

# Latvia

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## INTRODUCTION

By the mid-2020s, Latvia's development is shaped by ongoing geopolitical tensions in Europe, a shrinking population (projected at 1.85 million in 2025), and an aging society. Its location on the EU's eastern border, near the frontlines of Russia's war in Ukraine, has intensified the [political climate](#) and heightened public focus on national security. Despite inflation easing in 2024, [Latvia's economy remained stagnant](#), with GDP contracting by 0.4% due to adverse external factors.

Latvia's media landscape reflects [the country's ethnic diversity](#): 63% of the population are Latvians, 23% Russians, and 9% Ukrainians, Belarusians, Poles, and Lithuanians – many of whom speak Russian daily, 5% – others. This results in a linguistically [divided media system](#), marked by differing content and journalistic norms. A substantial portion of the Russo-phone community – mainly descendants of Soviet-era migrants – consumes Russian-language media and is more [exposed to Russian propaganda](#). In political discourse, these media preferences are often portrayed as a [security concern](#).

Three distinct journalistic cultures coexist in Latvia: traditional post-Soviet journalism, instrumental [journalism culture](#) is influenced by political and [economic power](#), and a professional model committed to editorial independence.

Media policy has recently advanced. In 2024, the government adopted the [Media Policy Guidelines 2024–2027](#) and began implementing EU Media Freedom Act priorities, particularly journalist safety. The Latvian Journalists' Association was appointed the national contact point for threats against journalists and established a reporting platform.

Journalism remains relatively stable in workforce size. The WJS3 survey, conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, showed that 17% of journalists experienced job disruptions. In the [2025 World Press Freedom Index](#), Latvia ranked 15th (score: 81.81), falling behind Lithuania (14th) and Estonia (2nd), despite similar post-Soviet trajectories.

## BACKGROUNDS OF JOURNALISTS

The journalism profession in Latvia is traditionally [female dominated](#). In line with findings from the previous study (72% women in WJS2), 67% of respondents in WJS3 identified as women and 32% as men.

The average age of Latvian journalists surveyed is 43.8 years (compared to 40.3 years in WJS2). Journalists aged 18–24 primarily work as reporters, journalists aged 25–34, are reporters or staff journalists. The respondents aged 35–44 occupy a range of roles, most commonly as reporters, or executive editors. Respondents aged 45–54 and 55–63 predominantly work as chief editors, and reporters.

Latvian journalists are generally well-educated. A total of 81% hold higher education degrees: 45% have a bachelor's degree, 35% a master's degree, and 0.6% (3 respondents) hold a doctorate. Additionally, 14% have incomplete higher education, 4% have completed secondary education, and 1% (5 respondents) answered, that they have not completed secondary school. About 78% of respondents studied journalism at university, 61% completed journalism internships in media organizations, and 36% completed journalism training through alternative programs, receiving certificates or diplomas. Overall, 62% have formal education or professional training in journalism, while 38% do not.

## JOURNALISTS IN THE NEWSROOM

The study respondents represent a range of media sectors: 24.3% indicated their main employer has a newspaper background, 21.9% work for internet-native media outlets, 18.9% for television organization, 13.4% for magazine companies, 11.3% for radio outlets, and 5.9% for news agencies, 4.1% of respondents reported not having a primary employer. A relatively small portion of the 464 Latvian journalists surveyed – 26.9% – are members of professional organizations, while the majority (72.0%) are not affiliated with any such groups.

Latvian journalists are generally experienced, and for many, journalism is a lifelong profession. Almost one-third (31.6%) of respondents have worked in the field for 21 to 30 years. One in four (24.1%) can be considered a young journalist, with less than 10 years of experience (13% have worked in journalism for five years or less). On average, respondents reported 19.12 years of professional experience.

Latvian full-time journalists work an average of 41.3 hours per week. The majority of respondents are employed full-time: 53% reported working 40–50 hours per week in journalism, while 12% work 20–30 hours per week. A smaller group (7%) indicated working long hours (55 and 60 hours per week). One in three respondents (32%) reported working a standard 40-hour week.

Approximately one-third of the surveyed journalists (32.4%) reported working primarily within a specific subject area or journalistic genre, while 67.6% did not specify a particular focus.

