



Country Report

Journalists in Canada

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Backgrounds of Journalists

Of the 352 journalists interviewed in Canada, nearly half were women (43.5%). The mean age was 44.51 years ($s=11.88$), which corresponds almost exactly to the median age of 44.50. With respect to their education, the majority of these journalists hold a minimum of a college diploma or university degree (93.4%), with 27.4 percent completing a Master's degree and just over 1.0 percent completing a doctorate. Of those completing post-secondary education, only 25.2 percent specialized in a field other than journalism or communications. Most respondents (61.3%) specialized only in journalism, 9.0 percent specialized in another communication field, and 4.5 percent specialized in journalism in addition to another communication field. Only 6.6 percent of respondents have not completed post-secondary education, and less than 1 percent had less than a high school education. These data suggest Canadian journalists are well educated.

Journalists in the Newsroom

Canadian journalists are most likely to be employed full time (78.1%), and only 3.4 percent were employed part-time; however, 17.0 percent of the respondents were freelance and 1.4 percent self-reported as "other." On average, respondents had been working in journalism for 18.88 years ($s=11.17$), with half of all respondents working in the field for at least 18 years, and 25 percent of respondents working in journalism for 27 years or longer. With respect to the type of journalism they do, 50.3 percent of respondents are specialists, and 49.7 percent are generalists.

On average, respondents worked for 1.92 newsrooms; however, there is considerable variation around this mean ($s=2.15$). Further, 26.1 percent of journalists worked for only 1 newsroom. 29.3 percent of respondents had other paid work. The majority (56.4%) are members of a professional association.

Canadian journalists work for a range of media. While 16.8 percent of respondents did not specify the type of media in which they work, the remaining 83.2 percent are distributed accordingly: 58.7 percent worked for a daily newspaper; 22.5 percent worked in television; 6.8 percent worked for a news agency; 5.1 percent worked for a magazine; 4.1 percent worked for a stand-alone online outlet; 2.4 percent worked in radio; and less than 1 percent worked for a weekly newspaper.

Journalistic Roles

The professional role orientations of Canadian journalists believe that reporting things as they are and educating the audience are the most important aspects of their work. Telling stories about the world, providing analysis of current affairs, being a detached observer and providing the information needed to make political decisions are also considered to be very important aspects of journalistic work. In contrast, very

few journalists considered their role to be one in which they should support government policy or convey a positive image of political leadership.

Considerably more diversity was evident in opinions regarding other roles. Specifically, there was relatively little consensus on the extent to which a journalist should strive to motivate people to participate in political activity or advocate for social change.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	351	96.9	4.82	.49
Educate the audience	350	93.4	4.62	.66
Tell stories about the world	346	80.6	4.31	.95
Provide analysis of current affairs	349	78.4	4.10	.94
Be a detached observer	342	78.4	4.12	1.02
Provide information people need to make political decisions	347	73.5	3.90	1.27
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	344	67.8	3.85	1.32
Let people express their views	339	67.0	3.88	1.17
Monitor and scrutinize business	348	62.6	3.72	1.29
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	348	60.9	3.72	1.24
Motivate people to participate in political activity	345	35.9	2.93	1.33
Advocate for social change	347	35.7	2.91	1.32
Influence public opinion	335	28.7	2.81	1.20
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	348	24.7	2.78	1.15
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	344	24.4	2.62	1.22
Set the political agenda	339	23.4	2.51	1.25
Provide entertainment and relaxation	348	21.8	2.54	1.21
Support national development	306	18.0	2.30	1.23
Be an adversary of the government	332	13.9	2.04	1.22
Support government policy	340	.9	1.24	.56
Convey a positive image of political leadership	342	.3	1.26	.57

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

Overall, Canadian journalists have strong ethical standards. The vast majority of respondents believe that journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics. Further, nearly all respondents believed it was never justified to engage in practices such as accepting money from sources, altering or fabricating quotes from sources, or altering photographs. Publishing stories with unverified content is also a practice in which most journalists will never engage. Some practices, however, are not considered unethical. For most respondents, using confidential business or government documents, as well as hidden cameras or microphones, could be justified at least on occasion.

Just over half of respondents believe that ethical interpretations are context-specific. Thus, some journalistic practices, while definitively not always acceptable, are considered justifiable on occasion. For example, approximately half of respondents felt they may be justified in exerting pressure on an unwilling source, gaining employment to get inside information, using recreations or dramatizations by actors, or making use of personal documents without permission. Of course, it is important to note that just under half of respondents did not agree that ethics are situation specific, indicating that there is relatively little consensus among Canadian journalists with respect to if and when ethical standards are flexible.

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	349	94.6	4.51	.80
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	349	53.9	3.15	1.39
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	332	31.9	2.70	1.30
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	349	18.1	2.16	1.13

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	346	31.5	58.4
Using hidden microphones or cameras	349	12.0	73.1
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	331	10.0	55.0
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	336	8.3	56.8
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	318	5.7	52.5
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	341	2.6	54.8
Claiming to be somebody else	349	2.3	36.4
Paying people for confidential information	342	.9	33.3
Publishing stories with unverified content	348	.6	15.5
Altering photographs	341	.6	9.1
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	346	.6	3.8
Accepting money from sources	352	.6	.3

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?

