

Chile

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INTRODUCTION

Following a series of protests in late 2019, known as the “social outburst,” which included both peaceful mass demonstrations and violent clashes with police and episodes of looting, Chile underwent two unsuccessful attempts to replace the constitution inherited from the Pinochet dictatorship. The country is currently facing a relatively stagnant economy, widespread public distrust in institutions and the media – especially in politics – significant fragmentation of political parties, and a sharp increase in criminal violence.

The Chilean media system is characterized by a commercial model based on private ownership, primarily financed through advertising revenue. It is highly centralized in the capital, Santiago, marked by a high degree of media concentration, and shaped by an ideological and value alignment between major media owners and the country's largest advertisers. This alignment tends to favor conservative sectors and the dominant economic interests of the country.

Three major events have profoundly shaped the media landscape and journalistic practice in Chile. First, the exhaustion of the traditional commercial model has resulted in the closure of numerous media outlets and widespread layoffs. Second, the social unrest of 2019 disrupted the media in four significant ways: the breakdown of established journalistic routines; difficulties in on-the-ground reporting due to violence; widespread public criticism of the media's role in society, which in some cases escalated into physical attacks on journalists and media facilities; and the withdrawal of advertising revenue, which further exacerbated the financial crisis. Third, the COVID-19 pandemic heightened the demand for continuous news coverage while restricting physical mobility, pushing journalists to adopt remote work practices and accelerating the implementation of new technologies that empowered sources and altered information flows. Although both the social unrest and the pandemic occurred prior to the data collection for this chapter, their consequences continue to shape journalistic routines today – particularly by intensifying job insecurity and negatively impacting the physical and mental well-being of media professionals.

BACKGROUNDS OF JOURNALISTS

Newsrooms in Chile have an average age of 41.1 years and a standard deviation of 11.9 (Median: 40 years), which shows a wide variation around that average. They tend to be made up mostly of men, with women accounting for 32.2% of the workforce. They are generally well educated: 64.4% of them held a Bachelor's degree or equivalent, 23.2% a Master's degree or equivalent, and an additional 0.8% have obtained a doctorate. Moreover, 91.5% of the respondents have acquired formal education or professional training in journalism. This education or training is usually obtained at university or in college (88.7%).

JOURNALISTS IN THE NEWSROOM

One third of journalists in Chile (31.2%) worked for an employer with a radio background, 28.0% for companies focused on publishing newspapers, 23.9% for television outlets, and 14.1% for native online media. Very few journalists worked for magazine companies (0.3%), news agency (0.5%) and in the telecommunications sector (2.0%). Regarding area of coverage, 46.2% of the journalists reported they mainly worked for (trans)national media, while 53.8% primarily catered to local or regional media. The great majority was working for private/commercial media (86.1%) and only 7.1% for state-run media and 1.3% for public service media. In the non-profit media were 4.8% of the interviewees, and in the community media 0.8%.

On average, Chilean journalists had 15.8 years of professional experience, but with a great dispersion (SD = 10.8; Median = 15). A majority of them (76.2%) worked on a variety of beats or subject areas rather than on a single one. In relation with the rank of the respondent, 35.7% didn't have a management role, 34.9% had a middle management role, and 24.4% were from top management roles.

Near to a quarter of Chilean journalists (24.0%) were members of professional associations or unions.

About three-quarters of the interviewed journalists in Chile had a full-time permanent contract (73.2%), 3.5% worked with a part-time permanent contract, 2.0% with a full-time fixed-term contract, 7.6% worked as freelancers or were self-employed, and an additional 13.7% had other forms of employment. Among them, 3.0% were media owners who worked as journalists, 5.5% had full-time jobs but no contract, and 3.5% worked part-time but also had no contract. These results do not suggest a precarious employment situation, but 50.5% of the respondents reported that they had additional jobs outside media. These data are influenced by the selection criteria used in this survey, which only surveyed journalists who earned at least 50% of their income from their work in the media or, failing that, who devoted at least 50% of their working hours to journalism.

The average working week of Chilean full-time journalists was 49.0 hours (SD = 12.1; Median = 48.5) which reflects that many journalists work more than their stipulated hours. Relatedly, 50.8% of the respondents reported they felt stressed out at work often or very often during the previous six months; only 18.6% had never or rarely felt that way.

SAFETY AND WORK-RELATED CONCERNS

Verbal attacks such as demeaning or hateful speech, public discrediting of journalists' work, and questioning of personal morality fared among the most common safety threats experienced by Chilean journalists (see Table 1). And the number of journalists who have suffered legal action, physical attacks, or sexual assault/harassment in the last five years remains a cause for concern.

