WJS3 Methodology

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At its core, the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS) is a collaborative project by researchers from around the world who have jointly developed a shared conceptual and methodological framework aiming for the highest standards of scientific cooperation. These efforts of joint preparation and implementation of the data collection process are described in the field manual, which is freely available on the project website. Following these guidelines, each national team selected journalists as respondents and conducted a standardized survey before submitting the data to the WJS Center in Munich for evaluation and data consolidation.

INCLUSION OF COUNTRIES

The outcomes of comparative studies can vary considerably depending on the selection of countries (Geddes, 2003; Hanitzsch, 2009; Hantrais, 1999). WJS aims for global representation and is guided by the principle of inclusivity. Accordingly, it welcomes researchers from all countries in the world who are prepared to investigate the state of journalism in their respective contexts following our shared methodological guidelines.

As in other projects, scholars from established Global North democracies with greater access to resources were more likely to be able to participate than colleagues from the Global South. We actively reached out to researchers in countries that are underrepresented in comparative studies and invited collaborators from financially privileged countries to provide funding. In this way, we were able to fund research in eleven rarely studied countries, selected through a standardized application process. Yet, despite these efforts, the Global South regrettably remains underrepresented, particularly with regard to the African continent.

SELECTING JOURNALISTS

WJS strives to investigate samples of news outlets and journalists that represent or speak to their respective national population of journalists working in the country. The study focuses on surveying professional journalists, broadly defined as those who have some editorial responsibility for the content they produce (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986). Consequently, they had to be either involved in producing or editing journalistic content or hold a position in editorial supervision or coordination. Further, to qualify as professional journalists, individuals had to earn at least 50% of their income from paid work in journalism or spend at least 50% of their working time on journalistic activities.

The selection of journalists for the survey as specified in the Field Manual consisted of three steps: (1) estimating the population of journalists, (2) randomly (simple random sample) or systematically (systematic random sample) selecting news media organizations, and (3) randomly or systematically choosing journalists working in these news organizations.

Yet, despite the greatest efforts of the national teams, limited access to data and journalists, fast-changing or challenging conditions on the ground – such as surveillance of journalists by government authorities or an omnipresent atmosphere of physical violence – sometimes prevented researchers from fully adhering to our field manual. Whichever strategy the national teams used to deal with challenges, the key principle was that national samples of journalists should provide a reasonable representation of the respective national populations of journalists. When evaluating the data, the WJS Center has been rigid regarding the sample size: We only fully integrated national data sets into the global data set if they included a sufficient number of interviews to ensure, with 95% confidence, that the responses from the interviewed journalists closely reflected those we would have obtained if all journalists in the country had been surveyed (i.e., a maximum margin of error of 5.1%). It should be noted, however, that the margin-of-error criterion tends to favor countries with larger populations of journalists. Despite the national researchers' best efforts, nine countries did not succeed in reaching the minimal required sample size: Ecuador, Hong Kong, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Serbia, Singapore, Ukraine, and Yemen. These are still part of the global data set but have been flagged to encourage more cautious interpretation.

However, we allowed a certain degree of flexibility beyond strict probability sampling if the conditions on the ground clearly required it and asked the national research teams to document the deviations. Although we thrive towards the highest methodological standards, we aspire to balance methodological rigor and inclusivity (Lauerer, 2022). Excluding countries that face serious challenges – such as economic crises or political conflicts – and which therefore struggle to fully meet all standards would risk reinforcing the Global North bias in journalism studies.

SURVEYING JOURNALISTS

The current wave of data collection is the Worlds of Journalism Study 3 (WJS3), which contains survey data from 32,354 journalists from 75 countries (Lauerer et al., 2025). The WJS3 builds on the work of the first two waves of the study and is thematically focused on journalism, risk, and uncertainty.

Response rates (i.e., how many people answered a survey compared to how many were invited to take part) varied considerably among countries (see Table 1). In 33 countries, response rates of 50% or higher were achieved, while in 9 countries, the response rate was below 10%.

