

# Norway

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## INTRODUCTION

Norway is a stable parliamentary democracy characterized by robust institutions, high levels of political participation, and a strong welfare state. Economically, it is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, largely due to its significant natural resources, especially oil and gas. Socially, Norway maintains high standards of living, emphasizing equality, social welfare, and education, underpinned by an inclusive social model.

Journalistically, Norway has a tradition rooted in the principles of press freedom, independence, and responsibility, sustained by strong ethical guidelines, self-regulatory mechanisms and a relatively generous press subsidy system designed to maintain a diversity of news media outlets in all parts of the country. Currently, journalism in Norway faces transformations driven by digitalization, changing media consumption patterns, and economic challenges to traditional media outlets. While overall trust in journalism remains high, there is increased concern about misinformation, media pluralism, and the influence of global tech platforms. Norwegian editorial media continue to innovate, experimenting with new digital formats and funding models to maintain their relevance and societal role.

The data for this study were collected between April and June 2021, when all members of the national journalists' and editors' associations were asked to participate in the survey.

## BACKGROUNDS OF JOURNALISTS

Our Norwegian sample shows a near gender balance: 46.7% of journalists identified as female, 52.9% as male, and 0.3% identified as other. The average age of respondents was 48.6 years (SD = 11.3, Median = 50). In terms of education, 65.6% had a Bachelor's degree, 23.0% had a Master's degree, 0.6% had a Doctorate. An additional 2.9% reported some university studies. A majority of Norwegian journalists (59.3%) reported having formal education or professional training in journalism. Among them, 79.1% received their training at a university or college. Additionally, 46.6% reported having professional training through journalism apprenticeships or cadetships, and 50.2% via short-term courses.

## JOURNALISTS IN THE NEWSROOM

Two-thirds of Norwegian journalists (66.7%) reported no management role, while 17.2% were in middle management and 16.1% in top management. Regarding their workplace reach, 34.7% worked primarily for local or regional media, and 65.3% for national or transnational outlets. The media ownership landscape was dominated by private/commercial media (60.2%), followed by public service media (26.2%), and smaller shares for state-run (1.2%), community (3.7%), and non-profit media (8.6%).

The majority held full-time permanent contracts (81.7%), while others had part-time permanent (4.4%), full-time temporary (4.8%), part-time temporary (0.9%), freelance or self-employment (7.9%), or other employment forms (0.3%). Additional jobs outside journalism were reported by 13.6% of the respondents.

Norwegian journalists had on average 21.4 years of professional experience (SD = 11.1, Median = 22), and worked an average of 38.8 hours per week (SD = 7.7, Median = 38; for those in full-time employment). All respondents were members of a union (100.0%), and 33.8% worked on specific beats or subject areas.

SAFETY AND WORK-RELATED CONCERNS

Verbal attacks such as demeaning or hateful speech or public discrediting of journalists' work fared among the most common safety threats experienced by Norwegian journalists (see Table 1). More severe threats like sexual assault/harassment, or physical attacks, are very rarely experienced by Norwegian journalists. However, quite a few Norwegian journalists experience having their morality questioned. Despite being less frequent, experiences of other threats and workplace bullying are worrying, as is the fact that almost one in four Norwegian journalists are concerned about their emotional and mental wellbeing (see Table 2). Quite a few Norwegian journalists are also concerned that those who harm journalists can do so without being punished.

