

Poland

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INTRODUCTION

Poland has been experiencing a wave of refugees from Russia-attacked Ukraine since early 2022. Moreover, after the elections in October 2023, there was a change from a right-wing cabinet to a more centrist one. Economically, the country is rather stable, although it has struggled with inflation after the pandemic. The biggest identified danger is hybrid attacks from Belarus and Russia.

Following the political, economic, and social transformations after 1989, the Polish media market experienced significant changes. The collapse of the communist regime opened the door to media pluralism and media freedom. Privatization processes and the growing influence of private investors facilitated the restructuring of the media market. In subsequent decades, the rise of the internet and digital media further influenced the industry's evolution, presenting challenges such as readers migrating to online platforms, declining print circulation, and the need to adapt offerings to meet the changing demands of the audience. After 1989, the Polish media market witnessed the emergence of new daily newspapers. A similar process is applied to the radio and television market. The Broadcasting Act of 1992 introduced a dual media system. The National Broadcasting Council, the KRRiT was established under this Act. It regulates broadcasting in Poland. Public and private media entities coexist in the market.

The data collection period covered the 2023 Parliamentary elections lost by the right-wing populist party, Law and Justice. However, the survey was carried out when the Law and Justice party was in power. They exercised their state power between 2015 and 2023 through the control of media, the manipulation of information, and the restriction of freedom of expression.

BACKGROUNDS OF JOURNALISTS

Our sample of Polish journalists is balanced in terms of gender: 55.3% in the sample were women. On average, they were 31.8 years old (SD = 9.9; Median = 29). They are generally well educated: 31.3% completed a Bachelor's degree, 37.4% Master's degree, 5.6% have obtained a doctorate. Moreover, 53.4 % of the respondents have acquired formal education or professional training in journalism. This education or training is obtained at university or in college for the group of 70.6% but also via apprenticeships or cadetships (40.5%) and short-term courses (20.7%).

JOURNALISTS IN THE NEWSROOM

In terms of the background of their main employers, more than one third of journalists in Poland (33.8%) worked for native online media, 10.8% for newspapers, 8.5% for Magazines, 8.5% for radio, and 6.7% for television and 8.5% for news agencies, respectively. Very few journalists worked for telecommunications (2.5%, respectively). Finally, 20.7 % of the interviewed journalists claimed not to have a main employer. Regarding area of coverage, 60.9% of the journalists reported they mainly worked for (trans)national media, while 39.1% primarily catered to local or regional media.

On average, Polish journalists had 7.3 years of professional experience (SD = 6.9; Median = 5). A majority of them (76.3%) worked on a variety of beats or subject areas rather than on a single one. Only 29.8% of Polish journalists were members of professional associations.

27.5% of journalists in had a full-time permanent contract, 14% had a full-time fixed-term contract. More than a third (35.9%) worked as freelancers or were self-employed, and an additional 2.7% had other forms of employment. Finally, 11.7% had a part-time permanent contract, and 8.2 % had a part-time fixed contract. These results suggest a precarious employment situation, as does the fact that 49.7% of the respondents reported that they had additional jobs outside journalism.

The average working week of Polish full-time journalists was 40.7 hours (SD = 13.7; Median = 40). Relatedly, 30.9% of the respondents reported they felt stressed out at work often or very often during the previous six months; 39.6% felt stressed sometimes at work, and 29.5% had never or rarely felt that way.

SAFETY AND WORK-RELATED CONCERNS

Demeaning or hateful speech and public discrediting of journalists' work are the most common kind of abuses against respondents in the safety area (see Table 1). These experiences also impact the concerns expressed by Polish journalists; more than a quarter were concerned about their physical or emotional well-being (see Table 2). Moreover, almost half of the respondents feared that those who harm journalists would go unpunished.

