



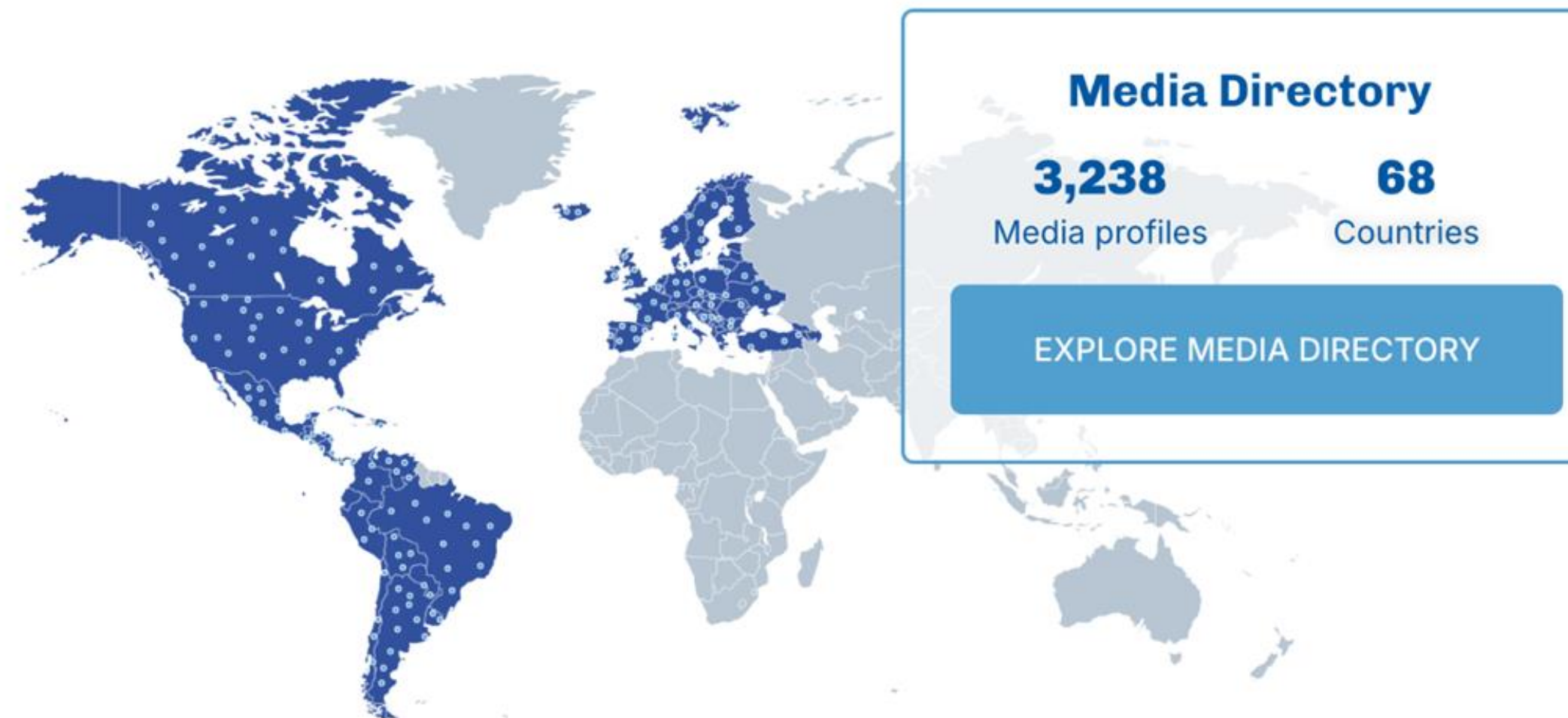
# PROJECT OASIS

GLOBAL RESEARCH ON DIGITAL NATIVE MEDIA

 SEMBRAMEDIA Google News Initiative



# Mapping independent digital media around the world



**Project Oasis** is a research effort to map independent digital media organizations, news creators and publishers-in-exile across 68 countries. You can use this effort to:

- **Discover the latest trends**, opportunities and threats affecting independent digital media in our global report.
- **Search more than 3,000 media profiles** with details on coverage areas, revenue sources, and other characteristics.

Research lead



Research partners



# Our Mission

To empower media leaders to publish **valuable information** with **independence** and journalistic integrity, and to create a **positive impact** on the communities they serve.





# Promotional partners

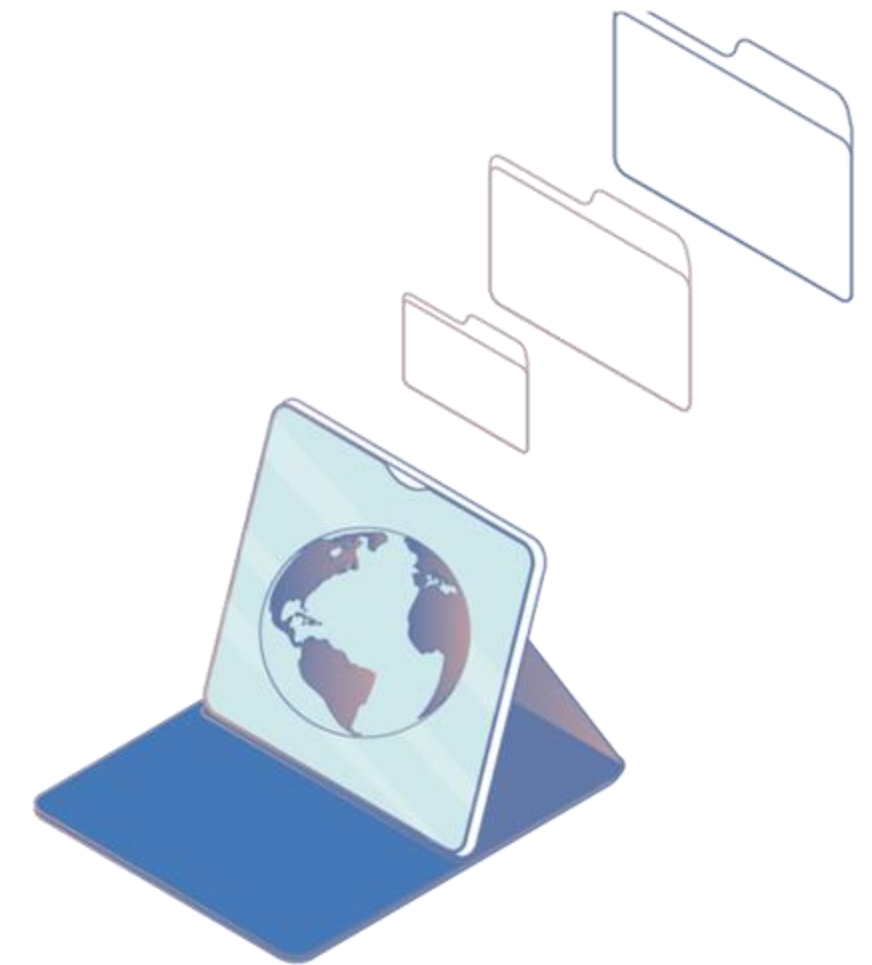


# Key findings and report highlights



# Project Oasis

- **Search** more than **3,000 profiles** from **68 countries** in the Global Digital Media Directory.
- **Discover the latest trends**, opportunities and threats affecting independent digital media in the report.



# Latin America

*Spanish-language media*

892

media profiles

21

countries

 **SEMBRA**MEDIA





# Brazil

*Portuguese-language media*

164

media profiles



# United States & Canada

1553  
media profiles

2  
countries



# Europe

*Media that publish in 36 languages*

633

media profiles

42

countries



# What are digital native media?



Initiatives that were started online and publish content exclusively or primarily on the internet.

Many were launched by “entrepreneurial journalists”

# Criteria for inclusion in the directory

- Started as digital native media organizations
- Published content for at least six months
- Create original content
- Serve the public interest
- Editorially independent
- Non-partisan
- Operate with transparency

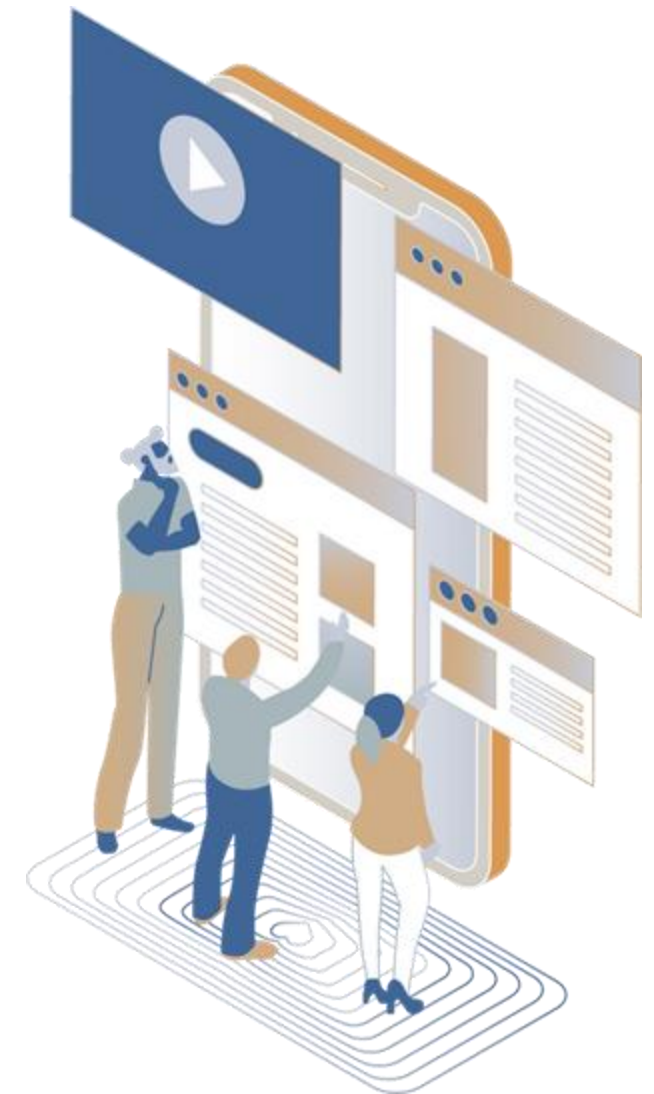




# They are a growing force, but they are also under attack

Many digital native media organizations have grown to become significant voices in the public debate in their countries.

But as they grow in influence, they also receive more legal, physical, and online threats.



# **Global highlights:**

## **Building sustainable news organizations**



# Led by mission-driven journalists...

Many are experienced journalists who left high-profile positions in traditional media or other reporting roles because they were told they couldn't cover stories that were "too controversial, too dangerous, or might offend powerful interests."