Most of respondents (63%) earn their entire income from journalism, including 58% of regional/local media journalists. Another 15% report that journalism constitutes 90–99% of their income, and 4% state it accounts for 50%. Among respondents who earn less than 100% of their income from journalism, 27% list “other sources,” 31.4% work in education, 20% in advertising, 17.2% in public relations or corporate communications, and 7.5% in state or municipal institutions. Over half (52%) of Latvian media professionals earn between €601 and €1,200 after taxes (24% between €601–900, and 28% between €901–1,200). 10% earn from €301 – 600. Approximately 24% earn between €1,201–1,800, a smaller segment (4.7%) earns €1,801–2,100. Higher-income earners are a minority: 3.7% receive €2,101–2,400, 1% earn €2,401–2,700, and 1% (n=4) earn over €2,700.

A majority of journalists (57.9%) report experiencing frequent work-related stress: 27.9% very often, 32.0% often, 29.6% sometimes, 9.3% rarely, and 1.3% never.

## SAFETY AND WORK-RELATED CONCERNS

Latvian journalists rarely face physical threats and generally describe their work environment as safe. Nonetheless, some report surveillance (23.2%), workplace bullying (13.2%), and sexual harassment (5.2%).

The primary security concerns are online threats: demeaning or hateful speech (79.5%; 16.7% frequently), public discrediting of journalistic work (73.2%; 13.5% frequently), questioning of personal morality (59.7%; 8.3% frequently), dissemination of personal information (22.0%), and use of bylines for fabricated content (24.1%). Legal threats are also notable, with 22.2% reporting work-related legal actions.

Job security is not a major concern: only 16.9% worry about losing their job within 12 months. However, 56.4% are concerned about emotional and mental health, 54.9% about impunity for those who harm journalists, and 43.3% about physical health and wellbeing.

**TABLE 1. EXPERIENCED THREATS**

|  | N   | Very often | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |
|--|-----|------------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|
| Demeaning or hateful speech directed at you                    | 463 | 2.4%       | 14.3% | 33.0%     | 29.8%  | 20.5% |
| Public discrediting of your work                               | 462 | 2.2%       | 11.3% | 29.4%     | 30.3%  | 26.8% |
| Surveillance   | 461 | 0.2%       | 1.5%  | 6.5%      | 15.0%  | 76.8% |
| Hacking or blocking of social media accounts or websites       | 462 | 0.2%       | 0.2%  | 3.5%      | 7.8%   | 88.3% |
| Arrests, detentions or imprisonment                            | 462 | 0.0%       | 0.0%  | 0.4%      | 0.2%   | 99.4% |
| Legal actions against you because of your work                 | 463 | 0.0%       | 1.5%  | 6.9%      | 13.8%  | 77.8% |
| Stalking   | 462 | 0.2%       | 0.4%  | 3.9%      | 9.3%   | 86.1% |
| Other threats or intimidations directed at you                 | 457 | 0.4%       | 1.1%  | 9.4%      | 26.3%  | 62.8% |
| Sexual assault or sexual harassment                            | 458 | 0.0%       | 0.0%  | 1.3%      | 3.9%   | 94.8% |
| Other physical attacks   | 458 | 0.0%       | 0.2%  | 0.2%      | 2.6%   | 96.9% |
| Coercion   | 457 | 0.2%       | 0.2%  | 1.5%      | 2.8%   | 95.2% |
| Questioning of your personal morality                          | 457 | 1.3%       | 7.0%  | 19.9%     | 31.5%  | 40.3% |
| Others using your byline for fabricated or manipulated stories | 457 | 0.7%       | 1.1%  | 7.0%      | 15.3%  | 75.9% |
| Others disseminating your personal information                 | 455 | 0.2%       | 0.9%  | 7.3%      | 13.6%  | 78.0% |
| Workplace bullying   | 456 | 0.2%       | 0.7%  | 4.6%      | 7.7%   | 86.8% |
| Abductions   | 456 | 0.0%       | 0.0%  | 0.0%      | 0.2%   | 99.8% |
| Office raids or seizures or damage to equipment                | 455 | 0.0%       | 0.0%  | 0.2%      | 1.8%   | 98.0% |
| Intimidation that targets family                               | 455 | 0.0%       | 0.0%  | 0.2%      | 3.1%   | 94.9% |

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/<br>strongly agree | Mean | SD   |
|---|-----|--------------------------|------|------|
| Worried about losing job in journalism within the next 12 months  | 461 | 16.9%                    | 2.44 | 1.08 |
| Concerned about physical well-being                               | 460 | 43.3%                    | 3.05 | 1.25 |
| Concerned about emotional and mental wellbeing                    | 461 | 56.4%                    | 3.42 | 2.21 |
| Concerned that those who harm journalists in Latvia go unpunished | 459 | 54.9%                    | 3.51 | 1.00 |

