CENTER for NEWS, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION.

What It Means to Do Journalism in the Age of AI: Journalist Views on Safety, Technology and Government

50% Report Experiencing Government Overreach in the Last Year

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Overview

Over the last few decades, the widespread adoption and use of new communications technology have rapidly reshaped global information ecosystems. For journalists and news organizations, these changes have both empowered their work and presented new challenges. For the public, these technological and social changes have provided many more options, disrupting how news outlets have historically interacted with them. Concurrently, governments around the world are increasingly impinging on press freedom, weaponizing the law against journalists, while questions about revenue models and digital content valuation remain unsettled.

Social media platforms specifically have offered new opportunities to meet the public where they are, but have also put journalists on the receiving end of continuous legal threats and harassment.

Most recently, the convenience and expediency of AI[1] tools can help individuals and teams produce more content — but these tools are resource-intensive, have shown potential for inaccuracy, and the opacity of their algorithms can leave journalists unsure about how their own work is being repurposed.

Surveys are a snapshot of what people think at a particular moment in time. We surveyed more than 430 journalists from more than 60 countries about government, technology, online harassment and what it means to be a journalist these days between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. As with all CNTI research, this report was prepared by the research and professional staff of CNTI. Here are some highlights of what we learned:

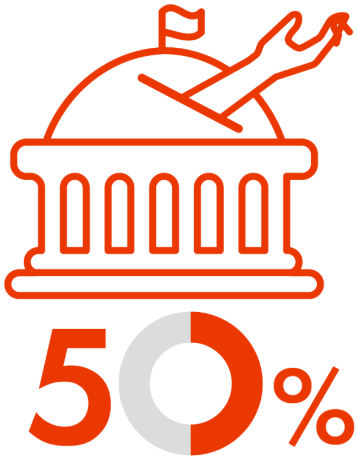
[1] Given the lack of consensus about what "Artificial Intelligence" encompasses, we use the term broadly to refer to "sciences, theories and techniques whose purpose is to reproduce by a machine the cognitive abilities of a human being." While there is no agreed-upon technical definition, it's helpful to consider examples like Large Language Models (LLM), which are "trained" on data to recognize statistical patterns and use those patterns to generate plausible text. These kinds of models typically have too many parameters to be fully transparent or explainable, even for their creators.

Key findings

Survey of more than 430 journalists from more than 60 countries.

24%

of **U.S. journalists** think the public can distinguish journalism from other kinds of news and information.



50%

of journalists say they experienced direct government overreach in the last year.

36%

of journalists say that AI will have a positive effect on enabling an informed public.

15% of journalists say that they use encrypted peer-to-peer messaging as their primary means of communication with sources.

Journalists see a lot of value in their field, but they are unsure that value is being communicated well, leading to public confusion: **U.S. journalists don't think the public can identify what journalism is — or what it isn't.** About one-in-four U.S. journalists (24%) think the public can distinguish journalism from other kinds of news and information. Meanwhile, about half of Mexican journalists (48%) think the public can make a distinction, as do 70% of Nigerian journalists. And while professional training and institutions matter to journalists' self-conception, most of them agree that people who are not journalists can produce journalism.

Half of the journalists surveyed (50%) have experienced direct government overreach in the last year. This may be why strong majorities (more than three-quarters) say it is inappropriate for the government to define journalism or journalists, and about half say their government exerts too much control over journalism.

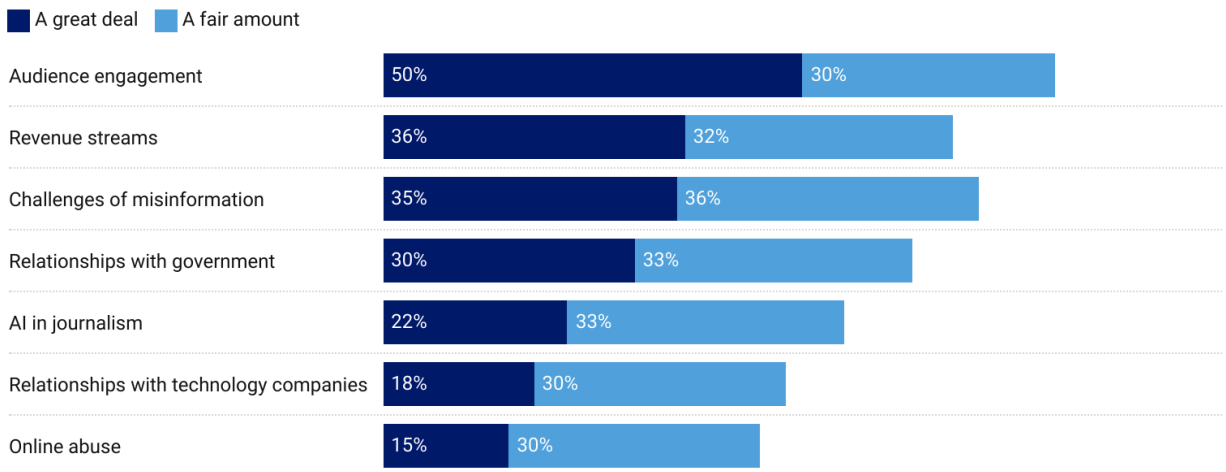
Journalists believe technology is improving their work, but they are hesitant about AI: Two-thirds say that technology in general — and social media in particular — are having a positive effect on their work, although only one-third say the same about AI's effect on the information landscape. Journalists in the Global South are more positive overall.

Serious risks are wide-spread: one-in-three face them somewhat often or more. All the same, preparation varies: **Changing passwords and updating hardware and software on devices is done frequently — but journalists don't necessarily communicate with sources through the most secure platforms**. About 40% said they do both once every few months on average, and 30% or less say they did so once every few years or when the device stops working. And journalists in the Global North do both of these more often than their colleagues elsewhere. Meanwhile, 15% of journalists say that they use encrypted peer-to-peer messaging as their primary means of communication with sources. Strong majorities do feel comfortable discussing safety with colleagues and managers, including government censorship and personal experiences of abuse.

Finally, as a way to connect the dots across the different issue areas asked about, we asked an overarching question about seven current issues facing many news organizations today. The results provide valuable insight into journalists' sense of field — and newsroom-wide priorities — which may not match newsroom leaders' perspective. According to respondents, the long-standing issue of **audience engagement continues to get the most attention inside news organizations** with revenue streams and misinformation coming next. At the bottom: Online abuse.

Audience engagement is getting the most attention in newsrooms; online abuse is the lowest priority

Question: How much attention is each of the following getting these days in the organization you work for?



Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages factor in attrition. Not much, Not at all and Refused/NA responses not shown.

Chart: Center for News, Technology & Innovation • Source: What It Means to Do Journalism in the Age of AI: Journalist Views on Safety, Technology and Government • Created with Datawrapper

This report addresses the information environment with a focus on four of the most pressing issue areas today, each of which deserves more research and conversation: definitions of news and journalism, relationships between news organizations and the government,

technology and AI, and security and safety. While the report parses out these areas, there is a great deal of overlap, addressed across sections.

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Journalists Easily Articulate Their Distinct Role in Society but Do Not Think the Public Can

There is no consensus definition of journalism, at least in part by design. Thirty years ago, examining a definition did not seem necessary. People could rely on obvious physical traits: the broadsheet newspaper and the 30-minute newscast, for example, which were almost exclusively produced by professional and institutional outlets.

But as the media universe expands, it has become harder to easily differentiate journalism from other content. Social media feeds have largely standardized the way external links look and feel, and the wide availability of high-quality web templates has also blurred once-reliable visual cues. Furthermore, many more people are now involved in the process of getting informed by posting eye-witness accounts, sharing news stories digitally and offering commentary and analysis about the day's events. At the same time, governments are increasingly defining journalism in policy, both in actions to support journalism and to suppress it. These shifts have made it more important to consider definitions of journalism.

CNTI has been exploring the changing definition of journalism through the Defining News Initiative which includes surveys and focus groups with the public, policy analyses and now this survey of journalists.

In this lens on how journalists themselves feel about their role in society, respondents mainly focus on the civic function of journalism — its power to support informed participation in public life — and the importance of broad circulation and distribution. But, nearly half of them (45%) think the field is not communicating that value well to the public, and a similar number (51%) think the public cannot identify what journalism is and what it is not. The traits journalists associate with their job — ethical standards, approaching things analytically, and working hard — clearly support the civic function of news. There are some differences by region. While those in the Global North are more likely to say non-journalists can produce journalism, most of the respondents find the public an important source for their work.

Journalists see a lot of value in their field

We asked journalists to define journalism in just a few words. Of the 323 codeable answers in English, Spanish, French, Ukrainian, German, and Arabic,[2] 223 (69%) focus on the **professional practice** of journalism and 181 (56%) focus on the **social function** of journalism. These numbers add up to more than 100% because 88 responses (27%) address both. An additional

[2] Thirty responses were too brief or ambiguous to code.

nine responses mention other traits, including six that emphasize downsides of practicing journalism, like poor pay or high levels of risk.

Overall, journalists are most concerned with the civic function of journalism, under the theme of social function (i.e., its power to support informed participation in public life) and the importance of broad circulation and distribution, under the theme of professional practice. More than 75% of responses include at least one of these two concepts. Journalists also emphasize the importance of reliable facts (28%) and the process of newsgathering (25%) as defining professional norms.

Journalists define journalism in terms of both professional practices and social functions

Theme: Professional practice	69%
- Distribution	44%
- Factual	28%
- Newsgathering	25%
- Verification	15%
- Objective	8%
Theme: Social function	56%
- Civic	48%
- Watchdog	12%
- Interventionist	5%
- Service	2%
- Infotainment	0
- Loyal facilitator	0
Other	3%
- Downsides of journalism	2%

Note: We coded a total of 323 responses, and answers were not mutually exclusive, so percentages add up to more than 100%.

