

Report reveals journalists' views on ethics, pay and the pressures they feel

May 10 2016



A new report called 'Journalists in the UK', launched today by Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford, examines their views on the ethics and practices of journalism, how they regard their role, pay and diversity within the profession, who they trust, and the changing pressures of the news environment. The report is based on a comprehensive survey using a representative sample of 700 journalists. Here are just 10 of the findings:

(1) Post-Leveson, UK journalists still more likely to push boundaries to get the story

53% think it is justified to pay for confidential information in the public interest compared with just 5% of American [journalists](#). 81% think it is acceptable, when stories are in the public interest, to use confidential business or government documents without permission. This compares with just 58% of journalists in the United States.

(2) Over half of the journalists surveyed now work online

Since 2012, the proportion of journalists in the UK working in print versions of newspapers has fallen from 56% to 44%, while the proportion working online has risen from 26% to 52%. However, the median [pay](#) of those working exclusively online is lower than that of journalists who continue to do all their work for printed newspapers.

(3) 86% of journalists thought that the time available for researching stories had decreased

The report says more online working may be part of the reason, with journalists who work online producing 71% more stories than other journalists. Journalists who only work online were found to produce 186% more stories than those who did not.

(4) About twice as many journalists believe their editorial freedom has decreased over time as believe it has increased

The report argues this could be because of the increasing influence of

audiences and public relations communications. 41% of journalists surveyed for the report said data and research on what audiences like to read is now 'very' or 'extremely' influential; 61% thought the influence of public relations had increased over the last five years.

(5) 77% of journalists said that being a detached observer was 'very important' or 'extremely important'

The roles mentioned most frequently show that journalists see themselves as providers of accurate information, analysis, entertainment and scrutinisers of those in power. A minority of those surveyed said setting the political agenda, being an adversary of government, or supporting national development were important roles to fill as a journalist.

(6) Half of the journalists surveyed describe their political stance as 'left-wing'

About half of journalists said they were left of centre; the other half were split between the centre and the right-wing. Right-of-centre political beliefs increase with seniority.

(7) 45% of UK journalists see it as 'very' or 'extremely' important to provide news that attracts the largest audience

This is a higher proportion than found in a survey of US journalists six years ago, which the report says may be partly explained by the increased financial pressures on journalism. 77% of journalists said they felt their job was more influenced by profit-making pressures than it had

been five years ago, with 66% saying the same about advertising.

(8) Journalists have little trust in religious leaders and trade unions

76% of journalists think religion has little or no influence on their work and 61% are not members of a formal faith, a lower percentage than in the general population. They trust religious leaders and trade unions less than Parliament, the police, and the military, although politicians and political parties are at the bottom of their list.

(9) A high and growing proportion of journalists are learning the trade at university

64% of those who entered the profession in the last five years had a degree in journalism or a related field, compared with 51% of journalists in the previous five-year period. Only 41% of all working journalists have degrees related to journalism.

(10) 83% of journalists in their mid- to late-20s earn less than £29,000

The survey shows how young journalists, despite having higher formal qualifications, are relatively poorly paid. About 20% of journalists have gross yearly earnings of less than £19,200, so are on incomes that are either close to or under the 'living wage'.

Report lead author, Dr Neil Thurman, commented: 'This report shows the increasing pressures that journalists face due to the social, economic, and technological changes effecting journalism. However, the survey suggests despite this and the fall-out the Leveson Report, UK journalists

are still more aggressive than US media in their pursuit of important stories.'

Provided by University of Oxford

Citation: Report reveals journalists' views on ethics, pay and the pressures they feel (2016, May 10) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-05-reveals-journalists-views-ethics-pressures.html>

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