in each country). The study will focus on both employed and freelance journalists to determine the support available and how organisational routines and autonomy differ.

Third Phase

Consultation with journalism academics to assess current teaching practices and how they can be implemented based on journalists' recommendations. These will be included in a practical toolkit/survival guide.

Preliminary findings

Why investigative journalism?

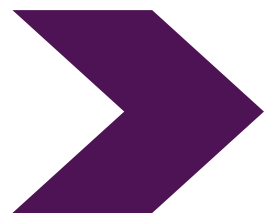
- Working in a niche sport and industry I felt that important issues were being ignored by journalists building their careers on being friendly and 'in' with those they write about. I wanted to go deep into certain issues to find out what the truth was behind them - good or bad (Freelancer, 5-10 years experience)
- To hold people in power to account for their actions and behaviour and help to maintain the public's faith in authority figures and big business (Employed, 5-10 years)
- Because our government and institutions simply cannot be trusted (Employed, 10-15 years)
- To expose malpractice and make things better (Freelancer, more than 20 years)
- Seeing people willingly mislead the public made me angry (Freelancer, 15-20 years)



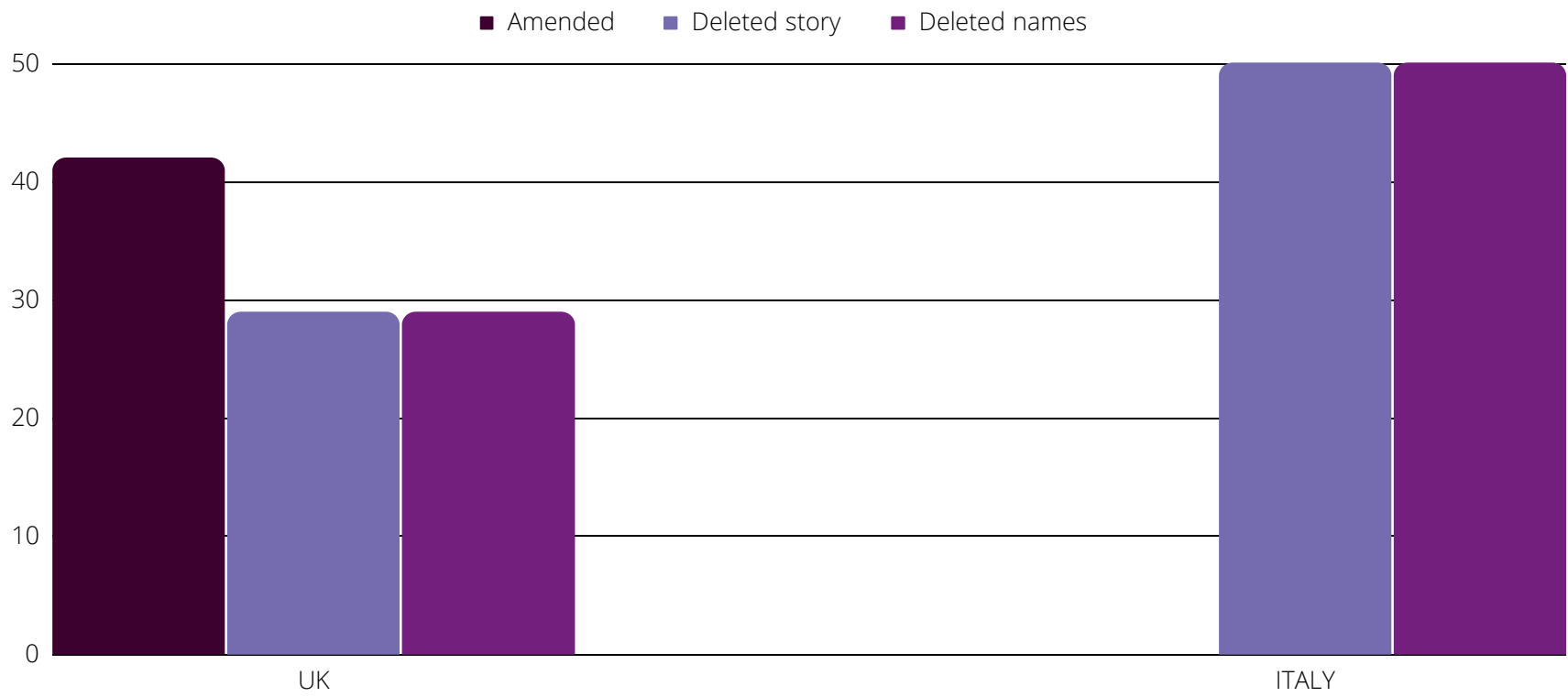
Libel Vs SLAPPs

- Not all libel lawsuits are SLAPPs. Students need to understand how to distinguish them and to act accordingly
- SLAPPs are not always based on defamation law, they can be on the ground of Privacy Law or GDPR
- The intent of the claimant is to create a chilling effect to silence the journalist
- Targets are intentionally isolated, for example a journalist could be sued (personally) for a post on Twitter rather than for the published story
- The lawsuit will trigger a wave of online abuse and threats
- Physical threats could follow with extreme consequences (Daphne Caruana Galizia)

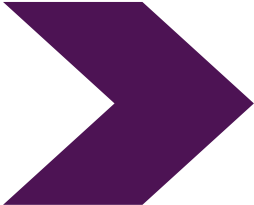
Have you (or your publisher) ever redacted accurate public interest stories as a consequence of abuse and intimidation?



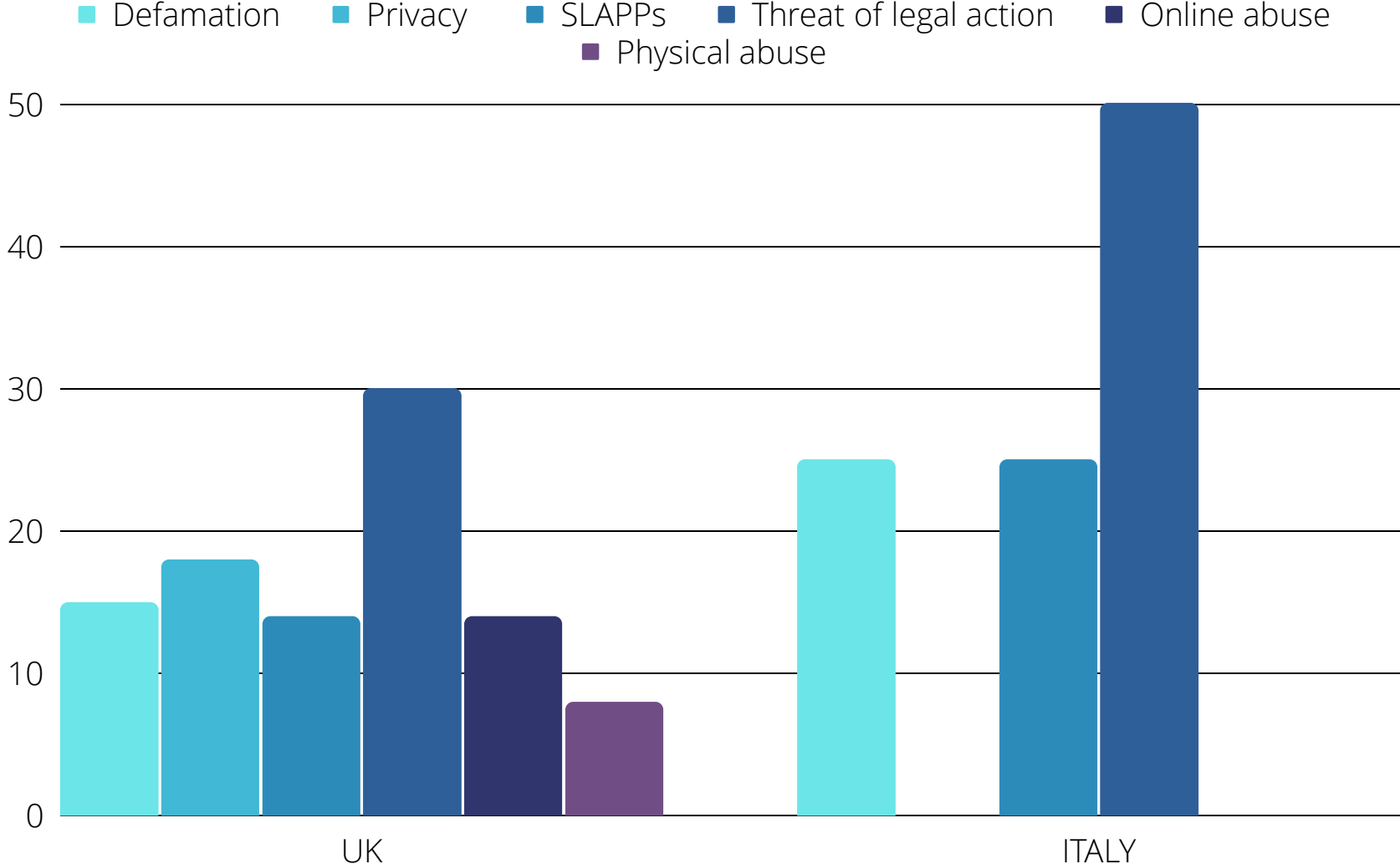
50% of UK participants answered YES
35% of Italy participants answered YES