Raffaele Angius

[Indip](#)



Luz Mely Reyes

[Efecto Cocuyo](#)

# Working on tight budgets

## Europe

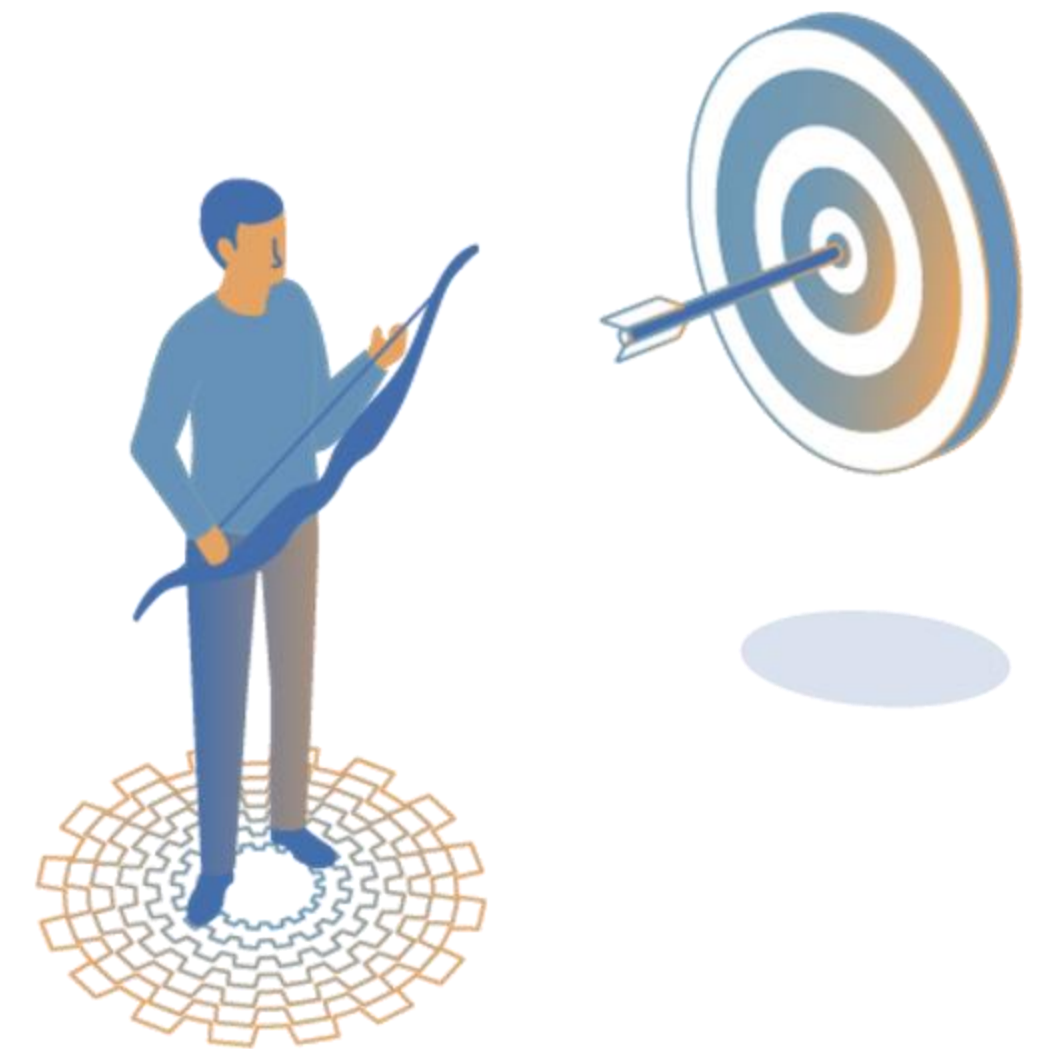
+50% of the organizations report **\$150,000** or less

## U.S. & Canada

+50% bring in **\$100,000** or less per year

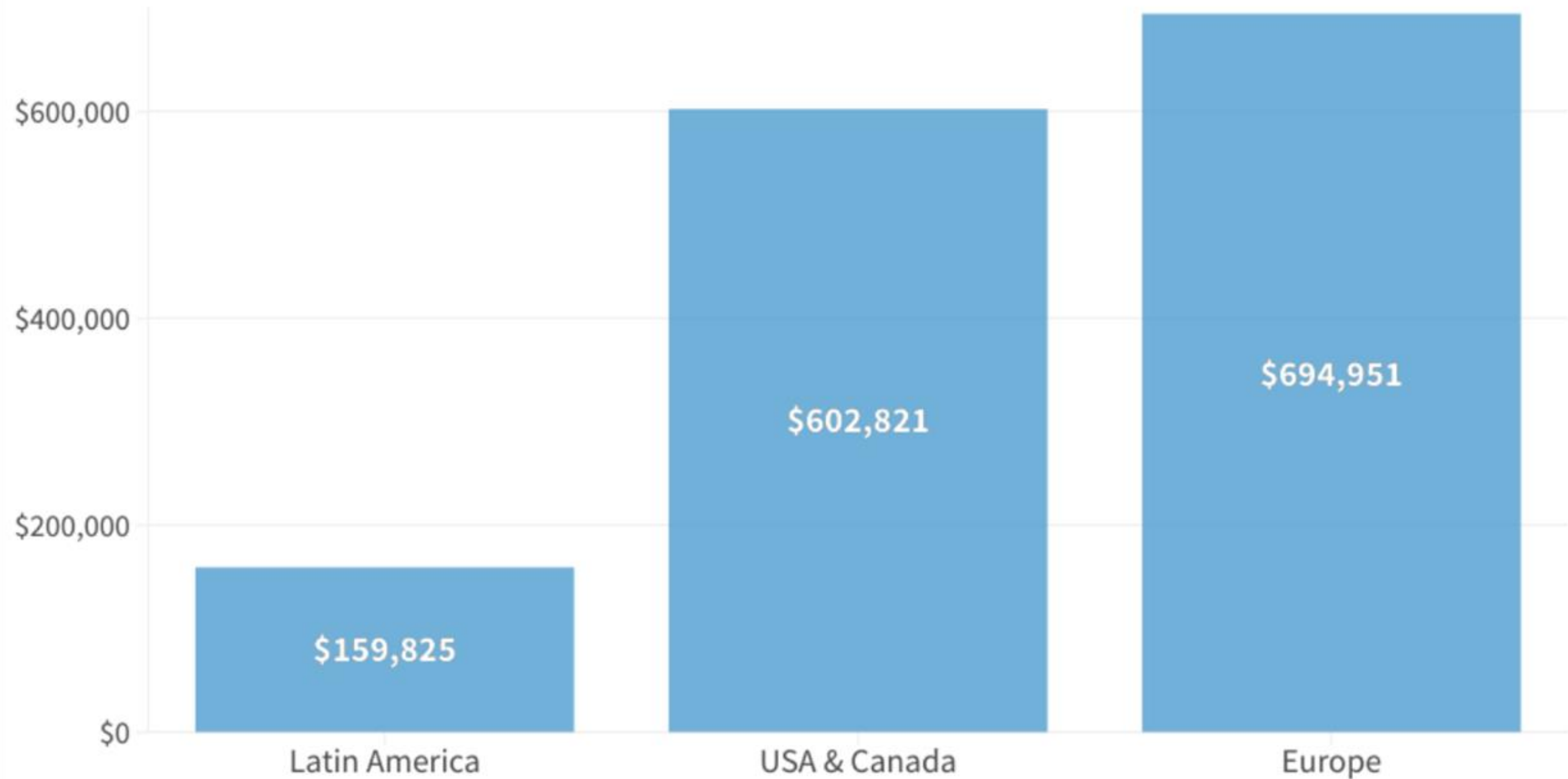
## Latin America

+50% report **\$20,000** or less



# European media report highest revenues

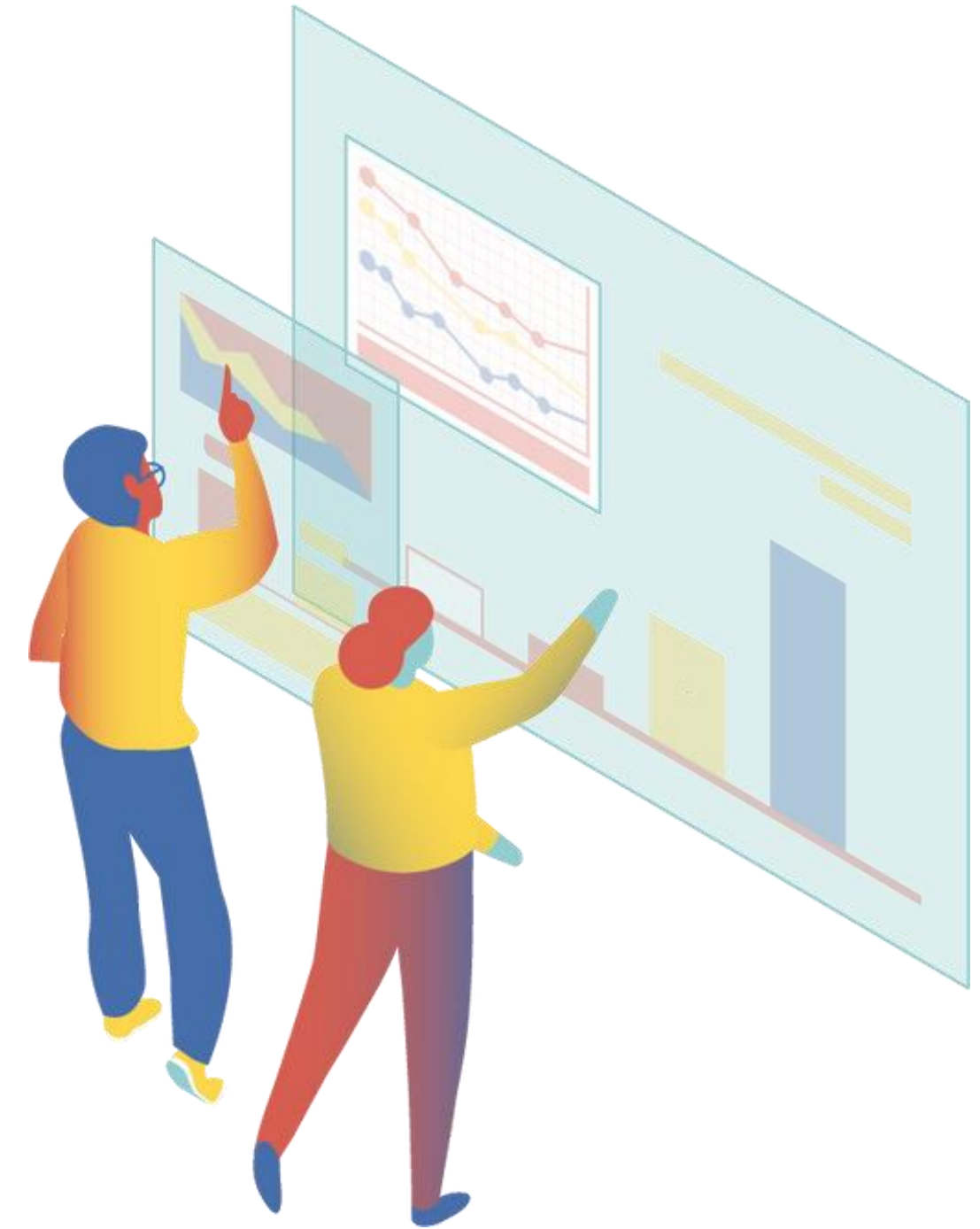
Average annual revenues reported by digital media in each region





# Revenues vary dramatically

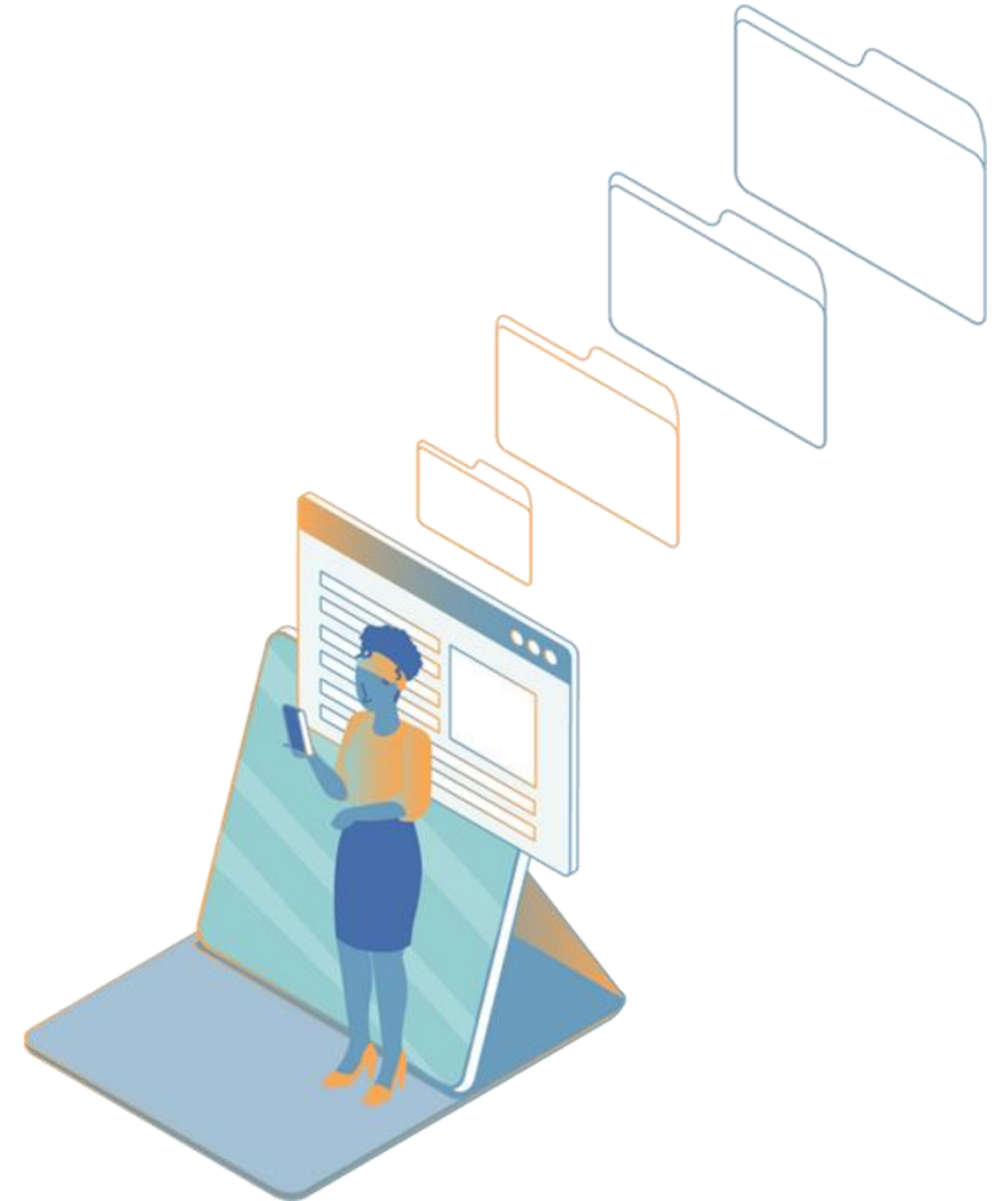
While some report revenues greater **than 1 million USD per year**, more than **10%** report no revenue at all.



