

Mexico

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INTRODUCTION

Between 2018 and 2022, Mexico underwent political, economic, and social shifts. President López Obrador's populist government broke from past administrations, promoting austerity, nationalism, and open hostility toward institutions, including the media. This deepened anti-press sentiment and public [mistrust in journalism](#).

The period was also shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, economic stagnation, and persistent structural violence and inequality. Officials often [discredited journalists](#), worsening risks and weakening their credibility.

Since the democratic opening in 2000, key journalistic actors have played a central role in diversifying the public sphere and adopting [democratic norms](#) and professional practices. Yet throughout the country, several media outlets remain embedded in [legacy practices](#) from the [authoritarian era](#) such as connivance with political elites, clientelistic relations, dependence on official advertising, and partisan allegiances. These dynamics, combined with labor precarity, violence, and risk, have eroded professional standards, weakening newsroom autonomy. Consequently, much of the media landscape remains fragile due to multiple factors limiting press freedom and independence, as well as frequent [threats against journalists](#) – leading to their adoption of [resilience](#) and [resistance strategies](#) to cope with these challenges.

BACKGROUNDS OF JOURNALISTS

The Mexican journalists surveyed between the summer of 2021 and the spring of 2022 were predominantly female (45.8%) and male (54.2%). The average age was 40.1 years (SD = 10.2; Median = 39). Regarding education, 75.6% held a bachelor's degree, 14.4% reported having postgraduate studies, and only 9.3% had completed high school. While 85.6% had received journalism training at some point in their careers, just 17.7% reported having received recent or updated instruction.

JOURNALISTS IN THE NEWSROOM

Mexican journalists work in diverse and often demanding environments. Nearly half (46.8%) are employed in regional media, with 26% in local outlets and 21.5% in national organizations. A strong majority (91.6%) reported having a main employer, while 8.8% identified as freelancers or self-employed, suggesting a relatively stable employment structure within the profession. On average, journalists had 16.3 years of professional experience (SD = 9.8, Median = 14) – showing a mature and experienced workforce. Despite this, only 27.0% reported belonging to a professional association.

Journalists in Mexico work long hours. The average workweek extends to 53.6 hours (SD = 16.1) for those in full-time employment, with a median of 50 hours. Journalistic work in Mexico tends to be generalist: 80.1% of journalists report not covering a specific beat, often addressing a broad range of topics. Financially, journalism remains the primary income source for the majority, but not always the only one. About 39% of journalists reported holding an additional job outside the profession.

When asked about the percentage of their income derived from journalism, 58.7% reported earning 100% of their income from journalistic work, leaving approximately four out of ten journalists under more precarious income arrangements. Others reported lower levels: 8.9% earn 80% from journalism, 8% earn 50%, and smaller percentages reported more precarious combinations. Only 5% or less of journalists earn 30% or less of their total income from the profession, highlighting economic instability for a small minority.

SAFETY AND WORK-RELATED CONCERNS

Anti-press attacks have increased and diversified. Mexican journalists frequently face threats that compromise their safety and well-being. Nearly 76% reported receiving demeaning or hateful speech, and 65.6% experienced public discrediting. More than 38% had been hacked or blocked online, and 49.4% believe they were under surveillance (see Table 1). Beyond direct threats, 74.9% expressed concern for their mental health, and more than half (55.1%) for their physical safety or losing their job (50.9%). Despite the prevalence of anti-press violence, impunity perception prevails. These percentages include all who reported experiencing each issue, excluding those who answered "never" (Table 2).