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

Respondents prioritized normative journalistic roles. Among informational-instructive roles, strong support was shown for “shining a light on society’s problems” (88.5%), “being a detached observer” (67.5%), and “monitoring those in power” (67.8%). Analytical-deliberative roles also received strong endorsement: “providing analysis of current affairs” (82.3%) and “allowing people to express their views” (71.1%). Advocacy roles were supported less frequently: “advocating for social change” (53.9%), “providing political information” (56.2%), “influencing public opinion” (47.9%), and “motivating to participate in politics” (35.6%). “Setting the political agenda” was deemed important by only 24.5%. Developmental-educative roles were highly valued: “educating the audience” (87.4%), “pointing toward solutions to societal problems” (76.0%), and “promoting peace and tolerance” (68.1%). Less support was expressed for “speaking on behalf of marginalized groups” (25.2%). The collaborative-facilitative role elicited mixed responses: 44.4% support “national development,” while only 6.2% support “government policies” and 2.9% endorse “conveying a positive image of political leaders.”

The political life domain included new questions relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting a “watchdog” role: “counteracting disinformation” (86.5%), “discussing future implications of current events” (68.2%), “monitoring and scrutinizing those in power” (67.8%) and “supporting public health efforts” (67.8%). The indicators within the daily life domain received comparatively lower levels of support from respondents. A total of 45.1% rated the duty to “tell stories that emotionally move the audience” as very or extremely important. Meanwhile, 24.6% considered it important to “provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience,” 22.3% valued the role of “providing advice, orientation, and direction for daily life,” and 20.7% emphasized the importance of “providing entertainment and relaxation.”

**TABLE 3. JOURNALISTIC ROLES**

|   | N   | Very/extremely important | Mean | SD   |
|---|-----|--------------------------|------|------|
| Be a detached observer                                      | 456 | 67.5%                    | 3.86 | 1.00 |
| Monitor and scrutinize those in power                       | 459 | 67.8%                    | 3.88 | 1.03 |
| Shine a light on society’s problems                         | 461 | 88.5%                    | 4.39 | 0.74 |
| Motivate people to participate in politics                  | 458 | 35.6%                    | 3.16 | 1.03 |
| Provide analysis of current affairs                         | 458 | 82.3%                    | 4.19 | 0.86 |
| Let people express their views                              | 461 | 71.1%                    | 3.98 | 0.92 |
| Provide information people need to form political opinion   | 457 | 56.2%                    | 3.59 | 1.10 |
| Advocate for social change                                  | 456 | 53.9%                    | 3.61 | 1.03 |
| Influence public opinion                                    | 459 | 47.9%                    | 3.43 | 1.05 |
| Set the political agenda                                    | 453 | 24.5%                    | 2.83 | 1.09 |
| Promote peace and tolerance                                 | 454 | 68.1%                    | 3.94 | 1.00 |
| Educate the audience  | 454 | 87.4%                    | 4.44 | 0.73 |
| Point toward possible solutions to society’s problems       | 458 | 76.0%                    | 4.03 | 0.84 |
| Speak on behalf of the marginalized                         | 452 | 25.2%                    | 2.87 | 1.08 |
| Support national development                                | 453 | 44.4%                    | 3.35 | 1.02 |
| Support government policy                                   | 452 | 6.2%                     | 2.14 | 0.90 |
| Convey a positive image of political leaders                | 452 | 2.9%                     | 1.60 | 0.79 |
| Provide entertainment and relaxation                        | 450 | 20.7%                    | 2.62 | 1.13 |
| Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience | 456 | 24.6%                    | 2.87 | 1.06 |
| Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life    | 457 | 22.3%                    | 2.65 | 1.13 |
| Tell stories that emotionally move the audience             | 459 | 45.1%                    | 3.37 | 1.09 |
| Support efforts to protect public health                    | 456 | 68.2%                    | 3.91 | 0.86 |
| Counteract disinformation                                   | 457 | 67.8%                    | 3.91 | 0.95 |
| Discuss future implications of current events               | 459 | 86.5%                    | 4.44 | 0.81 |

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

Respondents largely support journalism's capacity to reflect objective reality (73.3%) and believe that facts can represent it (71.1%). The strongest agreement (86.4%) was for the statement that journalists should flag false claims.

