



Country Report

Journalists in India

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Backgrounds of Journalists

In the sample of 527 journalists interviewed in India, most were male (72.4%), held a master's degree (69.5%), and specialized in journalism at some point in the course of her/his education (50.5%). The mean age of these journalists was 36.52 years. Journalists who spoke Bengali were the largest group (32.3%), followed by those who spoke Hindi (28.0%). Some other language groups represented were Gujarati, Marathi, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kashmiri, Urdu, and Odia. Among those who indicated their religious affiliation, Hindus formed the largest group (45.5%). Religion was not very important for the journalists; 30.8 percent said it was unimportant and only 10.1 percent said it was extremely important. The journalists' political stance was only a little bit left of center (4.72 on a ten-point scale, where a lower number was more left).

Journalists in the Newsroom

While the spread of position titles was considerable, the modal position of Indian journalists in this study was reporter (33.7%). The majority of these journalists were full time (87.5%), permanent (72.5%), worked for only one newsroom (90.3%) and one news outlet (80.0%), did not hold other paid jobs (88.4%), and were not generally members of professional associations (63.7%). These journalists tended to be generalists working on several topics (57.9%); while several beats were represented among those who worked on beats, the modal beat was domestic politics (22.0%). On average, Indian journalists had 11.04 years of professional experience ($s=8.40$); half of them had more than nine years of experience.

The modal income of these journalists was Rs. 20,000 (USD 321) to Rs. 30,000 (USD 482). Most of the journalists worked for newspapers (63.4%), followed by television (20.9%), and very few worked for independent online news media (1.0%) with a slightly larger percent (2.7%) working for online versions of offline news media. The news outlets respondent journalists worked for were mostly privately owned (90.7%) and regional in their reach (88.2%).

Journalistic Roles

The top five roles, in order of importance both by mean scores and by percent who said "extremely" and "very" important, for Indian journalists, were: report things as they are (88.4%), educate the audience (85.5%), provide analysis of current affairs (84.7%), let people express their views (83.2%), and support national development (81.7%) (see Table 1). Interestingly, the last role in mean importance was "convey a positive image of the leadership." "Be an adversary of the government" and "set the political agenda" tied for second last place in terms of means, followed by "support government policy." These Indian journalists considered it only somewhat important to be directly oppositional to the government as well as to portray leaders positively. As the means decreased, in general, standard deviations increased. Thus

journalists' opinions were quite varied on the roles that were not of primary importance to them.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	518	88.4	4.43	.81
Educate the audience	504	85.5	4.33	.94
Provide analysis of current affairs	503	84.7	4.31	.81
Let people express their views	513	83.2	4.28	.96
Support national development	503	81.7	4.22	1.06
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	498	77.9	4.16	1.05
Tell stories about the world	503	76.1	4.08	1.01
Be a detached observer	501	76.0	4.04	1.19
Advocate for social change	505	74.5	4.03	1.10
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	509	69.7	3.94	1.11
Provide information people need to make political decisions	502	62.9	3.77	1.19
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	511	62.8	3.78	1.11
Influence public opinion	506	61.3	3.67	1.25
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	502	58.2	3.63	1.24
Motivate people to participate in political activity	508	52.6	3.42	1.35
Monitor and scrutinize business	493	50.7	3.43	1.19
Provide entertainment and relaxation	499	49.7	3.43	1.21
Set the political agenda	497	38.4	2.94	1.35
Support government policy	498	35.1	3.01	1.28
Be an adversary of the government	491	34.0	2.94	1.35
Convey a positive image of political leadership	496	32.4	2.82	1.38

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

Indian journalists had the highest agreement with the statement that journalists should always adhere to the codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context (it was the only role with a mean above 4.00), and the lowest agreement with what is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment (the only one with a mean below 3.00) (see Table 2). Respective percentages for journalists saying "strongly" or "somewhat" agree were 77.6 percent and 41.4 percent. However, standard deviations were large for all four statements, indicating considerable difference in answers; the largest standard deviation ($s=1.51$) was for "It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it," and the lowest but still above 1 ($s=1.26$) was for "Journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context."

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	517	77.6	4.10	1.26
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	519	65.5	3.64	1.32
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	515	45.5	3.08	1.51
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	512	41.4	2.99	1.44

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.

For opinions about which potentially controversial reporting practices were more or less justified in the case of reporting an important story (measured on a three-point scale), the majority of Indian journalists either believed that these techniques were justified only occasionally or did not approve of them at all (see Table 3). “Accepting money from sources” was the least justified reporting method for the journalists (12.8%), indicating that this practice was not justified under any circumstance and that journalists were cohesive in their answers; 87.2 percent of the journalists said this practice was not justified under any circumstances. Lack of verification as well as fabrication and alteration of content followed next with high disapproval scores. Interestingly, using recreations was not part of this group, with 41.8 percent saying it is justified on occasion. The practice of using hidden microphones and cameras was rated as being justified on occasion (52.0%) (see Table 3).

Table 3: Justification of controversial reporting methods by journalists

	N	Percentage saying “always justified”	Percentage saying “justified on occasion”
Using hidden microphones or cameras	504	23.0	52.0
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	491	14.1	41.8
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	497	11.1	30.2
Paying people for confidential information	500	10.8	42.6
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	501	9.8	40.1
Claiming to be somebody else	499	6.0	43.5
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	494	5.9	32.2
Altering photographs	493	5.5	17.8
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	497	5.0	26.6
Publishing stories with unverified content	499	4.8	12.6
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	494	3.4	19.4
Accepting money from sources	502	3.0	9.8

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?

Professional Autonomy and Influences

Means for professional autonomy hovered around 3.90 indicating considerable autonomy in selecting stories, in selecting aspects of the story to emphasize, and in participating in editorial coordination.

