

# Canada

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## INTRODUCTION

Canada is a stable democracy that continues to rank highly for civil liberties and political rights compared to most other countries. The country has a history of independent journalism dominated by a few large media organizations. The news media industry in Canada has been shrinking for two decades now; in that time, hundreds of newsrooms have closed. The federal government has increased its support of local news, launching the Local Journalism Initiative and the Canadian Journalism Labour Tax Credit in 2019.

In the data collection period (2022-2024), there were more layoffs at Bell Media, which owns CTV News, and at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Metroland Media Group and Métro Média laid off approximately 68 journalists. Québec, a media giant in the Francophone market, cut one-third of its workforce at Groupe TVA.

In 2023, the federal government's Online News Act took effect, requiring the two big tech companies, Google and Meta, to compensate Canadian news organizations for sharing their content. This prompted Meta to ban Canadian news from its platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, negatively impacting the reach of news organizations. The company also ended its contract with The Canadian Press to fund approximately 30 early-career journalists. Google has since sought an exemption from the act and agreed to fund \$100 million CDN annually for five years to Canadian news organizations.

## BACKGROUNDS OF JOURNALISTS

In terms of gender, the sample is balanced: 49.1% female; 49.1% male. An additional 1.9% indicated they didn't fit in either category. On average, the Canadian journalist was 41.8 years old (Median = 40; SD = 12.7). They were well educated, with 57.0% reporting a bachelor's degree or equivalent, 33.2% a master's degree or equivalent, and 2.4% a doctorate. In addition, 83.9% have received professional training or formal education in journalism. This training was largely obtained at a university or college (85.2%), and/or via a journalism internship or apprenticeship (75.4%).

## JOURNALISTS IN THE NEWSROOM

The journalists who responded to the survey were mostly permanent staff working full-time hours at traditional media organizations. They were also experienced, with an average of 17.2 years in journalism (Median = 15; SD = 12.0).

Specifically, 78.7% were full-time, permanent employees, with only 9.5% identifying as freelance or self-employed, 7.6% as full-time contract, and 1.9% as part-time. In addition, 2.4% indicated they didn't fit in any of those categories.

They worked an average of 43.3 hours a week (Median = 40; SD = 8.2; for those in full-time employment). Additionally, 79.0% received all of their work-related income from journalism, while 21.0% earned additional income in other ways.

Newspapers were identified as the background of the main employer for 39.4% of the journalists, followed by TV at 21.0%, news agencies at 14.6%, native online media at 10.2%, radio at 8.6%, and magazines at 3.0%. Another 3.2% of journalists said they had no main employer.

Only 39.1% of the journalists had a specific beat or subject area, compared to 60.9% who considered themselves generalists.

Of those respondents whose editorial rank was known, 70.7% had no management role, 22.0% were middle management, and 7.3% were top management. Notably, more than one-quarter of the total respondents (28.7%) could not be categorized into traditional editorial hierarchies, reflecting, in part, the shifting nature of job descriptions and responsibilities.

SAFETY AND WORK-RELATED CONCERNS

The data suggest that most Canadian journalists are relatively unburdened by safety concerns. The most common negative experiences cited include being on the receiving end of demeaning or hateful speech. Almost 40% of journalists reported being subject to such comments “sometimes,” while a minority were exposed “often” or “very often” (see Table 1). And, while just over one-third of journalists surveyed agreed or strongly agreed they are worried about losing their job in the next year, perhaps the most noteworthy finding is that a majority of journalists surveyed agree or strongly agree that they are very concerned about their mental health; they also report strong agreement with the statement, “I am concerned that those who harm journalists in Canada go unpunished” (see Table 2).

