



Country Report

Journalists in Sweden

Monica Löfgren Nilsson, *University of Gothenburg*

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Backgrounds of Journalists

The Swedish journalist corps is gender equal, well-educated and middle aged. Of the interviewees, 45.9 percent were women and on average the journalists were 51.32 years old ($s=10.05$); 41.4 percent of the journalists were younger than 50 years. 60.5 percent of the journalists held at least a college or bachelor's degree and 26.0 percent had studied at the university without completing their studies. A majority (68.0%) had specialized in journalism or in another communication field.

Journalists in the Newsroom

A vast majority of the interviewed journalists held a full-time position (74.4%), a minority held part-time positions (7.3%) and 17.0 percent worked as freelancers. Most journalists worked on a specific beat (65.9%) and a minority had other paid jobs alongside with journalism (12.6%). The affiliation rate is high among Swedish journalists; 68.9 percent are members in a professional association.

Journalistic Roles

With regard to professional role orientations, Swedish journalists found it most important to report things as they are, to be a detached observer and to let people express their views. The relevance of these roles was almost undisputed among the journalists. Furthermore, the journalists hold a strong watchdog ideal – to monitor and scrutinize political leaders and business – and they also found it important to provide the information people need to make political decisions.

Politically assertive roles – such as to support government policy and convey a positive image of political leadership - were the least supported alongside with providing the kind of news that attracts the largest audience. The agreement upon these issues was unanimous.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	590	96.4	4.59	.58
Be a detached observer	585	90.4	4.41	.76
Let people express their views	590	90.3	4.41	.75
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	587	87.1	4.35	.93
Provide information people need to make political decisions	592	84.0	4.23	.93
Monitor and scrutinize business	587	82.5	4.20	.95
Provide analysis of current affairs	587	77.3	4.05	.92
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	589	75.4	4.06	1.04
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	586	39.8	3.23	.96
Advocate for social change	566	38.5	2.98	1.24
Be an adversary of the government	572	36.0	2.78	1.39
Motivate people to participate in political activity	580	35.7	2.92	1.20
Influence public opinion	560	25.0	2.62	1.20
Set the political agenda	559	18.4	2.50	1.14
Provide entertainment and relaxation	579	15.4	2.54	.98
Support national development	548	14.4	2.10	1.17
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	577	5.4	2.00	.91
Convey a positive image of political leadership	565	1.4	1.37	.70
Support government policy	572	.0	1.03	.20

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

The Swedish journalists completely agreed that journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context. However, a majority at the same time regarded the codes as negotiable and 49.9 percent regarded ethics in journalism as a matter of personal judgement.

When it comes to controversial reporting methods, the Swedish journalists almost completely agreed that using confidential business or government documents without authorization, to work under cover and to use hidden microphones or cameras is justifiable on occasion. A vast majority also accepted the use of re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors and claiming to be somebody else at least on occasion. To accept money from sources was unanimously rejected by the journalists.

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	592	98.3	4.58	.58
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	590	66.4	3.53	1.17
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	588	61.9	3.30	1.27
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	591	49.9	2.93	1.28

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	577	11.8	84.7
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	556	7.9	87.1
Using hidden microphones or cameras	582	4.5	93.6
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	497	2.4	79.3
Claiming to be somebody else	578	1.7	83.4
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	549	1.5	46.8
Paying people for confidential information	529	.6	48.4
Publishing stories with unverified content	573	.2	42.8
Accepting money from sources	583	.2	.7

