

Argentina

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INTRODUCTION

Between 2022 and 2023, Argentina underwent a period of profound political and economic upheaval. Inflation surged to over 211% in 2023, while poverty rates climbed sharply, particularly among young people, more than half of whom have lived in poverty at some point over the past decade. This instability deeply affected the country's media landscape, which was already grappling with economic fragility, intense political polarization, and a steady erosion of public trust.

The survey was conducted in 2023, before the presidential elections, resulting in a political shift from a left-wing administration that had ruled the country for twenty years of this century to a new brand of libertarian government. This increasingly polarized environment created fertile ground for threats to press freedom, complicating the conditions under which journalists operate.

Despite Argentina's relatively high physical and digital safety rankings, the profession remains constrained by a legacy of political harassment and a heavy reliance on state funding. These structural vulnerabilities not only limit journalistic independence but also affect the psychological well-being of media professionals.

Media reform in 2009 promoted the creation of media outlets based on generous subsidies to public and community-based media and state advertisement for private media. This policy turned Argentina into the country with the most radio outlets in Latin America. Flourishing digital ventures failed to support professional journalism, so finding journalists for this sample who fulfilled this study's definition was hard. Besides the extended poverty level conspiring against subscriptions, interest in news dropped significantly, with an increasing number of Argentines actively avoiding the news.

As part of the policy, national and local governments have become major advertisers and leading providers of diverse subsidies. The imbalance between supply and demand creates a weak financial infrastructure, resulting in a high dependency on government funding and informative subsidies from public relations and state sources.

BACKGROUNDS OF JOURNALISTS

Argentinian journalists in this sample were on average 45.6 years old (SD = 10.6; Median = 45.5), and 41.8% were women. Regarding educational attainment, 48.5% held a bachelor's degree or equivalent, 26.4% a master's degree or equivalent, and 1.6% had obtained a doctorate. Additionally, 16.1% had completed some university studies without earning a degree. Furthermore, 86.4% of respondents had received formal education or professional training in journalism. This training was most acquired at a university or college (75.0%), but also through apprenticeships or cadetships (67.4%) and short-term courses (77.5%).

JOURNALISTS IN THE NEWSROOM

In the country, professional journalism is mainly possible on private media, where most respondents work (72.6%), while 14.4% work for different kinds of public service, community, or non-profit. The state-run media is represented by 5.3% of the sample. Regarding area of coverage, 52.4% primarily catered to local or regional media, 44.4% of the journalists reported mainly working for (trans)national media, while 3.2% declared no main media. The sample included top management positions (27.7%), middle management roles (44.4%), and no management role (27.7%).

Argentina has a record number of radio stations in the region, so one third of the sample works for an outlet with this background (27.9%), followed by organizations focused on newspaper publishing (27.6%), television (17.5%), digital native (11.1%), and magazines (4.2%). Few journalists worked for news agencies and outlets with a telecommunications background (1.6%, respectively). Only 5% of the interviewed journalists claimed not to have a main employer, although the norm is to have multiple jobs, which is why half of the sample has additional income.

About half of the interviewed journalists in Argentina had a full-time contract (44.5% permanent contract and 4.5% fixed-term contract), and one in five was part-time (19.5%). Almost a third (28.3%) worked as freelancers or were self-employed, and an additional 3.2% had other forms of employment. The precarious employment situation is evident because half of the respondents (50.8%) reported having additional jobs outside journalism.

On average, Argentinian journalists had 20.2 years of professional experience (SD = 20.3; Median = 20). Most worked on several beats or subject areas (71.6%) rather than a specific beat (28.4%). The average working week of Argentinian full-time professional journalists was 41.1 hours (SD = 16.4; Median = 41.5). Relatedly, 55.3% of the respondents reported they felt stressed out at work often or very often during the previous six months; only 14.5% had never or rarely felt that way. Only one third of Argentinian journalists (37.3%) declared to be members of any kind of union or professional association.

