



Country Report

Journalists in Turkey

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Backgrounds of Journalists

Of the 95 journalists interviewed in Turkey, nearly half of them were women (44.9%). The mean age was 32.35 years ($s=8.01$), which corresponds almost exactly to the median age of 30 years. Journalists tend to be well educated: 91.1 percent of the respondents held a degree from a graduate program, and 8.0 percent of Turkish journalists completed a Master program and had a MA diploma. Across the whole sample of journalists, 31.9 percent of Turkish journalists had a diploma from journalism and/or any other department of communication.

Journalists in the Newsroom

The majority of journalists interviewed in Turkey held a full-time position (91.5%), whereas 1.1 percent of the respondents indicated that they had part-time employments, and 6.4 percent worked as freelance journalists. Of those with full or part-time employment, 92.1 percent said that they held permanent positions, and 7.9 percent worked on a temporary contract. On average, respondents had been working in journalism for 9.31 years ($s=7.75$), with half of the respondents working in the field for at least six years, 20 percent of respondents working in journalism for twelve years, and 10 percent of respondents working in journalism for 20 years or longer. With respect to the type of journalism they do, 50.5 percent of respondents are generalists, and 49.5 percent are specialists.

The majority of respondents (68.4%) are not members of a professional association; only 31.6 percent of respondents said they had a membership in any occupational association.

Respondents in this research are working for a range of media: 10 percent of journalists work for mainstream online news sites, 10 percent of journalists work for an alternative online news site, 10 percent of journalists work in mainstream TV, 6 percent in state news agency, 8 percent for private news agency, 54 percent work for a daily newspaper (private, which includes minority newspapers), and 2 percent for public broadcasting TV.

Journalistic Roles

With regards to professional role orientations, journalists in Turkey believe that reporting things as they are and to be a detached observer are the most important aspects of their work. To provide analysis of current affairs, to let people express their views, to monitor and scrutinize political leaders, and to advocate for social change are also considered to be very important aspects of journalistic work. Journalists in Turkey also believe that to promote cultural diversity and to provide information people need to make political decisions are crucial professional roles. In contrast, very few journalists believed that their role is to support government policy or to convey a positive image of political leadership.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	94	97.9	4.79	.57
Be a detached observer	94	91.5	4.66	.80
Let people express their views	94	87.2	4.30	1.05
Provide analysis of current affairs	94	88.3	4.31	.83
Advocate for social change	93	81.7	4.19	.94
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	93	86.0	4.14	.92
Provide information people need to make political decisions	94	78.7	3.96	1.09
Influence public opinion	94	77.7	4.07	1.12
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	93	77.4	3.98	1.22
Set the political agenda	92	69.6	3.74	1.15
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	94	63.8	3.65	1.33
Monitor and scrutinize business	93	63.4	3.61	1.09
Support national development	90	56.7	3.41	1.45
Tell stories about the world	92	46.7	3.34	1.24
Educate the audience	94	52.1	3.30	1.38
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	93	41.9	3.02	1.25
Be an adversary of the government	92	35.9	3.00	1.47
Motivate people to participate in political activity	93	34.4	2.91	1.32
Provide entertainment and relaxation	93	32.3	2.68	1.30
Convey a positive image of political leadership	93	11.8	2.09	1.20
Support government policy	93	6.5	1.85	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

Journalists in Turkey have strong ethical standards discursively. The vast majority of respondents believe that journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics (see Table 2.) Furthermore, almost four out of five journalists disagreed with the view their ethical decisions are a matter of personal judgement and that sometimes it is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it. Less than half of the journalists subscribed to the idea that journalists' ethical decisions depend on the specific situation.

Nearly all respondents believed it was never justified to engage in practices such as accepting money from sources, altering or fabricating quotes from sources, or altering photographs. Publishing stories with unverified content is also a practice in which most journalist would never engage. However, some journalistic practices, such as using hidden microphones or cameras, could be justified at least occasion.

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	94	92.6	4.40	.74
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	93	38.7	2.90	1.25
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	93	19.4	2.38	1.10
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	93	14.0	2.12	1.12

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	93	26.9	52.7
Claiming to be somebody else	94	17.0	60.6
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	94	5.3	31.9
Paying people for confidential information	93	4.3	41.9
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	94	4.3	44.7
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	95	4.2	29.5
Publishing stories with unverified content	95	3.2	32.6
Using hidden microphones or cameras	95	2.1	57.9
Altering photographs	94	1.1	12.8
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	94	.0	7.4
Accepting money from sources	95	.0	3.2
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	94	.0	6.4

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 Turkey reported a fairly high degree of professional autonomy. 64.2 percent of respondents said they had complete or a great deal of freedom in their selection of stories. With a total of 64.5 percent, the number of respondents who had complete or a great deal of freedom in deciding over what aspects to emphasize in a news story was even higher. Still, slightly less than half of the journalists reported that they participated in editorial coordination activities (such as meetings and news management) "always" or "very often" (49.5%).

