

Country Report

Journalists in Norway

Jan Fredrik Hovden, *University of Bergen, Norway*

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Backgrounds of Journalists

Female (50.4%) and male (49.6%) journalists are evenly numbered in Norway. The typical Norwegian journalist is in his or her mid-forties ($\bar{x}=43.33$, $\tilde{x}=43$, $s=11.63$), and almost everyone (89.3%) has completed some kind of university or university college studies. 67.0 percent hold a bachelor degree and 22.2 percent a master degree. A large majority (72.3%) of these degrees are in communication and media studies, and 55.7 percent report to hold a degree in journalism.

Journalists in the Newsroom

The majority of journalists in Norway hold a full-time position (72.6%), whereas 4.7 percent said they held part-time employments and 18.8 percent that they work as a freelance journalist.

The majority of Norwegian journalists are experienced journalists. On average, they had worked as journalists for 16.69 years ($\tilde{x}=15$, $s=11.11$), one in three had worked more than twenty years. Most were working in various beats (63.0%), and of those who held a specific beat, the most common beats listed were culture (26.1%), health (12.2%) and sports (10.4%). Less common were foreign politics (9.0%), economy (7.2%), politics (6.3%), entertainment (5.4%), current news (3.2%), domestic politics (2.7%) and crime/law (1.8%). On average, the Norwegian journalist worked for 1.3 newsrooms ($s=1.10$). 25.9 percent said they held additional jobs outside journalism. In regard to membership in professional associations, the sample - being based on members in the two main professional organizations - cannot provide information on this, but union membership has in Norway - for journalists as for other professional groups - historically been very high, and it seems reasonable to assume this is higher than 90 percent for those working in a traditional news room (Source: Norwegian Union of Journalists).

The majority of the Norwegian journalists work in print media. 44.1 percent work in daily newspapers, 7.7 percent in weekly newspapers, and 12.3 percent in magazines. In addition, 3.3 percent work in online outlets of offline media. In regard to broadcasting, 17.9 percent work in broadcasting, 9.9 percent in radio. Few work in news agencies (2.3%) or in dedicated online media (2.5%).

Journalistic Roles

In regard to professional role orientations, most Norwegian journalists score reporting things as they are and educating the audience as important in their jobs (Table 1). A slight majority also says that being a detached observer and letting people express their views is important. Less than half say providing analysis of current affairs and providing information people need to make political decisions are important.

Investigative and political interventionist role elements, like monitoring political and business elites, setting the political agenda, motivating people to vote and being an advocate for social change is reported as important for one-third or somewhat less of the journalists. Where almost no-one says supporting those in power is an important part of their job, one in four say supporting national development is. One in three says that entertainment is important. In sum, ideals of being a detached watchdog and critical change agent appears to be most important, although far from common to all.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	625	87.8	4.26	.90
Educate the audience	624	82.7	4.11	.87
Be a detached observer	620	62.7	3.64	1.03
Let people express their views	608	62.0	3.66	1.13
Provide analysis of current affairs	609	47.8	3.30	1.15
Provide information people need to make political decisions	599	42.9	3.10	1.29
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	599	38.6	2.96	1.27
Set the political agenda	599	36.9	2.95	1.20
Monitor and scrutinize business	600	34.2	2.86	1.25
Advocate for social change	592	32.9	2.96	1.14
Provide entertainment and relaxation	525	32.0	2.87	1.19
Motivate people to participate in political activity	595	31.1	2.77	1.24
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	610	30.2	2.96	1.07
Influence public opinion	591	28.1	2.81	1.12
Support national development	584	24.1	2.63	1.16
Be an adversary of the government	594	23.4	2.56	1.18
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	604	22.5	2.69	1.10
Convey a positive image of political leadership	587	2.4	1.56	.78
Support government policy	586	.3	1.31	.53

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

Norwegian journalists generally demonstrate a strong commitment to professional standards of ethics as a principle. Almost everyone agrees that a journalist should always agree to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context, but half of the journalists says what is ethical depends on the situation, and almost as many that it is a matter of personal judgment (Table 2). One in four say that moral standards can be set aside in extraordinary circumstances.

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	631	96.5	4.68	.61
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	619	53.5	3.17	1.33
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	618	42.4	2.86	1.29
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	615	25.7	2.55	1.26

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.