TABLE 1. EXPERIENCED THREATS

	N	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Demeaning or hateful speech	982	1.5%	5.1%	25.8%	37.2%	30.4%
Public discrediting of your work	980	1.4%	3.2%	22.4%	35.3%	37.7%
Surveillance	947	0.1%	0.3%	4.2%	12.8%	82.6%
Hacking or blocking of social media accounts or websites	967	0.2%	0.2%	2.5%	9.9%	87.2%
Arrests, detentions or imprisonment	977	0.1%	0.0%	0.4%	1.2%	98.3%
Legal actions against you because of your work	978	0.1%	0.0%	1.2%	5.0%	93.7%
Stalking	978	0.1%	0.0%	1.2%	4.0%	94.7%
Other threats or intimidations directed at you	980	0.3%	0.5%	5.9%	18.8%	74.5%
Sexual assault or sexual harassment	976	0.1%	0.2%	1.3%	7.5%	90.9%
Other physical attacks	976	0.1%	0.0%	0.6%	2.7%	96.6%
Coercion	973	0.2%	0.2%	1.3%	6.4%	91.9%
Questioning of your personal morality	977	1.1%	2.5%	11.4%	27.4%	57.6%
Others using your byline for fabricated or manipulated stories	971	0.1%	0.0%	0.9%	3.4%	95.6%
Others disseminating your personal information	973	0.1%	0.3%	2.4%	9.7%	87.6%
Workplace bullying	974	0.5%	0.6%	5.4%	14.0%	79.5%
Intimidation that targets family	973	0.1%	0.2%	0.6%	2.9%	96.2%

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	979	12.5%	1.69	1.18
Concerned about physical well-being	980	15.9%	1.96	1.18
Concerned about emotional and mental wellbeing	979	22.4%	2.20	1.27
Concerned that those who harm journalists in Norway go unpunished	979	27.3%	2.59	1.31

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

Norwegian journalists display a diverse set of role orientations, yet informational roles like educating the audience, shining a light on society's problems, and countering disinformation are the most common (see Table 3). Monitorial role orientations are also common, while interventionist and agenda-setting roles are less relevant, even if around one in three Norwegian journalists support such roles. Collaborative roles, like supporting the government and promoting a positive image of politicians are rarely found among Norwegian journalists.

TABLE 3. JOURNALISTIC ROLES

	N	Very/extremely important	Mean	SD
Be a detached observer	982	69.0%	3.81	0.91
Monitor and scrutinize those in power	982	53.2%	3.38	1.23
Shine a light on society's problems	982	81.0%	4.19	0.97
Motivate people to participate in politics	982	24.0%	2.71	1.12
Provide analysis of current affairs	982	52.0%	3.42	1.12
Let people express their views	982	72.3%	3.88	1.01
Provide information people need to form political opinion	982	59.6%	3.51	1.24
Advocate for social change	982	30.2%	2.92	1.15
Influence public opinion	982	17.0%	2.45	1.07
Set the political agenda	982	32.1%	2.85	1.19
Promote peace and tolerance	982	37.1%	3.07	1.15
Educate the audience	982	91.9%	4.46	0.75
Point toward possible solutions to society's problems	982	55.9%	3.50	1.07
Speak on behalf of the marginalized	982	52.4%	3.45	1.11
Support national development	982	22.8%	2.68	1.06
Support government policy	982	0.6%	1.32	0.58
Convey a positive image of political leaders	982	1.8%	1.51	0.73
Provide entertainment and relaxation	982	27.7%	2.83	1.15
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	982	25.7%	2.83	1.06
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	982	20.7%	2.67	1.05
Tell stories that emotionally move the audience	982	67.4%	3.82	0.96
Support efforts to protect public health	982	22.3%	2.64	1.09
Counteract disinformation	982	80.2%	4.17	1.02
Discuss future implications of current events	982	62.9%	3.64	1.07

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

While very few Norwegian journalists believe things are either true or false, a majority believe that objectivity in reporting is possible (see Table 4). Yet, an even stronger majority believe facts cannot be made sense of without interpretation, and almost half of Norwegian journalists strongly agree that personal beliefs influence their reporting.

**TABLE 4. JOURNALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGIES**

	N	Agree/ strongly agree	Mean	SD
Interpretation is necessary to make sense of facts	912	76.0%	3.94	0.92
Truth is inevitably shaped by those in power	911	29.7%	2.73	1.13
It is impossible for journalists to withhold their personal beliefs from reporting	911	47.5%	3.17	1.05
Things are either true or false, there is no in-between	909	11.7%	2.06	1.03
It is possible to represent objective reality in reporting	913	56.5%	3.37	1.15

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

Norwegian journalists strongly agreed on the importance of professional standards rather than subjective and situational considerations for ethical reporting (see Table 5). When it comes to the justification of controversial reporting methods, however, accepting money from sources and producing content that mimics news stories but hides its promotional nature was strongly rejected (see Table 7). Almost all Norwegian journalists found it acceptable to use hidden recording devices and use confidential documents without authorization, while three out of four found it acceptable to occasionally claim to be someone else.