# Grants and advertising are the primary funding sources

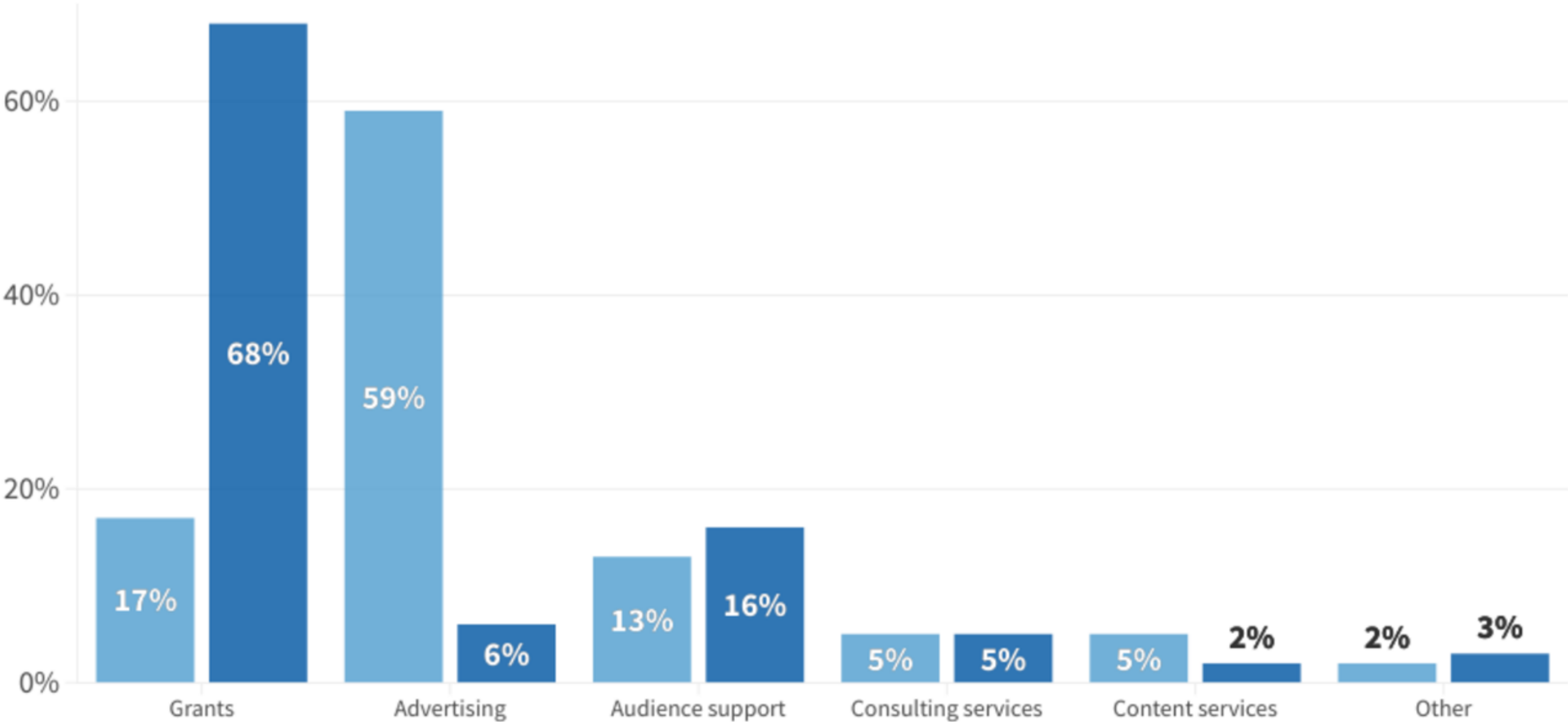
Nonprofits rely more on grants.

For profits earn more revenue from advertising.



# For-profit digital media report advertising as the primary revenue source; nonprofits primarily rely on grants

■ For-profit organizations ■ Nonprofit organizations



Based on data from Latin America and Europe.

## Grants

- Grants from private donor organisations
- Grants or investment from philanthropic organisations
- Grants from Google
- Grants from Meta
- Grants from corporations (excluding Google and Meta)
- Grants from foreign governments
- Grants from local and national government, and other connected governmental institutions or entities
- Grants from United Nations, UNESCO, and other agencies

## Advertising

- Google Adsense
- Programmatic ad networks (beyond adsense)
- Local advertising sold by own team
- National advertising sold by own team
- Advertising sold by an external agency
- Advertising for local governmental entities
- Affiliate advertising
- Branded content or native advertising
- Event sponsorships
- Youtube channel income
- Meta (Facebook) content income

## Consultancy services

- Services for for-profit clients
- Services for non-profit clients
- Services for foreign governments
- Services for local governmental entities
- Training services for journalists
- Training services for clients (non journalists)
- Product development and sales
- Technology development services

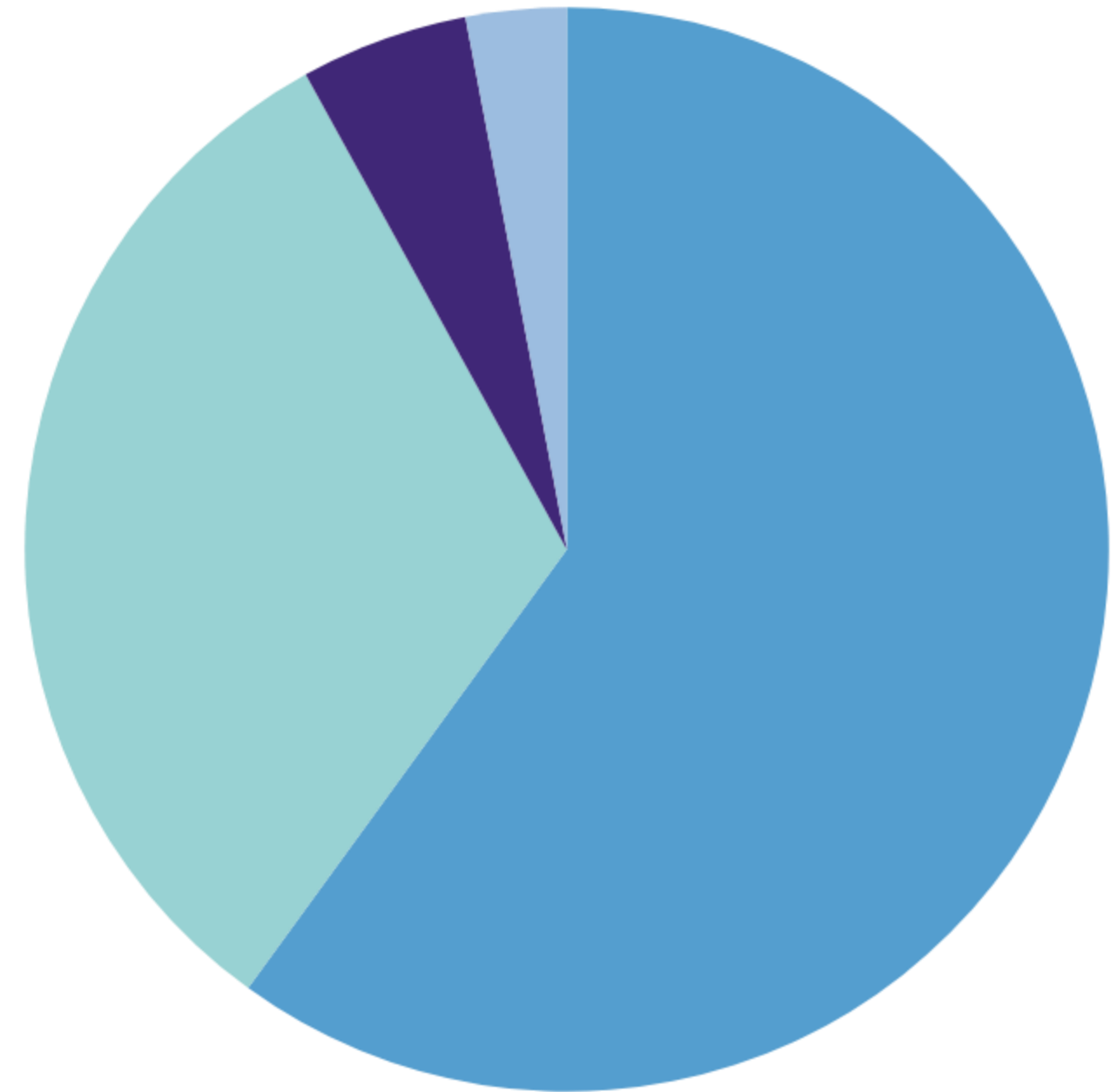
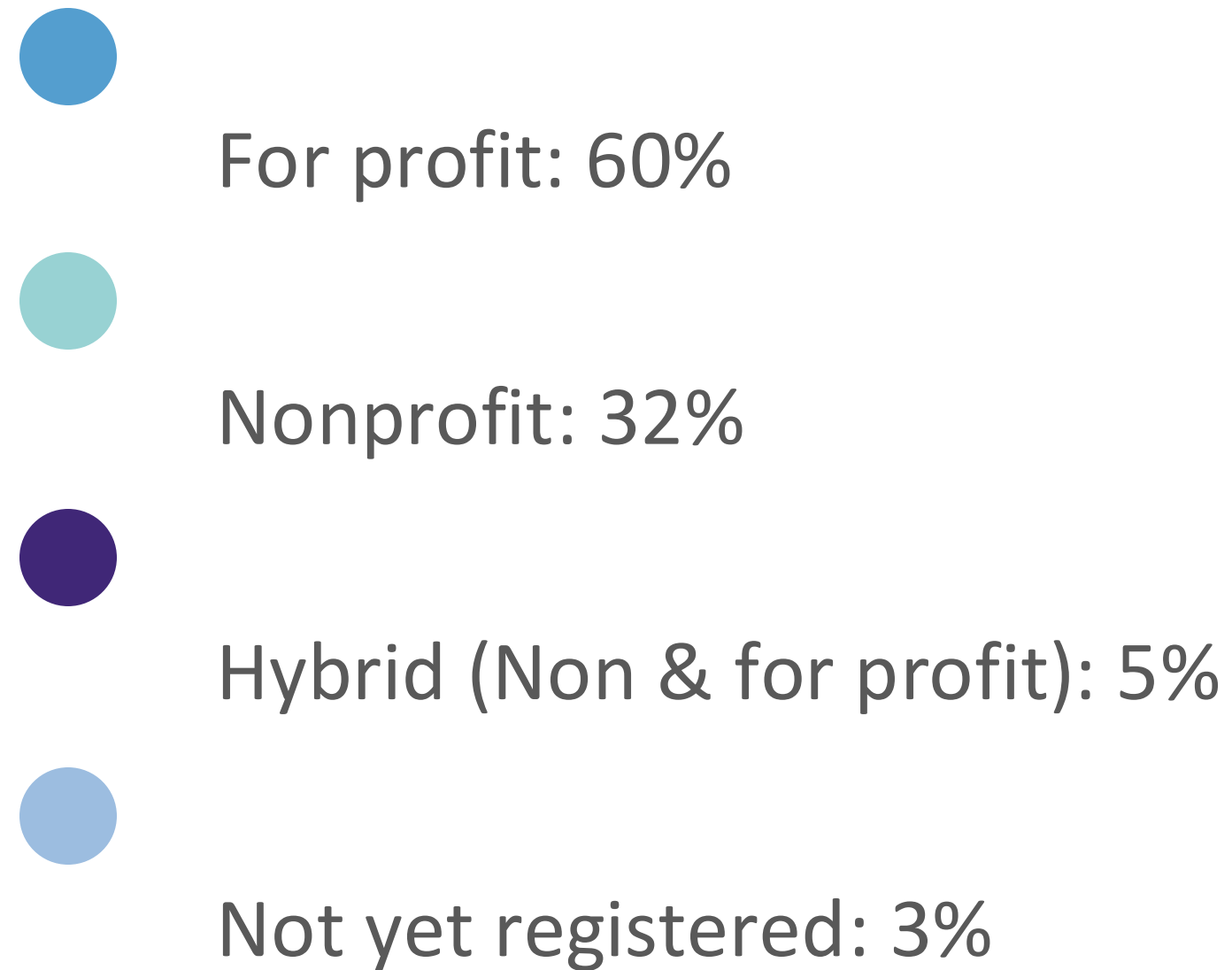
## Content services for others