Professional Autonomy and Influences

Canadian journalists perceive themselves to be very autonomous in their work. 83.2 percent believe they have complete freedom or a great deal of freedom in selecting their stories, and 86.5 percent believe they have complete freedom or a great deal of freedom in determining the aspects to emphasize in their reporting. At the same time, fewer journalists feel they participate in the editorial coordination of news reporting: only 47.8 percent always or very often participate, and 34.1 percent rarely or never participate.

A variety of influences shape the way in which Canadian journalists do their work. Ethics are reported to be the most influential force in Canadian journalism, with nearly all journalists reporting ethics to be extremely or very influential. Other strong influences include time limits, media laws and regulation, information access, and the availability of news-gathering resources. In contrast, there is also a great deal of agreement that religious considerations, advertising and profit expectations, business people, and pressure groups are not influential forces in journalistic work. There is greater diversity in responses with respect to some influences. For example, there is little consensus on the extent to which peers on the staff and personal values and beliefs influence journalistic practices.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying “extremely” and “very influential”	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	349	92.3	4.53	.72
Time limits	345	67.0	3.78	.93
Media laws and regulation	339	65.5	3.68	1.22
Information access	328	64.0	3.68	1.02
Availability of news-gathering resources	334	60.8	3.71	.95
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	345	48.1	3.35	.99
Editorial policy	324	46.9	3.19	1.42
Relationships with news sources	338	38.8	3.11	1.11
Your personal values and beliefs	344	35.8	3.22	1.08
Your peers on the staff	332	25.6	2.83	1.00
Audience research and data	319	25.4	2.68	1.18
Managers of the news organization	324	24.7	2.66	1.18
Feedback from the audience	349	21.8	2.62	1.05
Competing news organizations	347	19.0	2.57	1.07
Colleagues in other media	350	10.3	2.22	1.00
Government officials	346	8.4	1.75	1.03
Censorship	310	7.4	1.65	1.00
Owners of the news organization	302	7.0	1.77	.99
Public relations	351	6.3	1.87	.93
Politicians	347	6.1	1.65	.96
Military, police and state security	344	5.8	1.54	.93
Friends, acquaintances and family	352	5.7	1.91	.93
Business people	349	4.3	1.64	.86
Profit expectations	324	4.0	1.54	.90
Pressure groups	345	2.9	1.54	.81
Religious considerations	310	2.6	1.33	.72
Advertising considerations	323	2.5	1.47	.77

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.

Journalism in Transition

Canadian journalists have experienced many changes in their work in recent years. Technology is playing a central role in journalism: journalists report that the need for technical skills has increased in the past five years, as well as the use of search engines and the use of social media. Audiences are also playing a larger role in journalism. Audience research and feedback are believed to play an increasingly larger role, and journalists are interacting with their audiences more frequently. User-generated feedback and audience involvement in news production is also playing a more prominent role in journalism. Lastly, corporate interests are increasingly an issue, as evidenced by the fact that journalists report that profit-making pressures, competition, hours worked each week, and advertising considerations are a stronger influence than in the past. In contrast, journalists report that they have less time to research stories. They also feel the credibility of journalism as a profession has decreased.

Many aspects of journalism have remained consistent over the past few years, such as public relations, pressure toward sensational news, or the necessity of post-secondary education. The questions about changes in journalism were only presented to journalists who had five years or more of professional experience.

Table 5: Changes in journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "increased"	Percentage saying has "decreased"
Technical skills	318	90.9	2.8
The use of search engines	318	90.6	0.0
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	314	83.1	3.8
Average working hours of journalists	305	76.1	2.0
The relevance of journalism for society	316	51.3	20.6
Having a university degree	299	43.1	9.4
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	298	34.6	16.4
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	304	16.4	29.3
The credibility of journalism	303	14.9	56.4
Time available for researching stories	312	7.1	78.5

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in [country]. 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.

Table 6: Changes in influences on journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "strengthened"	Percentage saying has "weakened"
Social media	317	97.8	.6
User-generated contents, such as blogs	312	79.5	4.2
Profit making pressures	311	75.6	4.2
Audience research	295	71.9	3.7
Audience feedback	312	71.8	4.2
Advertising considerations	305	68.2	6.9
Competition	317	66.2	19.9
Audience involvement in news production	300	64.7	4.7
Pressure toward sensational news	314	46.8	7.0
Public relations	308	44.5	8.1
Journalism education	267	36.0	22.8
Western ways of practicing journalism	168	30.4	4.8
Ethical standards	307	24.1	33.6

Question: Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in [country]. 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

Canadian journalists demonstrate skepticism towards many social institutions. In particular, journalists are very distrustful of political parties and politicians, and quite distrustful of trade unions, religious officials, and the government. In contrast, the majority report trust in the judiciary/the courts, and nearly half the respondents have trust in the news media. There is considerably more diversity in responses when asked about the police, the military, and parliament.

Table 7: Journalistic trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying "complete" and "a great deal of trust"	Mean	Standard Deviation
The judiciary/the courts	341	64.8	3.73	.77
The news media	340	48.2	3.42	.71
The police	340	26.5	2.94	.89
The military	327	24.5	2.91	.91
The parliament	337	21.4	2.93	.80
The government	326	12.6	2.69	.83
Religious leaders	324	11.7	2.37	.97
Trade unions	333	11.1	2.70	.81
Politicians in general	336	5.4	2.47	.78
Political parties	334	3.9	2.29	.78

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>	6500 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	Stratified proportionally random sampling for newsrooms and simple random sampling for journalists within newsrooms
<i>Sample size:</i>	352 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	telephone
<i>Response rate:</i>	22%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	06/2014-02/2016