Professional Practice

The 223 responses about the professional practice of journalism are varied. At least 142 responses address **distribution**. A typical answer in this category *"Journalism is the practice of disseminating timely and accurate information to the public,"* highlights journalism as a process and profession dedicated to communicating, disseminating and reporting.

The next most common response is that journalism is **factual** (at least 91 responses), followed closely by **newsgathering** (81).

Newsgathering and distribution often co-occur in responses. One person writes, for example, "*Journalism is a profession of gathering, processing and disseminating information through various mediums*."

At least 50 answers refer to **verification**, such as "The art of providing verified information to the citizens so they can be well-informed — and make well-informed decisions." This concept frequently co-occurs with the norm that journalism must be factual. A typical response that includes both: "*Collecting information, verifying it and bringing it to the attention of the public*" (*recueillir l'information, la vérifier et la porter à la connaissance du public*).

Objectivity is a feature of at least 25 answers. As one person writes, journalism means *"to make information of interest available to the public in a truthful and objective manner*" (*dar a conocer al público información de interés de manera veraz y objetiva*).

The **Professional practice theme**, which was synthesized from the responses, has five subcategories. The first three categories focus on processes that journalists follow, while the latter two emphasize professional norms.

Journalism requires newsgathering. One core journalistic process is conducting research and investigation to learn about things that are happening.

Journalism requires verification. A second core journalistic process is verifying and assessing the truth of that information before sharing it.

Journalism requires distribution. A third core journalistic process is distributing or disseminating those stories. These responses typically focused on large-scale broadcast communication, which was almost always unidirectional.

Journalism is factual. A core norm is that journalism is based on facts that are reliable and truthful.

Journalism is objective. A core norm is that journalism is objective, fair, and independent of political or economic influence.

Social Function

The majority of responses about the social function of journalism focus on two of the six major roles of journalism outlined by the Journalistic Role Performance project: the **civic** and **watchdog** roles. At least 156 responses include the civic role. Many of these comments use language like "informing the public." Meanwhile, at least 39 responses include the watchdog role. These two roles are highly compatible with one another, and many responses combine elements of both, such as the person who writes, *"In pursuit of what benefits and serves the public interest of citizens, condemns violations, and strives to achieve justice."*

Only a small number of responses point to the other roles. At least 15 include the **interventionist** role. Many of these responses focus on journalism's ability to support development or offer solutions to social problems. The five we categorized under **service** point explicitly to journalism's role in supporting decision-making beyond politics and government. All of these also refer to the civic function of journalism, such as the person who writes, "*Giving people the information they need to make good decisions about their lives, their governments and their financial interests*."

Both the **infotainment** and **loyal facilitator** roles are roles that journalism sometimes plays in the world, but they are not necessarily compatible with the ideals of journalism. It is no surprise, then, that we do not see any responses that spoke to either. However, three responses that focus on the civic function of journalism also nod to "entertainment" as one of several functions that journalism could provide, like the person who writes that journalism is "*Collecting, choosing, writing/speaking news for the audience, enable them to form an opinion or get entertained*."

Other considerations

At least six journalists who do not provide clear definitions focus instead on **downsides** of practicing journalism, including risk to practitioners and poor pay. As one person writes, *"A nice exercise because it addresses the needs of the population, but one that is very risky at present*" (*Un ejercicio bondadoso porque se suma a las causas de las necesidades de la población, pero de mucho riesgo en la actualidad*).

The **Social function theme** draws from the Journalistic Role Performance project. It focuses on roles of journalism as seen in published news reports, but their categories are also useful to understand how journalists describe their role. We analyzed the 181 responses that address the social function of journalism using these categories.

Civic journalism empowers people to get involved in public debate and participate in public life, often by highlighting local impact and contexts.

Watchdog journalism focuses on holding powerful people and institutions accountable by uncovering hidden truths and secrets.

Interventionist journalism includes the journalist's voice and includes forms of journalism that advocate for particular people or groups.

Service journalism focuses on "news you can use" for individuals.

Loyal facilitator journalism promotes and defends government actions and policies and encourages patriotism.

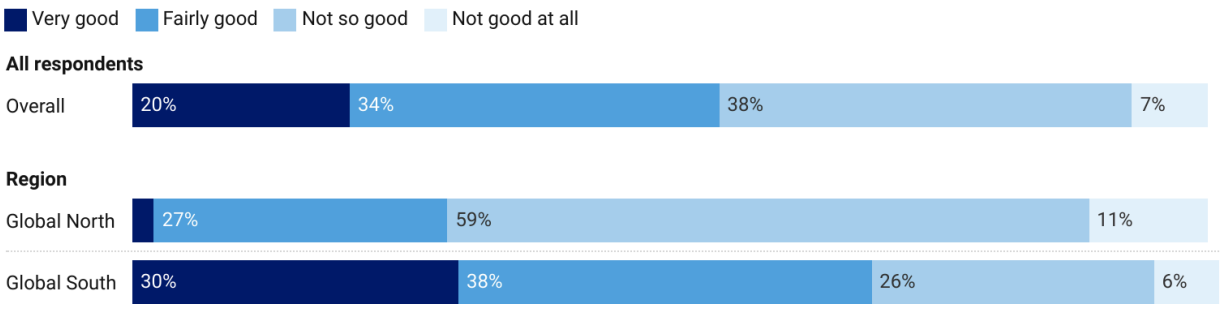
Infotainment journalism is frequently lurid or morbid and serves to shock and entertain.

Nearly half of journalists think the industry is failing to communicate its value — which leads to public confusion

As the definitions above make clear, journalists see a lot of value in their field. But there is less consensus over how well they think the journalism industry is communicating that value. Only two-in-ten say the industry is doing a "very good" job communicating its value to the public while about three-in-ten say it's doing a "fairly good" job and a similar number say "not so good." Journalists in the Global North are much more negative than journalists in the Global South: just 2% of journalists in the Global North say the industry is doing a very good job, compared with 30% in the Global South. It is also important to note some stark national differences: journalists in Nigeria are much more positive than journalists elsewhere in the Global South. More than half of them say the industry is doing a “very good” job.

Journalists differ on the field's ability to communicate its value, but those in the Global South are more positive

Question: How good of a job do you think the journalism industry is doing in communicating the value of journalism to the public?



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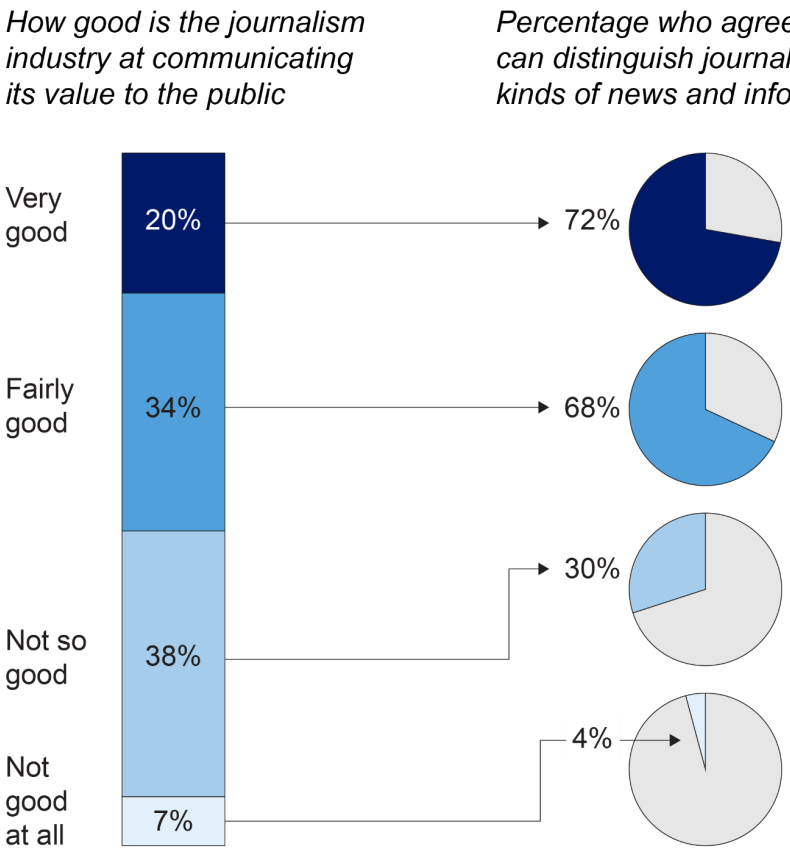
Just about half of journalists think the public cannot differentiate journalism from other kinds of news and information

Respondents are just about evenly split on whether they think the public can tell the difference between journalism and other kinds of news and information online: 49% say "yes" and 51% say "no."

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the journalists who think the industry is communicating its value are also much more positive about the public's ability to distinguish journalism from other news and information. A strong majority (68-72%) of those who say the industry is doing a fairly

good or very good job of communicating its value say that the public can distinguish these categories of information. Just 4% of those who say the industry is not doing a good job at all agree.

Journalists who think the field is communicating its value well also think the public can identify journalism



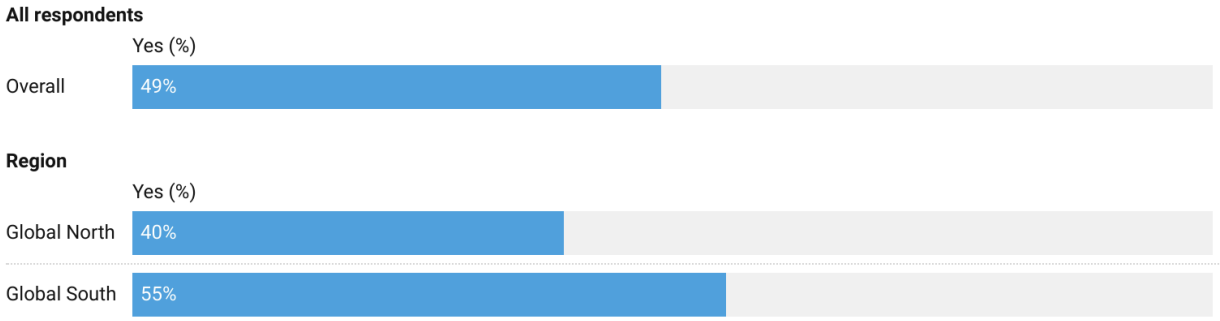
Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages factor in attrition. Refused/NA responses not shown.