SAFETY AND WORK-RELATED CONCERNS

More than half of the respondents expressed concern about losing their jobs, while a majority reported anxiety over their physical and emotional well-being (see Table 2). Demeaning or hateful speech and public discrediting of journalistic work emerged as two of the most common safety threats faced by journalists in Argentina (see Table 1). Alarming, nearly all surveyed journalists feared that those who perpetrate harm against members of the press would not be held accountable.

TABLE 1. EXPERIENCED THREATS

	N	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Demeaning or hateful speech directed at you	376	5.9%	12.0%	39.9%	24.2%	18.1%
Public discrediting of your work	376	5.6%	10.4%	34.6%	25.0%	24.5%
Surveillance	376	2.1%	4.5%	13.8%	21.5%	58.0%
Hacking or blocking of social media accounts or websites	376	1.1%	2.7%	14.9%	12.5%	68.9%
Arrests, detentions or imprisonment	376	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	1.6%	97.9%
Legal actions against you because of your work	376	0.8%	1.9%	7.4%	13.0%	76.9%
Stalking	376	1.9%	2.9%	9.6%	17.8%	67.8%
Other threats or intimidations directed at you	376	2.1%	3.2%	15.4%	21.5%	57.7%
Sexual assault or sexual harassment	376	0.5%	1.3%	6.1%	8.0%	84.0%
Other physical attacks	376	0.5%	0.8%	2.4%	6.9%	89.4%
Coercion	376	0.8%	3.7%	8.8%	16.8%	69.9%
Questioning of your personal morality	376	3.2%	8.8%	26.6%	24.5%	37.0%
Others using your byline for fabricated or manipulated stories	376	1.3%	1.9%	4.5%	10.9%	81.4%
Others disseminating your personal information	376	1.3%	3.5%	9.3%	17.6%	68.4%
Workplace bullying	376	1.3%	3.5%	13.6%	14.1%	67.6%
Abductions	376	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.5%	98.9%
Office raids or seizures or damage to equipment	376	0.3%	0.8%	2.1%	2.4%	94.4%
Intimidation that targets family	376	0.5%	0.8%	2.7%	4.8%	91.2%

Question: "In the last five years, how often have you experienced any of the following actions related to your work as a journalist?"

TABLE 2. WORK-RELATED CONCERNS

	N	Agree/ strongly agree	Mean	SD
Worried about losing job in journalism within the next 12 months	376	39.9%	2.99	1.29
Concerned about physical well-being	376	16.8%	2.21	1.18
Concerned about emotional and mental wellbeing	376	68.4%	3.63	1.19
Concerned that those who harm journalists in Argentina go unpunished	376	85.6%	4.25	0.99

Question: "Thinking about your work, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements." (Scale: 5 = Strongly agree; 4 = Agree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly disagree.)

JOURNALISTIC ROLES

Argentinian journalists considered focusing on society's problems and counteracting disinformation to be their essential roles. In general, they showed strong support for interventionist roles as providing analysis, advocating, and promoting peace. Audience-oriented roles and service-oriented journalism are less appreciated (see Table 3). Likewise, politically assertive roles were among the least valued ones (considered combined percentage for "extremely" and "very important").