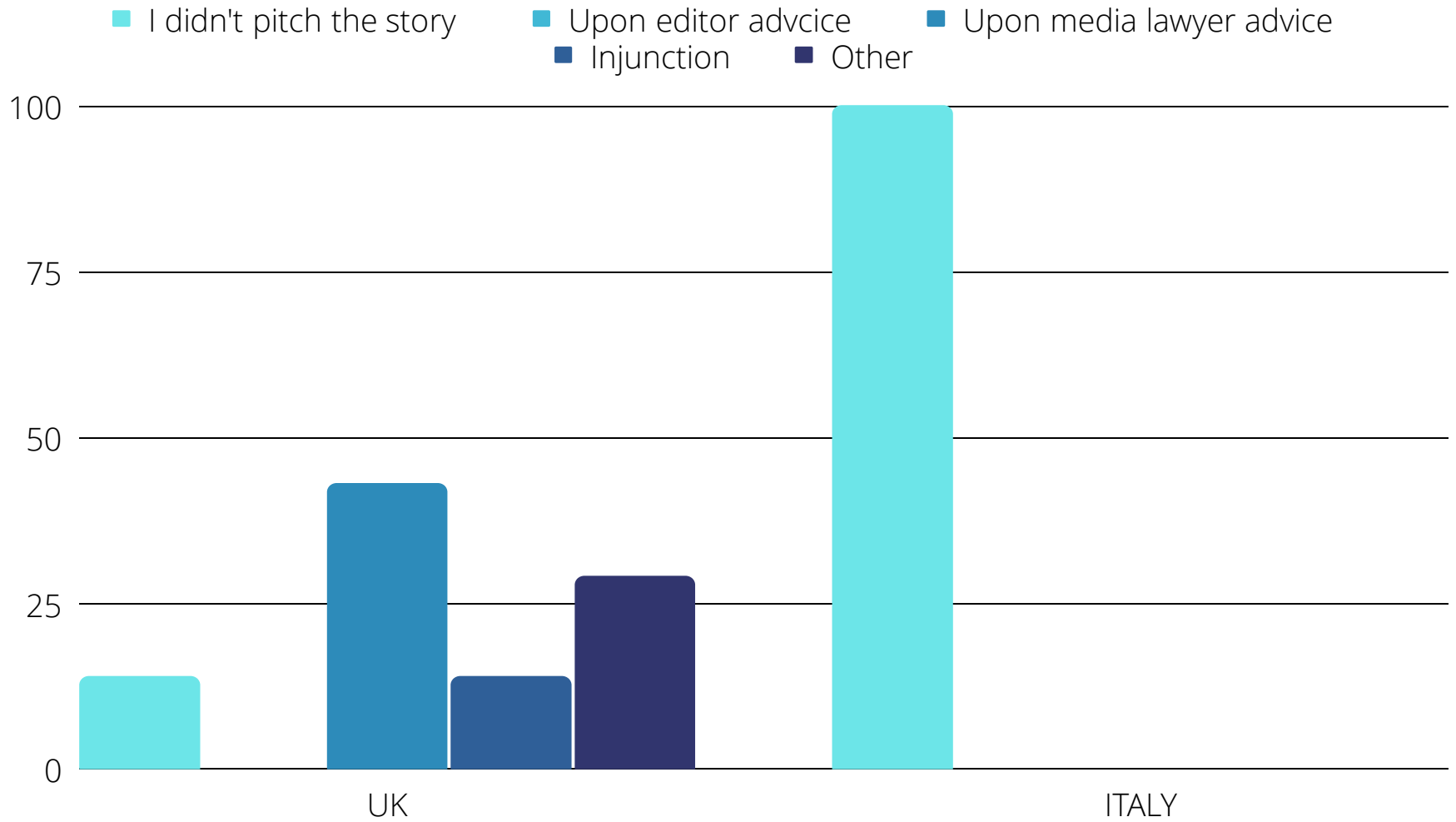
Have you ever abandoned a public interest story as a consequence of abuse and intimidation?



