Personal Backgrounds of Journalists

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Age and gender present the face of journalism, while years of professional experience indicate journalists' commitment to their work. Since the previous wave of the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS2), conditions for journalism and journalists have undergone significant shifts. Changes in information channels, alongside political and economic headwinds, have left visible marks on journalists' age and experience profiles, while other demographic characteristics, such as gender and education level, have remained relatively stable.

GENDER

Globally, journalism remains slightly male-dominated, with just under half of respondents across the 75 countries identifying as female (see Table 2). This represents only a modest increase in female participation compared to WJS2 (Josephi et al., 2019) and earlier studies, which consistently identified journalism as predominantly male (Weaver et al., 2012).

Female representation varies considerably across countries, reflecting diverse national contexts and levels of gender empowerment. Women constitute a majority of journalists in 30 of the 75 countries surveyed, exceeding 60% in 11 countries. Most of these are in Northern and Eastern Europe, including Moldova—where nearly three in four journalists are female—as well as Ukraine, Latvia, Romania, Croatia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, and Finland. Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore and Thailand also report high female representation.

Conversely, significant gender disparities persist in favor of men in 14 countries, particularly in South, Central, and East Asia, including India, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, South Korea, and Indonesia. Women are also clearly outnumbered in several Arab countries, such as Yemen, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In Latin America, women generally remain a minority, except in Brazil, Venezuela, and Cuba.

Worldwide, 135 journalists (0.4%) identified as "other." North America (Cuba: 2.9%; USA: 2.7%; Canada: 1.9%) and Thailand (2.4%) reported the highest percentages for non-binary genders.

AGE AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

The global mean age of nearly 40 years indicates a relatively mature journalistic workforce, particularly compared to previous studies (Josephi & Oller, 2021). In the majority of the 54 countries participating in both WJS2 and WJS3, the journalistic workforce has aged (see Table 2). This trend may reflect less attractive and less secure job prospects in journalism, discouraging young people from entering the profession as their first career choice.

Pronounced differences remain, however. Countries with younger median ages are generally found in Asia, Africa, and parts of Eastern Europe. For example, the median age of journalists in Poland, Albania, Kosovo, and Moldova is 30 years or less. In contrast, journalists in the Global North—particularly in the United States, Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden), and Central Europe—tend to be substantially older. Many Latin American

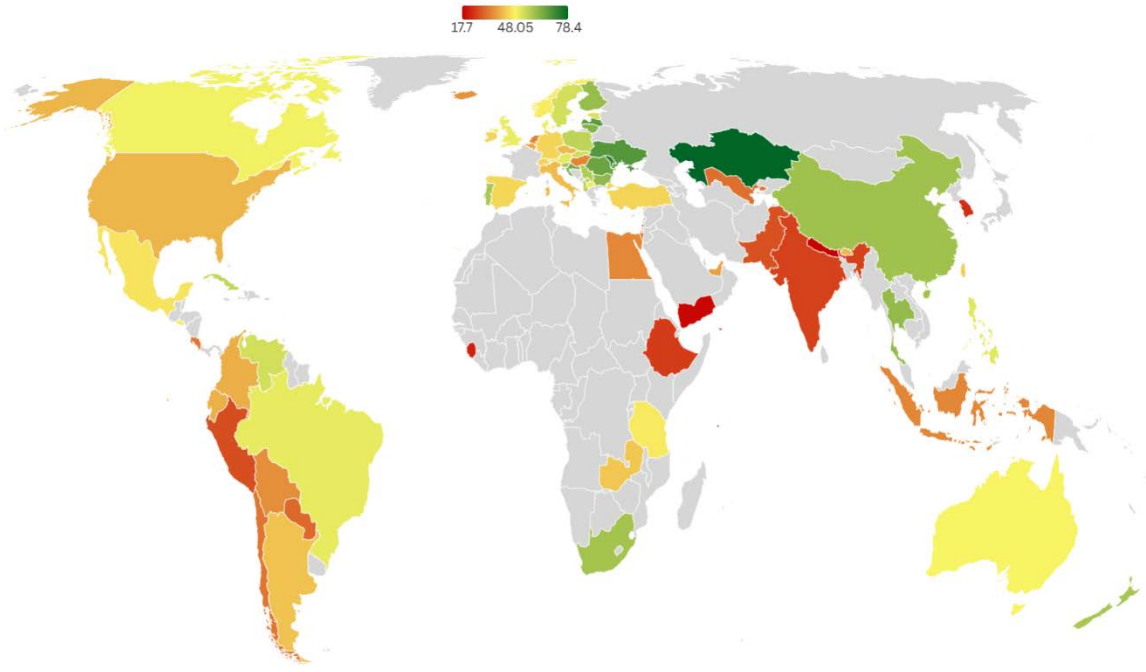

FIGURE 1: WOMEN JOURNALISTS AROUND THE WORLD
Percentages of women journalists

countries also report a workforce older than the global average.