While almost no Norwegian journalists says that controversial reporting methods (Table 3) are always justified, many see such methods as occasionally so. A large majority says hidden recoding equipment and use of unauthorized business or government documents fall into this category, and a majority thinks that this also goes for getting employed in a firm or organization to get inside information or claiming to be somebody else to get a story. On the other hand, the involvement of money (either as paying for information or receiving payment from sources) is seen as problematic by most, and this also goes for reporting stories with unverified content.

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	586	7.8	82.3
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	497	3.8	47.1
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	560	3.0	62.0
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	543	1.5	69.6
Using hidden microphones or cameras	590	1.0	92.7
Paying people for confidential information	559	.9	25.9
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	553	.4	51.0
Claiming to be somebody else	579	.2	67.4
Publishing stories with unverified content	568	.2	27.3
Accepting money from sources	598	.0	.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

Journalists in Norway report a fairly high degree of professional autonomy. 60.5 percent say they have complete or a great deal of freedom in selecting the stories they work on, and 75.2 percent say the same for deciding what aspects of a story should be emphasized. 65.6 percent say they very often or always participate in editorial and newsroom coordination.

In regard to sources of influences on their own journalistic work (Table 4), Norwegian journalists perceive professional and legal regulations (journalism ethics, editorial policy, media law) to be the most important, together with time limits and access to information. Few say that influences related to competition and profit expectations are important, and almost nobody quotes pressures from owners, the marketing division, PR, politicians or censorship as important influences in their work.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very influential"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	548	77.6	3.92	.78
Information access	542	62.4	3.67	.78
Media laws and regulation	548	58.6	3.63	.90
Editorial policy	546	55.3	3.52	.80
Time limits	551	51.7	3.55	.87
Your personal values and beliefs	561	43.9	3.43	.82
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	534	37.5	3.28	.76
Your peers on the staff	544	28.7	3.17	.69
Availability of news-gathering resources	474	24.3	2.87	.97
Relationships with news sources	531	17.9	2.67	.98
Competing news organizations	547	13.2	2.63	.82
Feedback from the audience	554	12.3	2.73	.75
Audience research and data	505	11.7	2.37	1.04
Profit expectations	479	9.4	1.96	1.06
Politicians	546	5.3	1.93	.85
Friends, acquaintances and family	554	5.2	2.20	.76
Government officials	540	4.1	1.84	.82
Advertising considerations	466	3.9	1.56	.88
Owners of the news organization	489	3.7	1.60	.82
Colleagues in other media	552	3.4	2.16	.73
Censorship	521	3.3	1.56	.79
Managers of the news organization	508	3.0	1.81	.82
Public relations	538	2.8	1.87	.78
Business people	539	2.2	1.66	.72
Pressure groups	539	1.9	1.82	.74

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

The Norwegian journalists make it clear that they feel the Internet is transforming their profession, that competition and commercial pressures are increasing, together with the increased need for having a university education. Almost half also say that the credibility of journalism has decreased (Table 5).

Almost everyone says the need for Internet (e.g. search engine skills), the need to interact with their audiences has increased, and that social media and blogs have become more important in their own jobs. At the same time, the tempo has increased: half of the journalists feel the pressure to work more hours and four in five feel like there is now less time to work on the stories than before. More than half of the Norwegian journalists feel that various types of commercial pressures (including a pressure towards sensationalism) has increased in their own jobs in the last five years. Also, many note that the importance of university education, both more specialized and journalism education in general, has become more important.

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	425	95.1	1.9
The use of search engines	424	94.8	.7
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	398	61.6	15.3
Having a university degree	402	61.2	6.2
Average working hours of journalists	389	57.8	12.3
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	401	56.1	6.2
The relevance of journalism for society	411	31.1	24.6
The credibility of journalism	417	18.7	43.4
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	383	17.8	37.9
Time available for researching stories	419	4.8	81.9

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in Norway. 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, such as Facebook or Twitter	440	97.0	.7
User-generated contents, such as blogs	420	88.8	2.6
Competition	431	85.8	5.1
Profit making pressures	412	84.7	3.4
Audience feedback	425	75.5	2.1
Audience involvement in news production	410	74.6	1.5
Audience research	388	74.5	2.1
Public relations	385	71.2	3.4
Advertising considerations	397	66.5	5.3
Pressure toward sensational news	417	61.6	5.0
Ethical standards	418	47.8	21.8
Journalism education	332	53.9	13.3

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

Methodological Information

<i>Size of the population:</i>	7750 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	simple random for journalists
<i>Sample size:</i>	656 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	online
<i>Response rate:</i>	36%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	11/2013-12/2013