TABLE 1. EXPERIENCED THREATS

| | N | Very often | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |
|--|-----|------------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|
| Demeaning or hateful speech directed at you | 443 | 5.9% | 13.1% | 36.3% | 20.5% | 24.2% |
| Public discrediting of your work | 442 | 6.6% | 10.2% | 26.0% | 22.9% | 34.4% |
| Surveillance | 433 | 5.5% | 6.2% | 19.6% | 18.0% | 50.6% |
| Hacking or blocking of social media accounts or websites | 441 | 2.9% | 4.3% | 16.3% | 14.5% | 61.9% |
| Arrests, detentions or imprisonment | 443 | 0.2% | 0.5% | 1.8% | 4.7% | 92.8% |
| Legal actions against you because of your work | 443 | 1.4% | 0.5% | 5.0% | 10.4% | 82.8% |
| Stalking | 443 | 2.0% | 2.7% | 14.0% | 19.9% | 61.4% |
| Other threats or intimidations directed at you | 442 | 2.3% | 4.3% | 19.2% | 20.8% | 53.4% |
| Sexual assault or sexual harassment | 443 | 0.9% | 2.0% | 6.8% | 7.4% | 82.8% |
| Other physical attacks | 442 | 1.8% | 1.8% | 8.1% | 15.2% | 73.1% |
| Coercion | 442 | 1.4% | 2.9% | 8.1% | 15.4% | 72.2% |
| Questioning of your personal morality | 442 | 5.0% | 7.2% | 17.9% | 22.6% | 47.3% |
| Others using your byline for fabricated or manipulated stories | 442 | 0.5% | 2.5% | 8.4% | 12.4% | 76.2% |
| Others disseminating your personal information | 442 | 1.1% | 4.1% | 11.3% | 16.3% | 67.2% |
| Workplace bullying | 443 | 2.7% | 5.0% | 11.7% | 16.7% | 63.9% |
| Abductions | 442 | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.7% | 1.6% | 97.5% |
| Office raids or seizures or damage to equipment | 443 | 0.0% | 0.9% | 6.1% | 8.1% | 84.9% |
| Intimidation that targets family | 443 | 1.1% | 0.9% | 4.3% | 3.6% | 90.1% |

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 | 442 | 50.9% | 3.29 | 1.46 |
| Concerned about physical well-being | 442 | 55.1% | 3.36 | 1.39 |
| Concerned about emotional and mental wellbeing | 441 | 74.9% | 3.98 | 1.19 |
| Concerned that those who harm journalists in Mexico go unpunished | 442 | 98.2% | 4.83 | 0.47 |

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

Mexican journalists uphold traditional roles such as providing platforms for diverse ideas and maintaining objective detachment. Approximately 91.4% support allowing individuals to express their views, and 91% emphasize the importance of being a neutral observer. They also place a high value on more active roles, such as countering disinformation and interpreting current events. Over 96% of journalists consider exposing social issues very or extremely important, while 95.7% highlight the necessity of combating disinformation. In stark contrast, traditional roles focused on supporting elites – common in the past – are now rarely endorsed. Only 5.9% of journalists prioritize conveying a positive image of political leaders (see Table 3).

TABLE 3. JOURNALISTIC ROLES

| | N | Very/extremely important | Mean | SD |
|---|-----|-----------------------------|------|------|
| Be a detached observer | 443 | 91.0% | 4.41 | 0.70 |
| Monitor and scrutinize those in power | 443 | 87.1% | 4.31 | 0.80 |
| Shine a light on society's problems | 443 | 96.6% | 4.68 | 0.55 |
| Motivate people to participate in politics | 443 | 43.9% | 3.15 | 1.23 |
| Provide analysis of current affairs | 442 | 89.6% | 4.31 | 0.72 |
| Let people express their views | 441 | 91.4% | 4.41 | 0.71 |
| Provide information people need to form political opinion | 443 | 87.1% | 4.31 | 0.87 |
| Advocate for social change | 443 | 82.1% | 4.21 | 0.87 |
| Influence public opinion | 442 | 63.3% | 3.71 | 0.98 |
| Set the political agenda | 443 | 42.0% | 3.21 | 1.11 |
| Promote peace and tolerance | 441 | 87.1% | 4.37 | 0.80 |
| Educate the audience | 443 | 71.1% | 3.91 | 1.01 |
| Point toward possible solutions to society's problems | 443 | 77.9% | 4.10 | 0.90 |
| Speak on behalf of the marginalized | 441 | 87.5% | 4.38 | 0.87 |
| Support national development | 443 | 69.5% | 3.88 | 1.01 |
| Support government policy | 442 | 35.3% | 3.01 | 1.13 |
| Convey a positive image of political leaders | 443 | 5.9% | 1.77 | 0.98 |
| Provide entertainment and relaxation | 441 | 26.2% | 2.78 | 1.17 |
| Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience | 443 | 67.3% | 3.78 | 1.07 |
| Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life | 440 | 49.0% | 3.35 | 1.11 |
| Tell stories that emotionally move the audience | 443 | 71.4% | 3.99 | 0.96 |
| Support efforts to protect public health | 442 | 83.3% | 4.23 | 0.95 |
| Counteract disinformation | 443 | 95.7% | 4.66 | 0.67 |
| Discuss future implications of current events | 442 | 81.9% | 4.12 | 0.83 |