Journalists in the Global South are more likely to say the public can tell the difference between journalism and other forms of news: 55% of them agreed, compared with 40% in the Global North. And, looking at specific countries, journalists from the United States stand out as the most pessimistic. About one-in-four U.S. journalists surveyed thinks the public can distinguish journalism from other kinds of news and information. Meanwhile, half of Mexican and 70% of Nigerian journalists surveyed think the public can.[3]

[3] These are the three countries from which we received sufficient responses to look at them individually. We call them out only in cases like this one, where we see meaningful differences from the larger region. See "About this Study" for further details.

Journalists in the Global South are more likely to believe the public can identify journalism

Question: Do you think it is possible for members of the public to distinguish journalism from other kinds of news and information online?



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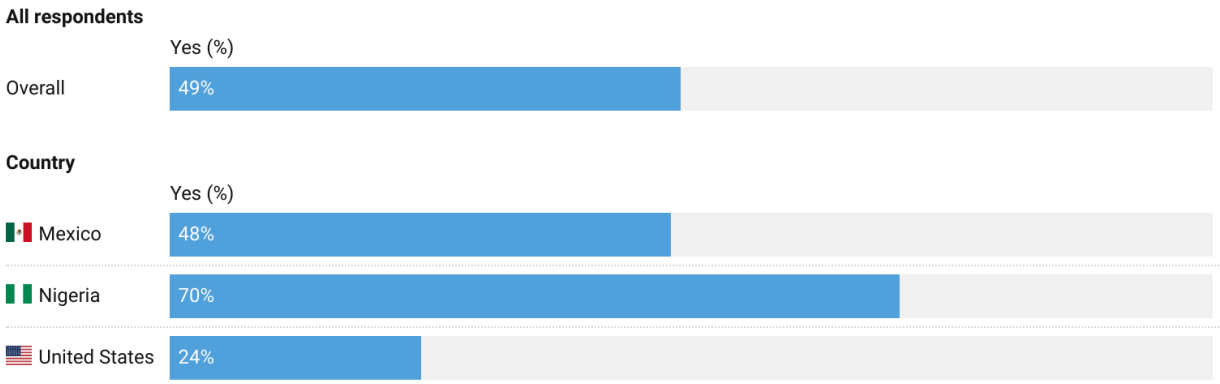
U.S. journalists are pessimistic about the public's discernment, while those in Nigeria are more optimistic

Question: Do you think it is possible for members of the public to distinguish journalism from other kinds of news and information online?



Note: Survey of journalists conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024 showing Mexico (n = 116), Nigeria (n = 75) and United States (n = 65) respondents. Percentages factor in attrition. No and Refused/NA responses not shown.

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Journalists in the Global South are also much more positive about social media overall (see Technology & AI section). One potential reason for these views could be the vast development of alternative news sources in the digital space, alongside the rise of disinformation that intentionally mimics news media in form.

CNTI's related report on the public's views of journalism offers some interesting areas of contrast. In that work, we find that publics in the Global South are less likely to draw a distinction between news and journalism. But here we see clearly that journalists in the Global South are more likely to say they do.

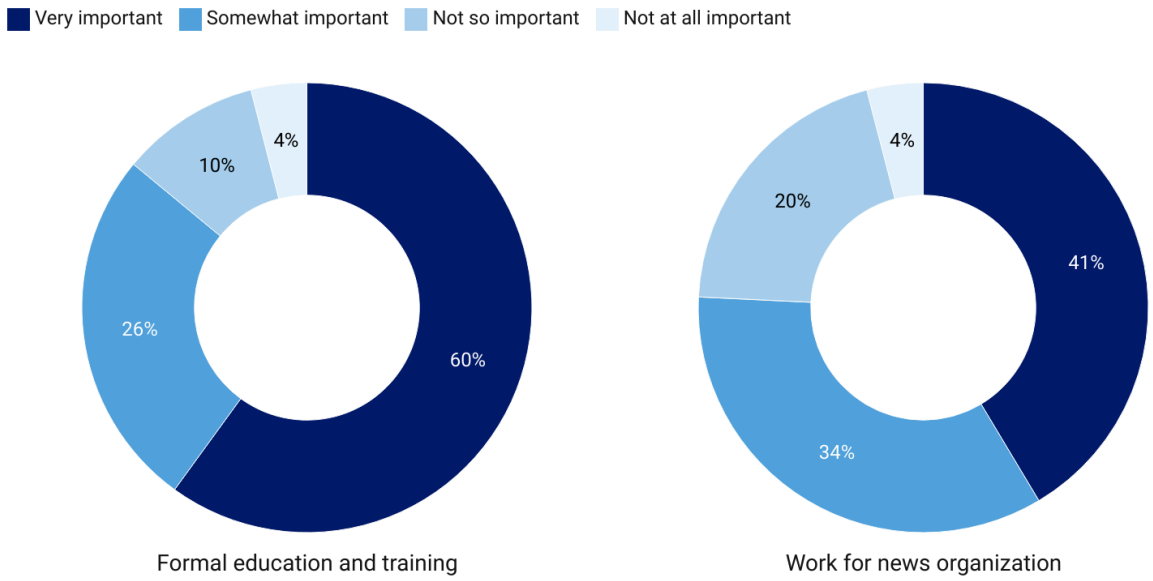
Professional training and institutions matter to journalists' self-conception

Despite the growing presence of and reliance on news influencers — most of whom are unaffiliated with news organizations — most journalists who took our survey think that being a journalist requires having a specific type of formal education, working for a news outlet, or both. More than eight-in-ten say that "formal education and training" is somewhat important or very important, and three out of four say the same about "working for a news organization." Indeed, over eight-in-ten journalists surveyed here work for news organizations.

Most journalists consider formal education and training to be very important; working for a news organization at least somewhat important

Question: In your view, how important is formal education and training for someone to be considered a journalist?

Question: How important is it to you that, for someone to be considered a journalist, they work for a news organization?



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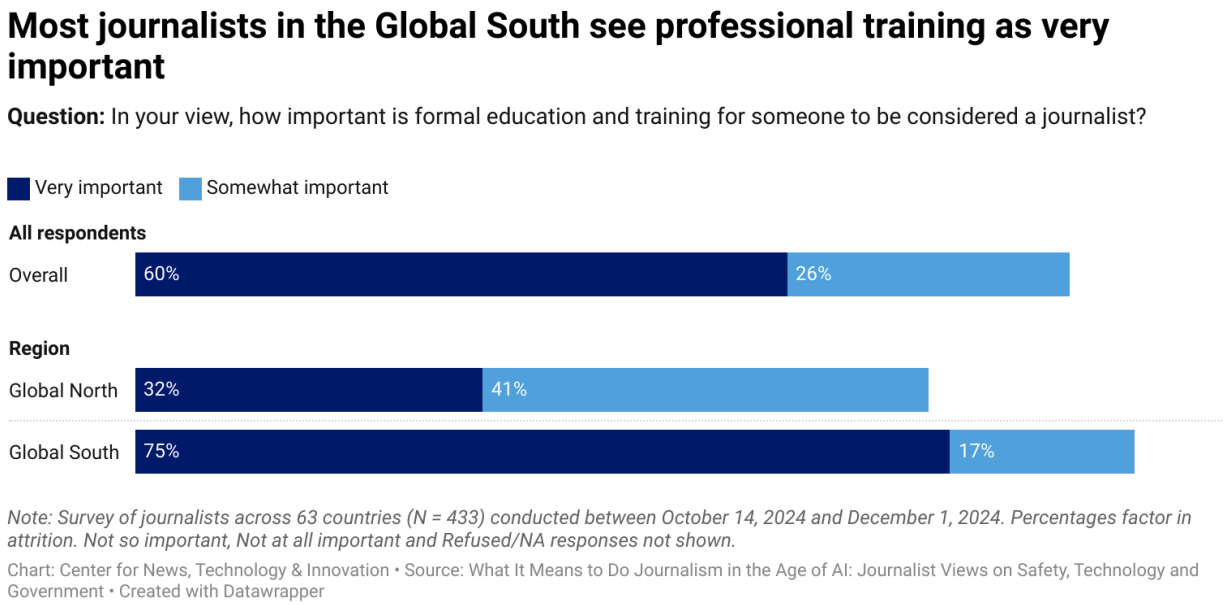
Journalists in the Global South feel more strongly about both education and working for a news outlet

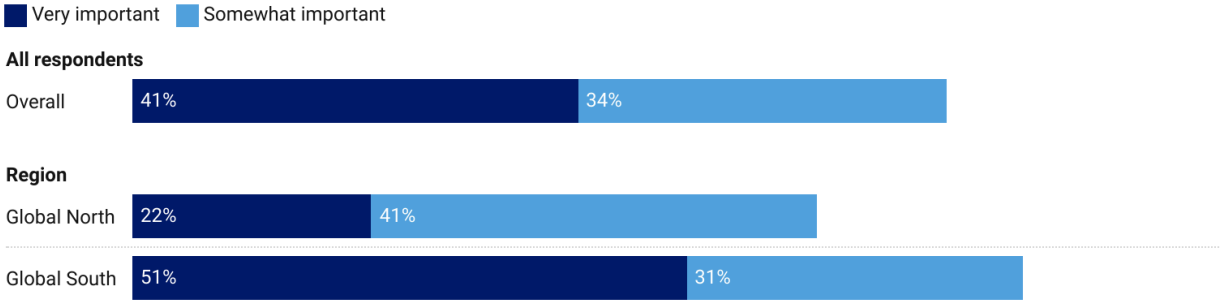
Journalists in the Global South feel more strongly than those in the Global North that formal education and training are very important (75% versus 32%), with much of the difference driven by specific countries within each region. Journalists in Nigeria feel particularly strongly about formal education: 91% say it is "very important."



