

# Turkey

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## INTRODUCTION

Turkey's media environment in 2025 is defined by intensified government control, the suppression of dissenting voices, and an increasingly hostile setting for independent journalism. While digital platforms provide alternative channels for information, they too face escalating censorship and regulatory pressure. The convergence of legal constraints, economic hardship, and eroding public trust presents significant obstacles to media freedom, editorial independence, and the democratic flow of information.

Culturally, media pluralism is under severe threat. The concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few conglomerates closely aligned with the government has resulted in content homogenization and a decline in the representation of diverse perspectives. As a result, Turkey's media in 2025 must navigate a complex intersection of economic fragility, political repression, and cultural constraints.

The fieldwork for this study was conducted between late 2022 and early 2024, a period shaped by the long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the aftermath of the 2023 general elections, and an ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Although parts of Turkish society have shown resilience and civic engagement – particularly through grassroots solidarity networks – the broader climate remains dominated by political polarization, economic insecurity, and a shrinking civic space.

## BACKGROUNDS OF JOURNALISTS

Of our sample of Turkish journalists, 43.9% were women, 56.1% were men. On average, they were 39.9 years old (SD = 9.9; Median = 39). The respondents are generally well educated: 71.2% of them held a Bachelor's degree or equivalent, 19.2% a Master's degree or equivalent, and 2.7% have obtained a doctorate. Of the journalists in the sample, 73.4% have acquired formal education or professional training in journalism. This education or training is predominantly acquired at university or college (82.7%), with smaller proportions receiving it through apprenticeships or cadetships (12.5%) or short-term courses (4.8%).

## JOURNALISTS IN THE NEWSROOM

The majority of the journalists in Turkey (93.0%) worked for private/commercial media. More than one third of the sample (35.0%) worked for organizations focused on newspaper publishing, 23.6% for television organization, 13.6% for internet native and 9.2% for news agencies. Very few worked for radios outlets (0.8%) and 6.5% claimed not to have a main employer. Of the respondents, 86.4% worked for national/transnational media and 13.6% for local/regional media.

On average, Turkish journalists had 14.6 years of professional experience (SD = 9.9; Median = 12). More than half of them (61.2%) worked on a variety of beats or subject areas rather than on a single one. More than half of Turkish journalists (52.6%) were members of professional associations. Since journalists were contacted through the union, union membership appears to be higher. However, these data do not indicate that journalists in Turkey are highly organized.

About four-fifths (81.8%) of the journalists in Turkey had a full-time contract (65.0% permanently and 16.8% temporarily employed). Of them, 12.7% had a part-time contract (5.4% permanently and 7.3% temporarily) and only 5.4% worked as freelancers or were self-employed. Almost three quarters of them (74.3%) stated that all their income came from journalism, while one-quarter (25.7%) had income-generating jobs outside of journalism.

The average working week of Turkish journalists had 45.7 hours (SD = 9.2; Median = 45). Of all Turkish journalists, 40.7% had no management role, 37.1% had middle and 22.2% had top management roles. Two-thirds of journalists (66.6%) reported they felt stressed out at work often (34.4%) or very often (32.2%) during the previous six months; only 5.7% had never (0.8%) or rarely (4.9%) felt that way.

## SAFETY AND WORK-RELATED CONCERNS

Among Turkish journalists surveyed, demeaning or hateful speech and stalking emerged as the most frequently experienced threats within the past five years (see Table 1). While more overt forms of repression such as arrests, legal actions, or office raids were relatively rare, nearly half of the respondents reported being subjected to coercion, public discrediting, or surveillance at least occasionally. Notably, incidents such as the hacking of digital platforms or dissemination of personal information, though less common, highlight ongoing concerns around digital safety and personal privacy. These findings suggest that Turkish journalists operate in an environment where psychological and reputational threats are more pervasive than physical violence, reinforcing a broader pattern of intimidation that aims to suppress independent reporting through indirect means.

