

## Country Report

# Journalists in Albania

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## Backgrounds of Journalists

Women represent the majority of journalists in Albania (51.7%), with an average age of 32.54 years ( $s=8.76$ ); half of the journalists were younger than 31 years and they often hold a degree in journalism or related field of study (72.4%). The dominating group in the media consists of reporters 30 to 39 years old (42.2%) and young journalists who just graduated (42%). Experienced journalists over 50 make up only 5.3 percent, while those who are 40 to 49 constitute 10.6 percent of the sample. With regard to the education level, 64.1 percent of interviewees hold a Bachelor's degree, 32.2 percent have a Master's and 1.7 percent have obtained a Doctorate. Only four of 295 journalists (1.4%) have earned a simple high school diploma. Of all interviewees with a diploma, 26.6 percent say they specialized in areas outside journalism and communication, 62.7 percent graduated in journalism or communication, and 10.7 percent have specialized in both areas.

## Journalists in the Newsroom

Most Albanian journalists admit to being employed on a full-time basis (90.5%), 8.8 percent work part-time and only 0.7 percent do freelance work. Full-time journalists mainly work in the press, newspapers and magazines (40%), even though the sector is facing a crisis. 52 percent of journalists who work in TV are employed part-time and nearly three quarters have moved to a permanent position (72.2%).

Journalists in Albania do not have much work experience, about 9.36 years ( $s=6.62$ ), and about half of them had more than eight years of professional experience. 39 percent of them have worked for six to ten years. The least experienced are employed by local newspapers or by the public broadcaster. Only 4 percent admit to have received additional training while working at these institutions. Many journalists are generalists (53.6%) working on several different topics and stories. 35 percent of them work for daily newspapers or national coverage magazines, others for private national TVs (21%) and local TVs (17%). Albanian journalists have generally worked for 1.22 newsrooms ( $s=0.51$ ). Only 19 percent of interviewees say they have a second paid job, mainly in the private commercial media, with 33 percent working in the press and 46 percent in local and national televisions. 63.9 percent of journalists in the survey declare not to have joined any professional organization or trade union.

Results show that television (42%) and the press (24%) are the two media types with the highest number of journalists, followed by radio (9%) and online media (7%). The number of journalists working on specialized publications such as cultural magazines (6%), financial magazines or weekly newspapers (6%) and news agencies (5%) is quite small.

## Journalistic Roles

Albanian journalists believe their most important professional role is reporting things as they are, being detached observers and providing the kind of news that attracts the largest audience. These functions contrast with the dominant perceived role of journalists in the early 1990s as missionaries and educators of the audience (see Table 1).

Journalists in Albania tend to be audience-oriented, report uninvolved according to the audience's taste and demand and attempt to educate them remotely through entertainment and recreation. Journalists' other attributes as "advocates for social change", "educators of the audience" and "promoters of tolerance and cultural diversity" find broad support as well.

As for critical journalism, only a few journalists think it is important to set the political agenda, to monitor and scrutinize business and political leaders.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	293	98.0	4.57	.57
Be a detached observer	293	90.8	4.31	.80
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	293	81.6	4.14	.89
Let people express their views	292	80.1	4.06	.83
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	293	79.5	4.07	.96
Influence public opinion	293	77.1	4.02	1.00
Provide analysis of current affairs	292	77.1	3.94	.72
Educate the audience	293	73.4	3.98	1.00
Support national development	293	73.4	3.85	1.13
Advocate for social change	289	72.3	3.88	1.02
Be an adversary of the government	291	64.9	3.67	1.19
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	293	55.3	3.50	1.07
Provide information people need to make political decisions	292	51.7	3.33	1.31
Tell stories about the world	292	49.3	3.40	1.12
Provide entertainment and relaxation	291	46.0	3.24	1.19
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	293	36.5	3.02	1.19
Monitor and scrutinize business	290	27.9	2.74	1.13
Set the political agenda	290	19.7	2.28	1.20
Convey a positive image of political leadership	290	18.6	2.21	1.25
Motivate people to participate in political activity	292	13.0	2.14	1.12
Support government policy	289	9.7	2.06	1.07

