



## Country Report

# Journalists in Brazil

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## Backgrounds of Journalists

The typical Brazilian journalist is young, aged between 22 and 35 years old (57.2%). On average, they are 34.68 years old ( $s=11.22$ ; median=32); about 11.7 percent are more than 50 years old. There is a balance in relation to gender: 50.8 percent are men and 49.2 percent are women, an outcome that is nonetheless surprising as during the last two decades the image of newsrooms as spaces of an ever-growing female presence was common. Of the 376 journalists interviewed for the research, 271, or 72.1 percent, have a university degree – mostly in journalism, since during 40 years (from 1969 to 2009) a diploma was mandatory in order to work in a newsroom. Three out of four journalists hold a Bachelor's degree either in journalism or in other areas, 14.2 percent have obtained a Master's degree, and 1.6 percent completed a doctorate. Another 5.1 percent undertook some university studies but did not complete their degrees.

## Journalists in the Newsroom

More than half of Brazilian journalists hold a full-time position (59.0%), whereas 35.4 percent of the respondents indicated that they have part-time employments, and 5.1 percent work as freelance journalists. Of those with full or part-time employment, 86.9 percent said they hold permanent positions, and 13.1 percent work on a temporary contract.

Brazilian journalists interviewed for this research are somewhat experienced in the profession. Almost half of the respondents (45.5%) have ten or more years of experience (mean=11.61;  $s=9.69$ ; median=8). Most journalists worked on a specific desk (55.1%), such as city affairs (31.5%), culture (14%), sports (13%), economy (10%), and politics (7%). On the whole, Brazilian journalists worked mainly for one newsroom (86%), and 23.3 percent of them had additional jobs outside the area of journalism. The majority of Brazilians journalists (59.2%) do not belong to any professional association.

Across the whole sample, 78 percent percent of the interviewees worked only in one news organization and 19.4 percent percent indicated that they worked in different platforms simultaneously (from two to six). Most of Brazilian journalists in the sample worked for print media – 42.5 percent contributed to daily newspapers, 1.1 percent to weekly newspapers, and 4.3 percent to magazines – and television (21.8%). Another 11.8 percent of the journalists worked for private or public radio, 8.8 percent worked for stand-alone online news sites, and 8.5 percent worked for online newsrooms of traditional media. Few journalists in the sample reported they worked for news agencies (2.2%). The great majority of journalists (82.7%) work in private media, 8.8 percent in public media, and 4.5 percent in state media. Considering the scope of media, the majority of journalists (45.8%) work for regional media, 35.4 percent work for national media, 10.4 percent for local media, and less than one-tenth (8.7%) for international media.

## Journalistic Roles

With regards to professional role orientations, Brazilian journalists found it most important to report things as they are, to promote tolerance and cultural diversity, to be a detached observer, to let people express their views, and to provide analysis of current affairs (see Table 1). These results express the relevance of the “classic” roles of journalism as indicated by the quite low standard deviations. There was also a consensus among the respondents over the little importance of conveying a positive image of political leadership, being an adversary of the government, and supporting government policy.

Most of Brazilian journalists supported politically assertive roles, like advocating for social change, providing information people need to make political decisions, monitoring and scrutinizing political leaders, and supporting national development. On the other hand, the interviewees consider less important to provide entertainment and relaxation, and to monitor and scrutinize business.

*Table 1: Roles of journalists*

	N	Percentage saying “extremely” and “very important”	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	376	89.4%	4.57	.75
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	376	77.4%	4.25	1.09
Be a detached observer	376	73.1%	4.13	1.02
Let people express their views	376	72.3%	4.08	1.08
Advocate for social change	376	64.1%	3.84	1.19
Provide analysis of current affairs	376	63.8%	3.85	.99
Provide information people need to make political decisions	376	59.8%	3.70	1.19
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	376	52.1%	3.56	1.11
Support national development	376	51.6%	3.56	1.21
Educate the audience	376	44.4%	3.29	1.26
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	376	43.9%	3.36	1.22
Motivate people to participate in political activity	376	42.8%	3.19	1.30
Tell stories about the world	376	40.4%	3.22	1.22
Influence public opinion	376	37.8%	3.22	1.17
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	376	36.7%	3.09	1.20
Monitor and scrutinize business	375	35.2%	3.10	1.18
Provide entertainment and relaxation	376	23.9%	2.69	1.25
Set the political agenda	376	20.5%	2.65	1.10
Support government policy	376	7.4%	2.03	1.04
Be an adversary of the government	376	7.2%	1.77	.99
Convey a positive image of political leadership	376	5.6%	1.63	.98