- Content development for other media
- Content development for non-media clients
- Content development for NGOs

## Audience support/ reader revenue

- Memberships
- Website subscriptions
- Newsletter subscriptions
- Crowdfunding campaigns
- Individual donations
- Event ticket sales

# Organizations come in different shapes

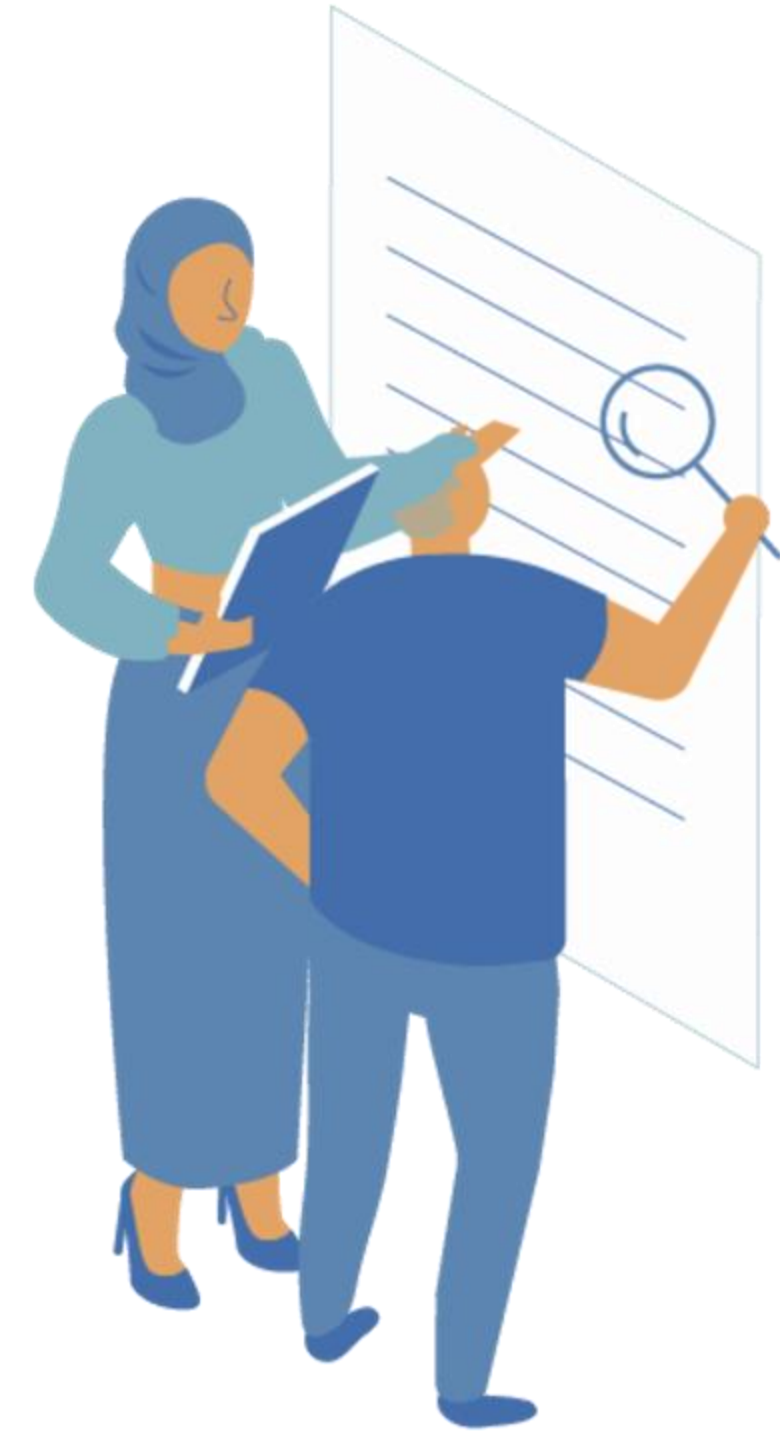




# Revenue diversity

Revenue diversity drives editorial independence and organizational resilience, but too many sources can complicate the business model and lead to diminishing returns, because they spread themselves too thin.

**Two to six sources appears optimal for these relatively small teams.**



# Is there a team in place?



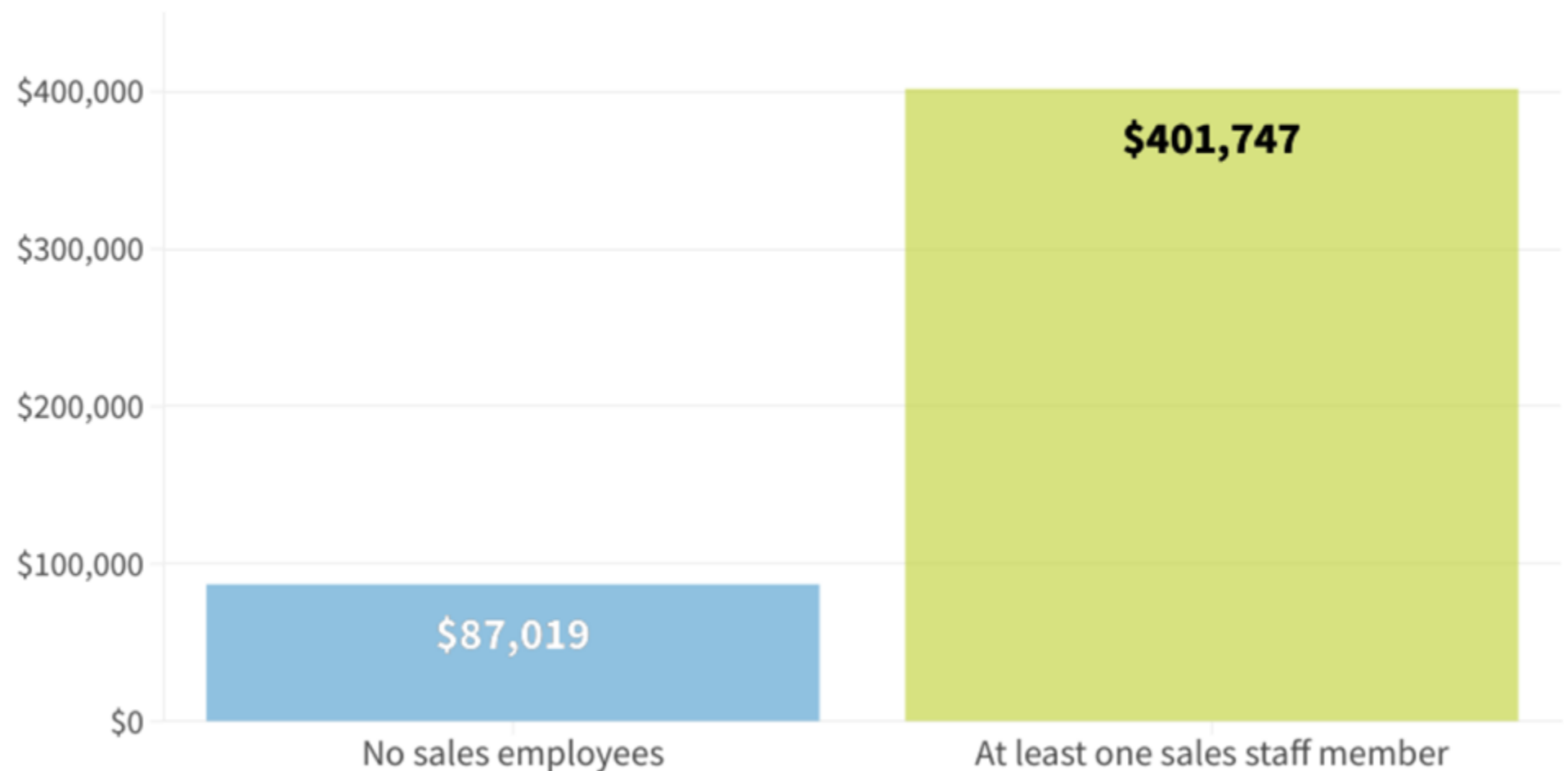
# Teams with business and sales skills earn more revenue

Those that do have **at least one employee dedicated to revenue generation** reported average annual revenue four to six times higher than those without people in these roles.

## Hiring sales people boosts revenue by 462%

Average annual revenue for digital media with and without sales teams

■ No sales employees ■ At least one sales staff member



\* Includes media that reported having sales or business development staff members. \*Average based on data for Europe and Latin America. Comparable data was unavailable for the U.S. and Canada.





# Diversifying revenue sources

# GK

Media

**GK**

**gk.city**

Country

**Ecuador**

El Salvador in  
RSF Ranking

**110/180**

# Ecuadorian media outlets in  
SembraMedia's Directory

**60**





# Build a community, not just an audience



Media

Ciper Chile

[ciperchile.cl](http://ciperchile.cl)

Country

Chile

Chile in  
RSF Ranking

52/180

# Chilean media outlets in  
SembraMedia's Directory

59



[case study](#)



