

## Country Report

# Journalists in Qatar

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18 May, 2016

## Backgrounds of Journalists

The typical journalist in Qatar is an expat male in his mid-thirties and holds a university degree in journalism or communication, as this is one of the requirements for recruiting expat journalists. Of the 383 interviewed journalists, 106 were female, making for a proportion of 27.7 percent of the overall sample. On average, journalists in Qatar were 39.15 years old; 67 percent of the journalists were younger than 46.

Journalists tend to be well educated: 81.5 percent of the respondents hold a degree from a graduate program and 55.1 percent hold a Bachelor's degree. 13.6 percent of the journalists had obtained a Master's degree, 3.9 percent with a doctoral degree, and 8.9 percent had undertaken some university studies but did not complete their studies. Across the whole sample of Qatari journalists, the majority (87.7%) had specialized in communication or journalism; 30 percent had specialized in journalism, 30.7 percent had studied in another communication field, and 27 percent had specialized in both journalism and another communication field. Across the whole sample of journalists in Qatar, the majority (91%) are non-Qataris while the rest (9%) are Qataris. Media and journalism is not an attractive field for Qataris due to low remuneration package, and women still face challenges, especially in the field of media. These challenges are rooted in customs, traditions, society's perception and familial authority. All foreign journalists working in the country must be accredited by the Qatar Foreign Information Agency and sponsored by a local institution.

## Journalists in the Newsroom

The majority of journalists interviewed in Qatar held a full-time position (63.1%), whereas 21.6 percent of the respondents indicated that they had part-time employments, and 13.1 percent worked as freelance journalists. Of those with full or part-time employment, 92.7 percent said they held permanent positions, and 2.2 percent worked on a temporary contract.

Journalists in Qatar are fairly experienced. About 34.5 percent had worked as journalists for more than 10 years, and 57 percent had more than 5 years of professional experience. Most journalists worked on a specific desk (66.3%), such as politics, local news, or sports. The remaining 33.7 percent of the respondents indicated that they worked on various topics and subjects. On the whole, 28.8 percent of the sample had additional jobs outside the area of journalism. 23.2 percent of the interviewed journalists – expats journalists – were members of a professional association in their home country as there are no journalist syndications in Qatar.

Across the whole sample, about one third of the interviewees were true multimedia journalists, as they indicated to work for various media types simultaneously. The majority of journalist in the sample worked for broadcast media: 53.8 percent contributed to broadcast media, 29 percent to daily newspapers, and 3.2 percent to

magazines. About 86.7 percent of the journalists worked for mixed ownership but mostly private, and 13.3 percent for purely state ownership. Few journalists in the sample reported they worked for QNA (Qatar news agency) – around 4.4 percent – and for online newsrooms of traditional media (8.7%).

### Journalistic Roles

With regards to professional role orientations, journalists in Qatar found it most important to influence public opinion, to advocate for social change, to support national development, to report things as they naturally are, to be a detached observer and to support government policy (see Table 1).

About half of journalists in Qatar found it important to promote a positive image of political leadership, to provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience, and to provide entertainment and relaxation. On the other hand, the following traits were only supported by a minority of respondents: monitor and scrutinize political leaders, monitor and scrutinize business, and acting as adversary of the government.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Influence public opinion	375	57.9	3.66	1.24
Advocate for social change	382	57.1	3.64	1.19
Support national development	378	56.6	3.58	1.19
Report things as they are	365	54.5	3.51	1.23
Be a detached observer	357	53.2	3.48	1.22
Support government policy	375	49.1	3.35	1.29
Convey a positive image of political leadership	379	48.8	3.34	1.28
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	353	48.2	3.38	1.23
Provide entertainment and relaxation	341	47.2	3.33	1.27
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	357	44.0	3.23	1.27
Provide analysis of current affairs	366	40.4	3.19	1.23
Set the political agenda	352	36.4	2.93	1.37
Let people express their views	347	36.3	2.90	1.40
Motivate people to participate in political activity	340	34.7	2.78	1.41
Provide information people need to make political decisions	329	34.3	2.78	1.40
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	360	29.7	2.58	1.35
Monitor and scrutinize business	372	29.0	2.61	1.34
Be an adversary of the government	315	16.5	1.96	1.29