TABLE 1. EXPERIENCED THREATS

| | N | Very often | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|
| Demeaning or hateful speech directed at you | 449 | 3.8% | 12.9% | 26.9% | 22.7% | 33.6% |
| Public discrediting of your work | 445 | 4.3% | 9.0% | 22.9% | 22.0% | 41.8% |
| Surveillance | 449 | 2.0% | 6.5% | 12.0% | 19.4% | 60.1% |
| Hacking or blocking of social media accounts or websites | 448 | 2.2% | 7.8% | 14.1% | 21.2% | 54.7% |
| Arrests, detentions or imprisonment | 449 | 2.2% | 2.7% | 3.3% | 4.2% | 87.5% |
| Legal actions against you because of your work | 449 | 2.2% | 6.2% | 6.5% | 12.5% | 72.6% |
| Stalking | 447 | 2.0% | 5.8% | 9.2% | 15.2% | 67.8% |
| Other threats or intimidations directed at you | 449 | 2.7% | 4.5% | 10.9% | 19.8% | 62.1% |
| Sexual assault or sexual harassment | 448 | 0.7% | 3.1% | 2.5% | 3.3% | 90.4% |
| Other physical attacks | 448 | 1.3% | 2.5% | 4.0% | 10.0% | 82.1% |
| Coercion | 449 | 1.1% | 4.0% | 7.6% | 16.7% | 70.6% |
| Questioning of your personal morality | 448 | 3.6% | 8.0% | 16.3% | 20.8% | 51.3% |
| Others using your byline for fabricated or manipulated stories | 448 | 3.8% | 4.5% | 7.8% | 16.3% | 67.6% |
| Others disseminating your personal information | 448 | 3.1% | 7.4% | 10.9% | 17.0% | 61.6% |
| Workplace bullying | 448 | 1.6% | 3.3% | 4.9% | 10.5% | 79.7% |
| Abductions | 446 | 1.1% | 2.5% | 1.6% | 3.6% | 91.3% |
| Office raids or seizures or damage to equipment | 448 | 1.3% | 2.9% | 4.2% | 4.7% | 86.8% |
| Intimidation that targets family | 448 | 1.1% | 3.1% | 7.6% | 6.0% | 82.1% |

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 | 446 | 13.5% | 2.19 | 1.13 |
| Concerned about physical well-being | 445 | 25.2% | 2.53 | 1.25 |
| Concerned about emotional and mental wellbeing | 446 | 36.5% | 2.94 | 1.26 |
| Concerned that those who harm journalists in Poland go unpunished | 446 | 48.9% | 3.27 | 1.29 |

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

Journalists in Poland strongly identify with all roles that involve educating their audience (see Table 3). However, the majority of respondents would not like to be associated with the government, political leaders or politics in general. The distance from the political class may be related to the strong polarization of the political scene in Poland during the research period and the restrictions imposed on journalists by the government at the time.

TABLE 3. JOURNALISTIC ROLES

| | N | Very/extremely important | Mean | SD |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|------|------|
| Be a detached observer | 449 | 73.7% | 3.99 | 1.03 |
| Monitor and scrutinize those in power | 448 | 54.9% | 3.46 | 1.28 |
| Shine a light on society's problems | 449 | 77.1% | 4.10 | 1.13 |
| Motivate people to participate in politics | 446 | 41.9% | 3.20 | 1.27 |
| Provide analysis of current affairs | 448 | 80.1% | 4.16 | 0.97 |
| Let people express their views | 448 | 72.1% | 3.99 | 1.08 |
| Provide information people need to form political opinion | 445 | 61.8% | 3.69 | 1.22 |
| Advocate for social change | 447 | 64.4% | 3.79 | 1.06 |
| Influence public opinion | 448 | 55.8% | 3.55 | 1.12 |
| Set the political agenda | 448 | 23.4% | 2.62 | 1.19 |
| Promote peace and tolerance | 449 | 73.3% | 4.07 | 1.06 |
| Educate the audience | 449 | 74.8% | 4.10 | 1.05 |
| Point toward possible solutions to society's problems | 446 | 62.8% | 3.76 | 1.17 |
| Speak on behalf of the marginalized | 448 | 50.7% | 3.45 | 1.27 |
| Support national development | 448 | 62.1% | 3.71 | 1.14 |
| Support government policy | 449 | 15.6% | 2.28 | 1.19 |
| Convey a positive image of political leaders | 448 | 12.7% | 2.11 | 1.18 |
| Provide entertainment and relaxation | 449 | 55.9% | 3.61 | 1.17 |
| Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience | 449 | 63.7% | 3.80 | 1.06 |
| Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life | 448 | 45.5% | 3.31 | 1.13 |
| Tell stories that emotionally move the audience | 449 | 50.3% | 3.49 | 1.23 |
| Support efforts to protect public health | 449 | 54.3% | 3.42 | 1.23 |
| Counteract disinformation | 447 | 74.5% | 4.10 | 1.11 |
| Discuss future implications of current events | 449 | 60.1% | 3.65 | 1.11 |