Media laws and regulation are the most influential factors among journalists in Turkey (mean=3.86). That indicates that the news making process is influenced mostly by external factors. As opposed to this, the influences following are information access and journalism ethics, which are internal factors. Censorship is declared as the fourth line influential factor, also an external factor. It is not safe to say that internal factors are more influential, as external factors such as censorship are also very influential factors that obscure the freedom of the journalistic field in Turkey.

However, it is believed that the media sector is a very competitive one, but factors such as competing news organizations, advertising considerations, public relations, and colleagues in other media are not reported as very influential factors in the news production process.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying “extremely” and “very influential”	Mean	Standard Deviation
Media laws and regulation	95	72.6	3.86	1.01
Information access	95	58.9	3.56	1.09
Journalism ethics	93	54.8	3.46	1.28
Censorship	95	52.6	3.41	1.30
Time limits	93	52.7	3.32	1.23
Editorial policy	94	51.1	3.30	1.23
Government officials	95	48.4	3.26	1.35
Politicians	94	45.7	3.18	1.35
Pressure Groups	92	37.0	3.02	1.27
The managers of the news organizations	93	35.5	2.91	1.22
The military, police and state security	94	35.1	2.90	1.33
The owners of the news organization	90	34.4	2.89	1.34
Availability of news-gathering resources	95	31.6	2.85	1.17
Feedback from the audience	95	28.4	2.81	1.06
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	93	26.9	2.62	1.17
Business people	92	25.0	2.55	1.26
Personal values and beliefs	94	23.4	2.53	1.15
Audience research and data	92	22.8	2.57	1.18
Relationships with news sources	92	20.7	2.85	.91
Competing news organizations	95	18.9	2.38	1.11
Profit expectations	93	17.2	2.31	1.22
Peers on the staff	94	16.0	2.44	1.08
Advertising considerations	94	16.0	2.38	1.21
Religious considerations	93	15.1	2.28	1.20
Friends, acquaintances and family	95	14.7	2.44	.99
Public relations	92	10.9	2.42	1.02
Colleagues in other media	95	7.4	2.19	.91

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 has been changing recently. Journalists in Turkey reported that the importance of technical skills and the use of search engines had most profoundly changed over the last five years. Working conditions for journalists have changed as well. A large majority of respondents reported an increase in their average working hours. Furthermore, Turkish journalists felt that their professional freedom and the time available for researching stories had decreased. Another crucial concern for Turkish journalists was the decrease in journalism's public credibility (see Table 5).

Influences on journalism and news production have changed as well. According to Turkish journalists, social media, user-generated contents (such as blogs), advertising considerations, audience feedback, and profit making pressures have increased the most over the last five years. Only journalism education and ethical standards have decreased over the years (Table 6).

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

Table 5: Changes in journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "increased"	Percentage saying has "decreased"
Technical skills	54	92.6	3.7
The use of search engines	54	90.7	7.4
Average working hours of journalists	54	70.4	5.6
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	53	56.6	32.1
Having a university degree	53	54.7	17.0
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	53	50.9	17.0
The relevance of journalism for society	53	17.0	54.7
The credibility of journalism	53	9.4	77.4
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	53	9.4	69.8
Time available for researching stories	54	7.4	72.2

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in Turkey. 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	52	100.0	.0
User-generated contents, such as blogs	52	82.7	3.8
Advertising considerations	53	81.1	3.8
Audience feedback	53	79.2	5.7
Profit making pressures	53	77.4	3.8
Audience involvement in news production	53	73.6	9.4
Competition	51	62.7	23.5
Audience research	52	59.6	23.1
Pressure toward sensational news	53	56.6	15.1
Public relations	52	50.0	17.3
Western ways of practicing journalism	51	27.5	23.5
Journalism education	53	18.9	47.2
Ethical standards	53	9.4	75.5

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

First, it must be said that Turkish journalists do have little trust in all public institutions. They mainly reported trust in the parliament and the government. The news media and trade unions were also found trustworthy; however, respondents did not hold them in particularly high esteem. An interesting point is that Turkish journalists seem to have more trust in the military (mean=2.15) than in politicians (mean=2.06).

Table 7: Journalistic trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying "complete" and "a great deal of trust"	Mean	Standard Deviation
The parliament	54	20.4	2.52	1.26
The government	54	20.4	2.24	1.24
The news media	53	18.9	2.66	.96
Trade unions	54	18.5	2.41	1.02
The military	54	18.5	2.15	1.22
The police	54	16.7	2.00	1.20
The judiciary/the courts	54	13.0	2.06	1.04
Political parties	53	9.4	2.19	.96
Religious leaders	54	9.3	2.06	1.05
Politicians in general	52	5.8	2.06	.89

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>	14,415 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	stratified proportionally random sampling for newsrooms and convenience sample for journalists within newsrooms
<i>Sample size:</i>	95 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	face-to-face and online
<i>Response rate:</i>	-
<i>Period of field research:</i>	05/2014-06/2015