Examining age alongside professional experience reveals further insights. The global median of 14 years of experience suggests that journalists typically enter the profession in their mid- to late twenties, likely after completing professional training, often at university. National differences are considerable, with median years of experience ranging from as little as three to 23 years.

Countries with younger workforces, such as Kazakhstan, Poland, and Zambia, also tend to have journalists with fewer years of professional experience. Low experience levels are also observed across parts of Eastern Europe, Africa, and South and Southeast Asia. Conversely, more experienced workforces—often indicative of more stable working conditions—are found in the Global North, including the Nordic countries, the United States, and Central Europe, as well as in some Latin American countries. Notably, mean experience figures are generally higher than medians, reflecting the presence of older journalists even in relatively young workforces.

EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Journalists' education has important implications for how they think about and practice their work (Becker et al., 1987). While journalism was traditionally learned on the job, the past four decades have seen a marked academization, with an increasing number of university-educated journalists (Josephi et al., 2019; Weaver & Willnat, 2012).

Our data show that a university degree is currently a near-universal prerequisite for journalism (see Table 2). In 55 of the 75 countries surveyed, at least eight out of ten journalists hold a university degree, rising to nine out of ten in 34 countries. University education is especially common in East and South Asia—including China, Taiwan, South Korea, India, Pakistan, and Kazakhstan—but is also prevalent across other geographically diverse regions. Countries in Central and Northern Europe, Oceania, and parts of Latin America have slightly lower proportions, though still more than seven out of ten journalists hold a university degree.

Only four countries—Seychelles, Zambia, Tanzania, and Sierra Leone—have fewer than two-thirds of journalists with a university education, likely reflecting limited access to higher education. A further relevant aspect of higher education in journalism is the extent to which journalists have completed a degree specifically in journalism, rather than in other disciplines, such as communication more broadly. Our data show that, globally, more than two-thirds of journalists hold a degree specifically in journalism. Historically, journalism education has followed a variety of approaches, including on-the-job training, university-based training, and combinations of both (Deuze, 2005). Even in countries where journalists were predominantly university-educated, the proportion who had studied journalism specifically varied considerably (Josephi et al., 2019; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). This gap, however, has now narrowed substantially.

Comparisons between WJS2 and WJS3 indicate growing prevalence of professional journalism training—whether through a university degree, apprenticeship, certificate, or short-term course. Three-quarters of journalists have received some form of professional training, demonstrating the growing institutionalization of the field. Levels are particularly low in the UAE, Indonesia, some other Southeast Asian countries, and parts of Eastern and Northern Europe. Training is highest in Latin American countries, as well as in Portugal, China, Germany, and Switzerland.

Regarding university degrees specifically in journalism, regional patterns are less apparent. Latin America and some Eastern European countries (e.g., Ukraine, Hungary, Albania, and Kosovo) place particular emphasis on journalism education. By contrast, journalism-specific degrees are rare in some African countries (Seychelles, Zambia, Sierra Leone), Nepal, and in Germany and Austria. In Germany, on-the-job training remains important, with nearly all correspondents reporting completion of cadet or apprenticeship programs.

CONCLUSION

WJS3 focused on examining the risks and uncertainties journalists face worldwide, with personal backgrounds—such as gender, age, and years in the profession—offering important insights. While the gradual feminization of journalism appears to continue, the age data suggest a more pressing concern: journalism may be becoming less attractive to new entrants. The steady influx of young reporters that once characterized the field (Josephi & Oller, 2021; Weaver, 1998) has diminished. Most journalists are college or university graduates, and three-quarters have received some form of professional training. This trend may reflect the broader academization of society, but it may also indicate that individuals with a strong commitment to journalism are the ones entering the profession. The rising average age and years of professional experience suggest that it is primarily those deeply committed to journalism who remain in the field.