TABLE 1. EXPERIENCED THREATS

	N	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Demeaning or hateful speech directed at you	383	6.8%	10.7%	39.2%	30.8%	12.5%
Public discrediting of your work	378	7.1%	9.8%	29.6%	32.0%	21.4%
Surveillance	364	1.4%	0.8%	7.7%	22.0%	68.1%
Hacking or blocking of social media accounts or websites	377	1.6%	2.4%	9.8%	16.2%	70.0%
Arrests, detentions or imprisonment	383	0.3%	0.3%	1.0%	2.1%	96.3%
Legal actions against you because of your work	382	0.3%	1.8%	7.3%	21.2%	69.4%
Stalking	380	0.3%	0.3%	4.5%	8.4%	86.6%
Other threats or intimidations directed at you	380	2.4%	3.4%	21.1%	35.5%	37.6%
Sexual assault or sexual harassment	383	0.0%	0.8%	5.2%	11.2%	82.8%
Other physical attacks	382	0.3%	0.3%	1.6%	10.2%	87.7%
Workplace bullying	329	0.9%	3.6%	10.6%	18.5%	66.3%

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	379	36.9%	2.81	1.34
Concerned about physical well-being	382	27.5%	2.55	1.26
Concerned about emotional and mental wellbeing	381	60.9%	3.47	1.23
Concerned that those who harm journalists in Canada go unpunished	379	69.7%	3.88	0.96

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

Canadian journalists report that educating audiences and shining a light on society’s problems are the most important aspects of their work (see Table 3). Counteracting disinformation and monitoring and scrutinizing those in power are also identified by respondents as important journalistic roles. Conversely, Canadian journalists place little value on roles such as conveying a positive image of political leaders or supporting government policy.

TABLE 3. JOURNALISTIC ROLES

	N	Very/extremely important	Mean	SD
Be a detached observer	378	65.6%	3.84	0.99
Monitor and scrutinize those in power	380	85.5%	4.37	0.88
Shine a light on society’s problems	380	91.1%	4.53	0.77
Motivate people to participate in politics	376	23.4%	2.68	1.18
Provide analysis of current affairs	380	76.3%	4.05	1.06
Let people express their views	378	67.2%	3.81	1.03
Provide information people need to form political opinion	379	75.7%	4.08	1.07
Advocate for social change	372	33.6%	2.92	1.30
Influence public opinion	374	19.8%	2.44	1.22
Set the political agenda	370	11.1%	2.01	1.13
Promote peace and tolerance	373	37.3%	3.04	1.29
Educate the audience	381	93.7%	4.59	0.70
Point toward possible solutions to society’s problems	377	63.4%	3.72	1.07
Speak on behalf of the marginalized	372	60.8%	3.65	1.22
Support national development	361	12.5%	2.16	1.08
Support government policy	373	1.6%	1.29	0.66
Convey a positive image of political leaders	375	0.8%	1.10	0.44
Provide entertainment and relaxation	377	15.6%	2.24	1.15
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	380	22.4%	2.67	1.15
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	376	14.6%	2.31	1.11
Tell stories that emotionally move the audience	382	46.1%	3.41	0.99
Support efforts to protect public health	376	43.4%	3.22	1.22
Counteract disinformation	377	88.6%	4.53	0.82
Discuss future implications of current events	378	77.8%	4.05	0.70

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

There is less consistency in response to epistemological questions among Canadian journalist respondents. One noteworthy exception is a belief in the need to alert audiences when a claim is untruthful, to which a significant proportion of respondents either responded “agree” or “strongly agree” (see Table 4). And, while Canadian journalists’ survey responses show robust support for the proposition that “facts should speak for themselves,” they also signaled strong adherence to the notion that “interpretation is necessary to make sense of facts.”

**TABLE 4. JOURNALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGIES**

	N	Agree/ strongly agree	Mean	SD
Interpretation is necessary to make sense of facts	379	34.2%	2.83	1.16
Truth is inevitably shaped by those in power	380	26.8%	2.67	1.15
It is impossible for journalists to withhold their personal beliefs from reporting	380	34.2%	2.83	1.16
Things are either true or false, there is no in-between	381	12.9%	1.17	1.09
It is possible to represent objective reality in reporting	379	61.2%	3.51	1.10
Journalists should trust their instincts in deciding what’s true and what’s not	381	19.4%	2.44	1.06
Journalists should intuitively know what the final story will be	380	8.2%	2.01	0.92
Journalists should let the facts speak for themselves	382	74.3%	3.88	0.87
Journalists should be part of a community to portray it accurately	378	25.4%	2.77	1.11
Journalists should make their standpoint transparent in their work	372	26.9%	2.73	1.20
Journalists should alert audiences when a source’s claim is untruthful	379	93.1%	4.53	0.70

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

Canadian journalists largely reject the contention that ethics is a matter of personal judgment, with a majority of respondents agreeing with the statement that “what is ethical for journalists should be determined by professional standards unless extraordinary circumstances require disregarding them” (see Table 5). When asked about potentially controversial techniques often employed by investigative journalists, a majority indicated that approaches such as using hidden recording devices and accessing confidential government documents and the personal information of powerful people without their permission are justified on occasion (see Table 6).