While 48.7% support interpreting facts, 43.6% believe in a clear distinction between truth and falsehood. Many recognize the role of personal perspective: 45.6% believe journalists should intuitively foresee story outcomes, and 38.7% acknowledge that personal beliefs influence content. One in five (21.2%) insists that journalists should trust their instincts when deciding what is true.

**TABLE 4. JOURNALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGIES**

|  | N   | Agree/strongly agree | Mean | SD   |
|--|-----|----------------------|------|------|
| Interpretation is necessary to make sense of facts                                 | 460 | 48.7%                | 3.38 | 0.96 |
| Truth is inevitably shaped by those in power                                       | 463 | 10.2%                | 2.29 | 0.89 |
| It is impossible for journalists to withhold their personal beliefs from reporting | 462 | 38.7%                | 3.16 | 0.93 |
| Things are either true or false, there is no in-between                            | 463 | 43.6%                | 3.28 | 1.02 |
| It is possible to represent objective reality in reporting                         | 464 | 73.3%                | 3.82 | 0.76 |
| Journalists should trust their instincts in deciding what’s true and what’s not    | 463 | 21.2%                | 2.71 | 0.91 |
| Journalists should intuitively know what the final story will be                   | 461 | 45.6%                | 3.25 | 0.93 |
| Journalists should let the facts speak for themselves                              | 464 | 71.1%                | 3.78 | 0.77 |
| Journalists should be part of a community to portray it accurately                 | 462 | 31.4%                | 3.03 | 0.95 |
| Journalists should make their standpoint transparent in their work                 | 462 | 14.9%                | 2.56 | 0.97 |
| Journalists should alert audiences when a source’s claim is untruthful             | 464 | 86.4%                | 4.18 | 0.73 |

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

Most respondents (83.1%) support an absolutist view of ethics, grounded in professional standards, although 51.8% allow for exceptions. A third (31.0%) adopt a situational view, and 16.9% rely on personal judgment.

Accepting bribes or creating hidden advertising is overwhelmingly rejected. However, many accept controversial methods to uncover important information. About a third (32.8%) justify paying for confidential information, and 30.8% consider it acceptable to publish unverified stories occasionally. Using personal materials of ordinary people without permission is conditionally supported – 38.2%, 69.4% respondents agree to publish personal information of public figures.

A majority (75.5%) justify using confidential business or government documents without authorization on occasion; 89.8% endorse using hidden recording devices in certain situations. Controversial information gathering methods were considered “always acceptable” by only a small proportion of respondents, for example, 6% agree to publish other people’s personal documents without permission, 4% – usage of hidden recording devices.

**TABLE 5. ETHICAL ORIENTATIONS**

|   | N   | Agree/<br>strongly agree | Mean | SD   |
|---|-----|--------------------------|------|------|
| What is ethical for journalists should always be determined by professional standards regardless of situation and personal judgment         | 462 | 83.1%                    | 4.17 | 0.84 |
| What is ethical for journalists should be determined by professional standards unless extraordinary circumstances require disregarding them | 461 | 51.8%                    | 3.36 | 1.02 |
| What is ethical for journalists should depend on each specific situation  | 461 | 31.0%                    | 2.84 | 1.11 |
| What is ethical for journalists should be a matter of personal judgment   | 461 | 16.9%                    | 2.38 | 1.10 |

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  | 461 | 1.5%             | 75.5%                 |
| Using hidden recording devices  | 461 | 3.5%             | 89.8%                 |
| Using confidential business or government documents without authorization                               | 461 | 5.6%             | 75.5%                 |
| Using the personal materials of powerful people, such as documents and photos, without their permission | 461 | 2.2%             | 69.4%                 |
| Using the personal materials of ordinary people, such as documents and photos, without their permission | 461 | 0.4%             | 38.2%                 |
| Paying people for confidential information  | 461 | 1.7%             | 32.8%                 |
| Accepting money from sources  | 461 | 0.0%             | 0.4%                  |
| Accepting a free product or service from sources  | 460 | 0.2%             | 18.9%                 |
| Producing content that mimics news stories but hides its promotional nature                             | 461 | 0.0%             | 9.8%                  |
| Publishing or broadcasting stories with information that is not yet verified                            | 461 | 0.0%             | 30.8%                 |

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

Respondents admit their personal editorial autonomy: 82.9% report full freedom in selecting stories, and 87.9% in emphasizing story aspects. Still, only 39.4% believe that media freedom is fully realized in Latvia.