TABLE 2: SHARE OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS, AGE, AND WORKING EXPERIENCE

Country	Women journalists		Average age (years)		Average working experience (years)		College/university degree		Journalism degree		Professional training / education in journalism
	WJS2	WJS3	WJS2	WJS3	WJS2	WJS3	WJS2	WJS3	WJS2	WJS3	WJS3
Albania	51.7%	55.8%	32.54	32.56	9.36	9.66	98.0%	96.8%	72.4%	89.7%	85.2%
Argentina	36.9%	41.8%	38.75	45.62	13.83	20.23	67.7%	76.6%	70.9%	75.0%	86.4%
Australia	55.5%	48.4%	37.74	46.37	14.45	21.14	82.1%	81.7%	70.2%	73.6%	77.9%
Austria	40.8%	50.7%	43.00	47.26	17.94	22.12	63.2%	70.0%	41.9%	44.6%	85.9%
Belgium	36.5%	38.2%	38.16	45.02	12.64	16.90	96.3%	97.7%	64.3%	78.4%	62.1%
Bhutan	50.0%	40.4%	27.89	34.01	4.57	10.09	98.9%	97.8%	23.0%	52.9%	57.3%
Bolivia		35.4%		43.25		16.80		78.1%		70.4%	91.0%
Brazil	49.2%	50.3%	34.68	40.28	11.61	15.87	88.8%	93.9%	90.8%	90.9%	97.4%
Bulgaria	64.6%	61.0%	41.74	49.81	19.36	22.84	96.6%	95.9%	60.1%	68.4%	59.6%
Canada	43.5%	49.1%	44.51	41.80	18.88	17.20	93.4%	93.1%	71.3%	83.6%	83.9%
Chile	43.2%	32.2%	32.99	41.11	8.46	15.80	96.5%	88.4%	86.5%	86.3%	91.5%
China	50.5%	59.1%	33.90	35.88	9.01	11.81	99.5%	99.1%	76.2%	59.9%	98.2%
Colombia	39.7%	39.3%	35.21	48.80	11.17	20.81	89.4%	91.0%	27.5%	87.6%	93.7%
Costa Rica		32.2%		39.08		15.00		90.2%		89.8%	92.1%
Croatia	53.9%	64.1%	44.69	43.97	19.73	18.78	71.7%	84.2%	48.4%	58.5%	73.9%
Cuba		54.8%		34.65		9.75		92.1%		80.4%	92.4%
Czech Republic	43.3%	40.5%	35.68	41.61	10.79	15.95	67.7%	66.5%	47.5%	66.0%	46.5%
Denmark	43.1%	49.5%	45.90	45.67	18.41	18.97	93.2%	86.5%	82.2%	87.7%	82.2%
Ecuador	33.2%	39.5%	35.22	35.80	10.04	11.13	80.1%	77.3%	77.2%	76.8%	87.3%
Egypt	36.5%	34.5%	36.73	40.62	12.00		97.3%	94.8%	71.8%	70.5%	85.0%
El Salvador	40.4%	46.8%	32.00	36.91		12.31	79.6%	92.1%	81.7%	89.1%	94.6%
Estonia	58.4%	51.9%	40.94	41.66	13.54	16.37	81.7%	81.4%	51.5%	80.6%	45.8%
Ethiopia	28.9%	25.1%	30.39	37.09	5.19	8.79	97.4%	92.4%	55.2%	64.0%	85.8%
Finland	55.2%	60.1%	43.40	47.38	17.27	20.42	74.6%	77.3%	55.6%	77.4%	54.0%
Germany	40.1%	44.0%	45.58	45.26	19.52	19.91	75.5%	70.2%	36.6%	33.1%	97.7%
Hong Kong	44.9%	57.4%	30.01	33.19	7.31		88.9%	92.1%	69.1%	88.7%	76.4%
Hungary	47.5%	34.2%	33.17	39.57	8.88	14.22	74.6%	86.8%	68.3%		57.4%
Iceland	35.0%	36.0%	39.58	43.99	11.99	15.12	68.4%	76.3%	24.9%	60.9%	43.7%
India	27.6%	25.8%	36.52	37.42	11.04	12.28	99.2%	96.7%	72.1%	85.0%	89.9%
Indonesia	21.5%	34.3%	34.43	34.56	8.48	8.22	87.0%	85.4%	33.9%	82.8%	30.5%
Ireland	41.9%	43.7%	39.18	43.51	15.25	18.67	85.6%	87.7%	73.0%	81.2%	70.0%
Israel	32.6%	32.8%	42.88	47.77	15.47	20.64	73.4%	76.7%	38.3%	50.9%	55.5%
Italy	42.4%	40.9%	42.98	46.88	16.84	19.82	72.9%	76.3%	50.1%	59.2%	55.7%
Kazakhstan		78.4%		29.37		6.53		96.7%		95.9%	84.6%
Kosovo	45.5%	56.4%	30.83	30.73	7.51	8.04	86.2%	98.1%	67.0%	79.9%	60.6%