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

Mexican journalists hold mixed epistemological views. Table 4 shows how Mexican journalists endorse both factual and interpretive views of their work. While 80.4% agree on exposing false claims, 79.6% believe facts should speak for themselves, and 72% see interpretation as essential. Views also diverge on objectivity: 62.8% believe it's possible, while 40.5% say personal beliefs can't be excluded from reporting.

TABLE 4. JOURNALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGIES

| | N | Agree/ strongly agree | Mean | SD |
|--|-----|--------------------------|------|------|
| Interpretation is necessary to make sense of facts | 442 | 71.9% | 3.77 | 1.01 |
| Truth is inevitably shaped by those in power | 442 | 11.3% | 2.08 | 1.03 |
| It is impossible for journalists to withhold their personal beliefs from reporting | 442 | 40.5% | 3.07 | 1.18 |
| Things are either true or false, there is no in-between | 443 | 38.8% | 2.98 | 1.30 |
| It is possible to represent objective reality in reporting | 441 | 62.8% | 3.58 | 1.20 |
| Journalists should trust their instincts in deciding what's true and what's not | 443 | 33.6% | 2.83 | 1.18 |
| Journalists should intuitively know what the final story will be | 442 | 33.3% | 2.84 | 1.16 |
| Journalists should let the facts speak for themselves | 440 | 79.5% | 4.04 | 0.91 |
| Journalists should be part of a community to portray it accurately | 442 | 42.1% | 3.08 | 1.21 |
| Journalists should make their standpoint transparent in their work | 440 | 63.6% | 3.66 | 1.14 |
| Journalists should alert audiences when a source's claim is untruthful | 444 | 80.4% | 4.03 | 0.98 |

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 Mexican journalists uphold strong ethical standards: 92.6% believe ethics should always guide their work, and only 25.4% think ethics depend on the situation (Table 5). When it comes to controversial practices, just 1.4% support impersonation, and fewer than 3% justify occasionally accepting money from sources. Hidden recordings (62.8%) and using personal materials of powerful people without their permission (51.8%) are more permissible, but mainly when justified on occasion.

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 | 443 | 92.6% | 4.49 | 0.72 |
| What is ethical for journalists should be determined by professional standards unless extraordinary circumstances require disregarding them | 440 | 51.6% | 3.29 | 1.22 |
| What is ethical for journalists should depend on each specific situation | 441 | 25.4% | 2.46 | 1.28 |
| What is ethical for journalists should be a matter of personal judgment | 442 | 27.6% | 2.45 | 1.36 |

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 | 442 | 1.4% | 39.6% |
| Using hidden recording devices | 443 | 2.9% | 62.8% |
| Using confidential business or government documents without authorization | 443 | 6.8% | 50.1% |
| Using the personal materials of powerful people, such as documents and photos, without their permission | 440 | 5.7% | 51.8% |
| Using the personal materials of ordinary people, such as documents and photos, without their permission | 442 | 0.9% | 18.3% |
| Paying people for confidential information | 440 | 1.1% | 24.3% |
| Accepting money from sources | 442 | 0.5% | 3.4% |
| Accepting a free product or service from sources | 441 | 1.4% | 30.8% |
| Producing content that mimics news stories but hides its promotional nature | 441 | 2.3% | 27.9% |
| Publishing or broadcasting stories with information that is not yet verified | 442 | 0.9% | 6.6% |

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

Around three-quarters of journalists feel they have room to decide: 75.1% report having complete or a great deal of freedom in selecting stories, and 73% in shaping their content. However, only 17% believe that media freedom is broadly guaranteed in the country. This contrast suggests that despite perceptions of autonomy at the individual level, structural restrictions still shape the wider media environment (see Table 7).