# **Global highlights:**

## **Developing teams and organizational capacity**



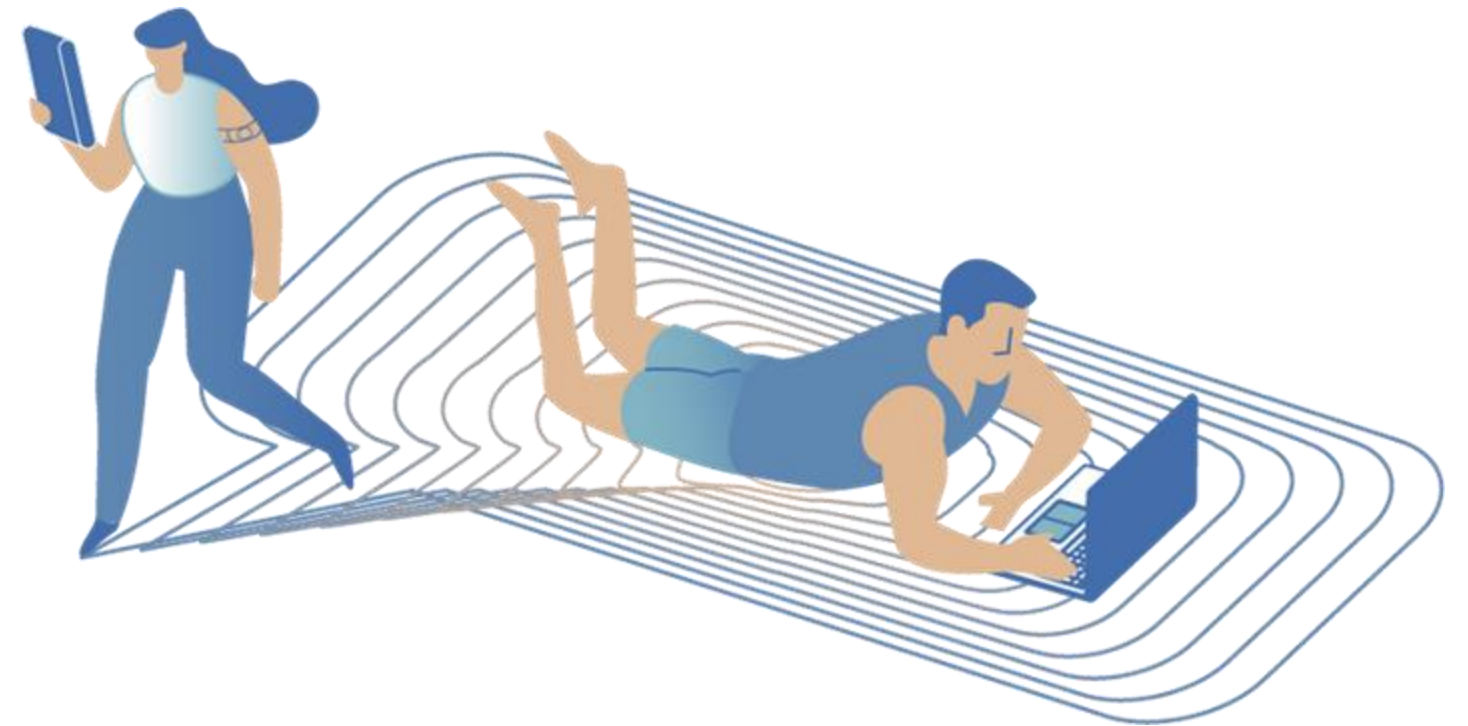
# Many are “reluctant entrepreneurs”

They are often more focused on producing news and informing their communities, than developing a profitable business.



# Women leaders launch digital media to get around the glass ceiling

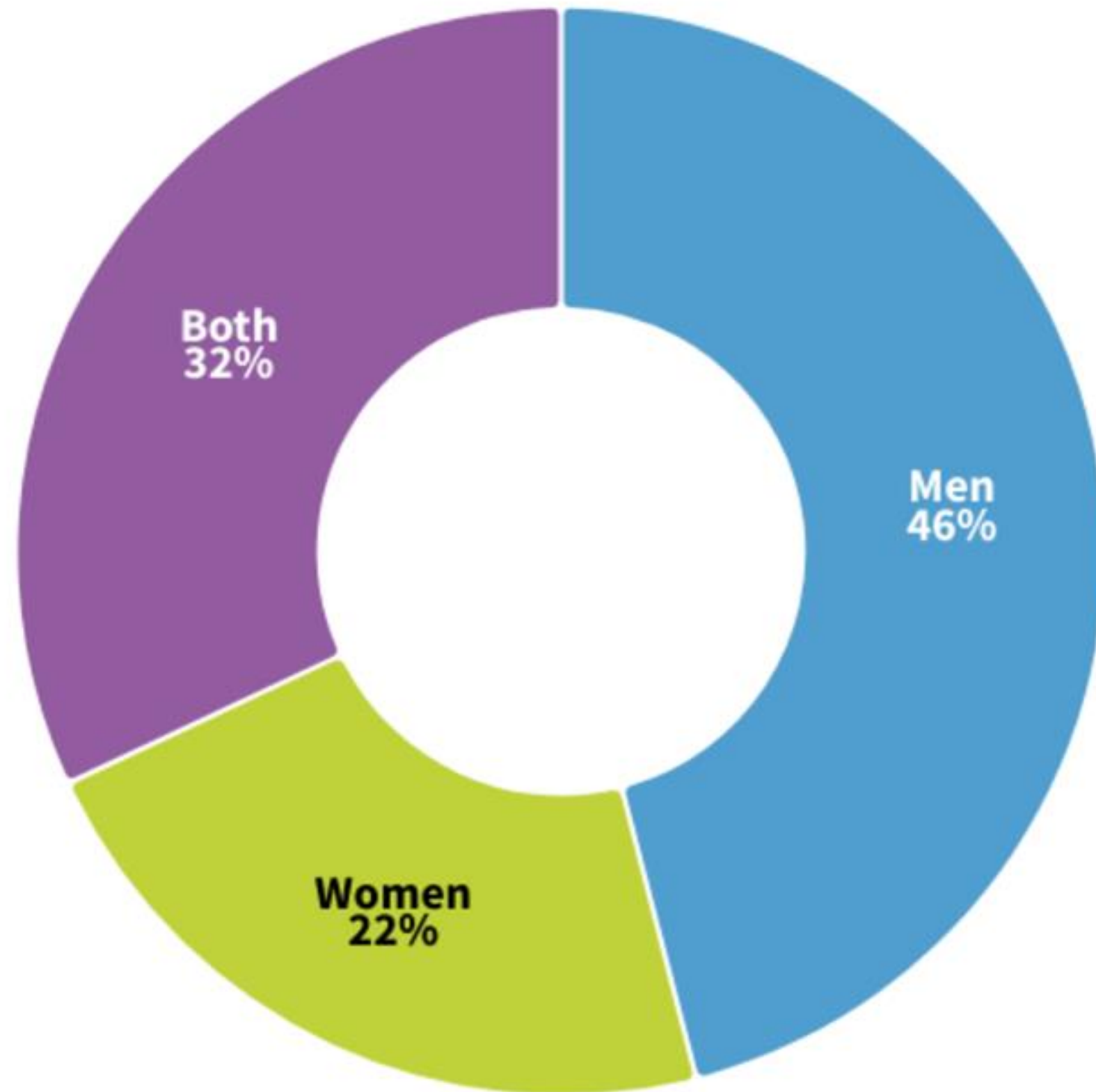
Digital native media have a high number of women founders, especially when compared with traditional media. More than 50% of the media in the directory were founded by teams that include at least one woman.



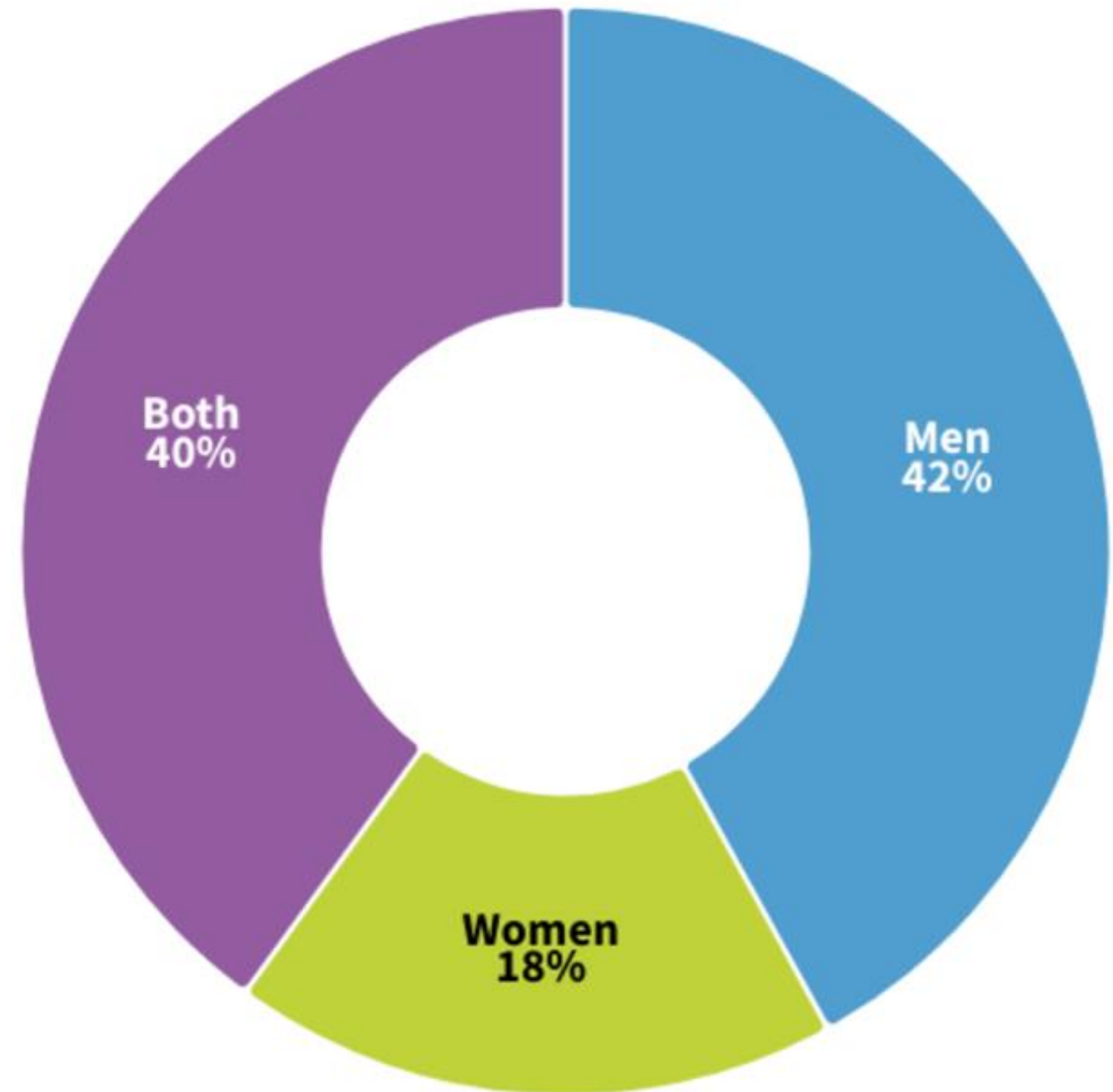
## Women leaders launch digital media to get around the glass ceiling

More than half were founded by women, or teams that include women

**Latin America**



**Europe**



Comparable data unavailable in the U.S and Canada



# Taking care of your media team's mental health



Media

**Alharaca**

[alharaca.sv](http://alharaca.sv)

Country

**El Salvador**

El Salvador in  
RSF Ranking

**133/180**

# Salvadorean media outlets in  
SembraMedia's Directory

**14**







# Incorporating sustainability roles increases revenue



Media

**Conexión Migrante**  
[conexionmigrante.com](http://conexionmigrante.com)

Country

**Mexico**

Paraguay in  
RSF Ranking

**121/180**

# Mexican media outlets in  
SembraMedia's Directory

**132**



[case studies](#)