Latvia	72.4%	67.4%	40.27	43.80	16.29	19.06	80.3%	80.8%	58.5%	78.1%	62.3%
Lithuania		62.3%		43.62		18.09		95.7%		79.6%	71.5%
Mexico	31.8%	45.8%	38.41	40.12		16.26	86.9%	90.7%	62.5%	80.7%	85.6%
Moldova	60.6%	72.8%	30.26	33.55	7.91	11.19	81.4%	70.5%	68.2%	75.1%	55.4%
Nepal		17.7%		38.02		10.68		74.2%		31.2%	76.8%
Netherlands	39.3%	33.8%	46.76	46.22	18.73	19.99	81.8%	86.8%	57.8%	80.6%	68.6%
New Zealand	50.4%	58.0%	43.66	45.92	17.00	18.69	85.1%	78.0%	65.3%	57.2%	81.8%
North Cyprus		45.0%		44.81		19.95		88.4%		76.1%	79.5%
North Macedonia		50.0%		43.95		19.08		87.9%		68.4%	81.0%
Norway	50.4%	46.7%	43.33	48.60	16.69	21.44	89.3%	89.1%	64.3%	79.1%	59.3%
Pakistan		27.8%		35.66		10.86		95.0%		81.9%	68.3%
Paraguay		30.7%		40.84		15.85		78.4%		64.6%	84.9%
Peru		27.3%		44.01		16.21		82.6%		76.3%	85.8%
Philippines	51.1%	51.1%	37.86	39.47	14.10	14.96	93.6%	94.2%	73.1%	82.9%	82.3%
Poland		55.3%		31.78		7.35		74.3%		70.6%	53.4%
Portugal	45.9%	57.7%	39.00	38.13	14.65	15.52	86.2%	97.0%	75.9%	77.7%	99.2%
Romania	62.5%	65.4%	30.65	36.91	7.81	14.41	70.7%	85.3%	64.7%	75.4%	69.8%
Serbia	53.8%	56.7%	40.92	41.56	15.99	16.35	68.6%	74.3%	48.5%	58.9%	77.2%
Seychelles		68.3%		38.08		11.45		37.7%		25.6%	63.9%
Sierra Leone	29.1%	21.8%	31.59	33.44	5.79	8.26	40.4%	54.6%	48.3%	14.5%	81.2%
Singapore	58.9%	68.3%	37.70	37.43	11.42	11.71	93.7%	96.7%	39.4%	76.0%	55.3%
Slovakia		53.5%		39.59		13.62		87.1%		81.8%	64.3%
Slovenia		58.3%		44.01		20.36		86.0%		80.9%	60.6%
South Africa	62.1%	58.6%	39.92	44.06	13.65	18.60	84.3%	82.7%	69.6%	81.7%	80.7%
South Korea	23.7%	23.5%	37.19	42.39	11.30		99.4%	98.1%	46.0%	60.6%	58.4%
Spain	41.0%	44.2%	39.23	42.06	15.91	17.41	96.7%	95.7%	88.6%	96.1%	91.6%
Sweden	45.9%	52.9%	51.32	49.10		22.55	60.5%	66.0%	68.0%	78.3%	72.7%
Switzerland	38.5%	43.6%	41.63	42.67	14.62	16.41	69.6%	80.0%	37.9%	48.5%	93.5%
Taiwan		43.2%		41.44		15.25		98.2%		71.9%	81.0%
Tanzania	45.2%	46.5%	27.63	31.81	6.80			48.8%	77.2%	46.1%	86.7%
Thailand	43.8%	60.5%	37.19	37.57	7.51	9.03	81.6%	88.5%	52.6%	79.6%	53.6%
Turkey	44.9%	43.9%	32.35	39.86	9.31	14.58	91.1%	93.1%	31.9%	82.7%	73.4%
UAE	50.2%	37.6%	37.73	43.75		18.21	91.8%	96.3%	72.6%	80.0%	15.8%
UK	45.2%	50.0%	43.17	45.09	18.53	19.86	86.3%	90.8%	41.2%	46.4%	66.1%
Ukraine		68.1%		39.05		15.29		96.8%		78.6%	68.1%
USA	27.1%	40.1%	46.91	48.14	22.74	20.84	93.7%	93.3%	78.9%	83.4%	80.7%
Uzbekistan		31.5%		36.25		11.41		92.7%		59.0%	80.4%
Venezuela		53.0%		44.36		17.64		98.2%		96.4%	97.2%
Yemen		18.7%		38.35		12.66		91.5%		87.1%	88.0%
Zambia		42.2%		32.72		7.23		40.4%		36.6%	89.5%
Average[1]	**44.6%**	**46.5%**	**38.07**	**40.75**	**12.95**	**15.50**	**83.7%**	**85.0%**	**60.2%**	**71.7%**	**74.4%**

[1]Average across the countries listed in the table (the original WJS2 sample included 67 countries)