Similarly, 22% of journalists in the Global North say that working for a news organization is very important, and 51% of their Global South colleagues say the same. Journalists in Nigeria (67%) are more likely to say that it is very important, compared with journalists elsewhere in the Global South.

About half of journalists in the Global South see working for a news organization as very important

Question: How important is it to you that, for someone to be considered a journalist, they work for a news organization?



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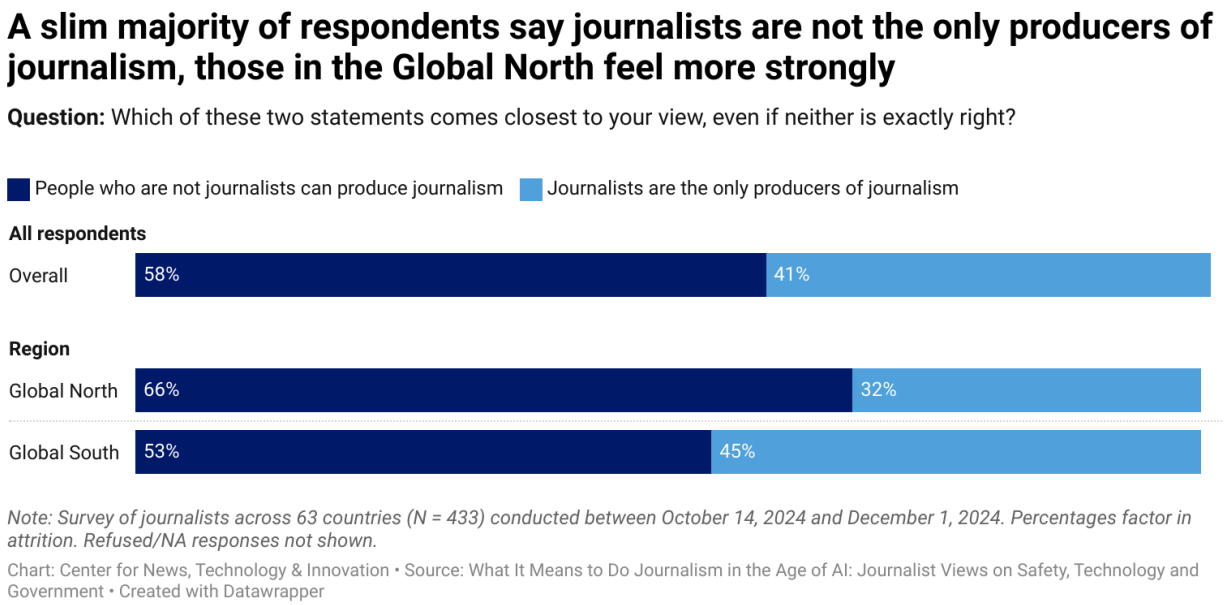
A slim majority of journalists say that people who are not journalists can produce journalism; overwhelming majorities see information from the public as important to their work

While most journalists surveyed say that journalists have to work for news organizations, a majority of respondents (58%) also say that people who are not journalists can produce journalism. In the Global North a strong majority (66%) feel this way, compared with half (53%) in the Global South. Countries within each region are consistent with one another.



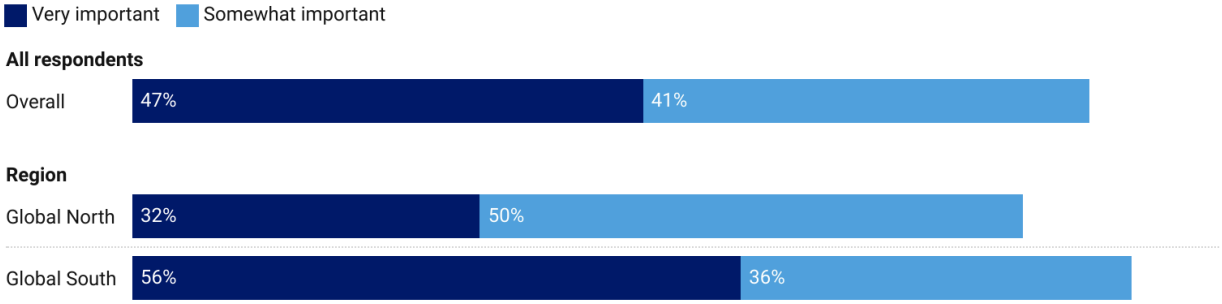
The public seems to agree: CNTI's survey of publics in four countries found that nearly three-quarters in the Global North (specifically, the U.S. or Australia) think that people who are not journalists can produce journalism. Meanwhile, about half of Brazilians and South Africans say the same.

Journalists say news and posts from the public are important to their work — especially in the Global South

All the same, information coming from the public is important to journalists' work – 88% say it is at least somewhat important, and 47% say it is very important. In the Global South, where more people say that journalists can produce journalism, information from the public is even more important. Journalists in Mexico say this is even more important than others in the Global South.

Journalists rely on the public to inform their work, especially in the Global South

Question: How important to your own reporting is news and information posted online by members of the public?



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Overall, journalists in the Global South are stricter about qualifications than those in the Global North but they place more importance on news and information posted by members of the public. These findings at first seem contradictory, but they speak to an understanding of journalists as gatekeepers who verify, curate and disseminate information with help from the public, when appropriate.

Journalists use similar terms to describe traits of journalists as they do to define the job

In addition to asking for definitions of the **field**, we asked about the **people** who do this work. We asked the journalists who took our survey to list the top three traits or characteristics they most associate with the job of a journalist. We received answers from 351 different people in six languages, of which 325 sets of responses could be analyzed.[4]

The traits respondents identify largely comport with the definitions of the field. The traits identified in this survey also align closely with the themes identified in our earlier focus groups.

The majority of answers fall into eight somewhat fuzzy categories. A full list of words associated with each category is included in “About the Study.”

[4] The other answers were unclear, or did not seem to respond to the question that was asked.

Journalists rely on verifiable facts and have clear ethical standards

Category	%
Rely on verifiable facts	49%
Clear ethical standards	41%
- Objectivity	26%
Analytical	28%
Grit and hard work	24%
Mental acumen	24%
Communicate complicated topics clearly	22%
Timely and proximate	20%

Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages add up to more than 100 because each individual could provide up to three responses and because some lengthy responses were coded as containing multiple concepts.

1. **Journalists rely on verifiable facts**. Journalists tell stories that are truthful and that rely on details that can be confirmed. Journalists and the stories they tell are credible, accurate and reliable. Some other words and phrases associated with this trait include "fact(ual)," "truth(ful)" and "trust(worthy)." At least 159 individuals (49%) mention this trait.

2. **Journalists have clear ethical standards.** They approach their work following a set of professional standards. They are independent from governmental and other kinds of interference, even incorruptible. Moreover, they are transparent and honest in their dealings, and focus on what is in the public interest. Other words and phrases that speak to this concept include "accountability," "sincerity" and "watchdog." At least 134 respondents (41%) included this trait.

3. **One particular facet of journalistic ethics stood out in our data: objectivity**. Journalists are neutral, impartial and fair. Their work attempts to present all sides of an issue or incident, including multiple points of view. Other cues to this concept include "balance" and "unbiased." At least 86 journalists (26%) include this trait.

4. **Journalists are analytical.** They engage in processes of research, investigation and analysis. They are skeptical of what they are told and approach information with critical thinking. Additional cues to this concept include "gather" and "context." At least 90 journalists (28%) include this trait.

5. **Journalists have "grit" and work hard.** They approach things multiple times through different channels, rather than stopping when the work gets difficult. They are persistent and "tenacious, and face challenges with courage." Some additional words and phrases associated with this trait include "determination," "passion," "thorough," "commitment" and "responsibility." At least 78 respondents (24%) include this trait.

6. **Journalists have mental acumen.** They are intelligent, knowledgeable, educated and curious about the world. At least 77 journalists (24%) include this trait.

7. **Journalists can communicate complicated topics clearly.** They are excellent at writing and storytelling and take a creative approach. Other ways we saw this trait expressed were in terms of "clarity." At least 72 people (22%) mention this trait.

8. **Journalists provide work that is timely and proximate to happenings on the ground**. Journalists work quickly and are able to pivot. They are physically present at the scene whenever possible, and have access to sources and connections who witnessed specific events or have access to insider information. Some of the words and phrases associated with this trait include "immediacy," "deadlines," "be at the scene of the incident," "sources" and "adaptability." At least 66 individuals (20%) mention this trait.

These traits of journalists overlap considerably with respondents' definitions of journalism. In particular, the emphasis on verifiable facts and objectivity across both questions underscore that these are core to journalists' perceptions of their own field. Moreover, there is a clear throughline between these traits and journalists' emphasis on the civic function of journalism, which about half (48%) reference in their definitions.

Journalists are not Comfortable with Government Involvement

Press freedom goes hand-in-hand with democracy. If journalism is to help the public participate in civic debate, journalists need to report without government intrusion. This includes reporting on the government itself, often referred to as the "watchdog role." At the same time, governments can and often do help protect the freedom and independence of the news media both in judicial cases and provide financial support. There exists a significant tension, then, in news media reliance on the body of government that upholds its freedom.

Successful management of that tension relies on the government's foundational belief in the importance of an independent news media — even if it does not always serve their interests.

Unfortunately, belief in that fundamental value has shown increasing signs of erosion. Government interference in the news is on the rise worldwide, with even well-intentioned laws sometimes weaponized against journalists. In 2024 alone, governments have spied on journalists, imprisoned them and even failed to hold their killers accountable. But 2024 also saw the passage of the EU's European Media Freedom Act, a law that seeks to protect media independence and the right to information.

This survey explored journalists' general views on the role of governments in the news media dynamics. Our international pool of respondents included journalists from three types of regimes:

- Liberal democracies have free and fair elections, free and independent media, clear checks and balances on power, rule of law, and civil liberties.
- Electoral democracies have free and fair elections and largely free media but may lack some of the three latter protections.
- Autocracies largely lack freedom of expression, including media freedom.