On another note, but related to a safe and peaceful working environment, a broad majority were concerned about their physical or emotional well-being and just over a third were worried about losing job in journalism within the next 12 months (see Table 2). This seems to be related to the precarious working conditions that Chilean journalists experience today.

TABLE 1. EXPERIENCED THREATS

	N	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Demeaning or hateful speech directed at you	397	6.3%	10.3%	32.0%	25.9%	25.4%
Public discrediting of your work	397	4.0%	8.3%	22.2%	28.2%	37.3%
Surveillance	393	1.3%	2.3%	7.6%	13.7%	75.1%
Hacking or blocking of social media accounts or websites	397	1.0%	3.3%	7.1%	8.6%	80.1%
Arrests, detentions or imprisonment	397	0.3%	0.0%	0.5%	4.0%	95.2%
Legal actions against you because of your work	396	0.8%	0.8%	6.6%	10.6%	81.3%
Stalking	396	1.0%	1.5%	7.3%	15.2%	75.0%
Other threats or intimidations directed at you	397	1.8%	4.3%	14.1%	24.7%	55.2%
Sexual assault or sexual harassment	396	0.5%	1.5%	1.5%	7.1%	89.4%
Other physical attacks	396	0.3%	0.5%	4.8%	12.4%	82.1%
Questioning of your personal morality	397	3.0%	7.6%	17.6%	24.9%	46.9%
Others disseminating your personal information	397	0.8%	3.0%	9.1%	11.6%	75.6%
Workplace bullying	395	0.8%	4.6%	8.4%	9.9%	76.5%

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	398	35.9%	2.80	1.46
Concerned about physical well-being	396	20.2%	2.17	1.36
Concerned about emotional and mental wellbeing	398	60.8%	3.58	1.32
Concerned that those who harm journalists in Chile go unpunished	397	79.1%	4.19	1.07

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

In a context in which 19 of the 24 proposed roles receive majority support (see Table 3), Chilean journalists showed stronger support for traditional monitorial roles. Further behind are roles linked to interventionist journalism. In this context, roles linked to accommodative journalism, which seeks to attract, entertain, and excite large audiences, received less support, especially those related to collaborative journalism.

TABLE 3. JOURNALISTIC ROLES

	N	Very/extremely important	Mean	SD
Be a detached observer	396	88.4%	4.41	0.84
Monitor and scrutinize those in power	396	90.9%	4.55	0.73
Shine a light on society's problems	397	96.0%	4.72	0.57
Motivate people to participate in politics	398	40.2%	3.12	1.23
Provide analysis of current affairs	397	88.9%	4.45	0.75
Let people express their views	396	95.5%	4.62	0.63
Provide information people need to form political opinion	397	89.2%	4.42	0.86
Advocate for social change	393	63.1%	3.77	1.08
Influence public opinion	395	63.3%	3.72	1.15
Set the political agenda	397	38.8%	3.10	1.17
Promote peace and tolerance	398	83.7%	4.35	0.93
Educate the audience	398	83.2%	4.33	0.89
Point toward possible solutions to society's problems	398	72.4%	4.01	0.98
Speak on behalf of the marginalized	396	79.8%	4.20	1.02
Support national development	396	78.0%	4.13	0.97
Support government policy	391	38.4%	3.14	1.12
Convey a positive image of political leaders	391	28.9%	2.81	1.33
Provide entertainment and relaxation	397	44.3%	3.33	1.24
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	397	69.0%	3.91	1.00
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	397	55.9%	3.50	1.13
Tell stories that emotionally move the audience	396	59.3%	3.63	1.08
Support efforts to protect public health	397	80.6%	4.20	0.95
Counteract disinformation	397	94.7%	4.76	0.59
Discuss future implications of current events	397	83.1%	4.23	0.88

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

In relation with the journalistic epistemologies, Chilean journalists agreed the most with the statement “Journalists should alert audiences when a source’s claim is untruthful” (see Table 4). Secondly, there are two statements that may be contradictory: “Journalists should let the facts speak for themselves” and “Interpretation is necessary to make sense of facts”. The other two statements, which receive majority support, may also sound contradictory: “It is possible to represent objective reality in reporting” and “Journalists should make their standpoint transparent in their work”.