Researchers were allowed to use different interview modes (see Table 1). The majority of surveys (65.5%) were conducted online, followed by telephone (11.8%), face to face (8.5%), paper-pencil (6.0%), video call (5.2%), and mail or e-mail (3.0%).

All participating countries used a shared questionnaire, which included a wide range of both mandatory questions that all national teams had to include (e.g., labor conditions, safety of journalists, influences on news work, journalistic roles, and ethics) and optional questions (e.g., technical aspects of news work, income, cultural group, and

political orientation). The questionnaire is accessible via the WJS website.

Many of the questions included in WJS3 were already part of the Worlds of Journalism Study 2 (WJS2), which had been the first to thrive for nationally representative samples (Lauerer & Hanitzsch, 2019). This allows for comparisons over time on several aspects. WJS2, fielded between 2012 and 2016, included interviews with more than 27,500 journalists across 67 countries. Both the methodological documentation and the global dataset of WJS2 are freely available for download on the WJS website.

Survey data reflect what journalists recall and report (e.g., their professional background), as well as their perceptions (e.g., influences on news work) and beliefs (e.g., journalistic roles). Accordingly, their responses do not necessarily fully represent objective reality, but their professional perspectives (Hanitzsch et al., 2019).

Although a complex project like WJS cannot be free of limitations, it is fair to say that it is grounded in ambitious methodological standards and carried out by a thriving global network of experienced journalism scholars. WJS represents the most comprehensive collaborative undertaking in communication research to date.