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

Professional ethics standards paint a mixed picture for Albanian journalism. As expected, most interviewees agree that they adhere to the code of ethics in every story they write about, but they also justify the random use of ethics by viewing ethics in journalism as a matter of personal judgment (see Table 2). In particular, they use double standards to justify aggressive reporting practices (Ibid). The majority of journalists, however, refuse to justify "altering of photographs" or "fabricating quotes from sources" (see Table 3), although they give reasons for the "use of hidden microphones and cameras". More than half of the journalists think it is right to claim to be somebody else or use a fake identity to obtain information. Most journalists do not accept corruption (accepting money from the sources),

which is good news. In truth, a promotional service to institutions, political parties and public relations’ offices is more than evident.

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	295	89.9	4.43	.82
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	294	62.9	3.47	1.12
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	293	41.6	3.01	1.19
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	295	36.9	2.89	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	293	17.1	51.5
Paying people for confidential information	294	13.9	59.2
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	292	9.9	61.0
Using hidden microphones or cameras	295	9.5	71.9
Claiming to be somebody else	295	5.4	41.4
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	292	4.5	27.7
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	291	3.4	42.6
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	294	1.0	6.5
Publishing stories with unverified content	295	.7	8.8
Accepting money from sources	295	.7	6.8
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	294	.0	7.5
Altering photographs	294	.0	3.1

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

Albanian journalists appear to have sufficient professional autonomy. Half of them (51.9%) acknowledge complete or a great deal of freedom in selecting the stories they work on, and 55.6 percent (s=0.96) of interviewees declare somewhat more autonomy to decide which aspects of a story should be emphasized. Higher autonomy is evident in editorial management. 78.6 percent of interviewees admit to “always” and “very often” participating in the media’s editorial boards, meetings and discussions on topics coverage. Despite the great freedom of autonomy, journalists in Albania use it very little to increase the quality of their stories.

Production of news is influenced by a variety of factors. “Journalism ethics” and the legal or professional framework in which journalists conduct their work have the highest impact (see Table 4). The interviewees think that lack of access to information (76.6%), time limits and non-availability of news-gathering resources (59.6%) can strongly constrain their work. More than a half of those interviewed consider the editorial policy of their media (52.6%) and personal values and beliefs (50.2%) as additional obstacles.

Internal factors are revealed to be more influential than external obstacles. Influences from owners and managers, market competition and profit expectations, as well as advertising, are still relevant in Albanian newsrooms.

Journalists in Albania feel little influenced by sources from within the political and civic realm, such as the government, politicians, censorship, religion, military, police and state security, pressure groups, business people, and public relations. They also report minor influence from friends, acquaintances, family, and colleagues in other media. Notwithstanding its significant influence, the audience does not simply represent the various categories of listeners, readers, web-users, but it has opinions and expectations for the quality of reporting as well.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very influential"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	295	88.5	4.23	.73
Information access	295	76.6	3.95	.81
Media laws and regulation	294	73.8	3.83	.97
Time limits	294	68.0	3.80	.96
Availability of news-gathering resources	285	59.6	3.52	1.11
Feedback from the audience	294	55.8	3.51	1.04
Competing news organizations	294	56.5	3.42	1.24
Editorial policy	291	52.6	3.39	1.06
Your personal values and beliefs	289	50.2	3.38	1.26
Audience research and data	283	50.9	3.33	1.15
Your editorial supervisors and higher editors	294	42.9	3.22	.99
The owners of the news organization	280	38.6	2.97	1.32
The managers of the news organization	289	35.6	3.01	1.17
Advertising considerations	259	26.6	2.54	1.28
Censorship	294	24.8	2.56	1.28
Profit expectations	275	24.0	2.42	1.36
Relationships with news sources	295	23.1	2.60	1.16
Your friends, acquaintances and family	295	16.6	2.28	1.14
Government officials	292	15.4	2.13	1.20
Public relations	293	15.0	2.31	1.11
Your peers on the staff	294	13.6	2.54	.98
Politicians	292	13.0	1.95	1.17
Business people	293	8.9	1.87	1.05
The military, police and state security	291	8.6	1.85	1.07
Colleagues in other media	295	6.4	2.08	.99
Religious considerations	225	6.2	1.54	.98
Pressure groups	295	2.4	1.56	.78