**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	980	84.3%	4.19	0.89
What is ethical for journalists should be determined by professional standards unless extraordinary circumstances require disregarding them	976	61.9%	3.56	1.17
What is ethical for journalists should depend on each specific situation	978	36.6%	2.80	1.26
What is ethical for journalists should be a matter of personal judgment	978	28.0%	2.48	1.27

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	980	0.4%	74.6%
Using hidden recording devices	981	1.2%	94.7%
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	980	6.2%	85.2%
Using the personal materials of powerful people, such as documents and photos, without their permission	980	4.0%	80.5%
Using the personal materials of ordinary people, such as documents and photos, without their permission	977	0.3%	49.6%
Paying people for confidential information	978	0.5%	24.2%
Accepting money from sources	981	0.1%	0.7%
Accepting a free product or service from sources	981	0.4%	16.0%
Producing content that mimics news stories but hides its promotional nature	981	0.1%	3.1%
Publishing or broadcasting stories with information that is not yet verified	979	0.0%	23.7%

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

Journalists in Norway experience relatively high degrees of professional freedom and autonomy when deciding what to report on (see Table 7). They also rate media freedom in Norway highly, as almost 9 out of 10 journalists find a great deal or complete media freedom in the country.

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

	N	A great deal/ complete freedom	Mean	SD
Freedom in selecting the news stories	982	71.1%	3.75	0.77
Freedom in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized	982	76.6%	3.86	0.68
Media freedom in Norway	982	87.1%	3.99	0.56

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

## EDITORIAL INFLUENCES

Norwegian journalists found that factors associated with the professional field of journalism, like journalism ethics, editorial supervision and policy are the ones that influence their work the most (see Table 8). However, external factors like access to information and media laws and regulations were also highly influential. Despite it not being considered among the most influential factors, it is worrisome that one in four journalists find self-censorship very or extremely influential in how they perform their work.

**TABLE 8. EDITORIAL INFLUENCES**

	N	Very/extremely influential	Mean	SD
Peers on the news staff	982	43.9%	3.36	0.76
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	982	59.9%	3.64	0.71
The business managers of the news organization	982	4.0%	1.72	0.85
The owners of the news organization	982	6.7%	1.75	0.98
Editorial policy	982	56.8%	3.54	0.86
Advertising considerations	982	4.0%	1.51	0.83
Profit expectations	982	17.2%	2.34	1.17
Audience research and data	982	16.5%	2.54	1.04
Availability of news-gathering resources	982	19.7%	2.69	1.00
Time limits	982	51.0%	3.50	0.93
Journalism ethics	982	78.8%	4.00	0.79
Self-censorship	982	24.5%	2.72	1.07
Personal values and beliefs	982	36.2%	3.11	1.00
Colleagues in other media	982	4.1%	2.19	0.82
Friends, acquaintances and family	982	2.8%	2.10	0.80
Feedback from the audience	982	15.8%	2.81	0.77
Competing news organizations	982	13.4%	2.68	0.85
Media laws and regulation	982	78.3%	4.00	0.82
Access to information	982	66.4%	3.74	0.75
Government censorship	982	2.6%	1.56	0.79
Government officials	982	4.7%	1.95	0.90
Politicians	982	3.8%	1.98	0.90
Business people	982	2.3%	1.73	0.80
Public relations	982	2.7%	1.82	0.82
Relationships with news sources	982	28.5%	2.91	1.00
Police	982	4.0%	1.83	0.91
Issue advocacy groups	982	3.9%	2.07	0.85
Scientists or health experts	982	12.4%	2.44	0.97

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.)