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

|   | N   | A great deal/<br>complete freedom | Mean | SD   |
|---|-----|-----------------------------------|------|------|
| Freedom in selecting the news stories                             | 461 | 82.9%                             | 4.15 | 0.78 |
| Freedom in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized | 462 | 87.9%                             | 4.29 | 0.74 |
| Media freedom in Latvia   | 459 | 39.4%                             | 3.24 | 0.79 |

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

## EDITORIAL INFLUENCES

Key internal influences include journalistic ethics (63.0%), personal values (59.6%), time constraints (54.8%), access to sources (49.7%), editorial policy (46.9%), and senior editors (44.5%). Less significant are self-censorship (31.1%), peer influence (28.2%), business managers (4.1%), profit expectations (17.8%), media owners (16.7%), and advertising considerations (11.7%).

External influences include access to information (65.0%), media regulations (36.2%), source relationships (34.5%), audience feedback (28.7%), and science and health experts (22.8%). Factors such as government censorship, politicians, law enforcement, businesspeople, and religious groups are not considered major influences.

**TABLE 8. EDITORIAL INFLUENCES**

|   | N   | Very/extremely influential | Mean | SD   |
|---|-----|----------------------------|------|------|
| Peers on the news staff                           | 454 | 28.2%                      | 2.85 | 1.05 |
| Editorial supervisors and higher editors          | 445 | 44.5%                      | 3.27 | 1.07 |
| The business managers of the news organization    | 399 | 17.8%                      | 2.22 | 1.21 |
| The owners of the news organization               | 383 | 16.7%                      | 2.11 | 1.25 |
| Editorial policy                                  | 439 | 46.9%                      | 3.22 | 1.17 |
| Advertising considerations                        | 359 | 11.7%                      | 2.00 | 1.13 |
| Profit expectations                               | 371 | 17.8%                      | 2.20 | 1.24 |
| Audience research and data                        | 420 | 27.1%                      | 2.75 | 1.12 |
| Availability of news-gathering resources          | 439 | 49.7%                      | 3.32 | 1.11 |
| Time limits                                       | 451 | 54.8%                      | 3.46 | 1.12 |
| Journalism ethics                                 | 449 | 63.0%                      | 3.54 | 1.14 |
| Self-censorship                                   | 427 | 31.1%                      | 2.70 | 1.25 |
| Personal values and beliefs                       | 448 | 59.6%                      | 3.57 | 1.18 |
| Colleagues in other media                         | 439 | 5.5%                       | 2.00 | 0.95 |
| Friends, acquaintances and family                 | 437 | 6.4%                       | 2.02 | 0.96 |
| Feedback from the audience                        | 453 | 28.7%                      | 2.98 | 0.94 |
| Competing news organizations                      | 442 | 12.9%                      | 2.43 | 0.99 |
| Media laws and regulation                         | 437 | 36.2%                      | 3.03 | 1.14 |
| Access to information                             | 451 | 65.0%                      | 3.66 | 1.02 |
| Government censorship                             | 383 | 5.0%                       | 1.43 | 0.88 |
| Government officials                              | 391 | 4.3%                       | 1.49 | 0.88 |
| Politicians                                       | 390 | 2.6%                       | 1.39 | 0.76 |
| Business people                                   | 387 | 4.1%                       | 1.43 | 0.82 |
| Public relations                                  | 426 | 8.7%                       | 2.09 | 1.04 |
| Relationships with news sources                   | 440 | 34.5%                      | 2.91 | 1.19 |
| Police  | 364 | 2.7%                       | 1.42 | 0.81 |
| Issue advocacy groups                             | 391 | 2.8%                       | 1.70 | 0.87 |
| Scientists or health experts                      | 404 | 22.8%                      | 2.41 | 1.25 |
| Religious groups and institutions                 | 356 | 1.1%                       | 1.21 | 0.59 |
| Military  | 345 | 1.4%                       | 1.19 | 0.56 |
| Para-military groups, militias and similar groups | 322 | 1.2%                       | 1.09 | 0.42 |
| Organized crime and criminal groups               | 321 | 1.2%                       | 1.08 | 0.45 |
| Terrorist groups                                  | 311 | 1.0%                       | 1.05 | 0.36 |

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.)