We wanted to understand how journalists feel about the relationship between the press and the government — both overall and within each regime type.

The findings reveal that few journalists anywhere (9%) see positive impacts of government intervention. About half (54%) see negative impacts from government involvement, although journalists in liberal democracies (25%) are less likely to see negative impacts than journalists in other types of regimes (67-70%). Half of journalists surveyed have experienced some form of government overreach in the last year. Once again, journalists in liberal democracies (29%) are much less likely than journalists elsewhere (56-66%) to note such experiences. And across regime types, journalists are uncomfortable with governmental attempts to define the boundaries of either the profession or its practitioners.

Relationships with the government are getting attention, especially in autocracies

In a question about how news organizations prioritize seven issues of concern, relationships with the government falls right in the middle. About one third (30%) of the journalists who took our survey say that relationships with the government are getting a great deal of attention at their news organizations, and another third (33%) say they are getting a fair amount of attention.

About two in three journalists say relationships with the government are getting attention in their organization

Question: How much attention is each of the following getting these days in the organization you work for?

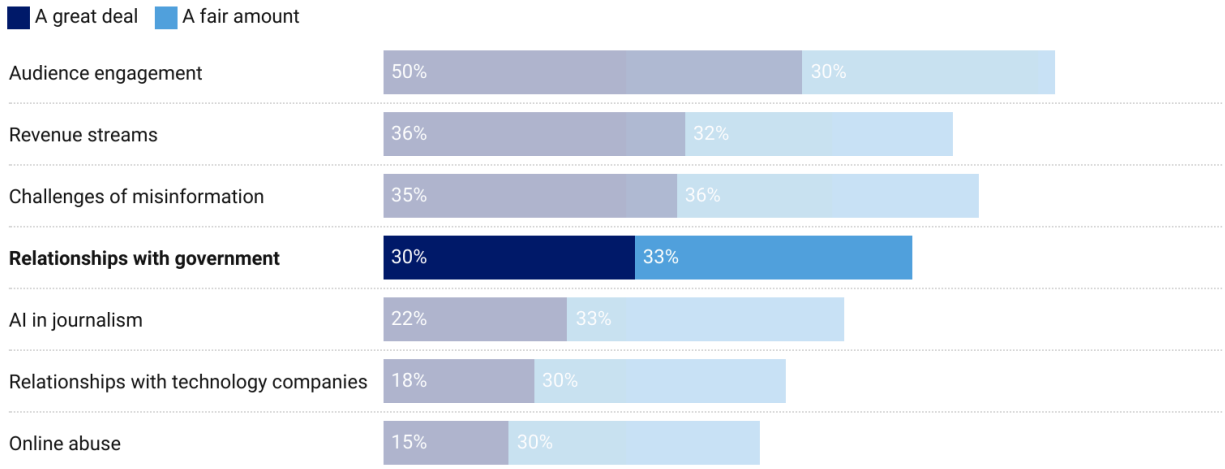

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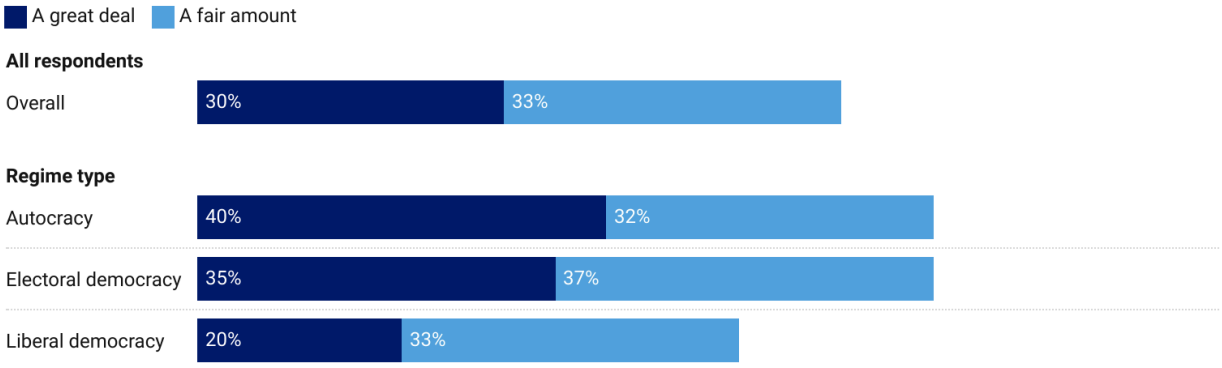
Chart: Center for News, Technology & Innovation • Source: What It Means to Do Journalism in the Age of AI: Journalist Views on Safety, Technology and Government • Created with Datawrapper

How much attention is given to relationships with the government differs when broken down by regime type.[5] In general, the less democratic the country, the more journalists say that these relations are getting a great deal of attention. Journalists working in autocracies and electoral democracies are about twice as likely as those living in liberal democracies to say that their organizations are paying a great deal of attention to relationships with the government.

[5] In this section, we use regime type rather than region as our main form of geographical distinction because it is more relevant to the questions we asked. See "About this study" for more about why.

Journalists in autocracies and electoral democracies are paying a lot of attention to relationships with the government

Question: How much attention are relationships with government getting in your news organization?



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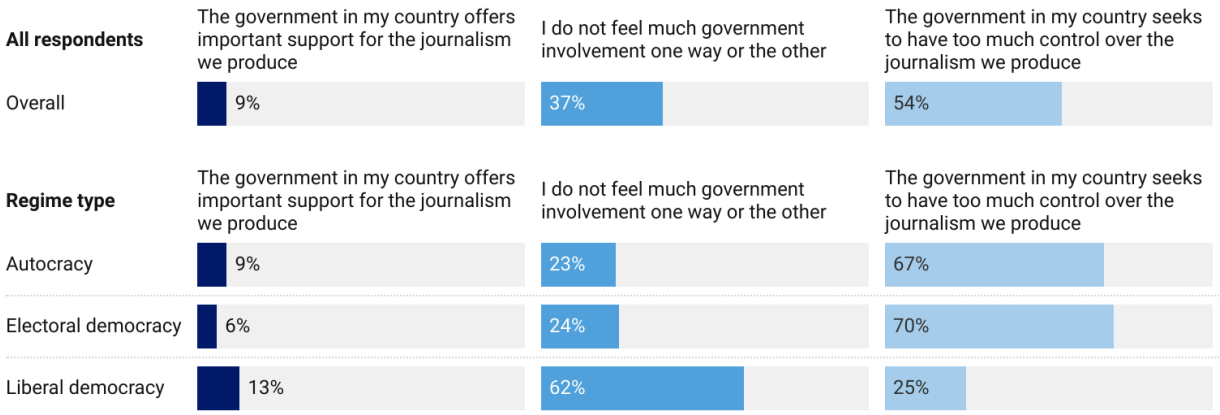
Few journalists see positive impacts of government

Across regime types, about one-in-ten journalists say the government in their country offers important support for journalism.

All the same, journalists in liberal democracies are less concerned about government involvement than those in the other regime types. Strong majorities (67-70%) of surveyed journalists in electoral democracies and autocracies say the government seeks to have too much control over their journalism, while journalists in liberal democracies mostly (62%) do not feel much government involvement either way.

Journalists in liberal democracies are much more likely to say they don't feel much government involvement

Question: Which of the following comes closest to your view, even if neither is exactly right?



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Many journalists are directly experiencing government overreach

For many of the journalists who took our survey, concerns about government control are borne out by direct experience, a finding that tracks with other data indicating government interference is on the rise worldwide.

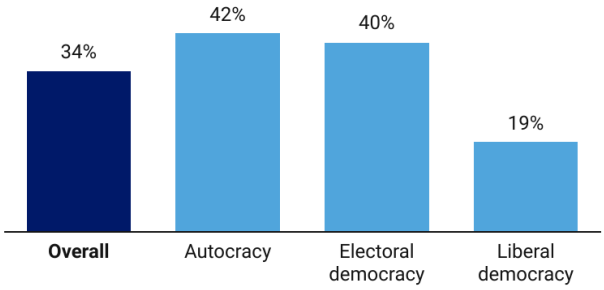
Roughly a third (34%) of respondents say they have received direct complaints from their government within the past year, and about as many (29%) say they have been denied access to official events, hampering their ability to report. About two-in-ten (21%) have experienced direct government censorship, while 5% said they have experienced the most extreme level of control we asked about: detention or imprisonment. All told, half of journalists answering these questions experienced at least one of these. Less than one-in-three (29%) journalists in liberal democracies reported government intrusion, while a majority (56-66%) of those in other regime types did.

In keeping with the levels of concern described above, there are big differences by regime type for **all** of these issues.

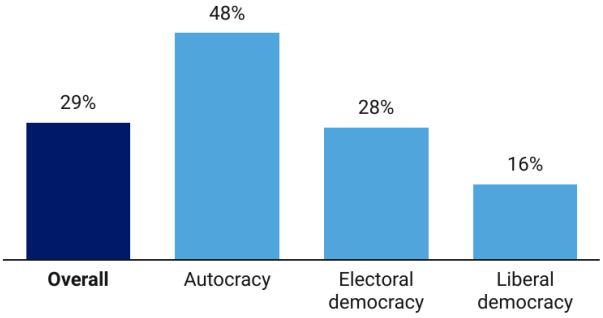
Frequency of government overreach varies by regime type

Question: In the past 12 months, have you experienced any of the following?