**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	380	52.4%	3.36	1.24
What is ethical for journalists should be determined by professional standards unless extraordinary circumstances require disregarding them	377	62.9%	3.53	1.12
What is ethical for journalists should depend on each specific situation	381	34.9%	2.82	1.22
What is ethical for journalists should be a matter of personal judgment	382	9.4%	1.96	0.98

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	378	0.0%	49.7%
Using hidden recording devices	381	3.7%	83.2%
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	376	21.8%	68.1%
Using the personal materials of powerful people, such as documents and photos, without their permission	379	10.0%	76.8%
Using the personal materials of ordinary people, such as documents and photos, without their permission	380	2.1%	59.7%
Paying people for confidential information	380	0.0%	18.2%
Accepting money from sources	383	0.3%	0.5%
Accepting a free product or service from sources	381	0.5%	26.3%
Producing content that mimics news stories but hides its promotional nature	383	0.3%	3.9%
Publishing or broadcasting stories with information that is not yet verified	381	0.00%	26.0%

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

Canadian journalists appear to enjoy significant editorial freedom, with more than three-quarters of respondents indicating they have “a great deal” or “complete” editorial freedom to select stories and choose what aspects of a story should be emphasized (see Table 7). A similar number also indicated that news media in Canada have “a great deal” or “complete” freedom.

**TABLE 7. PERCEPTIONS OF EDITORIAL AUTONOMY AND MEDIA FREEDOM**

	N	A great deal/ complete freedom	Mean	SD
Freedom in selecting the news stories	380	76.3%	3.89	0.75
Freedom in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized	379	81.3%	3.98	0.67
Media freedom in Canada	374	77.0%	3.83	0.60

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

## EDITORIAL INFLUENCES

Data suggest journalism ethics is the most significant editorial influence on Canadian journalists. Other influences cited by a majority are almost all internal, such as time limits and access to newsgathering resources (see Table 8). In contrast, very few Canadian journalists report being influenced by external sources such as government officials, advocacy groups, and their friends and family.

**TABLE 8. EDITORIAL INFLUENCES**

	N	Very/extremely influential	Mean	SD
Peers on the news staff	362	45.9%	3.29	1.00
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	369	60.4%	3.69	0.91
The business managers of the news organization	343	8.7%	1.72	1.04
The owners of the news organization	335	10.1%	1.79	1.10
Editorial policy	357	47.3%	3.29	1.26
Advertising considerations	337	3.0%	1.39	0.80
Profit expectations	341	8.5%	1.72	1.06
Audience research and data	364	28.0%	2.87	1.16
Availability of news-gathering resources	362	61.6%	3.67	1.01
Time limits	378	60.8%	3.71	0.97
Journalism ethics	375	82.9%	4.22	0.97
Self-censorship	339	12.4%	2.21	1.04
Personal values and beliefs	368	29.1%	2.79	1.20
Colleagues in other media	377	10.3%	2.38	0.94
Friends, acquaintances and family	378	4.8%	2.01	0.87
Feedback from the audience	379	14.5%	2.56	0.91
Competing news organizations	381	15.5%	2.62	0.92
Media laws and regulation	356	41.6%	3.06	1.31
Access to information	369	60.3%	3.70	1.05
Government censorship	343	15.2%	1.98	1.21
Government officials	356	8.7%	1.94	1.07
Politicians	358	10.9%	1.92	1.08
Businesspeople	364	6.6%	1.74	0.94
Public relations	368	10.6%	2.09	1.04
Relationships with news sources	375	40.5%	3.18	1.08
Police	351	11.1%	1.92	1.09
Issue advocacy groups	367	9.3%	2.29	0.99
Scientists or health experts	359	33.1%	2.94	1.15

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.)