

Country Report

Journalists in Greece

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Backgrounds of Journalists

A typical journalist in Greece is male, in his forties and holds a university degree in journalism or communication studies. Of the 411 interviewed journalists, 218 were men, making for a proportion of 53.0 percent of the overall sample. On average, Greek journalists were 40.23 years old ($s=9.50$, median=40), with the youngest in the sample 21 years old and the oldest 71 years old. Of the journalists surveyed, 37.5 percent held a Bachelor's degree, 21.4 percent a Master's and 1.5 percent a Doctorate. Another 22.9 percent of the journalists did not possess a university or college degree, and 8.8 percent had undertaken some university studies but did not complete their studies. Furthermore, our results showed that 49.7 percent of the respondents had specialized in journalism and 6.4 percent in communication when taking university education.

Journalists in the Newsroom

The vast majority of journalists interviewed in Greece held a full-time position (87.9%), whereas a small percentage of 12.1 percent of the respondents indicated that they were employed part-time.

Greek journalists were divided into two main categories regarding their assigned beat: Half of the respondents (53.1%) worked on or supervised a specific beat focusing on news/current affairs (27.7%), sports (14.6%), politics (8.9%), economy (8.0%), and foreign politics (7.5%), while the remaining 46.9 percent worked on various types of stories. On average, Greek journalists worked for one to two newsrooms ($s=1.37$), and 22.5 percent had additional jobs outside the area of journalism. The majority of the respondents were members of a professional association (71.6%).

Journalistic Roles

With regards to professional role orientations, Greek journalists found it most important to report things as they are, to let people express their views, to provide analysis of current affairs, to promote tolerance and cultural diversity, and to provide information people need to make political decisions (see Table 1). The first three roles, which could also be regarded as the most normative ones, seemed rather undisputed among the interviewed journalists as the relatively low standard deviations indicate. Other 'traditional' or 'watchdog' roles of journalists like being detached observers, advocates for social change, monitors and scrutinizers of political or business leaders, supporters of national development, and educators of the audience are favored by more than half of the respondents.

Rather ambivalent were the results linked to more ‘guiding’ roles of journalists towards the audience, such as to provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life, to motivate people to participate in political activity, and to influence public opinion. Politically more assertive roles were the least popular among the respondents, who agreed on their importance as demonstrated by the low standard deviations. The following traits belonged to these roles: supporting government policy, conveying a positive image of political leadership, setting the political agenda, and being an adversary of the government are ranked as the least important ones (see Table 1).

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying “extremely” and “very important”	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	409	96.8	4.75	.53
Let people express their views	402	86.1	4.41	.93
Provide analysis of current affairs	404	80.2	4.17	.95
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	404	75.5	4.07	1.20
Provide information people need to make political decisions	401	71.6	3.98	1.14
Be a detached observer	395	70.4	3.92	1.12
Advocate for social change	405	68.4	3.91	1.15
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	406	65.3	3.82	1.25
Monitor and scrutinize business	404	57.2	3.61	1.25
Support national development	400	54.8	3.52	1.31
Educate the audience	402	52.5	3.42	1.32
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	392	47.7	3.28	1.26
Motivate people to participate in political activity	402	42.0	3.14	1.34
Influence public opinion	398	31.7	2.87	1.26
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	399	30.6	2.77	1.32
Provide entertainment and relaxation	400	25.5	2.57	1.36
Be an adversary of the government	397	18.9	2.24	1.31
Set the political agenda	399	16.0	2.39	1.17
Convey a positive image of political leadership	399	6.3	1.68	1.03
Support government policy	396	2.8	1.43	.79

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

Greek journalists demonstrated a very strong commitment to professional standards of ethics as a principle. More than nine out of ten respondents agreed that a journalist should always agree to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context, but only one in three journalists said that what is ethical depends on the situation. Almost as many stated that moral standards can be set aside in extraordinary circumstances, and one in four respondents thought that it is a matter of personal judgment (Table 2).

While almost no Greek journalist said that controversial reporting methods are always justified, many see such methods as occasionally so (see Table 3). A large majority said the unauthorized use of confidential business or government documents falls into this category. A bit less than half of the respondents thought that it can be justified on occasion to exert pressure on unwilling informants, to claim to be somebody else to get a story, or to get employed in a firm or organization to get inside information. On the other hand, accepting money from sources, altering or fabricating photographs/quotes from sources, and publishing stories with unverified content were seen as very problematic practices by most 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	384	93.5	4.53	.67
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	374	36.1	2.69	1.33
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	367	34.3	2.75	1.26
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	373	23.3	2.33	1.26

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	365	13.2	64.4
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	370	8.1	47.8
Claiming to be somebody else	364	1.9	34.3
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	359	1.9	36.5
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	373	1.6	30.8
Using hidden microphones or cameras	361	1.4	41.0
Paying people for confidential information	361	1.1	36.8
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	349	.9	18.3
Accepting money from sources	380	.3	1.6
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	381	.3	.3
Altering photographs	380	.3	.5
Publishing stories with unverified content	382	.0	9.2

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 Greece reported a fairly high degree of professional autonomy. 72.2 percent said they had complete or a great deal of freedom in selecting the stories they worked on, and 74.8 percent said the same for deciding what aspects of a story should be emphasized. 58.1 percent said they had participated in editorial and newsroom coordination “always” or “very often”.