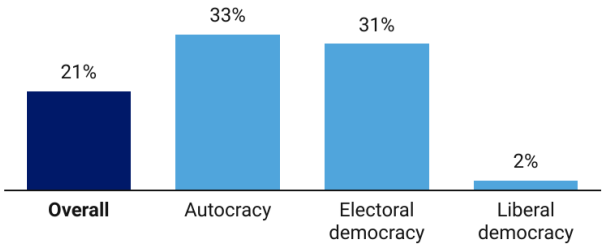
Direct complaints from the government about your content



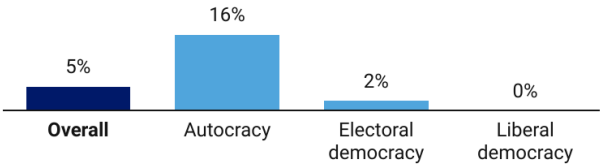
Denial of access to a government hearing or other official event



Government censorship of your content



Arrest, detention or imprisonment by the government or potentially affiliated groups



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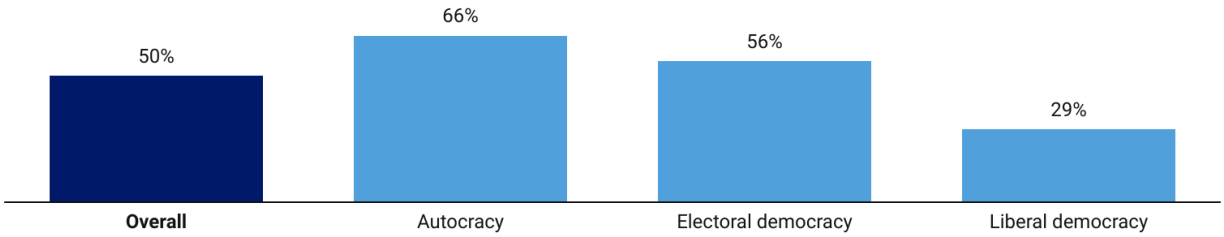
One in two journalists surveyed have experienced government overreach in the last year

Question: In the past 12 months, have you experienced any of the following?
• Government censorship of your content
• Direct complaints from the government about your content
• Denial of access to a government hearing or other official event
• Arrest, detention or imprisonment by the government or potentially affiliated groups

Respondents who selected at least one of these:



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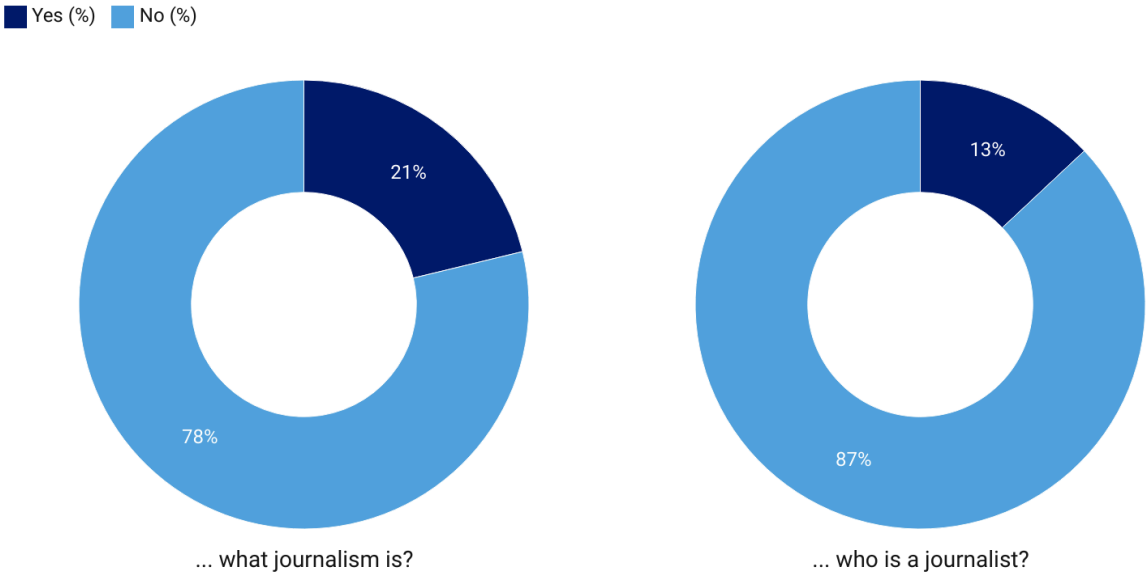
Journalists do not want government to define the profession or its practitioners

Policies that impact journalism, whether seeking to support it or seeking to constrain it, need to define who and what they cover. Even well-intended laws that define journalism or journalists can — and have been — used to empower governments that seek to control or censor the press. For example, in Egypt and India, permitting laws have been used to suppress reporting that is critical of the government, especially by foreign reporters.

Strong majorities of journalists — at least three-in-four — are against the government's involvement in defining *either* journalism *or* journalists. This is the case across regions and regime types.

Journalists do not want the government to define the field or its practitioners

Question: Do you think it is OK for the government to be involved in defining [...]



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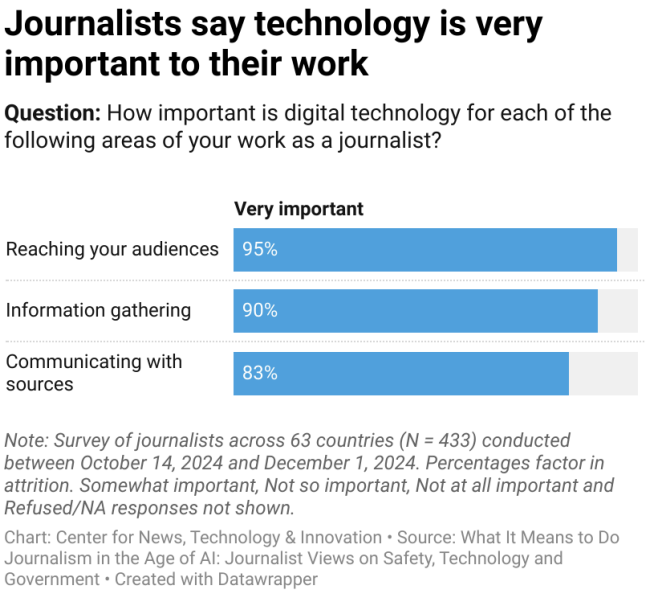
Journalists Believe Technology is Improving Their Work, but They are Less Sure About AI

Tension exists between news organizations and technology companies over various ways news content is used in relation to revenue generated, transparency of algorithmic selections and more. At the same time, technology is intertwined with news reporting, consumption and discovery today. We sought to explore journalists' relationship with technology and their sense of its impact on the future of journalism.

First, respondents made it abundantly clear that digital technology plays a major role in their work. More than 80% say that digital technology is very important for the three tasks that we asked about: reaching audiences (95%), information gathering (90%) and communicating with sources (83%), and nearly everyone else says it is somewhat important.



Respondents also generally feel positive about technology's long-term impact on their ability to inform the public, including AI and social media. The positivity around AI is not as universally felt compared with other technologies, especially from respondents in the Global North.

One-in-three respondents say their organization is using AI on their own content, and more than half are using technology for other tasks such as translating languages, summarizing or analyzing documents, improving their writing, checking accuracy and searching archives.

Compared with most other issues we asked about, technology is not getting much attention in newsrooms — and journalists say they want to see more.

In newsrooms, technology is getting relatively little attention; for journalists, AI is top of mind

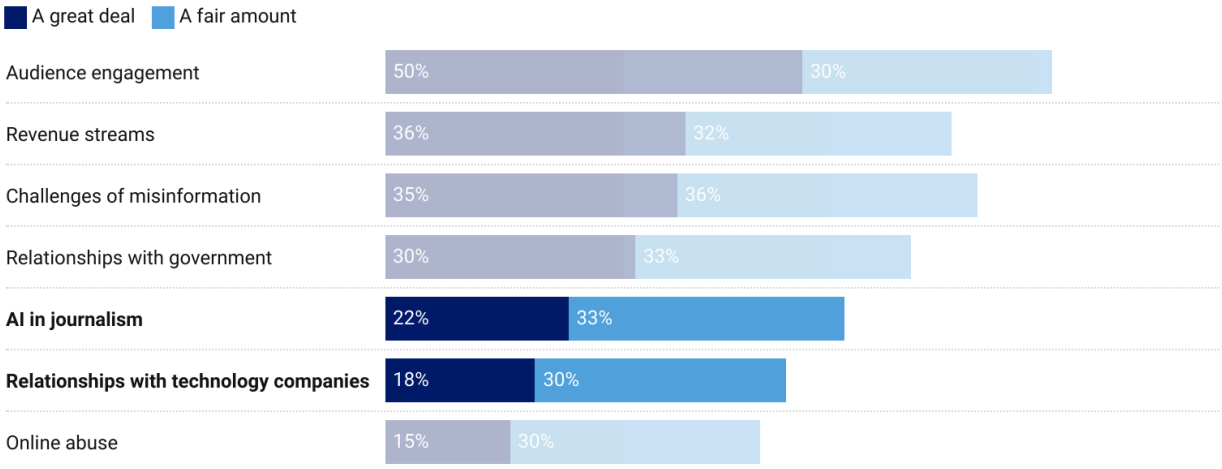
Among the seven issues asked about, two were tied directly to technology: AI in journalism and relationships with technology companies. Both fall in the bottom half for attention received in newsrooms, with journalists reporting slightly more attention being paid to AI than to technology company relationships. Just over half (55%) say AI is getting at least a fair amount of attention versus 48% for tech company relationships, comparable to online abuse. These issues fall behind audience engagement, revenue streams, misinformation and relationships with the government.

What do we mean by AI?

A challenge for this work is that "artificial intelligence" is primarily a marketing term rather than a technical one, and it is an umbrella term used to refer to many different technologies used for many different purposes. There are also widespread differences in what people think the term encompasses. Journalists use technology for many different facets of their jobs, and many of these uses include considerable automation. As technology continues to develop, the lines will only get blurrier. What is likely to matter more is **how** journalists are using technology, and how they are communicating about those uses — especially when we think about maintaining audience trust.

About half of surveyed journalists say technology issues are getting attention in their organization

Question: How much attention is each of the following getting these days in the organization you work for?