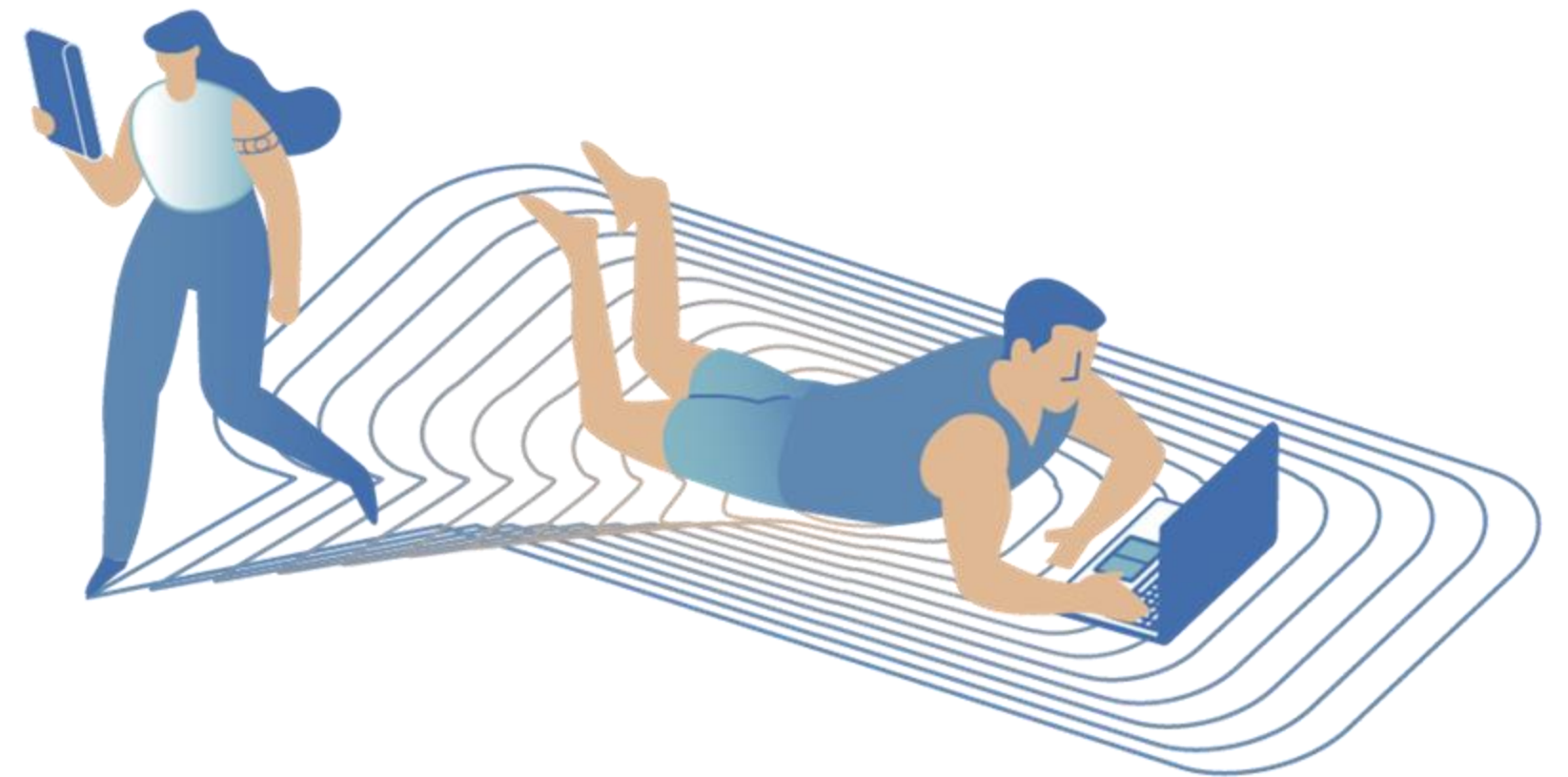
**GNI Startups Lab  
Hispanoamérica**



# Many start with volunteers & sweat equity

Many start with volunteers and founders willing to put in the sweat equity to launch the effort, often on a shoestring budget.

More than 80% of nonprofits said they rely on volunteers for at least some of the roles on their teams.



# Working in a cooperative

- Research collective Spit in The Netherlands
- a cooperative of eight investigative reporters
- Print, digital, radio and television
- Climate, sustainability, health(care), environment, society
- Fundraising, donations, grants, and selling its work to other media outlets.

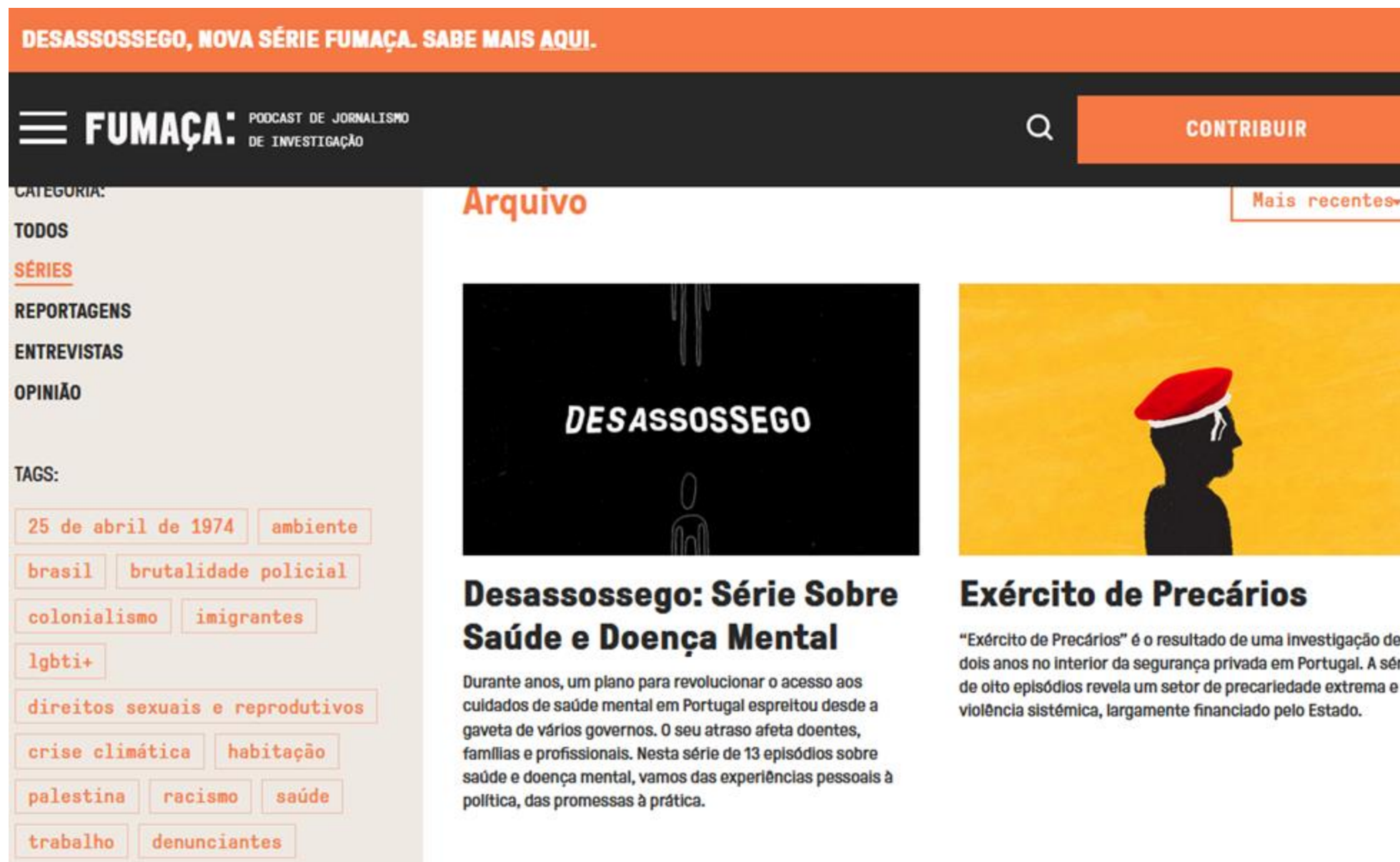
*"Independent journalism at a fair price for the freelancers involved."*



# Investing in humans

"We could choose to pay lower wages and guarantee the functioning of our newsroom for longer, but we have decided to pay our team decently because we believe it doesn't make sense to investigate precariousness and then not practice what we preach"

Maria Almeida, founder





# Small teams with big journalistic impact

Most have teams between 6 and 8 people on average, although those with teams of 50 or more earn the highest revenues.

Many rely heavily on volunteers and freelancers and 18% report they have no full-time staff.



# Digital native media hire more editorial staff compare to other skills

Although based on previous research, there are some indications that they are building teams with more diverse skills, **the majority hire 6 times more editorial staff** than team members with expertise in business, sales, finance, or technology.



# Community of supporters

OKO.press is a civic tool of power control. It has an engaged community which supports the organisation with individual donations that cover approximately 70% of its operating costs.

OKO.press is particularly strong on social media platforms.