60% of UK participants answered YES
35% of Italy participants answered YES

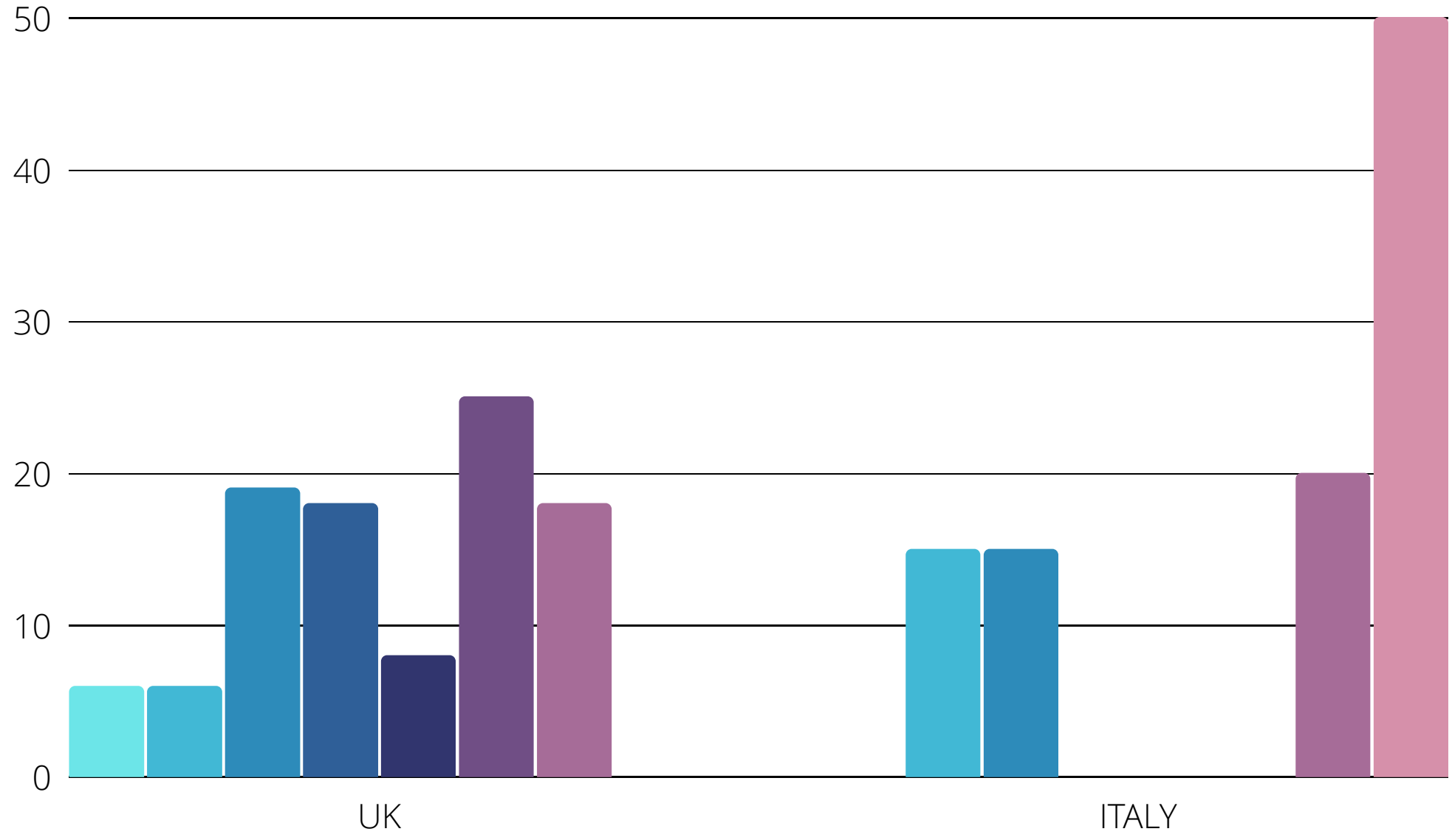



At what point did you abandon?



Participants' educational background


- Und Journ
- Und other
- Mast Journ
- Mast Other
- NCTJ Dip
- NCTJ NJQ
- Other
- Chartership





“Investigative journalism is
withering and is a pale
shadow of what it used to be.”

(Rob Edwards – The Ferret)

- From John Price (2017): Can The Ferret be a Watchdog?, Digital Journalism, DOI:10.1080/21670811.2017.1288582
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Trends

- More freelancing
- Collaboration
- Search for new models
- New opportunities / techniques

“...technology can regenerate the public sphere... offering new ways to critique power through investigative journalism”
(Carson 2020)

THE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM



Challenges for educators

- Lack of interest?
- Lack of jobs?
- Complexity

CISION
Jobs

Mirror & Daily Star, SEO Editor

Reach plc

Homeworking, London area

What can/should we do?

- Research techniques
- Rewards
- Resilience
- Resources