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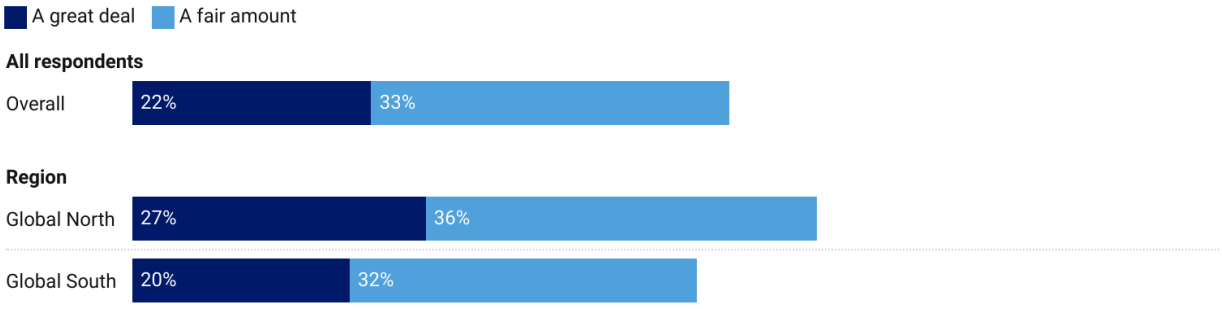
The amount of attention paid to technology was largely consistent across the two regions, although slightly more journalists in the Global North say their organizations were paying at least a fair amount of attention to AI.

AI is receiving slightly more attention in the Global North

Question: How much attention is AI in journalism getting these days in the organization you work for?



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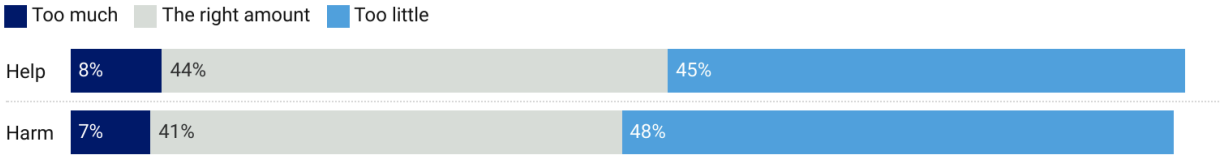
A strong majority of journalists (across the two regions surveyed) want their organization to pay at least as much — if not more — attention to AI. They feel the same way about both

potential benefits and potential harms. (We did not ask the same question for relationships with technology companies but cover additional views about technology below.)

Nearly half of journalists say their organizations are paying too little attention to AI benefits and harms

Question: Do you think your news organization is giving too much, the right amount or too little attention to developing ways AI can **help** journalists and other newsroom employees do their work?

Question: Do you think your news organization is giving too much, the right amount or too little attention to mitigating ways AI can **harm** the ability of journalists and other newsroom employees to do their work?



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The desire for newsrooms to pay more attention to AI aligns very closely with what journalists say is top of mind when it comes to technology. In an open-ended question about what technology was most on their minds, there is a clear consensus: artificial intelligence. Nearly three-quarters of all responses (74%) include AI. The second most common response, social media and platforms, trails far behind at 14%, with consistency across regions.

AI is top of mind for journalists who took our survey

Response	%
Artificial Intelligence	74%
Social Media	14%
Mis/disinformation	7%
Algorithms	5%
Data	4%

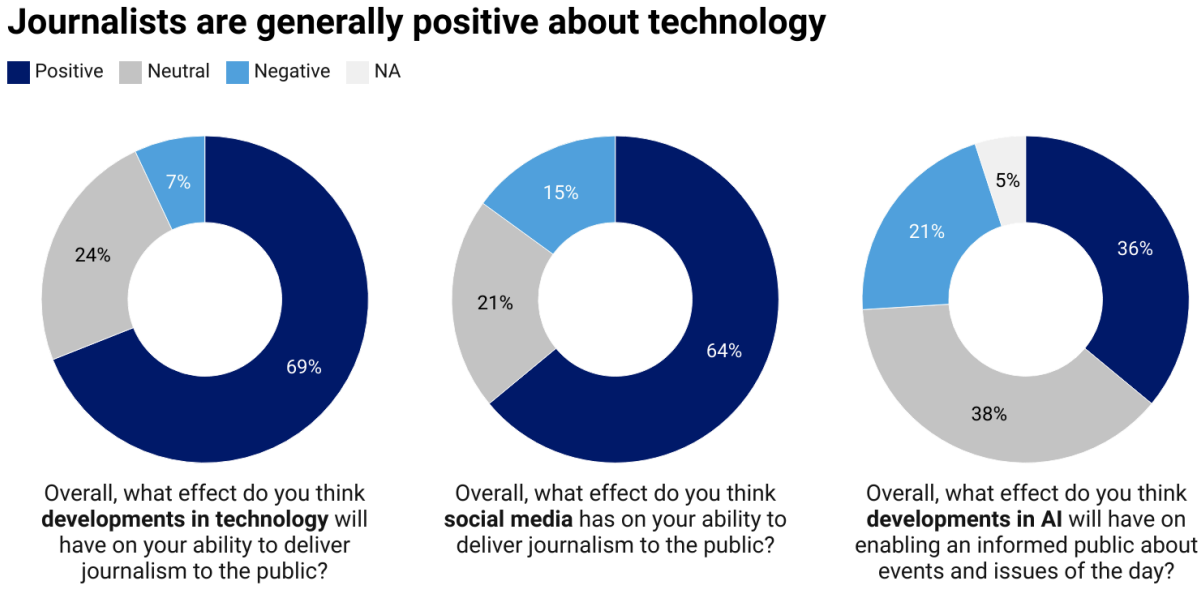
Note: Some people mentioned multiple technologies, so percentages may not add up to 100.

Some respondents elaborated, offering specific concern or excitement about these technologies: *"Artificial Intelligence, its role in journalism, and its impact on how we can report the news. On the flip side, how does the use of AI cast doubt on journalism, fabricate news, and otherwise spread misinformation."* Many more responses were extremely brief and

straightforward, simply naming one or more technologies. In fact, the most common response was two characters long: AI.[6]

Journalists are generally positive about technology's impact on their ability to inform; More hesitation about AI

Technology being top of mind does not necessarily mean respondents have a negative outlook. These journalists are generally positive about technology's longer term impact on their work. About seven-in-ten (69%) say that developments in technology will have a positive effect on their ability to deliver journalism to the public; only 7% say the effect will be negative. When asked in more specific terms, respondents are about equally positive about social media (64%) as about technology overall, while they are much more mixed in their appraisal of AI (36% positive).



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Overall, journalists are more positive than negative in their opinions about AI's impact on an informed public (36% versus 21%, respectively), with 38% who feel the impact would be neutral.

[6] Or IA or KI, depending on the language of the response.

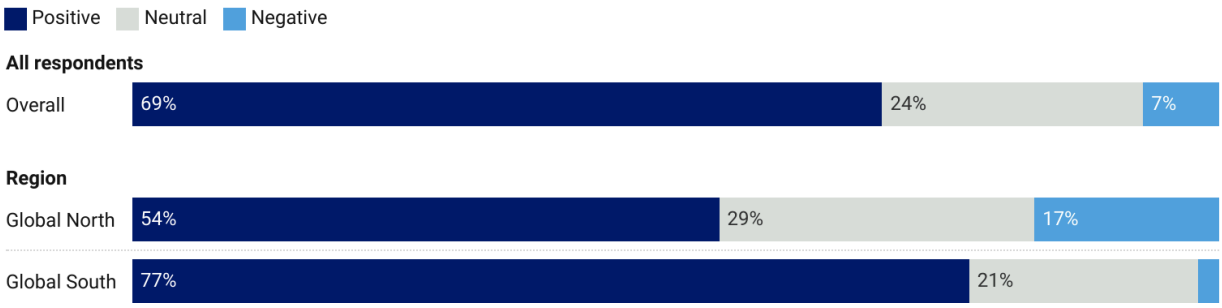
The large number of neutral responses may point to a sense of mixed positive and negative effects that in the end balance each other out or indicate skepticism that AI will have meaningful effects at all. But we make this comparison with caution, because the first two questions focused on journalists' work, while the AI question focused on the public's level of information: This question may also speak to journalists' greater trust in their own professional community's ability to take advantage of new technologies, compared with the public. In fact, one recent study of journalists' attitudes towards AI found that many journalists see AI as simultaneously improving their own work and worsening both the journalism industry and the larger information ecosystem.

Journalists in the Global South are more optimistic about technology than their colleagues in the Global North

Large regional differences emerge across all three questions, with much more positivity in the Global South. Journalists in Mexico stand out as considerably less positive than others in the Global South, although they remain more positive than journalists in the Global North.

About three in four Global South and half of Global North journalists think technology will have positive impacts on journalism

Question: Overall, what effect do you think developments in technology will have on your ability to deliver journalism to the public?



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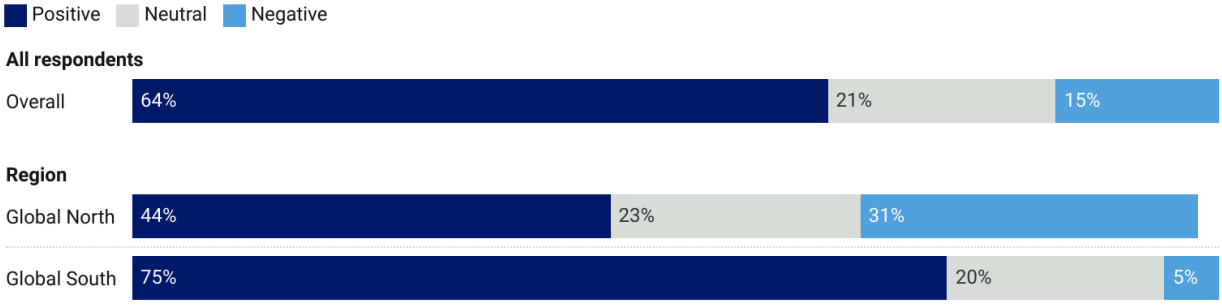
Journalists in the Global South are also much more positive about social media (75%) than journalists in the Global North (44%), and these findings are consistent across countries within both regions.