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

Brazilian journalists demonstrated a strong commitment to professional standards of ethics. For 89.6 percent of the respondents, journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context (see Table 2). Most of the journalists do not agree with the interpretation of what is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment, and less than one-fifth declared that it is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it. This understanding conflicts with the statement of more than one-third of journalists, for whom what is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation.

Following this view, for most of the respondents it was justified, depending on the occasion, to use hidden microphones or cameras (74.5%), to use confidential

business or government documents without authorization (62.9%), and to claim to be someone else (51.1%) (see Table 3). The journalists rejected the possibilities of accepting money from sources, altering or fabricating quotes from sources, publishing stories with unverified content, and altering photographs.

*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	376	89.6%	4.40	.82
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	376	36.4%	2.76	1.30
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	376	19.7%	2.31	1.17
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	376	14.9%	2.21	1.10

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	375	14.9%	62.9%
Using hidden microphones or cameras	376	13.6%	74.5%
Claiming to be somebody else	374	5.6%	51.1%
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	375	5.6%	45.6%
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	376	3.5%	33.0%
Paying people for confidential information	375	1.9%	17.9%
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	376	1.6%	24.7%
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	374	1.3%	35.6%
Altering photographs	376	.3%	5.9%
Publishing stories with unverified content	376	.3%	2.9%
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	376	.3%	1.6%
Accepting money from sources	376	.3%	1.1%

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

Brazilian journalists reported a moderate degree of professional autonomy. Half of the respondents (54.2%) said that they had complete or a great deal of freedom in their selection of stories, and also in deciding which aspects should be emphasized in a news story (53.9%). Less than half of the interviewees (41.1%) participated in editorial coordination.

Journalists in Brazil are influenced by multiple contextual factors. Among the potential sources of influences mentioned in the interviews, "journalism ethics" was cited by most of the respondents (78.0%). The majority of journalists found their work substantively constrained by information access (or lack thereof), by time limits, and by the editorial policy. For almost half of the journalists (49.7%), the (non-) availability of news-gathering resources as well as editorial supervisors and higher editors (47.6%) were also limitation aspects in their work.

In general, internal factors were found to be more influential than external constraints. Brazilian journalists felt little influenced by sources from within the political and civic realm: public relations, pressure groups, government officials, the military, policy and state security, business people, politicians, and censorship. Journalists reported only minor influence from friends, acquaintances and family as well as from colleagues in other media. Other influences pointed out by the interviewees, such as economic factors (constraints from advertising, profit expectations, and market competition) and social factors (religious considerations) had not as much relevance in Brazilian newsrooms.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very influential"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	363	78.0%	4.15	1.05
Information access	376	65.7%	3.90	.93
Time limits	373	64.3%	3.86	1.05
Editorial policy	369	55.0%	3.65	.98
Availability of news-gathering resources	368	49.7%	3.54	1.08
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	370	47.6%	3.46	.89
Relationships with news sources	376	42.8%	3.30	1.12
Feedback from the audience	376	42.8%	3.32	1.07
Owners of your news organization	353	41.9%	3.34	1.23
Managers of your news organization	363	39.9%	3.35	1.06
Audience research and data	343	35.9%	3.13	1.20
Personal values and beliefs	346	35.5%	3.25	1.05
Competing news organizations	376	33.0%	3.12	.99
Media laws and regulation	375	32.5%	3.10	1.09
Profit expectations	301	25.9%	2.68	1.28
Religious considerations	259	22.4%	2.36	1.37
Peers on the staff	364	22.3%	2.97	.90
Advertising considerations	311	22.2%	2.59	1.25
Colleagues in other media	376	17.6%	2.64	.99
Friends, acquaintances and family	376	14.1%	2.42	1.03
Censorship	376	12.8%	2.10	1.17
Politicians	376	11.4%	2.18	1.15
Business people	376	10.1%	2.14	1.09
The military, police and state security	376	10.1%	2.01	1.12
Government officials	376	9.6%	2.06	1.08
Pressure groups	376	8.2%	1.99	1.04
Public relations	376	7.4%	2.08	.96

