



Country Report

Journalists in Argentina

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Backgrounds of Journalists

The interviewed journalists in Argentina were mostly male and slightly under forty, with an average of 38.75 years old ($s=10.18$). Half of these journalists were younger than 37 years. Of the 363 interviewed journalists, 134 were women, making for 36.9 percent of the overall sample. Journalists tend to be educated: 67.7 percent of the respondents held a university or college degree; 12.4 percent of the journalists had obtained a Master's degree, and 22.5 percent had undertaken some university studies but they did not complete their studies. Of those respondents who held a university degree, a majority (79.3%) have specialized in communication or journalism. Across the whole sample of Argentinian journalists, 50.8 percent had specialized in journalism, 11.9 percent had studied in another communication field, and 16.6 percent had specialized in both journalism and another communication field.

Journalists in the Newsroom

A slight majority of journalists interviewed in Argentina held a full-time position (58.3%), whereas 31.2 percent of the respondents indicated that they had part-time employments, and 10.5 percent worked as freelance journalists. Of those with full or part-time employment, 79.9 percent said they held permanent positions, and 20.1 percent worked on a temporary contract.

Argentinian respondents, on average, had been working as journalists for 13.83 years ($s=9.15$), and about half of them had 12 years or more of professional experience. Most journalists worked on a specific desk (61.5%), such as politics, local news, or sports. The remaining 38.5 percent of the respondents said that they worked on various topics and subjects. On the whole, Argentinian journalists worked for 1.71 newsrooms ($s=1.05$): half of the respondents worked in a newsroom (56.8%), almost a third worked in two newsrooms (27.4%), and the rest, in more than three. More than a third had additional jobs outside the area of journalism (41.3%). A smaller number of the interviewed journalists were members of an organization or association for people in journalism or the communications field (36.2%).

The majority of Argentinian journalists in the sample worked for print media: 24.0 percent contributed to daily newspapers, 5.0 percent to weekly newspapers, and 4.1 percent to magazines. A quarter of the sample (24.8%) worked for private or public radio. Another 12.9 percent of the journalists worked for private or public service television. Few journalists in the sample reported they worked for news agencies (13.8%), for online newsrooms of traditional media (1.9%), and for stand-alone online news sites (10.7%). As regards of the media where they work, 39.2 percent of the respondents worked for national media, 25.8 percent for regional media, 30.8 percent for local media and 4.2 percent for transnational media.

Journalistic Roles

With regards to professional role orientations, Argentinian journalists found it most important to report things as they were, to promote tolerance and cultural diversity, to provide analysis of current affairs, and to let people express their views (see Table 1). A majority of journalists in Argentina found it important to monitor and scrutinize political leaders and business.

Considering the political polarization context as it was seen in Argentina during the years when the survey was conducted, options of conveying a positive image of political leadership or being an adversary of the government were surprisingly supported by only a minority of respondents. They showed some consensus towards more politically assertive roles such as supporting government policy or setting political agenda, both roles related to partisan journalism. Regarding this popular model, half of the respondents considered important, in increasing order, setting the political agenda, motivating people to participate in political activity, influencing public opinion, supporting national development, providing information people need to make political decisions and advocating for social change.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	360	91.1%	4.48	.75
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	359	79.9%	4.17	.97
Provide analysis of current affairs	358	79.6%	4.08	.87
Let people express their views	360	71.9%	3.96	1.06
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	350	71.7%	3.96	.96
Advocate for social change	353	69.7%	3.83	1.19
Provide information people need to make political decisions	355	67.3%	3.76	1.16
Monitor and scrutinize business	345	59.4%	3.69	1.13
Educate the audience	359	54.6%	3.45	1.27
Support national development	351	53.8%	3.35	1.30
Tell stories about the world	358	52.8%	3.46	1.15
Be a detached observer	353	52.1%	3.42	1.16
Influence public opinion	356	49.4%	3.46	1.13
Motivate people to participate in political activity	355	49.3%	3.28	1.26
Set the political agenda	346	48.0%	3.38	1.12
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	359	40.9%	3.16	1.23
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	357	33.6%	2.91	1.22
Provide entertainment and relaxation	353	30.6%	2.83	1.24
Support government policy	344	20.1%	2.51	1.18
Be an adversary of the government	351	11.7%	1.98	1.17
Convey a positive image of political leadership	349	7.4%	1.94	1.05

Question: Please tell me how important each of these things is in your work. 5 means you find them extremely important, 4 means very important, 3 means somewhat important, 2 means little importance, and 1 means unimportant.