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

Swedish journalists experience a high degree of professional autonomy; 80.0 percent said they had complete or a great deal of freedom when it comes to selecting stories and 84.4 percent said that they had complete or a great deal of freedom in deciding over which aspects to emphasize in a news story. Participation levels in editorial meetings and coordination are also high, with two-thirds (65.9%) of the journalists saying they were involved in activities such as attending meetings or assigning reporters.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very influential"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	652	69.5	3.78	.84
Information access	642	62.9	3.64	.84
Availability of news-gathering resources	611	56.8	3.55	1.00
Time limits	650	54.0	3.50	.99
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	592	53.9	3.49	.84
Your personal values and beliefs	649	47.6	3.36	.92
Editorial policy	623	46.7	3.32	.94
Media laws and regulation	646	34.7	3.03	.98
Relationships with news sources	644	25.2	2.77	1.04
Managers of the news organization	595	25.0	2.68	1.09
Competing news organizations	643	22.2	2.83	.85
Your peers on the staff	611	21.4	2.86	.82
Profit expectations	510	21.0	2.37	1.30
Feedback from the audience	645	18.4	2.81	.79
Audience research and data	602	18.3	2.58	1.00
Owners of the news organization	545	13.6	2.12	1.12
Advertising considerations	512	7.6	1.84	.98
Friends, acquaintances and family	647	6.3	2.19	.77
Colleagues in other media	645	6.0	2.24	.77
Public relations	645	2.9	1.85	.75
Censorship	644	2.6	1.46	.71
Politicians	642	2.3	1.73	.79
Pressure groups	643	1.7	1.76	.71
Business people	643	1.6	1.78	.72
Government officials	644	1.4	1.42	.66

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 ethics have, according to the journalists, the strongest influence on their work; 69.5 percent regarded ethics as extremely or very influential. Information access, availability of newsgathering resources and time limits were also agreed upon as influential.

External factors where, on the other hand, perceived as less influential; government officials, business people, pressure groups and politicians have little influence over the Swedish news production - the Swedish journalists strongly agreed upon this.

Journalism in Transition

According to the Swedish journalists, the most notable changes in journalism are the increased importance of technical skills and the increased use of search engines. Furthermore, the time available for researching stories has decreased. Influences on journalism and news production have changed as well and the Swedish journalists almost unanimous reported that the influence from social media and from user-generated content has increased. A vast majority also said that competition, audience involvement in news production and profit making pressures alongside with the influence of audience feedback and audience research have increased. Taking into account that a majority of the journalists also reported that advertising considerations and the pressure towards sensational news had increased, the results altogether point towards an increase for all the market-related sources of influence.

Table 5: Changes in journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "increased"	Percentage saying has "decreased"
The use of search engines	623	92.6	.2
Technical skills	624	92.0	.6
Average working hours of journalists	622	58.5	4.0
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	618	57.0	14.2
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	621	41.1	14.0
Having a university degree	620	32.1	11.6
The relevance of journalism for society	620	29.2	32.4
The credibility of journalism	621	12.7	47.5
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	621	7.6	41.4
Time available for researching stories	622	3.1	83.9

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in Sweden. 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 and Twitter	626	96.0	.3
User-generated contents, such as blogs	622	89.7	1.4
Competition	624	80.0	5.6
Audience involvement in news production	618	76.4	1.5
Profit making pressures	620	73.4	1.6
Audience feedback	620	69.0	1.6
Audience research	623	63.1	2.4
Advertising considerations	620	60.0	3.4
Pressure toward sensational news	618	59.5	1.6
Public relations	623	53.8	3.4
Journalism education	622	30.2	19.6
Ethical standards	621	18.0	32.0

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

The questions about changes in journalism were only presented to journalists who had five years or more of professional experience.

Journalistic Trust

When it comes to trust in public institutions, a majority of the Swedish journalists considered the judiciary/the courts, the parliament and the news media to be trustworthy. The journalists also had relatively high confidence in the trade unions, the government and the police, although they disagree to a higher extent when judging these institutions. Religious leaders are regarded as the least trustworthy institution and the agreement is fairly high.

Table 7: Journalistic trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying "complete" and "a great deal of trust"	Mean	Standard Deviation
The judiciary/the courts	585	55.4	3.53	.67
The parliament [Riksdagen]	581	53.9	3.49	.67
The news media	584	51.7	3.47	.64
Trade unions	585	34.0	3.21	.71
The government [Regeringen]	580	31.0	3.09	.79
The police	585	29.2	3.11	.75
Political parties	583	18.2	2.97	.66
The military	563	17.6	2.82	.80
Politicians in general	583	17.3	3.03	.61
Religious leaders	569	4.6	2.29	.81

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>	19,222 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	used an existing representative web-panel for newsrooms and for journalists within newsrooms
<i>Sample size:</i>	675 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	online
<i>Response rate:</i>	36%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	11/2013-02/2014