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

According to Brazilian journalists, the profession is currently in a state of change. Over the last five years, the interactions of journalists with their audiences, the importance of technical skills, and the use of search engines have changed deeply (see Table 5).

Overall, the journalists' responses point to a strong deterioration of working conditions in the profession: a large majority of respondents (76.1%) reported an increase in their average working hours. Linked to this work condition, most of the interviewees (57.0%) stated that the credibility of journalism has decreased. Also, the need of having a degree in journalism or in a related field has decreased for most journalists (33.6%), even though 33.2 percent of the respondents indicated the importance of having a university degree has increased. For more than one-third of

the Brazilian journalists the relevance of journalism for society has either increased (38.2%) or decreased (29.3%).

Table 5: Changes in journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "increased"	Percentage saying has "decreased"
Use of search engines	257	96.9%	.0%
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	259	76.8%	12.7%
Technical skills	258	76.4%	12.0%
Average working hours of journalists	259	76.1%	7.3%
Relevance of journalism for society	259	38.2%	29.3%
Having a university degree	259	33.2%	26.6%
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decision	259	28.6%	34.4%
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	259	28.2%	33.6%
The credibility of journalism	258	24.8%	57.0%
Time available for researching stories	257	7.8%	84.4%

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in Brazil. 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.

Among the professionals who had more than five years of experience, influences on journalism and news production have changed as well. The respondents stressed the influence of social media, of user-generated contents, of audience feedback, and of audience involvement in news production (Table 6). Two-thirds of Brazilian journalists also reported an increase for market-related influences, such as profit making pressures, audience research, competition, pressure toward sensational news, and advertising considerations. Ethical standards and journalism education were the two sources of influence that had weakened significantly over the years.

Table 6: Changes in influences on journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "strengthened"	Percentage saying has "weakened"
Social media	259	96.9%	.4%
User-generated contents, such as blogs	259	92.3%	1.2%
Audience feedback	258	91.5%	.8%
Audience involvement in news production	259	91.1%	.8%
Profit making pressures	259	74.1%	2.3%
Audience research	257	73.5%	1.9%
Competition	259	68.3%	12.0%
Pressure toward sensational news	259	63.7%	6.2%
Advertising considerations	258	58.9%	5.8%
Western ways of practicing journalism	257	50.2%	3.5%
Public relations	259	42.5%	5.8%
Journalism education	258	36.8%	31.8%
Ethical standards	259	35.1%	33.6%

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

Religious leaders, the news media, and the judicial system are the institutions that the Brazilian journalists trust the most (see Table 7). The trade unions, the government, and the military are the major political institutions trusted by the interviewees. The Brazilian journalists have no confidence in political parties and in politicians. The police and the parliament were also among the institutions with little trust among the professionals.

Table 7: Journalistic trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying "complete" and "a great deal of trust"	Mean	Standard Deviation
The news media	365	20.5%	2.95	.76
The judiciary/the courts	366	10.9%	2.61	.84
Religious leaders	366	7.1%	2.13	.89
Trade unions	366	7.1%	2.36	.84
The government	366	6.0%	2.37	.83
The military	364	5.8%	2.20	.89
The police	366	4.4%	2.17	.86
The parliament	366	2.5%	1.98	.78
Politicians in general	365	.8%	1.89	.72
Political parties	365	.5%	1.80	.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>	44,915 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	simple random sampling & convenience sample for newsrooms and simply random & convenience sample for journalists within newsrooms
<i>Sample size:</i>	376 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	telephone, mail and online
<i>Response rate:</i>	35.1%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	09/2014-01/2016