TABLE 3. JOURNALISTIC ROLES

	N	Very/extremely important	Mean	SD
Be a detached observer	376	68.1%	3.77	1.04
Monitor and scrutinize those in power	376	70.7%	3.92	0.99
Shine a light on society's problems	376	89.6%	4.34	0.78
Motivate people to participate in politics	376	31.4%	2.81	1.17
Provide analysis of current affairs	376	80.6%	4.11	0.81
Let people express their views	376	86.4%	4.27	0.80
Provide information people need to form political opinion	376	80.1%	4.09	0.87
Advocate for social change	376	65.4%	3.77	1.06
Influence public opinion	376	40.7%	3.20	1.08
Set the political agenda	376	38.3%	3.09	1.16
Promote peace and tolerance	376	76.1%	4.07	1.03
Educate the audience	376	67.8%	3.84	1.03
Point toward possible solutions to society's problems	376	65.4%	3.74	1.01
Speak on behalf of the marginalized	376	70.2%	3.86	1.06
Support national development	376	58.0%	3.59	1.05
Support government policy	376	26.9%	2.87	1.09
Convey a positive image of political leaders	376	23.7%	2.59	1.18
Provide entertainment and relaxation	376	33.0%	2.96	1.13
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	376	45.5%	3.28	1.11
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	376	34.3%	3.01	1.12
Tell stories that emotionally move the audience	376	56.4%	3.58	1.01
Support efforts to protect public health	376	69.9%	3.87	1.02
Counteract disinformation	376	87.2%	4.41	0.80
Discuss future implications of current events	376	69.9%	3.85	0.95

Question: "Please tell me how important it is to do each of the following in your daily work." (Scale: 5 = Extremely important; 4 = Very important; 3 = Moderately important; 2 = Slightly important; 1 = Not at all important.)

JOURNALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGIES

Most respondents agreed that it is essential to alert audiences when a source’s claim is untruthful, even though the factual basis of the statement was among the least commonly endorsed by participants. Reflecting an appreciation for an interventionist role orientation, Argentinian journalists also regarded interpretation as a crucial journalistic function, as indicated by the combined percentage of “strongly agree” and “agree” responses (see Table 4).

TABLE 4. JOURNALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGIES

	N	Agree/ strongly agree	Mean	SD
Interpretation is necessary to make sense of facts	370	76.5%	3.94	0.97
Truth is inevitably shaped by those in power	370	8.1%	2.16	0.94
It is impossible for journalists to withhold their personal beliefs from reporting	370	49.5%	3.26	1.11
Things are either true or false, there is no in-between	370	24.1%	2.51	1.23
It is possible to represent objective reality in reporting	370	47.3%	3.15	1.15
Journalists should trust their instincts in deciding what’s true and what’s not	370	16.2%	2.48	0.99
Journalists should intuitively know what the final story will be	370	13.2%	2.37	0.94
Journalists should let the facts speak for themselves	370	59.2%	3.49	1.00
Journalists should be part of a community to portray it accurately	370	38.6%	2.99	1.11
Journalists should make their standpoint transparent in their work	370	70.3%	3.75	0.95
Journalists should alert audiences when a source’s claim is untruthful	370	86.5%	4.12	0.78

Questions: “The following statements deal with beliefs related to how journalists know what they know. For each of them, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree.” / “Using the same scale, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the following beliefs.” (Scale: 5 = Strongly agree; 4 = Agree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly disagree.)

JOURNALISTIC ETHICS

There is strong consensus on the importance of professional standards for ethical reporting (see Table 5), despite the absence of explicit ethical principles or style manuals within the Argentinian media landscape. Many journalists considered it acceptable to receive products or services from sources (see Table 7), a practice often linked to the financial constraints they face. Additionally, half of the respondents expressed agreement with the use of confidential documents without authorization.

TABLE 5. ETHICAL ORIENTATIONS

	N	Agree/ strongly agree	Mean	SD
What is ethical for journalists should always be determined by professional standards regardless of situation and personal judgment	376	76.1%	3.93	1.06
What is ethical for journalists should be determined by professional standards unless extraordinary circumstances require disregarding them	376	30.1%	2.67	1.18
What is ethical for journalists should depend on each specific situation	376	14.6%	2.10	1.09
What is ethical for journalists should be a matter of personal judgment	376	19.4%	2.25	1.18

Question: “The following statements describe different responses journalists may have to ethical problems. For each of them, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree.” (Scale: 5 = Strongly agree; 4 = Agree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly disagree.)