TABLE 4. JOURNALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGIES

	N	Agree/ strongly agree	Mean	SD
Interpretation is necessary to make sense of facts	396	66.2%	3.82	1.06
Truth is inevitably shaped by those in power	397	8.8%	1.98	1.05
It is impossible for journalists to withhold their personal beliefs from reporting	397	32.5%	2.95	1.20
Things are either true or false, there is no in-between	397	32.7%	2.86	1.43
It is possible to represent objective reality in reporting	397	59.7%	3.60	1.19
Journalists should trust their instincts in deciding what’s true and what’s not	398	23.9%	2.51	1.23
Journalists should let the facts speak for themselves	397	68.8%	3.86	1.04
Journalists should make their standpoint transparent in their work	395	52.4%	3.37	1.35
Journalists should alert audiences when a source’s claim is untruthful	390	81.0%	4.14	1.11

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

Interviewees strongly agreed on the importance of professional standards rather than subjective and situational considerations for ethical reporting (see Table 5). However, a third of them stated that “what is ethical for journalists should be determined by professional standards unless extraordinary circumstances require disregarding them”.

When it comes to the justification of controversial reporting methods, accepting money from sources and publishing unverified information were most strongly rejected (see Table 7). Most journalists found it acceptable to use confidential documents and personal materials of powerful people without authorization, and use hidden recording devices.

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	398	91.5%	4.58	0.74
What is ethical for journalists should be determined by professional standards unless extraordinary circumstances require disregarding them	395	32.4%	2.59	1.40
What is ethical for journalists should depend on each specific situation	398	23.6%	2.25	1.37
What is ethical for journalists should be a matter of personal judgment	397	18.9%	2.18	1.35

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	398	0.8%	23.6%
Using hidden recording devices	397	3.5%	48.9%
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	398	6.3%	53.3%
Using the personal materials of powerful people, such as documents and photos, without their permission	397	4.0%	52.4%
Using the personal materials of ordinary people, such as documents and photos, without their permission	398	1.3%	28.6%
Paying people for confidential information	396	0.8%	13.6%
Accepting money from sources	398	0.0%	1.0%
Accepting a free product or service from sources	397	1.0%	24.7%
Producing content that mimics news stories but hides its promotional nature	397	1.5%	22.2%
Publishing or broadcasting stories with information that is not yet verified	397	0.8%	8.3%

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

Chilean journalists reported a great amount of freedom in their work (see Table 7). More than 80% claimed to have complete or a great deal of freedom in selecting their stories and in deciding which aspects to emphasize in a story. However, media freedom in the country was rated low by the respondents.

TABLE 7. PERCEPTIONS OF EDITORIAL AUTONOMY AND MEDIA FREEDOM

	N	A great deal/ complete freedom	Mean	SD
Freedom in selecting the news stories	398	81.7%	4.18	0.83
Freedom in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized	397	84.9%	4.23	0.79
Media freedom in Chile	393	31.0%	3.13	0.90

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

EDITORIAL INFLUENCES

Chilean journalists found journalism ethics, editorial supervisors and editorial policy to fare highest among the internal factors influencing news production (see Table 8). Among the external factors, most journalists considered access to information and relationships with news sources as being extremely or very influential.

TABLE 8. EDITORIAL INFLUENCES

	N	Very/extremely influential	Mean	SD
Peers on the news staff	386	42.0%	3.18	1.16
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	363	68.6%	3.79	1.07
The business managers of the news organization	365	27.9%	2.58	1.36
The owners of the news organization	360	28.9%	2.63	1.44
Editorial policy	384	64.1%	3.67	1.22
Advertising considerations	381	20.5%	2.39	1.28
Profit expectations	380	19.5%	2.28	1.30
Audience research and data	391	41.4%	3.12	1.29
Availability of news-gathering resources	391	59.3%	3.60	1.12
Time limits	393	56.0%	3.48	1.19
Journalism ethics	396	90.2%	4.47	0.80
Self-censorship	374	16.6%	2.21	1.21
Personal values and beliefs	387	40.1%	3.11	1.35
Colleagues in other media	381	8.4%	2.01	1.06
Friends, acquaintances and family	383	9.1%	1.90	1.05
Feedback from the audience	393	50.9%	3.47	1.07
Competing news organizations	385	26.0%	2.72	1.15
Media laws and regulation	385	46.2%	3.22	1.27
Access to information	395	81.3%	4.16	0.86
Government censorship	374	17.6%	2.14	1.29
Government officials	380	10.8%	2.07	1.11
Politicians	385	11.2%	2.06	1.11
Business people	384	14.8%	2.14	1.16
Public relations	384	15.6%	2.23	1.19
Relationships with news sources	394	54.6%	3.50	1.16
Police	382	22.8%	2.32	1.31
Issue advocacy groups	384	9.9%	2.08	1.07
Scientists or health experts	388	43.8%	3.11	1.27
Religious groups and institutions	381	6.6%	1.74	0.99
Military	381	7.6%	1.78	1.05
Para-military groups, militias and similar groups	364	3.0%	1.37	0.79
Organized crime and criminal groups	371	8.6%	1.54	1.06

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.)