The image shows a composite of two web pages. The top page is the Rory Peck Trust website, featuring a teal header with the logo, a search bar, and a 'DONATE' button. The main content area is titled 'LEGAL FUND' and includes a paragraph: 'The Legal Fund has been established to ensure that freelance journalists can access legal assistance, even when they are unable to afford a lawyer or trial costs.' Below this is a section for 'INDEX ON CENSORSHIP' with a search bar and a navigation menu including 'ABOUT', 'CAMPAIGNS', 'AWARDS', 'EVENTS', 'MAGAZINE', 'CONTACT', 'DONATE', and '50 YEARS OF INDEX'. A banner image shows hands writing in a notebook with the text 'Facing a Slapps case? active tool to find out'. The bottom page is a Google Form titled 'REPORT A SLAPP' from the 'CASE' coalition. The form includes a header with the 'CASE' logo and the text 'REPORT A SLAPP', a user profile for 'john.price@sunderland.ac.uk', and several input fields for 'Name', 'Your Slapper', and 'Organisation (if applicable)'. The browser's address bar shows the form URL: 'docs.google.com/forms/d/1FajQJ5AHCLT87F7hZjH8ATEp3KSLmXVQCFYHmactQeK3yGQ4veform'.

Questions and suggestions:

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Link and QR Code to survey:

https://sunduni.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9zCJWR4CUhp2Aho