TABLE 6. JUSTIFICATION OF CONTROVERSIAL REPORTING METHODS

	N	Always justified	Justified on occasion
Claiming to be somebody else	376	0.5%	23.7%
Using hidden recording devices	376	1.3%	55.3%
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	376	9.3%	56.9%
Using the personal materials of powerful people, such as documents and photos, without their permission	376	3.7%	49.5%
Using the personal materials of ordinary people, such as documents and photos, without their permission	376	0.5%	22.9%
Paying people for confidential information	376	1.1%	32.4%
Accepting money from sources	376	0.8%	8.8%
Accepting a free product or service from sources	376	6.4%	68.1%
Producing content that mimics news stories but hides its promotional nature	376	4.0%	28.2%
Publishing or broadcasting stories with information that is not yet verified	376	2.1%	23.4%

Question: “Which of the following, if any, do you think may be always justified, or justified on occasion, and which would you not approve of under any circumstances?”

EDITORIAL AUTONOMY AND MEDIA FREEDOM

About two-thirds of Argentinian journalists claimed to have complete or a great deal of freedom in selecting their stories and deciding which aspects to emphasize (see Table 7). However, only one-third reported media freedom in general.

TABLE 7. PERCEPTIONS OF EDITORIAL AUTONOMY AND MEDIA FREEDOM

	N	A great deal/ complete freedom	Mean	SD
Freedom in selecting the news stories	376	72.1%	3.90	0.84
Freedom in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized	376	70.2%	3.86	0.86
Media freedom in Argentina	366	29.2%	3.06	0.86

(Scale: 5 = Complete freedom; 4 = A great deal of freedom; 3 = Some freedom; 2 = Little freedom; 1 = No freedom at all.)

EDITORIAL INFLUENCES

Argentinian journalists found journalism ethics, editorial policy, and editors to fare highest among the internal factors influencing news production (see Table 8). Half of the respondents mentioned information-related factors, such as availability of news-gathering resources and relationships with news sources. Three out of four respondents consider access to information and government censorship extremely or very influential.

TABLE 8. EDITORIAL INFLUENCES

	N	Very/extremely influential	Mean	SD
Peers on the news staff	332	28.9%	2.91	1.06
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	340	51.5%	3.40	1.11
The business managers of the news organization	338	39.1%	3.02	1.24
The owners of the news organization	342	45.6%	3.15	1.35
Editorial policy	355	51.3%	3.45	1.12
Advertising considerations	356	28.1%	2.85	1.23
Profit expectations	352	21.6%	2.47	1.25
Audience research and data	356	37.1%	3.01	1.24
Availability of news-gathering resources	358	50.8%	3.46	1.04
Time limits	360	53.6%	3.48	1.05
Journalism ethics	370	73.0%	3.91	1.00
Self-censorship	362	16.3%	2.40	1.09
Personal values and beliefs	362	53.0%	3.42	1.14
Colleagues in other media	359	9.5%	2.27	0.96
Friends, acquaintances and family	360	8.1%	2.23	0.93
Feedback from the audience	364	40.4%	3.20	0.99
Competing news organizations	359	18.4%	2.62	1.03
Media laws and regulation	357	18.5%	2.62	1.01
Access to information	363	53.4%	3.52	1.04
Government censorship	354	21.2%	2.49	1.27
Government officials	358	22.9%	2.44	1.24
Politicians	355	20.3%	2.42	1.22
Business people	356	16.6%	2.33	1.13
Public relations	358	14.2%	2.38	1.05
Relationships with news sources	361	33.5%	3.06	1.06
Police	344	6.7%	1.81	0.96
Issue advocacy groups	349	7.2%	1.99	1.00
Religious groups and institutions	347	4.6%	1.68	0.89
Military	338	0.6%	1.37	0.62
Para-military groups, militias and similar groups	335	0.6%	1.24	0.54
Organized crime and criminal groups	334	2.1%	1.38	0.74
Terrorist groups	325	1.2%	1.16	0.56

Question: "Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work as a journalist." (Scale: 5 = Extremely influential; 4 = Very influential; 3 = Moderately influential; 2 = Slightly influential; 1 = Not at all influential.)