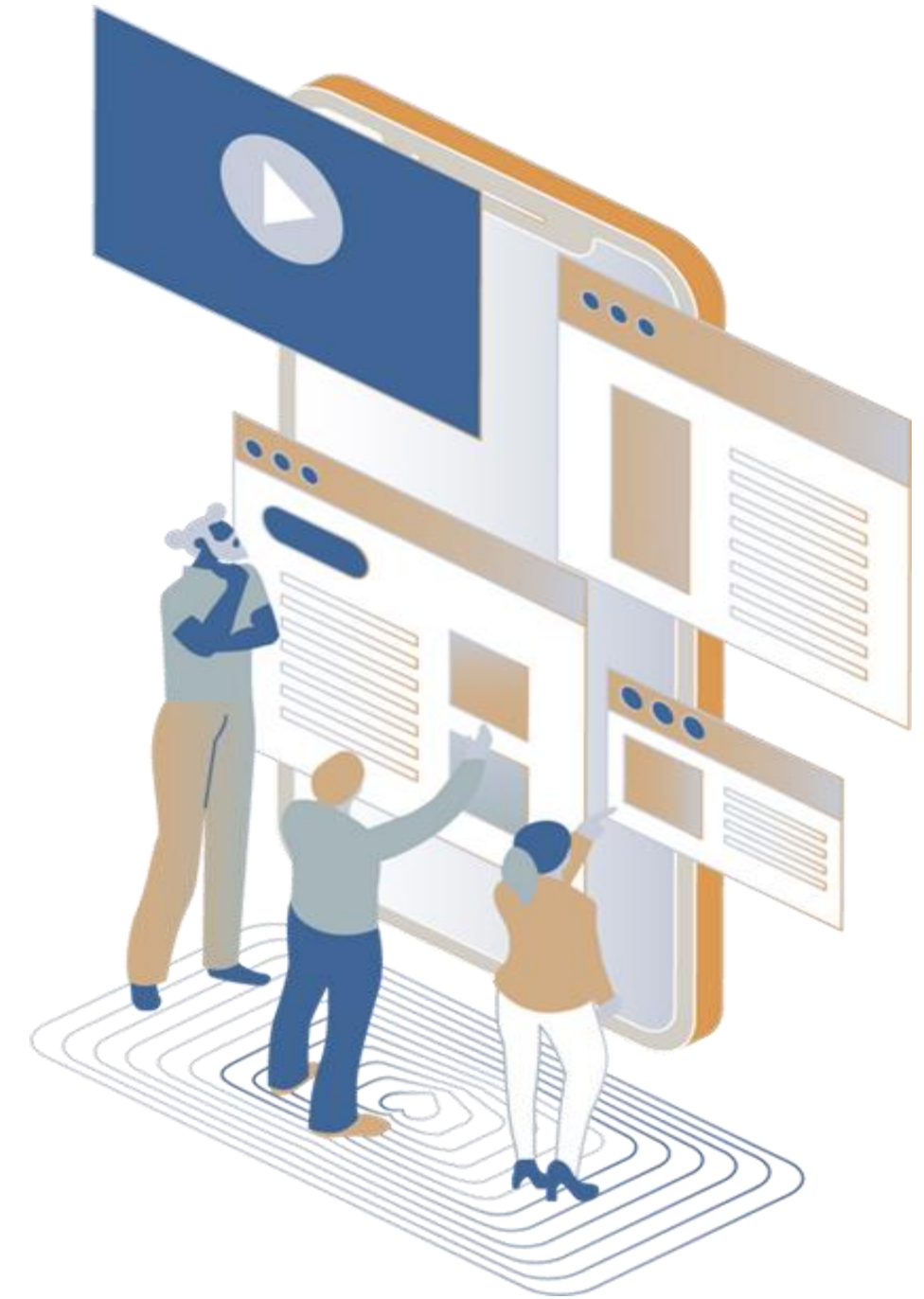
**Global highlights:**

**Attracting audiences with innovative  
journalism**



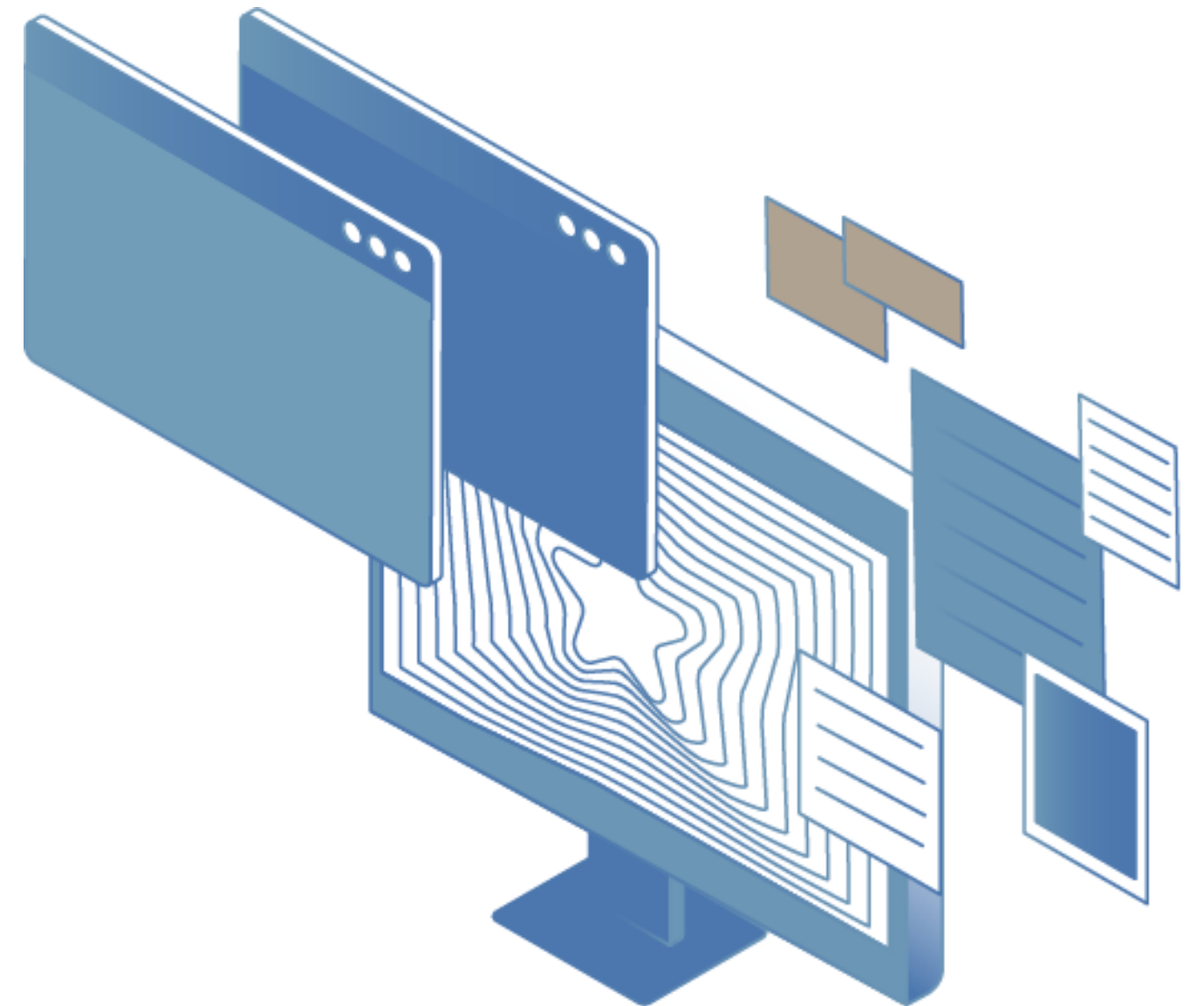
# They are reaching new audiences

They are attracting young audiences and influencing the conversation by using innovative approaches to visual storytelling, reaching audiences through social media, and even hosting in-person events.



# Innovative reporting

Many push the boundaries of what constitutes “news media” as they experiment with new ways of sharing information through memes, graphic-novel style reports, infographics, video, podcasts, and in-person events.



# Many focus on human rights, and underrepresented communities

Among the topics they cover, many focus on human rights, gender issues and local community news.



# Filling news desserts

Local news organizations and niche ventures are among the smallest, often started by one or two journalists seeking to fill news deserts. National and international organizations often have larger teams and report the highest revenues.

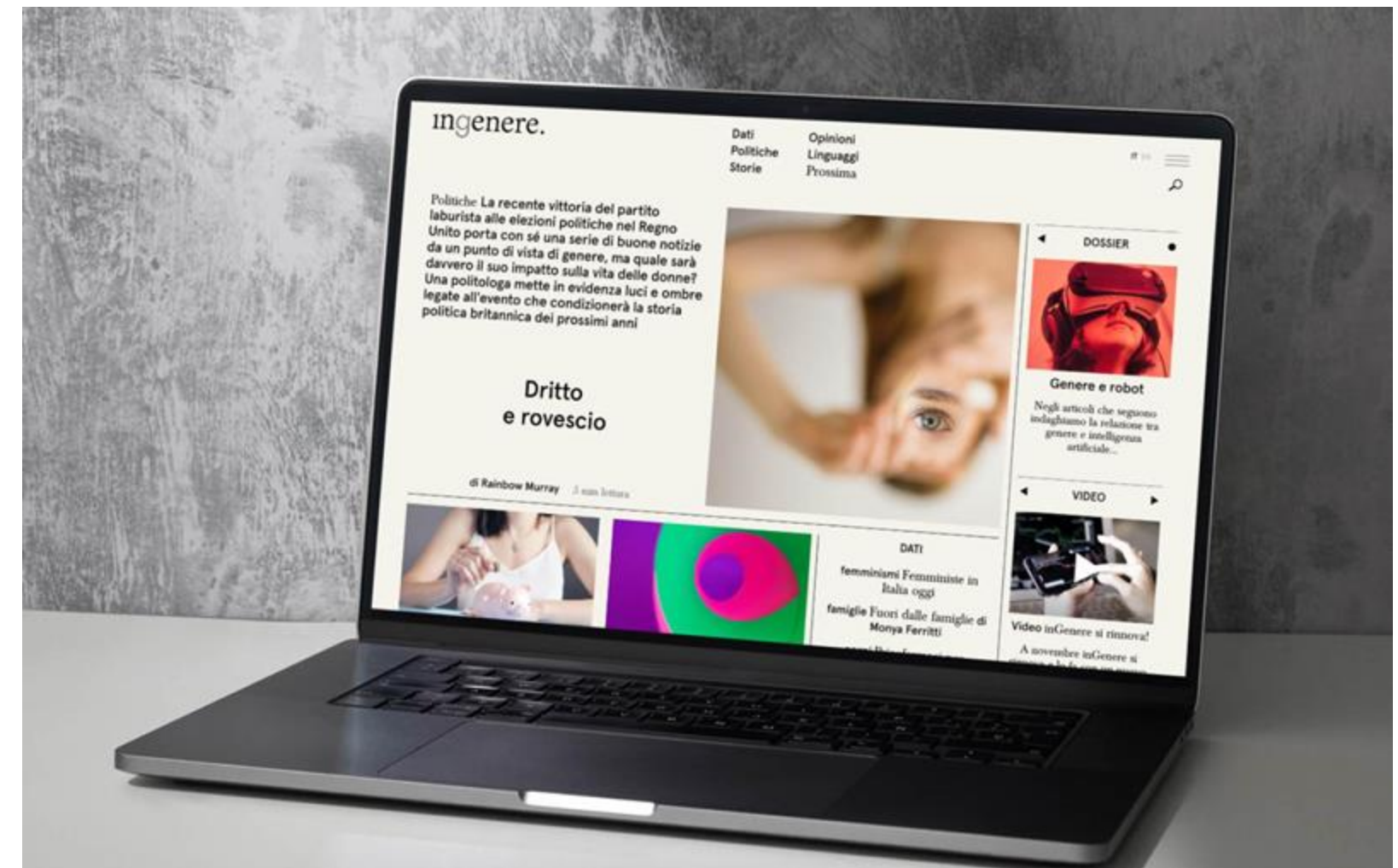




# Case study | Covering economics with a gender perspective

[inGenere](#) is an editorially independent project developed by the think-tank Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini in **Italy**. It was founded in 2009 by a group of women economists who felt unheard by the mainstream media despite their high-profile curricula as external policy advisors for the European Commission.

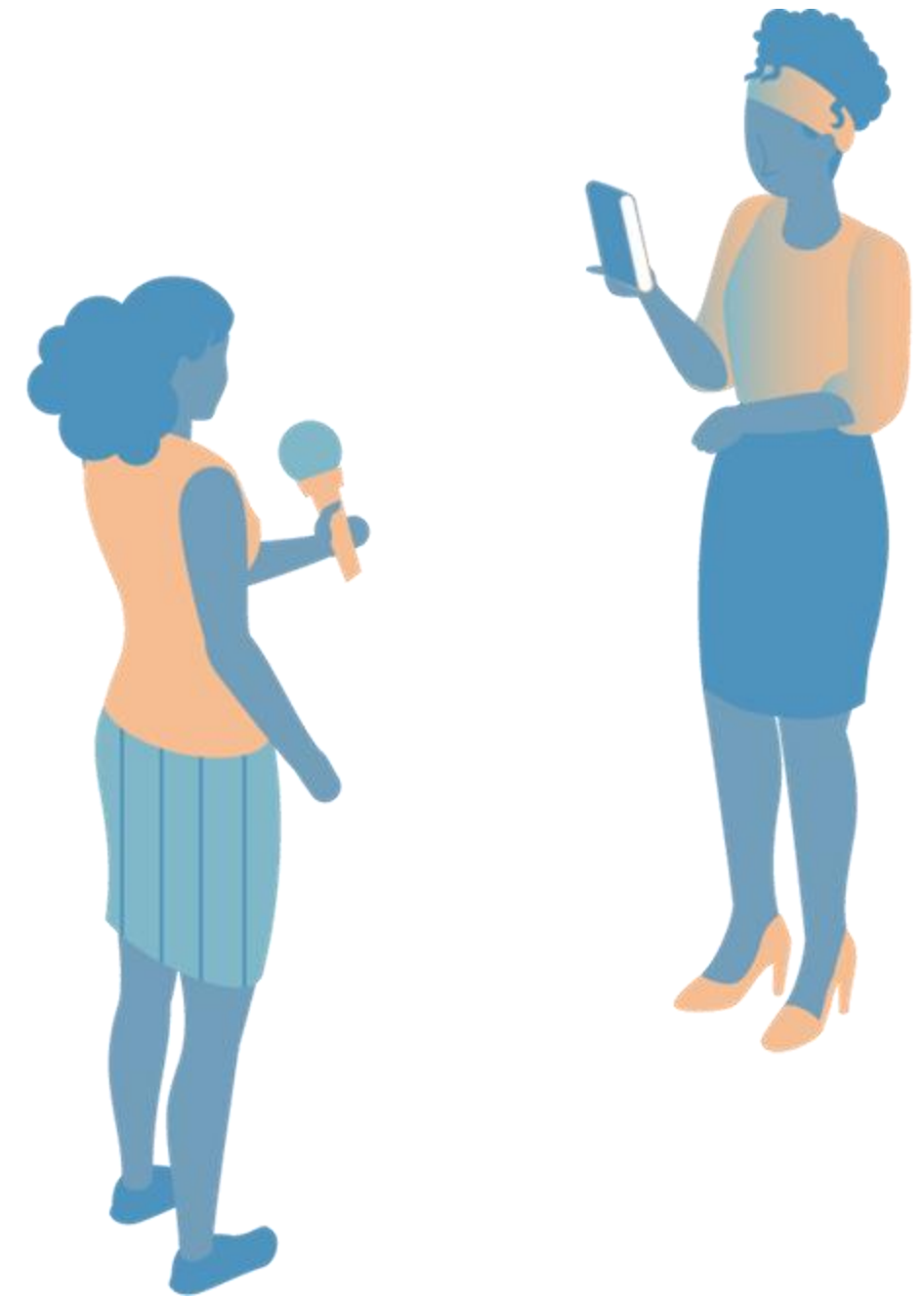
inGenere aims to bring a feminist view to the public discourse and to get the voice of experts out of academia. It covers economics with a gender perspective, and strives to give visibility to the opinions of high-profile female academics who are “ignored by mainstream media”, as the outlet’s editor-in-chief, Barbara Leda Kenny, explained.





# Engaging audiences with innovative reporting and online conversations

Many are attracting younger audiences with innovative reporting, others are fostering online discussions around their reporting to enhance audience engagement — and generate revenue through audience support and sponsorships.



# Case study | Create a community through Whatsapp

In May 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Maritza Félix started [Conecta Arizona](#) to bring information to the Spanish-speaking population in the Southwest U.S.