**TABLE 1. EXPERIENCED THREATS**

	N	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Demeaning or hateful speech directed at you	369	6.0%	10.8%	29.3%	19.5%	34.4%
Public discrediting of your work	369	2.7%	6.5%	17.1%	17.6%	56.1%
Surveillance	369	5.4%	9.8%	17.9%	13.6%	53.4%
Hacking or blocking of social media accounts or websites	369	1.4%	3.0%	6.2%	9.5%	79.9%
Arrests, detentions or imprisonment	369	1.6%	1.6%	6.0%	4.9%	85.9%
Legal actions against you because of your work	369	2.4%	4.3%	7.0%	9.5%	76.7%
Stalking	369	9.2%	12.2%	15.2%	15.2%	48.2%
Other threats or intimidations directed at you	369	4.1%	8.1%	16.0%	17.1%	54.7%
Sexual assault or sexual harassment	369	0.5%	1.6%	5.4%	7.6%	84.8%
Other physical attacks	369	1.4%	4.3%	8.1%	15.2%	71.0%
Coercion	369	4.6%	9.5%	17.9%	18.4%	49.6%
Questioning of your personal morality	369	5.4%	8.9%	14.4%	16.8%	54.5%
Others using your byline for fabricated or manipulated stories	369	5.1%	8.1%	18.2%	19.5%	49.1%
Others disseminating your personal information	369	2.4%	4.6%	8.7%	11.9%	72.4%
Workplace bullying	369	3.3%	3.0%	10.6%	9.8%	73.4%
Abductions	369	0.3%	0.5%	3.3%	1.6%	94.3%
Office raids or seizures or damage to equipment	369	0.5%	1.9%	4.6%	8.1%	84.8%
Intimidation that targets family	369	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

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	369	64.0%	3.67	1.30
Concerned about physical well-being	369	61.8%	3.60	1.27
Concerned about emotional and mental wellbeing	369	69.1%	3.78	1.25
Concerned that those who harm journalists in Turkey go unpunished	369	84.3%	4.29	1.06

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

Turkish journalists identified providing accurate political information and maintaining journalistic detachment as their most essential professional responsibilities, with over 90% rating these roles as very or extremely important (see Table 3). Functions such as letting people express their views, highlighting societal problems, and promoting peace and tolerance also received high levels of endorsement. Conversely, more partisan or state-aligned roles – such as supporting government policy or promoting political leaders – were rated lowest in importance, suggesting a strong professional preference for autonomy and critical distance. Interestingly, roles related to civic engagement and advocacy, including motivating political participation or speaking on behalf of marginalized groups, received more mixed support, indicating ongoing tensions between traditional norms of objectivity and a more activist orientation in Turkish journalism.

**TABLE 3. JOURNALISTIC ROLES**

	N	Very/extremely important	Mean	SD
Be a detached observer	369	93.5%	4.57	0.68
Monitor and scrutinize those in power	369	78.0%	4.01	0.95
Shine a light on society's problems	369	85.4%	4.38	0.84
Motivate people to participate in politics	369	43.6%	3.28	1.20
Provide analysis of current affairs	369	76.7%	4.10	0.98
Let people express their views	369	85.9%	4.32	0.82
Provide information people need to form political opinion	369	95.9%	4.63	0.62
Advocate for social change	369	75.9%	4.06	1.05
Influence public opinion	369	81.0%	4.12	0.95
Set the political agenda	369	45.3%	3.24	1.27
Promote peace and tolerance	369	82.1%	4.22	1.00
Educate the audience	369	62.6%	3.85	1.11
Point toward possible solutions to society's problems	369	79.9%	4.16	0.89
Speak on behalf of the marginalized	369	40.4%	3.09	1.32
Support national development	369	66.9%	3.82	1.13
Support government policy	369	11.1%	1.92	1.16
Convey a positive image of political leaders	369	15.4%	1.96	1.26
Provide entertainment and relaxation	369	33.9%	2.96	1.24
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	369	61.8%	3.67	1.19
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	369	45.8%	3.29	1.14
Tell stories that emotionally move the audience	369	30.6%	2.87	1.21
Discuss future implications of current events	369	77.5%	4.15	1.01
Support efforts to protect public health	369	83.7%	4.29	0.88
Counteract disinformation	369	75.6%	4.05	0.99

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

Turkish journalists largely uphold objectivity and truth-telling, with strong support for alerting audiences to false claims and the possibility of representing objective reality (see Table 4). At the same time, many recognize the role of interpretation and personal perspective in reporting. While relativistic or intuition-based approaches received limited support, there is clear awareness that journalistic knowledge is both constructed and context-dependent.

TABLE 4. JOURNALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGIES

	N	Agree/ strongly agree	Mean	SD
Interpretation is necessary to make sense of facts	369	64.5%	3.57	1.12
Truth is inevitably shaped by those in power	369	25.2%	2.50	1.30
It is impossible for journalists to withhold their personal beliefs from reporting	369	50.4%	3.14	1.20
Things are either true or false, there is no in-between	369	54.2%	3.44	1.16
It is possible to represent objective reality in reporting	369	75.3%	3.97	0.95
Journalists should trust their instincts in deciding what's true and what's not	369	26.0%	2.71	1.12
Journalists should intuitively know what the final story will be	369	19.8%	2.50	1.10
Journalists should let the facts speak for themselves	369	31.0%	2.82	1.16
Journalists should be part of a community to portray it accurately	369	65.6%	3.73	1.01
Journalists should make their standpoint transparent in their work	369	55.0%	3.60	1.11
Journalists should alert audiences when a source's claim is untruthful	369	91.1%	4.41	0.84

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 Turkish journalists express a clear preference for universal professional standards in resolving ethical dilemmas, with 76.4% agreeing that ethics should always be guided by such norms regardless of personal judgment or context (see Table 5). While nearly half also recognized that certain situations might justify deviating from these standards, and that context can matter, these views were less dominant. Only a small minority supported the idea that ethical decisions should rely primarily on personal judgment. Overall, the findings suggest that Turkish journalists tend to favor a rule-based ethical framework, though some openness to situational flexibility remains.

