



Country Report

Journalists in Denmark

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7 October, 2016

Backgrounds of Journalists

The typical journalist in Denmark is in his mid-forties, holds a bachelor degree and has specialized in journalism. 56.9 percent of the journalists interviewed were male and the average age was 45.90 years ($s=11.78$); half of the journalists were younger than 46 years. For many years, the typical way to secure a job within journalism in Denmark has been through a professional bachelor degree in journalism. This shows in the educational background of the Danish journalists. 78.3 percent have specialized in journalism and 65.1 percent held a bachelor degree. Another 28.1 percent held a master's degree.

Journalists in the Newsroom

The journalists who participated in the survey were primarily employed in full-time positions (71.1%). 20.5 percent worked as freelancers. Not many of the journalists had part-time employments (5.4%). Of the journalists who were not working as freelancers, 89.3 percent said they held a permanent position and 10.7 percent indicated they held a temporary position. A considerable percentage of the respondents (17.4%) had additional jobs outside the area of journalism.

Danish journalists have quite some experience, having worked as journalists for 18.41 years ($s=11.89$) on average; about half of them had more than 16 years of professional experience. 59.2 percent of the respondents told us that they work on various topics and subjects, while the other 40.8 percent worked on a specific beat. Politics, culture, economy and sport were the most common beats.

Most journalists in our sample worked for print media: 39.2 percent work for daily newspapers, 27.1 percent for magazines and 5.2 percent for weekly newspapers. 22.7 percent of the journalists are employed in television and 13.5 percent in radio. The share of journalists working for online versions of offline outlets (8.8%) is roughly equal to the share of journalists working for stand-alone online news sites (7.8%). 18.6 percent of the respondents told us that they work for various media types.

Journalistic Roles

Danish journalists strongly support classic roles such as reporting things as they are and being a detached observer (connected to objectivity and factual reporting), providing people with the information they need to make political decisions and the watchdog-role, i.e. monitoring and scrutinizing political leaders and business. At the other end of the spectrum they strongly reject the importance of conveying a positive image of political leadership and supporting government policy. The adherence and rejection of these roles were fairly undisputed, which can be seen from the low standard deviations (see Table 1).

Danish journalists also show support for letting people express their opinion, which is connected to the democratic debate. On the other hand, they only give limited

importance to actively advocating for social change, supporting national development and influencing public opinion. In other words, a somewhat passive objectivity norm seems to prevent them from pursuing more active goals in their journalism. Finally, they do not support a role of journalism as relaxation and entertainment and with an aim to attract the largest possible audience.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	1345	90.9	4.51	.69
Provide information people need to make political decisions	1352	88.5	4.42	.77
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	1342	80.4	4.18	.89
Monitor and scrutinize business	1339	74.2	4.03	.87
Provide analysis of current affairs	1345	74.1	3.99	.89
Be a detached observer	1340	63.2	3.80	1.09
Let people express their views	1354	50.5	3.48	1.01
Educate the audience	1348	44.9	3.26	1.18
Be an adversary of the government	1334	43.7	3.25	1.23
Motivate people to participate in political activity	1349	32.0	2.94	1.12
Set the political agenda	1338	30.0	2.93	1.07
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	1355	28.0	2.92	1.01
Support national development	1329	27.0	2.75	1.14
Advocate for social change	1333	26.0	2.69	1.18
Influence public opinion	1337	23.7	2.65	1.15
Provide entertainment and relaxation	1350	10.1	2.29	.92
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	1350	7.4	2.20	.90
Convey a positive image of political leadership	1348	.5	1.23	.50
Support government policy	1348	.2	1.11	.37

Question: Please tell me how important each of these things is in the journalistic 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

Danish journalists showed strong commitment to professional journalistic ethics. More than three out of four journalists agree that journalists should always adhere to the codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context (see Table 2). They also largely reject that what is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment. This is not unanimous, though, since a quarter of the journalists support this proposition. These perceptions of journalism ethics do, however, also leave room for specific ethical decisions in different situations. Approximately half of the journalists agree that it is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it and that what is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation.

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	1360	75.9	3.98	1.11
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	1359	50.6	3.12	1.29
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	1355	45.9	3.02	1.29
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	1361	27.4	2.47	1.21

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.