TABLE 7. PERCEPTIONS OF EDITORIAL AUTONOMY AND MEDIA FREEDOM

| | N | A great deal/ complete freedom | Mean | SD |
|---|-----|-----------------------------------|------|------|
| Freedom in selecting the news stories | 441 | 75.1% | 4.02 | 0.95 |
| Freedom in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized | 441 | 73.0% | 3.99 | 0.90 |
| Media freedom in Mexico | 441 | 17.0% | 2.83 | 0.76 |

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

EDITORIAL INFLUENCES

Internal influences such as editorial policy (62.8%), supervisors (61.3%), and owners (51.4%) shape journalistic work. Externally, ethics (82.4%), access to information (63.2%), and audience feedback (55.3%) are seen as highly influential, reflecting the complex environment in which news decisions are made. A source of concern is that almost a quarter of journalists (23.8%) consider organized crime very or extremely influential in their work, just above politicians (22.8%).

TABLE 8. EDITORIAL INFLUENCES

| | N | Very/extremely influential | Mean | SD |
|---|-----|----------------------------|------|------|
| Peers on the news staff | 442 | 29.2% | 2.79 | 1.12 |
| Editorial supervisors and higher editors | 440 | 61.6% | 3.55 | 1.12 |
| The business managers of the news organization | 438 | 32.9% | 2.75 | 1.35 |
| The owners of the news organization | 437 | 51.7% | 3.31 | 1.43 |
| Editorial policy | 442 | 62.9% | 3.58 | 1.17 |
| Advertising considerations | 440 | 35.9% | 2.88 | 1.35 |
| Profit expectations | 437 | 30.7% | 2.58 | 1.39 |
| Audience research and data | 440 | 50.2% | 3.28 | 1.20 |
| Availability of news-gathering resources | 441 | 50.1% | 3.31 | 1.14 |
| Time limits | 443 | 47.9% | 3.27 | 1.25 |
| Journalism ethics | 443 | 82.4% | 4.12 | 1.01 |
| Self-censorship | 441 | 26.8% | 2.62 | 1.23 |
| Personal values and beliefs | 441 | 39.7% | 2.95 | 1.37 |
| Colleagues in other media | 443 | 11.5% | 2.17 | 1.02 |
| Friends, acquaintances and family | 443 | 7.9% | 1.99 | 0.97 |
| Feedback from the audience | 443 | 55.3% | 3.49 | 1.00 |
| Competing news organizations | 443 | 25.5% | 2.78 | 1.06 |
| Media laws and regulation | 441 | 36.1% | 2.98 | 1.13 |
| Access to information | 442 | 63.3% | 3.63 | 0.99 |
| Government censorship | 439 | 35.3% | 2.80 | 1.33 |
| Government officials | 441 | 25.4% | 2.43 | 1.31 |
| Politicians | 443 | 22.8% | 2.37 | 1.30 |
| Business people | 442 | 17.9% | 2.19 | 1.21 |
| Public relations | 441 | 24.0% | 2.57 | 1.22 |
| Relationships with news sources | 442 | 40.7% | 3.08 | 1.20 |
| Issue advocacy groups | 442 | 15.2% | 2.18 | 1.13 |
| Religious groups and institutions | 441 | 5.4% | 1.69 | 0.94 |
| Military | 439 | 9.1% | 1.82 | 1.06 |
| Para-military groups, militias and similar groups | 437 | 4.8% | 1.57 | 0.92 |
| Organized crime and criminal groups | 440 | 23.9% | 2.27 | 1.37 |
| Terrorist groups | 435 | 4.4% | 1.31 | 0.80 |

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.)