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	369	76.4%	4.14	1.07
What is ethical for journalists should be determined by professional standards unless extraordinary circumstances require disregarding them	369	45.3%	3.14	1.20
What is ethical for journalists should depend on each specific situation	369	49.1%	3.18	1.30
What is ethical for journalists should be a matter of personal judgment	369	22.0%	2.40	1.25

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	369	4.6%	72.9%
Using hidden recording devices	369	1.4%	61.0%
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	369	13.0%	55.6%
Using the personal materials of powerful people, such as documents and photos, without their permission	369	2.7%	55.3%
Using the personal materials of ordinary people, such as documents and photos, without their permission	369	2.4%	39.8%
Paying people for confidential information	369	1.1%	28.7%
Accepting money from sources	369	1.1%	5.4%
Accepting a free product or service from sources	369	1.1%	12.7%
Producing content that mimics news stories but hides its promotional nature	369	2.4%	14.9%
Publishing or broadcasting stories with information that is not yet verified	369	1.9%	10.0%

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

Turkish journalists report moderate levels of autonomy in their individual editorial choices, with around half feeling they have considerable freedom in selecting and shaping news stories (see Table 7). However, perceptions of broader media freedom in the country are strikingly low – only 7.9% believe there is substantial or complete media freedom.

TABLE 7. PERCEPTIONS OF FREEDOM

	N	A great deal/ complete freedom	Mean	SD
Freedom in selecting the news stories	368	48.9%	3.34	1.07
Freedom in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized	368	51.9%	3.39	1.10
Media freedom in Turkey	369	7.9%	1.88	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

Turkish journalists perceive external political and institutional actors – such as government censorship (72.6%), media laws (72.4%), and government officials (69.4%) – as the most influential forces shaping their work (see Table 8). In contrast, internal professional elements like peers, journalism ethics, or personal values appear to exert less impact. Time constraints and editorial policy also emerge as notable internal pressures. The data suggest that journalism in Turkey is heavily shaped by political and structural power dynamics rather than journalistic autonomy or internal newsroom culture.

**TABLE 8. EDITORIAL INFLUENCES**

	N	Very/extremely influential	Mean	SD
Peers on the news staff	369	17.3%	2.37	1.16
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	369	33.1%	2.73	1.24
The business managers of the news organization	369	41.7%	2.98	1.29
The owners of the news organization	369	47.4%	3.11	1.34
Editorial policy	369	53.4%	3.31	1.28
Advertising considerations	369	43.4%	3.08	1.24
Profit expectations	369	50.7%	3.20	1.31
Audience research and data	369	23.6%	2.51	1.18
Availability of news-gathering resources	369	23.6%	2.50	1.20
Time limits	369	59.3%	3.59	1.29
Journalism ethics	369	30.4%	2.71	1.29
Self-censorship	369	33.1%	2.82	1.25
Personal values and beliefs	369	19.2%	2.29	1.26
Colleagues in other media	369	13.0%	2.28	1.06
Friends, acquaintances and family	369	17.6%	2.34	1.12
Feedback from the audience	369	22.8%	2.51	1.13
Competing news organizations	369	19.5%	2.57	1.09
Media laws and regulation	369	72.4%	3.87	1.14
Access to information	369	69.6%	3.83	1.16
Government censorship	369	72.6%	3.94	1.17
Government officials	369	69.4%	3.87	1.19
Politicians	369	65.9%	3.79	1.20
Business people	369	47.4%	3.38	1.15
Public relations	369	20.6%	2.70	1.08
Relationships with news sources	369	22.0%	2.62	1.10
Police	369	42.0%	3.15	1.18
Issue advocacy groups	369	16.8%	2.53	1.10
Religious groups and institutions	369	33.3%	2.88	1.23
Military	369	29.5%	2.86	1.23
Para-military groups, militias and similar groups	369	35.9%	2.89	1.28
Organized crime and criminal groups	369	38.8%	2.94	1.29
Terrorist groups	369	35.8%	2.86	1.31
Scientists or health experts	369	9.8%	2.14	1.05

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.)