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

Journalists in Poland place strong emphasis on two aspects of epistemology. Firstly, facts are important to them. Secondly, they mostly agree that interpretation is necessary to make sense of facts (see Table 4). It is also essential for respondents to alert audiences when a source's claim is untruthful.

TABLE 4. JOURNALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGIES

| | N | Agree/ strongly agree | Mean | SD |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|------|------|
| Interpretation is necessary to make sense of facts | 431 | 58.9% | 3.53 | 1.09 |
| Truth is inevitably shaped by those in power | 417 | 34.3% | 2.96 | 1.22 |
| It is impossible for journalists to withhold their personal beliefs from reporting | 425 | 29.4% | 2.83 | 1.13 |
| Things are either true or false, there is no in-between | 428 | 37.9% | 3.01 | 1.34 |
| It is possible to represent objective reality in reporting | 426 | 56.1% | 3.58 | 1.05 |
| Journalists should trust their instincts in deciding what's true and what's not | 421 | 38.2% | 3.09 | 1.19 |
| Journalists should intuitively know what the final story will be | 423 | 31.9% | 2.85 | 1.19 |
| Journalists should let the facts speak for themselves | 423 | 63.4% | 3.74 | 1.01 |
| Journalists should be part of a community to portray it accurately | 425 | 55.3% | 3.49 | 1.14 |
| Journalists should make their standpoint transparent in their work | 420 | 66.2% | 3.73 | 1.01 |
| Journalists should alert audiences when a source's claim is untruthful | 422 | 78.0% | 4.09 | 1.04 |

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

Journalists in Poland point to the need for professional standards. However, most of them agree that the ethical issues of actions depend on the situation. This may explain the acceptance by some of the surveyed population of certain controversial actions, such as paying people for confidential information or using the personal materials of ordinary people, such as documents and photos, without their permission.

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 | 447 | 46.1% | 3.31 | 1.23 |
| What is ethical for journalists should be determined by professional standards unless extraordinary circumstances require disregarding them | 447 | 44.7% | 3.30 | 1.07 |
| What is ethical for journalists should depend on each specific situation | 447 | 52.8% | 3.45 | 1.16 |
| What is ethical for journalists should be a matter of personal judgment | 446 | 39.0% | 3.06 | 1.21 |

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 | 448 | 5.6% | 34.4% |
| Using hidden recording devices | 449 | 10.0% | 46.3% |
| Using confidential business or government documents without authorization | 448 | 5.6% | 34.4% |
| Using the personal materials of powerful people, such as documents and photos, without their permission | 449 | 5.8% | 30.3% |
| Using the personal materials of ordinary people, such as documents and photos, without their permission | 448 | 4.7% | 20.8% |
| Paying people for confidential information | 449 | 9.1% | 37.2% |
| Accepting money from sources | 448 | 7.1% | 25.7% |
| Accepting a free product or service from sources | 448 | 14.3% | 32.1% |
| Producing content that mimics news stories but hides its promotional nature | 445 | 5.8% | 26.7% |
| Publishing or broadcasting stories with information that is not yet verified | 447 | 5.4% | 22.8% |

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

Table 7 indicates that journalists tend to rate their degree of freedom in selecting topics quite highly. A number of the respondents implied a certain degree of professional autonomy, albeit with constraints. The inquiry concerning media freedom in Poland yielded the most intriguing findings (see Table 7). The majority of journalists did not feel there was a great deal or complete media freedom in Poland.