Professional Ethics

Almost nine out of ten Argentinian respondents agreed that journalists should always adhere to the codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context (see Table 2). Even though Argentinian journalists usually expressed their commitment with professional standards of ethics, there is no tradition of ethic codes or professional consensus on journalism principles in the country. This lack of ethical corpus is related to the fact that slightly less than half of the interviewees subscribed to the idea that journalists' ethical decisions depend on the specific situation. It also explains the variety of responses to options that asked for potentially controversial reporting techniques.

Table 2: Ethical orientations of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "strongly" and "somewhat agree"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context	359	87.5%	4.38	.98
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	358	42.7%	2.76	1.48
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	358	34.6%	2.54	1.48
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	356	27.5%	2.27	1.36

Question: The following statements describe different approaches to journalism. For each of them, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree. 5 means you strongly agree, 4 means somewhat agree, 3 means undecided, 2 means somewhat disagree, and 1 means strongly disagree.

Table 3: Justification of controversial reporting methods by journalists

	N	Percentage saying "always justified"	Percentage saying "justified on occasion"
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	356	14.9%	57.6%
Using hidden microphones or cameras	358	8.9%	52.8%
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	356	7.6%	38.5%
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	349	5.7%	35.0%
Claiming to be somebody else	353	5.1%	37.1%
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	354	2.3%	25.1%
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	358	2.2%	26.5%
Paying people for confidential information	345	1.4%	28.7%
Accepting money from sources	356	1.1%	3.4%
Altering photographs	356	.6%	10.4%
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	358	.6%	7.5%
Publishing stories with unverified content	356	.6%	4.8%

Question: Given an important story, which of the following, if any, do you think may be justified on occasion and which would you not approve of under any circumstances?

A large majority of journalists in Argentina found that the use of confidential business or government documents without authorization is justified, as well as the use of hidden microphones or cameras (see Table 3). Still, most journalists thought it was acceptable to use re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors or to claim to be somebody else. For a third of the respondents, it is justified to get employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information; paying people for confidential information, and exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story. Only a minority of journalists found it permissible to exert pressure on unwilling informants to get a story and to make use of personal documents (such as letters and pictures) without

permission. The practice of altering photographs or quotes from sources, as well as publishing unverified content or accepting money from sources, was almost unanimously condemned by Argentinian journalists, although these are common practices in mainstream media.

Professional Autonomy and Influences

Journalists in Argentina reported a fairly high degree of professional autonomy. Three out of four respondents (71.2%) said that they had complete or a great deal of freedom in their selection of stories. A similar number (74.0%) expressed that they had either complete or a great deal of freedom in deciding over what aspects to emphasize in a news story. However, less than a half of journalists reported that they participated in editorial coordination activities (such as meetings and news management) “always” or “very often” (46.4%).

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying “extremely” and “very influential”	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	356	83.4%	4.19	.89
Information access	358	73.2%	3.89	.90
Your personal values and beliefs	355	71.0%	3.98	0.96
Editorial policy	347	59.7%	3.61	1.05
Time limits	352	57.4%	3.57	1.02
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	343	54.5%	3.50	.96
Managers of the news organization	328	51.5%	3.36	1.14
Owners of the news organization	315	50.5%	3.34	1.24
Availability of news-gathering resources	349	49.0%	3.32	1.17
Relationships with news sources	358	47.8%	3.32	1.04
Feedback from the audience	353	37.7%	3.20	.93
Media laws and regulation	350	32.3%	2.92	1.14
Your peers on the staff	357	31.7%	3.02	0.99
Censorship	337	30.9%	2.65	1.37
Audience research and data	323	24.1%	2.62	1.19
Competing news organizations	356	23.0%	2.84	.99
Colleagues in other media	359	19.5%	2.74	.93
Profit expectations	324	19.4%	2.46	1.26
Friends, acquaintances and family	349	18.1%	2.58	1.06
Public relations	347	17.9%	2.49	1.08
Government officials	341	17.6%	2.45	1.10
Advertising considerations	335	17.3%	2.44	1.15
Politicians	342	17.3%	2.43	1.10
Religious considerations	335	11.9%	2.01	1.17
Pressure groups	334	8.7%	2.11	1.02
Military, police and state security	326	8.3%	1.95	1.04
Business people	345	7.8%	2.08	.99

Question: Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work. 5 means it is extremely influential, 4 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 2 means little influential, and 1 means not influential.

News production is influenced by a variety of factors. Among the potential sources of influence mentioned in the interviews, “journalism ethics” fared on top of the list among Argentinian respondents (see Table 4). A majority of journalists found their work substantively constrained by information access (or lack thereof), by their personal values and beliefs and the editorial policy. In general, news making factors were found to be more influential than external constraints. Managers, owners and supervisors of the news organization as well as availability of news-gathering resources and relationships with news sources are mentioned by half of the

respondents. But, at the same time, they reported lesser influence from sources within the political and civic realm: public relations, government officials, politicians, religious considerations, pressure groups, and the military, police force and state security.