Journalism ethics (mean=4.23), followed closely by time limits (mean=4.21) were the topmost influences on work; 80.5 percent and 78.5 percent of journalists respectively indicated that these were “extremely” or “very” influential (see Table 4). Economic influences such as advertising considerations, public relations, and profit expectations were a little above midpoint. Below these, and also below the midpoint of three, were nine influences, the least influential among them being friends, acquaintances and family (mean=2.33). Standard deviations were just below or at 1 for the top four influences; for all other influences they were above 1. The highest standard deviation (s=1.47) was for religious considerations (mean=2.56), which was rated fifth last in influence.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very influential"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	512	80.5	4.23	1.00
Time limits	508	78.5	4.21	.96
Information access	509	76.2	4.02	.99
Editorial policy	502	75.9	4.08	1.00
Media laws and regulation	509	72.9	3.97	1.05
Availability of news-gathering resources	501	70.9	3.94	1.06
Feedback from the audience	514	68.1	3.81	1.10
Audience research and data	479	67.6	3.86	1.05
Competing news organizations	515	64.3	3.73	1.13
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	501	61.3	3.65	1.20
Relationships with news sources	515	57.9	3.64	1.18
Owners of your news organization	482	56.0	3.50	1.38
Censorship	507	50.7	3.37	1.25
Personal values and beliefs	487	49.3	3.31	1.43
Managers of your news organization	482	45.2	3.28	1.30
Public relations	511	44.4	3.19	1.33
Advertising considerations	478	44.4	3.21	1.26
Profit expectations	463	41.9	3.08	1.30
The military, police and state security	501	37.3	2.97	1.36
Peers on the staff	479	35.3	2.93	1.27
Government officials	511	30.9	2.80	1.25
Religious considerations	435	27.4	2.56	1.46
Colleagues in other media	518	25.7	2.54	1.26
Politicians	506	25.1	2.61	1.25
Friends, acquaintances and family	518	21.8	2.33	1.33
Business people	505	18.4	2.37	1.25
Pressure groups	505	16.8	2.35	1.20

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

Journalists who had worked for five or more years in the profession were asked to indicate increases or decreases in certain aspects of their work. While they indicated a large increase in average working hours (79.7%), they did not perceive much of a change in time available to research stories (34.2%) (see Table 5). Journalists indicated an increase in all other variables, particularly in the use of search engines and the importance of technical skills, the top two indicated changes with 90.7 percent and 83.5 percent of the journalists respectively indicating that these had increased a lot or somewhat. The variable list also included credibility of journalism and journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions—these were among the variables that journalists considered as having increased. Thus, other than increased working hours and the likelihood that journalists would have to learn technical skills, the conditions of the journalists' work did not necessarily deteriorate. In fact, it appeared that journalists perceived an improvement at least in terms of freedom (49.2%) and credibility (52.8%).

Journalists with five and more years of experience were also asked to indicate changes in the level of influence of certain variables. Altogether, 92.8 percent indicated that the influence of competition had strengthened, followed by 82.2 percent who said advertising considerations have strengthened (see Table 6). Percentages of journalists who indicated strengthening of other factors related to the advent of digitalization in journalism were: 77.3 for the influence of user-generated content, 76.2 percent for audience feedback, and 70.6 percent for

audience involvement in news production. Altogether, 31.8 percent indicated that the influence of ethical standards had weakened.

Table 5: Changes in journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "increased"	Percentage saying has "decreased"
The use of search engines	322	90.7	2.2
Technical skills	321	83.5	5.3
Average working hours of journalists	320	79.7	5.6
The relevance of journalism for society	315	72.7	12.4
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	323	70.3	12.1
Having a university degree	321	68.5	10.9
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	318	58.8	17.9
The credibility of journalism	318	52.8	28.3
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	319	49.2	25.4
Time available for researching stories	319	34.2	41.7

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in India. 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"
Competition	321	92.8	1.9
Advertising considerations	321	82.2	6.9
Social media	305	81.6	4.9
User-generated contents, such as blogs	313	77.3	7.0
Audience feedback	315	76.2	5.7
Journalism education	324	74.4	12.3
Audience research	313	72.8	11.2
Profit making pressures	320	72.5	9.4
Public relations	322	71.4	9.6
Audience involvement in news production	313	70.6	5.8
Pressure toward sensational news	316	68.4	12.7
Western ways of practicing journalism	305	58.4	15.4
Ethical standards	321	45.8	31.8

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

Interestingly, Indian journalists indicated trust in public institutions, such as the Parliament (mean=4.07), the military (mean=3.92), the judiciary (mean=3.87), and the government (mean=3.75), but not in political parties (mean=2.60) and in the people that participate in some of these institutions such as politicians (mean=2.40). The journalists reserved their lowest level of trust for religious leaders. However, standard deviations were all above one indicating considerable variance in responses, particularly for government, politicians, police, and political parties.

Table 7: Journalistic trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying "complete" and "a great deal of trust"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Parliament	487	72.1	4.07	1.10
Military	478	70.7	3.92	1.12
Judiciary/the courts	481	67.2	3.87	1.09
Government	486	60.9	3.75	1.19
News media	483	59.4	3.68	1.02
Police	480	38.3	3.14	1.16
Trade unions	473	20.9	2.71	1.11
Political parties	483	20.9	2.60	1.15
Politicians in general	480	16.3	2.40	1.16
Religious leaders	479	9.8	1.90	1.11

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>	700,155 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	Newsroom selection: Effort to include a city and vernacular media outlets from various states of India. Selection of journalists: Convenience sample & other
<i>Sample size:</i>	527 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	face-to-face and mail/e-mail
<i>Response rate:</i>	≈82%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	12/2013-07/2015