TABLE 7. PERCEPTIONS OF EDITORIAL AUTONOMY AND MEDIA FREEDOM

| | N | A great deal/ complete freedom | Mean | SD |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|------|------|
| Freedom in selecting the news stories | 445 | 56.4% | 3.66 | 0.97 |
| Freedom in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized | 447 | 55.7% | 3.60 | 0.93 |
| Media freedom in Poland | 434 | 26.5% | 2.94 | 0.95 |

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

EDITORIAL INFLUENCES

For journalists in Poland, the most important factors influencing their work are access to sources, ethical issues, audience, colleagues, profit expectations, editorial policy, and legal aspects. Personal values and beliefs are also crucial.

TABLE 8. EDITORIAL INFLUENCES

| | N | Very/extremely influential | Mean | SD |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----|----------------------------|------|------|
| Peers on the news staff | 406 | 21.9% | 2.67 | 1.14 |
| Editorial supervisors and higher editors | 402 | 43.3% | 3.12 | 1.32 |
| The business managers of the news organization | 390 | 30.8% | 2.82 | 1.26 |
| The owners of the news organization | 384 | 37.5% | 2.96 | 1.35 |
| Editorial policy | 403 | 41.7% | 3.01 | 1.34 |
| Advertising considerations | 398 | 37.2% | 3.01 | 1.25 |
| Profit expectations | 398 | 50.5% | 3.27 | 1.27 |
| Audience research and data | 409 | 41.1% | 3.06 | 1.28 |
| Availability of news-gathering resources | 407 | 48.2% | 3.22 | 1.25 |
| Time limits | 411 | 50.4% | 3.41 | 1.17 |
| Journalism ethics | 397 | 52.1% | 3.40 | 1.32 |
| Self-censorship | 400 | 31.3% | 2.80 | 1.27 |
| Personal values and beliefs | 404 | 53.0% | 3.40 | 1.27 |
| Colleagues in other media | 383 | 19.8% | 2.49 | 1.22 |
| Friends, acquaintances and family | 385 | 28.6% | 2.70 | 1.29 |
| Feedback from the audience | 383 | 53.5% | 3.51 | 1.15 |
| Competing news organizations | 389 | 30.8% | 2.82 | 1.29 |
| Media laws and regulation | 395 | 46.8% | 3.26 | 1.23 |
| Access to information | 393 | 63.4% | 3.64 | 1.20 |
| Government censorship | 364 | 22.3% | 2.41 | 1.30 |
| Government officials | 367 | 17.4% | 2.19 | 1.27 |
| Politicians | 365 | 16.7% | 2.06 | 1.29 |
| Business people | 369 | 24.9% | 2.33 | 1.36 |
| Public relations | 375 | 36.0% | 2.86 | 1.34 |
| Relationships with news sources | 376 | 37.5% | 2.89 | 1.35 |
| Police | 356 | 12.1% | 1.90 | 1.19 |
| Issue advocacy groups | 369 | 17.6% | 2.19 | 1.29 |
| Scientists or health experts | 353 | 21.0% | 1.84 | 1.20 |
| Religious groups and institutions | 347 | 11.9% | 1.66 | 1.11 |
| Military | 349 | 8.9% | 1.68 | 1.15 |
| Para-military groups, militias and similar groups | 348 | 10.0% | 1.61 | 1.09 |
| Organized crime and criminal groups | 345 | 8.9% | 1.60 | 1.14 |
| Terrorist groups | 352 | 10.4% | 2.32 | 1.33 |

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.)