That ethical decisions among Danish journalists depend on the context is confirmed by looking at a selected number of potentially controversial reporting techniques. For most of these reporting practices a majority of journalists says that they can be justified on occasion rather than always or never (see Table 3).

A large proportion of journalists agree that it can occasionally be justified to use confidential business or government documents without authorization, to exert pressure on an unwilling informant, to use re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors, to get employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information, to use hidden cameras or microphones, and to claim to be someone else. However, less than ten percent agree that these reporting practices can always be justified. In contrast, only three percent of the journalists believe that it is always or occasionally justified to accept money from sources, while only one out of five would occasionally justify paying people for confidential information.

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	1358	9.4	81.4
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	1356	6.5	65.4
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	1345	6.0	70.9
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	1358	5.2	75.8
Using hidden microphones or cameras	1358	2.4	92.7
Claiming to be somebody else	1359	1.5	68.9
Publishing stories with unverified content	1357	1.1	39.9
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	1357	.8	53.5
Accepting money from sources	1353	.7	2.3
Paying people for confidential information	1354	.6	20.5

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

The Danish journalists who participated in the study indicated that they have a great degree of autonomy in their work. 69.7 percent of the journalists indicated that they have a great deal of freedom or complete freedom in selecting which stories to work on. 75.5 percent of the journalists told us that they have a great deal of freedom or complete freedom in choosing which aspects should be emphasized in the stories they work on.

We asked the journalists to indicate to which degree they believe their work is influenced by a number of factors (Table 4). Danish journalists perceive that their professional ethics have most influence. Limits of time and resources are also seen as highly influential, and the same goes for editorial influences. The audience is perceived to have less influence on journalistic work than sources and the colleagues at the news organization. Political pressure through government officials and censorship are only felt as influential by a minority of Danish journalists. Likewise, only few Danish journalists see profit expectations and advertising considerations as influential.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very influential"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	1322	70.7	3.95	.98
Time limits	1334	66.1	3.87	1.05
Editorial policy	1311	59.7	3.63	1.07
Availability of news-gathering resources	1293	56.0	3.60	1.05
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	1285	51.5	3.47	1.03
Personal values and beliefs	1330	49.8	3.47	1.11
Relationships with news sources	1286	43.7	3.26	1.12
Peers on the staff	1279	41.7	3.24	1.06
Information access	1247	33.4	2.96	1.16
Media laws and regulation	1265	28.2	2.76	1.19
Managers of your news organization	1279	26.3	2.74	1.18
Audience research and data	1281	21.1	2.66	1.09
Feedback from the audience	1303	19.1	2.65	1.04
Profit expectations	1227	17.6	2.24	1.27
Owners of your news organization	1211	14.3	2.03	1.21
Competing news organizations	1276	13.2	2.43	1.02
Politicians	1229	10.2	2.05	1.07
Pressure groups	1256	10.2	2.10	1.05
Public relations	1260	9.0	2.23	.98
Business people	1238	7.3	1.85	1.01
Government officials	1224	6.9	1.88	.98
Advertising considerations	1197	6.6	1.66	1.00
Colleagues in other media	1275	5.8	1.93	.92
Friends, acquaintances and family	1268	5.4	1.89	.91
Censorship	1203	1.2	1.29	.63

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.

Journalistic Trust

We asked the journalists how much trust they have in ten public institutions (Table 5). The only institution in which a majority of the respondents place complete or a great deal of trust are the courts. The second most trusted institution is the news media themselves, followed by the police. Less than eight percent of the journalists told us that they have complete or a great deal of trust in the government, politicians in general and political parties.

Table 5: Journalistic trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying "complete" and "a great deal of trust"	Mean	Standard Deviation
The judiciary/the courts	1290	64.1	3.63	.76
The news media	1288	33.1	3.18	.70
The police	1289	32.7	3.10	.82
The parliament	1288	24.5	2.96	.81
Trade unions	1288	16.9	2.79	.79
The military	1287	12.3	2.58	.83
The government	1287	7.5	2.55	.77
Politicians in general	1288	4.0	2.42	.73
Political parties	1288	2.6	2.26	.74
Religious leaders	1286	2.6	1.87	.83

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>	7,196 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	-
<i>Sample size:</i>	1,362 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	online
<i>Response rate:</i>	18.9%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	05/2015-06/2015