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

Journalism is currently in a state of change. According to Albanian journalists, the use of search engines and the importance of technical skills had most profoundly changed over the last five years (see Table 5). Overall, responses point to a substantial deterioration of the profession's working conditions. 39.5 percent of interviewees report high average working hours while a large number perceive professional freedom and time available for researching stories has decreased. Journalists in Albania (34.7%) are concerned the public's credibility of journalism has declined over the years.

Influences on journalism and news production have changed as well. With the exception of audience research, ethical standards and journalism education,

journalists report increased influence for all sources mentioned in Table 6. The impact of social media, user-generated contents and competition has strengthened the most during the past five years. The audience also has exercised high pressure for sensational news (75.8%). Pressure for market-related influences like profit-making, competition and advertising has increased whereas ethical standards and audience research have substantially weakened over the years.

Only journalists with five or more years of professional experience were questioned for changes in journalism.

*Table 5: Changes in journalism*

	N	Percentage saying has "increased"	Percentage saying has "decreased"
The use of search engines	216	98.1	.9
Technical skills	215	83.3	3.3
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	212	66.0	10.4
The relevance of journalism for society	214	58.9	15.4
Time available for researching stories	214	43.9	20.1
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	215	43.7	22.8
The credibility of journalism	216	40.3	34.7
Average working hours of journalists	215	39.5	19.1
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	214	27.6	27.1
Having a university degree	216	25.9	27.3

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in Albania. 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	215	93.5	.9
User-generated contents, such as blogs	213	88.3	3.8
Advertising considerations	215	80.0	6.0
Profit making pressures	213	77.9	5.2
Competition	214	76.6	7.5
Pressure toward sensational news	215	75.8	5.6
Audience involvement in news production	213	66.2	9.4
Western ways of practicing journalism	212	63.7	16.0
Audience feedback	213	63.4	9.9
Public relations	214	61.7	12.6
Journalism education	214	52.3	28.5
Ethical standards	216	52.3	26.4
Audience research	210	47.6	20.5

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

When it comes to trusting public institutions, the interviewees turned out to have relatively little confidence and trust in Albanian institutions. Nearly one in four interviewees have confidence in their institution, the news media (see Table 7). The survey ranks politicians and political parties as the least trusted institutions, along with trade unions and the judiciary. The Albanian Government enjoys greater confidence than the Parliament. Religious leaders (in our case ‘religious institutions’) are highly trusted, the same as the military and police. From other surveys, the European Union and NATO are known to be the most trusted institutions in Albania, with the least ones being political parties and the judiciary.

Table 7: Journalists’ trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying “complete” and “a great deal of trust”	Mean	Standard Deviation
The news media	264	25.0	3.08	.81
Religious leaders	262	11.8	2.43	1.04
The military	252	11.5	2.33	1.03
The police	266	10.9	2.57	.83
The Albanian Government	266	8.6	2.25	.99
The Albanian Parliament	265	7.5	2.32	.93
The judiciary/ courts	266	5.6	1.90	.90
Trade unions	265	3.0	1.66	.84
Politicians in general	266	1.5	1.64	.72
Political parties	265	.8	1.65	.73

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>	1,200 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	purposive quota sampling & convenience sampling for newsrooms and simply systematic for journalists within newsrooms
<i>Sample size:</i>	295 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	face-to-face, telephone and online
<i>Response rate:</i>	95%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	02/2012-05/2012