Argentinian journalists felt little influence from peers on the staff, competing news organizations, and colleagues in another media. Friends, acquaintances and family seem to have little relevance for Argentinian journalists as a factor of influence in the process of newsmaking.

Journalism in Transition

According to Argentinian journalists, technology brought the most important changes in the profession over the last five years: technical skills, the use of search engines and interactions with the audience are the most mentioned options (see Table 5).

A large majority of respondents reported an increase in their average working hours. Furthermore, most interviewed journalists felt that their professional freedom and the time available for researching stories had dropped. Another major concern for Argentinian journalists was the decrease in the public credibility in journalism, whereas the respondents held that the relevance of journalism for society has increased.

Table 5: Changes in journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "increased"	Percentage saying has "decreased"
The use of search engines	299	96.7%	1.0%
Technical skills	297	79.1%	7.4%
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	289	78.9%	6.2%
Average working hours of journalists	291	72.5%	4.5%
Having a university degree	296	56.8%	9.5%
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	297	51.2%	11.8%
The relevance of journalism for society	294	46.9%	27.6%
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	295	27.1%	40.7%
The credibility of journalism	298	18.8%	60.1%
Time available for researching stories	293	11.6%	66.2%

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in Argentina. 5 means they have increased a lot, 4 means they have somewhat increased, 3 means there has been no change, 2 means they have somewhat decreased, and 1 means they have decreased a lot.

Among journalists who had more than five years of professional experience, internet environment meant the most influential changes. Nearly everyone mentioned the impact of social media, and four out of five pointed out users-generated contents, and audience participation as boosted factors. Although Argentinian journalists recognized the huge influence of ethic (as mentioned in Table 4), most of the respondents thought ethical standards have weakened in the recent years. Half of interviewed journalists reported an increase of market-related influences such as pressure toward sensational news, competition, audience research, public relations, profit making pressures, and advertising considerations.

Table 6: Changes in influences on journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "strengthened"	Percentage saying has "weakened"
Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter	296	93.6%	1.7%
User-generated contents, such as blogs	291	85.2%	4.8%
Audience feedback	292	78.8%	3.8%
Audience involvement in news production	293	77.8%	2.7%
Pressure toward sensational news	291	60.1%	9.6%
Competition	293	60.1%	11.9%
Journalism education	291	57.4%	26.8%
Western ways of practicing journalism	42	54.8%	9.5%
Audience research	270	53.7%	9.6%
Public relations	283	53.7%	6.7%
Profit making pressures	281	52.0%	11.4%
Advertising considerations	284	49.3%	14.1%
Ethical standards	291	30.6%	43.0%

Question: Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in Argentina. 5 means they have strengthened a lot, 4 means they have somewhat strengthened, 3 means they did not change, 2 means they have somewhat weakened, and 1 means they have weakened a lot.

Journalistic Trust

The government and the media are the institutions that Argentinian journalists trust the most, although interviewees did not hold them in particularly high esteem (see Table 7). The interviewed journalists had relatively little confidence in religious leaders and trade unions, but even less in political institutions such as political parties and politicians, the police, the military and the parliament. In general, institutions were barely found trustworthy by Argentinian journalists. Six out of ten respondents said they had little trust in Parliament and nobody expressed high levels of trust in this institution. Overall, there was a fairly high agreement among the respondents over the question of institutional trust, as low standard deviation values indicate.

Table 7: Journalistic trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying "complete" and "a great deal of trust"	Mean	Standard Deviation
The government	352	15.6%	2.64	.97
The news media	353	14.7%	2.80	.80
The judiciary/the courts	352	8.3%	2.51	.80
Religious leaders	349	8.0%	2.32	.93
Trade unions	354	6.2%	2.33	.85
Political parties	354	5.1%	2.39	.79
Politicians in general	352	3.7%	2.35	.76
The police	353	2.3%	1.96	.81
The military	347	2.0%	1.92	.80
The parliament [Congreso]	186	.0%	1.62	.51

Question: Please tell me on a scale of 5 to 1 how much you personally trust each of the following institutions. 5 means you have complete trust, 4 means you have a great deal of trust, 3 means you have some trust, 2 means you have little trust, and 1 means you have no trust at all.

Methodological Information

<i>Size of the population:</i>	5,525 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	convenience sampling & purposive quota sampling for newsrooms and convenience sampling for journalists within newsrooms
<i>Sample size:</i>	363 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	face-to-face and telephone
<i>Response rate:</i>	26%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	10/2013-12/2014