Conecta Arizona started as a WhatsApp group, where community members could ask questions and share experiences. Initially, Félix was a one-person team, focused on delivering relevant, much-needed facts on public health and immigration issues to the Arizona/Mexico border community. She now runs a news website, as well as sharing her content through WhatsApp and a newsletter.



# Mutante, Colombia

*„We are an experimental project and in the same way we experiment with journalistic methodologies, we also experiment with our portfolio of products.”*

Juan Camilo Maldonado Tovar, co-founder of Mutante

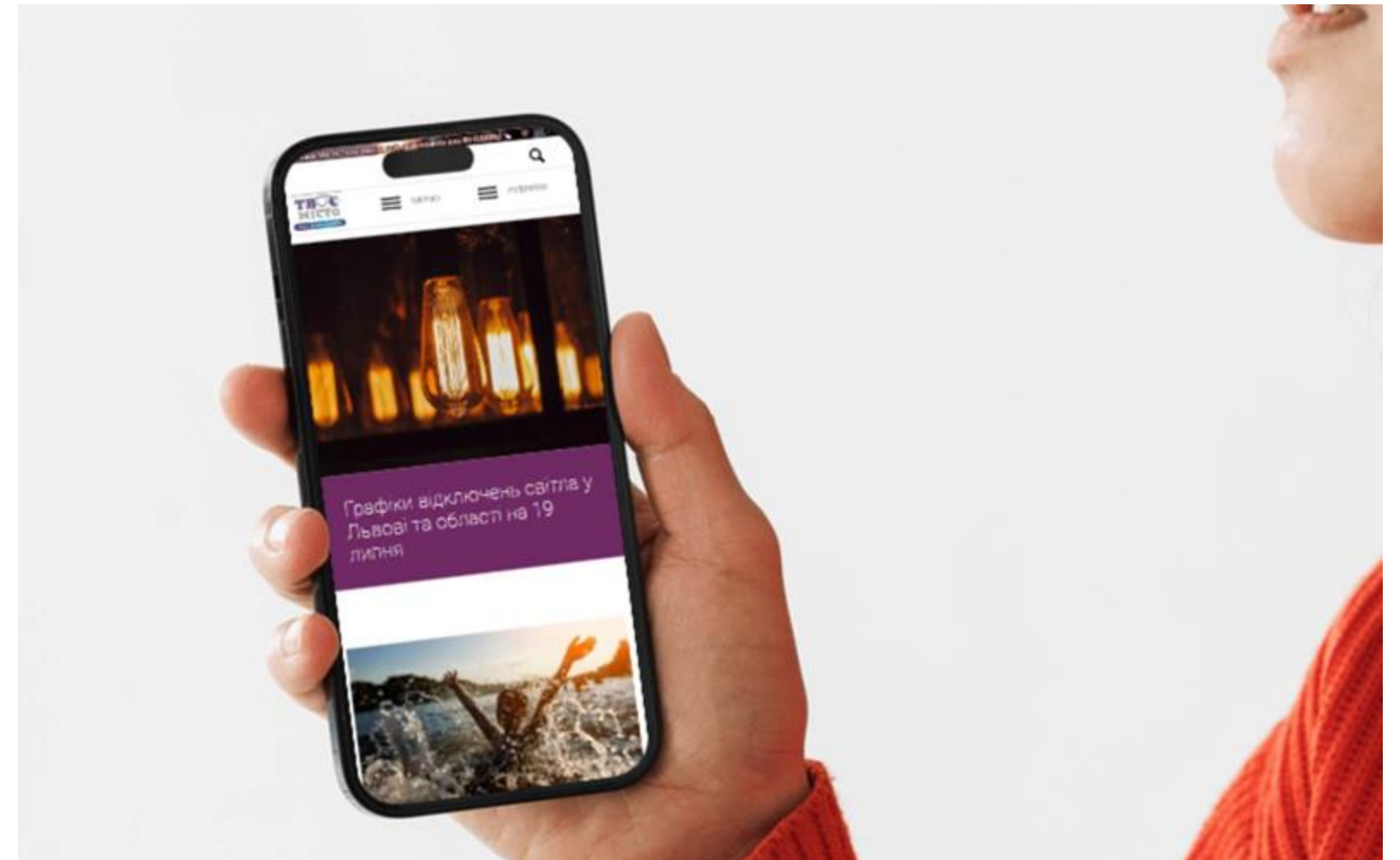




# Case study | Reporting by digital native media inspires citizens to take action

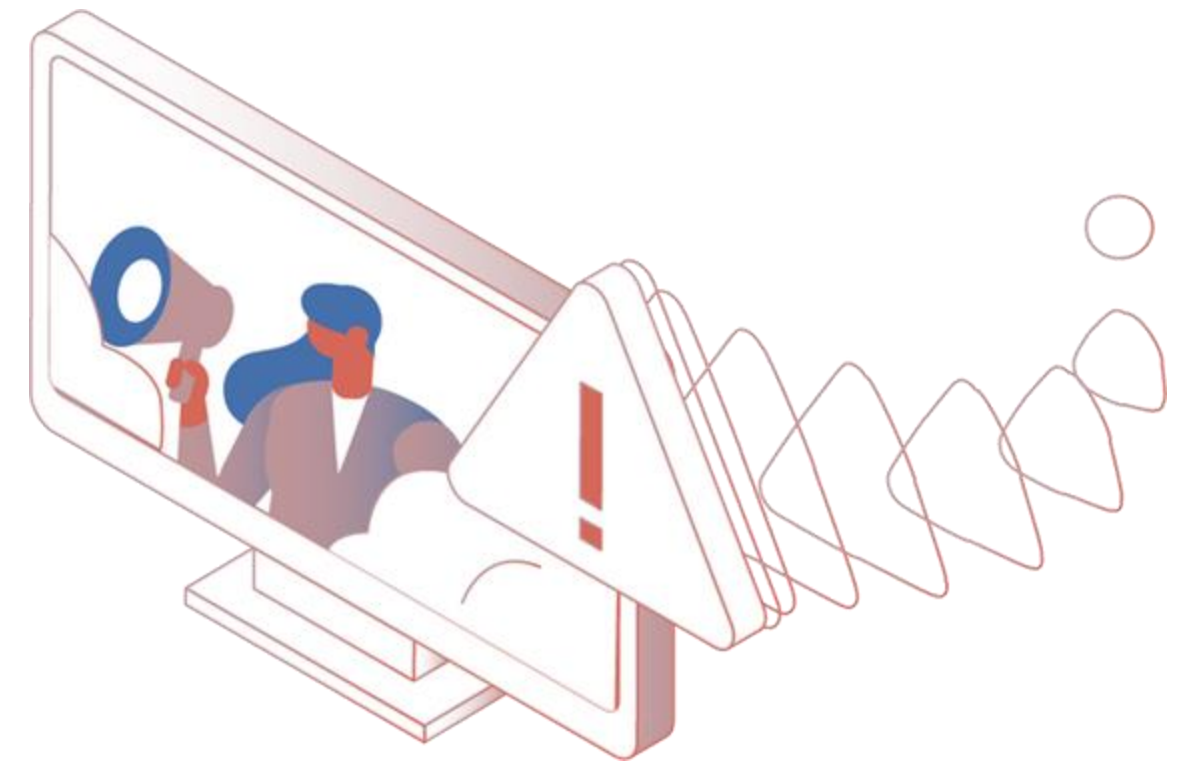
[Tvoe Misto](#) is a local media outlet in Lviv, Ukraine and was founded in 2014 as the city's independent multimedia hub, comprising a website, online TV and production studio. All of which rely on advertising and grants from international donors while backed by citizens of Lviv who have come together as "Friends of Tvoe Misto."

They have been organizing and moderating public debates and forums since launched with speakers who include city officials, policymakers, experts, and civil society actors



# More than 50% report threats and attacks

More than half of the digital media organizations in the directory report having been subject to threats and attacks.

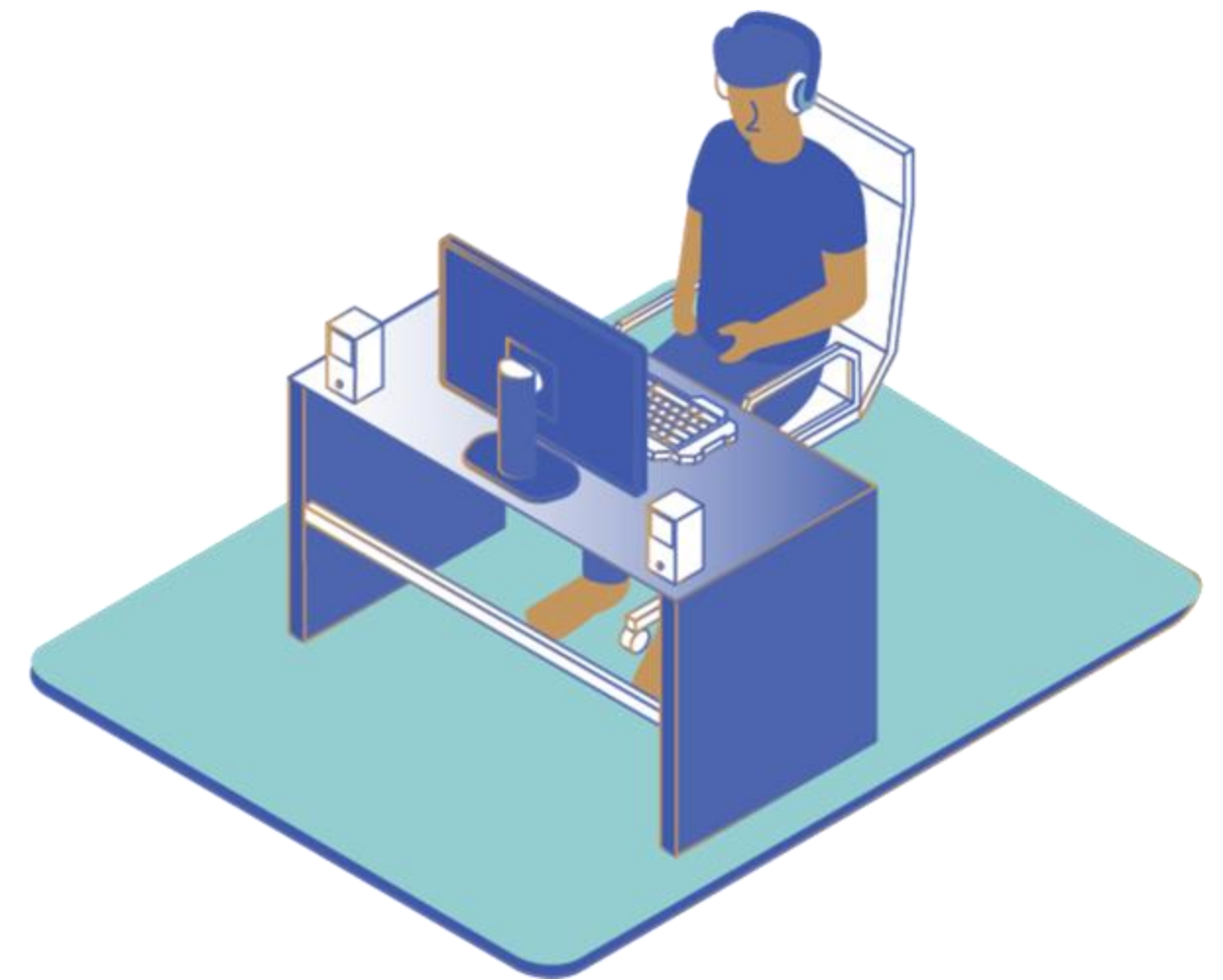




# Countries with more journalists in exile

Every one of the 20 independent digital native media we've mapped in **Nicaragua** report that one or more of their team has had to flee the country, and they are now operating their news organizations in exile.

Other countries that report high rates of journalists in exile in the directory include **Belarus, Azerbaijan, Venezuela, and Cuba.**



# Many have won awards for breaking news and investigative journalism

They are champions of fact-checking, they invest in investigative journalism, and often cover stories they others neglect.



**Access the report and  
explore the global  
directory**

**GlobalProjectOasis.org**