TABLE 1: POPULATIONS, SAMPLES, AND DATA COLLECTION

Country	Population	Sample	Response Rate	Data Collection Period	Survey Method
Albania	1100	284	87%	12/2021-01/2022	mixed (FTF, phone, video call, paper-pencil, mail/email, online)
Argentina	13000	376		05/2022-02/2023	online
Australia	4900	371	8%	11/2021-01/2023	mixed (online, phone)
Austria	4200	856	21%	02/2023-12/2023	online
Belgium	4783	574	14%	11/2024-03/2025	mixed (online, phone, FTF, mail/email)
Bhutan	118	90	80%	10/2023-10/2023	mail/email
Bolivia	11463	401	92%	04/2022-06/2023	video call
Brazil	48273	602	3%	01/2023-05/2023	mixed (online, mail/email)
Bulgaria	3800	390	39%	12/2021-03/2022	mixed (online, phone, FTF)
Canada	5500	383	21%	06/2022-01/2024	mixed (video call, online, phone)
Chile	6000	398	69%	12/2021-01/2024	mixed (phone, video call, FTF)
China	194263	1167	71%	07/2023-01/2024	paper-pencil
Colombia	10000	379	42%	03/2022-02/2024	mixed (FTF, phone, video call, paper-pencil, online)
Costa Rica	470	229	49%	07/2023-09/2023	mixed (online, video call & mail/email, phone)
Croatia	1500	313	30%	02/2022-12/2023	online
Cuba	3000	343	56%	01/2023-12/2023	mixed (online, mail/email, video call, phone, FTF)
Czech Republic	2150	331	37%	07/2022-11/2023	mixed (video call, mail/email, phone, FTF, online)
Denmark	6802	472	4%	11/2022-02/2024	mixed (mail/email, online)
Ecuador	11000	299	7%	10/2022-09/2023	online
Egypt	8890	436	45%	02/2023-04/2024	mixed (online, phone, paper-pencil, FTF)
El Salvador	475	208	47%	07/2022-10/2024	mixed (video call, online, phone, FTF)
Estonia	1200	299	28%	12/2022-02/2023	online
Ethiopia	5659	363	64%	03/2020-10/2024	mixed (paper-pencil, FTF, online, phone)
Finland	8047	409	5%	05/2021-03/2022	online
Germany	39769	1221	16%	09/2022-02/2023	mixed (phone, online)
Hong Kong	2500	289	30%	09/2024-10/2024	online
Hungary	6000	190	13%	01/2023-12/2023	mixed (online, mail/email, FTF, phone)
Iceland	442	239	54%	03/2021-05/2021	online
India	450000	487	62%	09/2023-03/2024	mixed (FTF, online, mail/email, paper-pencil)
Indonesia	235000	720	100%	08/2023-10/2023	online
Ireland	3406	363	33%	06/2021-10/2021	online
Israel	2337	336	26%	07/2021-10/2023	online
Italy	35700	648	12%	08/2021-04/2022	online
Kazakhstan	17000	273	80%	06/2022-01/2024	online
Kosovo	375	230	66%	10/2022-03/2023	mixed (mail/email, paper-pencil, FTF, online, phone)
Latvia	880	464	59%	03/2021-05/2021	online
Lithuania	1220	302	54%	10/2022-02/2023	mixed (phone, video call, mail/email, FTF)
Mexico	29906	443	55%	11/2021-11/2022	mixed (video call, paper-pencil, FTF, phone)
Moldova	500	305	69%	11/2022-08/2023	mixed (online, paper-pencil, FTF)
Nepal	6000	398	57%	05/2023-20/2023	mixed (FTF, video call, phone, paper-pencil, online)
Netherlands	9000	253		06/2022-03/2023	online
New Zealand	1635	338	23%	12/2021-05/2022	online
North Cyprus	166	122	73%	06/2022-12/2023	mixed (online, phone, FTF)
North Macedonia	580	232	70%	09/2023-04/2024	face-to-face
Norway	6400	982	19%	05/2021-06/2021	online
Pakistan	5000	363	17%	11/2024-03/2025	online
Paraguay	1000	680	68%	01/2022-01/2023	mixed (phone, FTF)
Peru	2913	335	73%	09/2021-03/2024	mixed (phone, mail/email, online, FTF, paper-pencil)
Philippines	2500	341	43%	04/2023-10/2023	online
Poland	20000	449	28%	10/2023-12/2023	mixed (online, mail/email, paper-pencil, phone)
Portugal	5425	366	53%	03/2023-12/2023	mixed (phone, FTF, video call, mail/email)
Romania	5000	367	26%	10/2022-09/2023	online
Serbia	6000	268	34%	12/2022-06/2022	online
Seychelles	70	63	91%	05/2022-08/2023	mixed (paper-pencil, online)
Sierra Leone	550	258	92%	05/2023-11/2023	mixed (phone, FTF, paper-pencil, mail/email)
Singapore	1400	184	27%	09/2023-11/2023	online
Slovakia	1508	342	25%	09/2021-12/2023	online
Slovenia	1207	339	28%	03/2023-12/2023	online
South Africa	1440	305	23%	08/2023-12/2023	online
South Korea	15000	370	16%	09/2022-01/2023	online
Spain	18000	391	66%	03/2023-07/2023	mixed (phone, FTF, paper-pencil)
Sweden	12000	483	7%	11/2021-12/2021	online
Switzerland	10000	1179	25%	11/2022-05/2023	online
Taiwan	3000	439	80%	08/2023	online
Tanzania	6000	865	61%	11/2023-12/2023	online
Thailand	20000	384	75%	04/2023-11/2023	mixed (online, paper-pencil, phone, FTF, video call)
Turkey	7464	369	50%	08/2022-02/2024	online
UAE	1600	311	85%	12/2020-10/2022	online
UK	68279	1130	7%	09/2023-11/2023	online
Ukraine	35000	185	5%	08/2023-02/2024	online
USA	47000	1326	8%	06/2023-11/2023	online
Uzbekistan	11000	479	70%	06/2023-09/2023	mixed (online, FTF, paper-pencil)
Venezuela	8460	398	33%	02/2022-04/2023	mixed (online, phone)
Yemen	1400	283	98%	07/2022-02/2023	mixed (phone, FTF, paper-pencil, video call, online)
Zambia	1001	294	100%	09/2022-10/2022	mixed (FTF, phone)