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

Journalists in Qatar generally demonstrated a strong commitment to professional standards of ethics. The respondents almost unanimously agreed that journalists should always adhere to the codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context (see Table 2). However, slightly less than half of the interviewees subscribed to the idea that journalists' ethical decisions depend on the specific situation, that their ethical decisions are a matter of personal judgment and that sometimes it is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it.

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	346	74.9	3.92	1.18
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	371	45.3	3.04	1.45
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	371	36.7	2.81	1.44
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	362	21.3	2.33	1.31

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”
Paying people for confidential information	339	3.8	5.6
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	360	3.1	6.1
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	355	2.0	5.4
Using hidden microphones or cameras	358	2.0	7.0
Claiming to be somebody else	358	1.7	3.9
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	355	1.7	3.9
Publishing stories with unverified content	354	1.7	3.4
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	354	1.4	7.9
Accepting money from sources	351	.9	2.0
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	356	.6	2.0

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 Qatar reported a fairly moderate degree of professional autonomy. 31.7 percent said that they had complete freedom or a great deal of freedom in their selection of stories. With a total of 34.7 percent, the number of respondents who had complete or a great deal of freedom in deciding over what aspects to emphasize in a news story was even higher. Still, a small number of journalists reported that they participated in editorial coordination activities (such as meetings and news management) “always” or “very often” (29.8%).

News production is influenced by a variety of factors. Among the potential sources of influences mentioned in the interview, “editorial policy” fared on top of the list among journalists in Qatar (see Table 4). A majority of journalists found their work substantively constrained by the availability (or non-availability) of news-gathering resources and by time limits. Also, more than 40 percent of the respondents admitted their work was influenced by media laws and regulation, information access and colleagues in other media.

Overall, internal factors were found to be more influential than external constraints. Journalists in Qatar felt little influenced by feedback from the audience, audience research and data, business people, government officials, politicians, censorship, editorial supervisors and higher editors, pressure groups, managers of the news organization, public relations, owners of the news organization and journalists’ peers on the staff.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very influential"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Editorial policy	331	53.2	3.38	1.31
Availability of news-gathering resources	350	49.4	3.35	1.30
Competing news organizations	349	47.0	3.25	1.32
Time limits	349	46.4	3.19	1.43
Relationships with news sources	354	46.3	3.23	1.37
Media laws and regulation	357	42.9	3.08	1.39
Information access	361	42.4	3.08	1.38
Colleagues in other media	371	41.2	3.11	1.33
Profit expectations	306	40.5	3.08	1.31
Advertising considerations	292	40.4	3.12	1.32
Friends, acquaintances and family	346	37.0	2.90	1.43
Journalism ethics	335	35.2	2.87	1.36
Feedback from the audience	343	33.5	2.80	1.39
Audience research and data	330	32.4	2.80	1.31
Business people	371	31.3	2.74	1.34
Government officials	346	31.2	2.65	1.42
Politicians	366	30.1	2.68	1.36
Censorship	331	29.6	2.62	1.40
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	311	28.6	2.71	1.25
Pressure groups	370	28.6	2.56	1.38
Managers of the news organization	264	28.4	2.63	1.30
Public relations	366	28.4	2.66	1.37
Owners of the news organization	293	25.9	2.49	1.33
Your peers on the staff	336	23.5	2.51	1.29
Your personal values and beliefs	329	21.0	2.40	1.25

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.

## Methodological Information

<i>Size of the population:</i>	800 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	stratified proportionally random sampling for newsrooms and based on quota for journalists within newsrooms
<i>Sample size:</i>	412 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	face-to-face, telephone and mail/e-mail
<i>Response rate:</i>	68.2%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	03/2012-10/2014