In regard to sources of influences on their own journalistic work, Greek journalists perceived professional regulations and personal self-constraints to be the most important, such as journalism ethics, personal values and beliefs, information access, and time limits (Table 4). Almost half of the journalists mentioned the availability of news-gathering resources, media laws and regulation, and the managers of the news organization as perceived influences. Almost one in ten journalists acknowledged influences from the personal or professional environment, as well as from governmental officials and politicians. An even lower influence was attributed to pressure groups, religious considerations and military, police and state security.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very influential"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	382	77.7	4.15	.97
Your personal values and beliefs	386	75.9	4.10	1.08
Information access	384	70.8	3.95	.99
Time limits	381	63.3	3.72	1.07
Availability of news-gathering resources	378	51.9	3.50	1.10
Media laws and regulation	381	50.7	3.45	1.12
Managers of the news organization	373	47.7	3.32	1.26
Owners of the news organization	372	42.2	3.12	1.35
Relationships with news sources	378	41.3	3.10	1.29
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	375	40.8	3.17	1.21
Editorial policy	370	38.6	3.08	1.22
Audience research and data	371	31.3	2.89	1.23
Censorship	372	26.9	2.49	1.42
Your peers on the staff	381	26.8	2.64	1.23
Advertising considerations	373	24.9	2.65	1.22
Competing news organizations	382	23.8	2.64	1.13
Feedback from the audience	384	19.8	2.57	1.07
Public relations	378	17.7	2.29	1.20
Profit expectations	372	17.2	2.31	1.20
Business people	370	12.4	1.93	1.15
Friends, acquaintances and family	387	11.9	2.02	1.10
Colleagues in other media	385	11.4	2.10	1.04
Government officials	369	11.1	1.90	1.14
Politicians	374	10.7	1.91	1.12
Pressure groups	370	9.5	1.89	1.08
Religious considerations	376	8.2	1.58	1.02
Military, police and state security	369	3.5	1.36	.79

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

The Greek journalists perceived the use of search engines and the necessity for technical skills as deeply transforming their profession. Overall, the journalists' responses highlighted ground-shifting changes in the working conditions of journalists: increased working hours and limited time for researching stories have affected the way journalism is exercised (Table 5). The need for university education (either in general or in journalism) plays a crucial role for half of the respondents. Interactions of journalists with their audiences and the relevance of journalism for society have become more important for almost one out of three respondents.

Influences on journalism have changed the field as well. With the exceptions of ethical standards, influences on journalists had increased for all sources mentioned. Social media, user-generated content and profit making pressures have changed journalism profoundly (Table 6). The influence of the audience, either as received feedback or its involvement in news production, has increased for more than three out of four journalists. A majority of Greek journalists reported an increase for market-related influences, such as competition, advertising considerations, PR, pressure toward sensational news, and audience research. Ethical standards were the only source of influence that has substantially lost importance over the years.

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

Table 5: Changes in journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "increased"	Percentage saying has "decreased"
The use of search engines	339	97.6	.0
Technical skills	335	94.0	1.2
Average working hours of journalists	336	78.9	9.8
Having a university degree	327	59.6	9.5
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	330	52.1	11.8
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	333	36.6	35.1
The relevance of journalism for society	334	36.2	41.6
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	337	21.1	51.3
The credibility of journalism	333	20.1	61.3
Time available for researching stories	330	9.7	73.9

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in Greece. 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	334	97.9	.9
User-generated contents, such as blogs	331	90.3	3.3
Profit making pressures	324	79.3	4.6
Audience feedback	331	77.6	5.4
Audience involvement in news production	326	74.5	5.8
Competition	337	73.6	11.3
Advertising considerations	328	70.4	16.8
Public relations	328	60.4	10.1
Pressure toward sensational news	323	55.1	12.7
Audience research	321	49.5	11.5
Journalism education	324	48.5	31.5
Ethical standards	338	13.0	68.0

Question: Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in Greece. 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 trust in public institutions, Greek journalists had very limited faith in public institutions. As shown in Table 7, Greek journalists trusted the military, the judiciary/the courts and the police the most, although the percentages in their trust dropped below 15 percent. The Greek parliament, the government and the news media were trusted by almost one in twenty journalists. Trade unions, political parties and politicians in general were almost not trusted at all. A strong consensus among the responding journalists was established as demonstrated in the standard deviation values.

Table 7: Journalistic trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying "complete" and "a great deal of trust"	Mean	Standard Deviation
The military	367	15.3	2.46	1.02
The judiciary/the courts	375	10.4	2.53	.82
The police	375	9.9	2.31	.90
The Greek parliament	373	6.7	2.21	.84
The Greek government	374	6.7	2.17	.87
The news media	374	5.9	2.28	.81
Religious leaders	364	5.2	1.80	.92
Trade unions	374	2.4	1.67	.77
Political parties	373	2.1	1.74	.70
Politicians in general	374	1.9	1.76	.67

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>	12,000 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	stratified proportionally random sampling for newsrooms and convenience sample for journalists within newsrooms
<i>Sample size:</i>	411 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	face-to-face and mail/e-mail
<i>Response rate:</i>	57.3%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	02/2015-04/2015

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