Three in four journalists in the Global South and less than half in the Global North see social media's impact on journalism as positive

Question: Overall, what effect do you think social media has on your ability to deliver journalism to the public?



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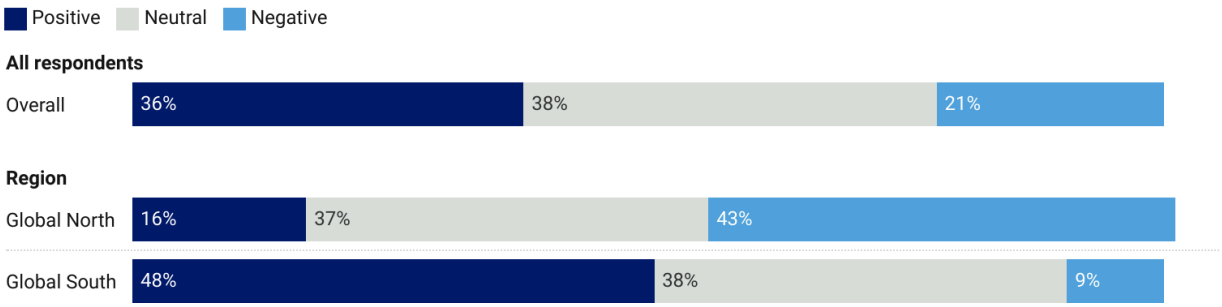
The differences in terms of AI are even more striking. In the Global North, negative attitudes outweigh positive attitudes almost three-to-one, while in the South, five times as many journalists feel positive compared with those who feel negative. Nigeria is the most positive country in this regard: 62% of these journalists think AI will have a positive effect, outpacing the rest of the Global South by 17 percentage points.

Almost half of journalists in the Global South are optimistic about AI — three times as many as in the Global North

Question: Overall, what effect do you think developments in AI will have on enabling an informed public about events and issues of the day?



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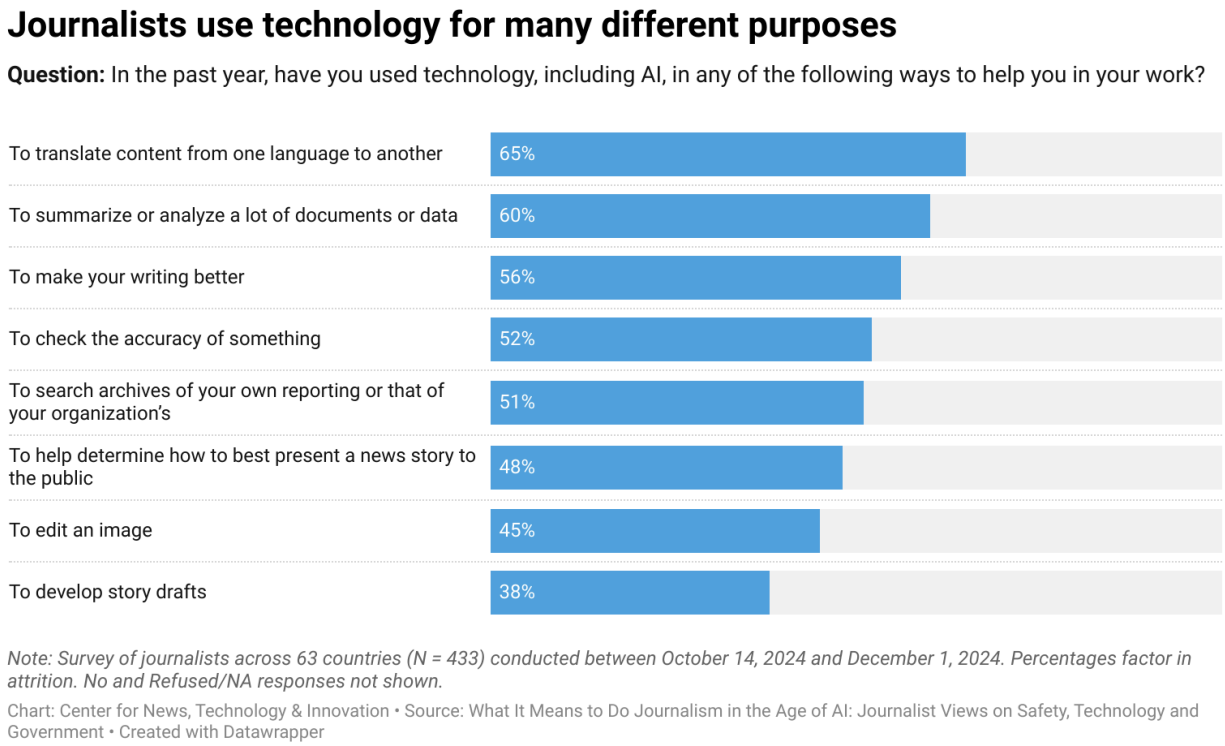
The socio-political context that a journalist operates under could influence their sentiments about technologies. Journalists working in areas with relatively few resources tend to express more excitement about new tools, which is consistent with other global research about trust

in AI. For example, a 2023 study found that people in emerging economies[7] are more likely to believe the benefits of AI adoption outweigh the risks, although they see the same risks as people elsewhere. And a 2025 report found that about three-quarters of journalists in the Global South were already using AI for journalism, although roughly half expressed ethical concerns.

Technology is already deeply embedded in journalists' work

In seeking to understand technology's role in journalism it can also be useful to get a sense of the arrays of ways technology is — or is not — currently utilized.

Journalists report using technology for a range of tasks, including many where AI is increasingly gaining a foothold. Across our respondent pool, roughly half of journalists or more say they used technology for all but two tasks: to edit an image and to develop story drafts.



Of course, technology encompasses a wide range of tools and uses, some of which involve AI and others that do not. For example, a journalist who says they use technology for translation

[7] We use the terminology selected by the reports we cite; in this case, "emerging economies" and "the Global South" largely refer to the same countries.

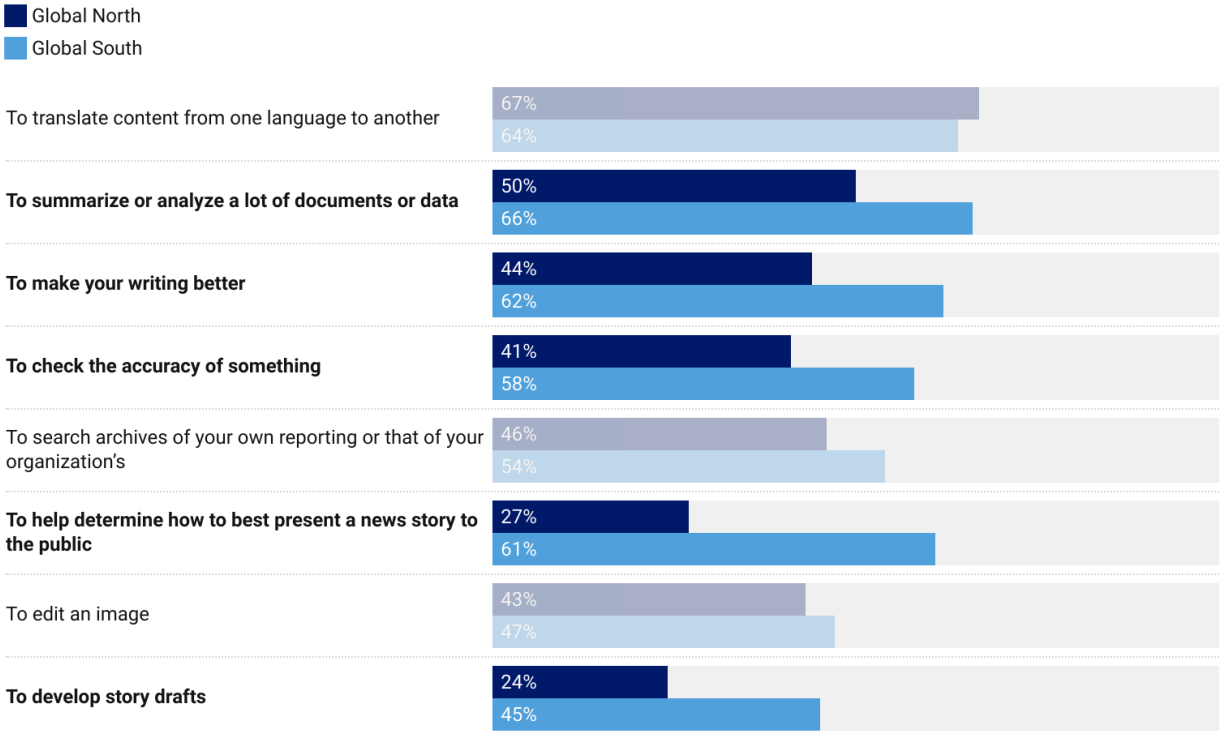
might be using machine translation tools to make sense of documents that would otherwise be wholly incomprehensible to them. Or, they might be using an online dictionary or a two-column document in a word processor to manually translate between languages they know well. These involve different levels of automation and also — possibly — comfort and facility with it.

Journalists in the Global South use technology more than their colleagues in the Global North

Journalists in the Global South report higher use of technology for most use cases. There are meaningful differences for all uses except translation, archive searches and image editing. The most striking difference was in determining how to best present a news story to the public: about a quarter (27%) of journalists in the Global North say that their organizations did this, compared with more than twice as many (61%) journalists in the Global South.

Journalists in the Global South report using technology far more than journalists in the Global North

Question: In the past year, have you used technology, including AI, in any of the following ways to help you in your work?



Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages factor in attrition. No and Refused/NA responses not shown.

Chart: Center for News, Technology & Innovation • Source: What It Means to Do Journalism in the Age of AI: Journalist Views on Safety, Technology and Government • Created with Datawrapper

Global South journalists' higher reported use is consistent with their more positive assessment of technologies. Many journalists and news organizations in the Global South are deeply under-resourced, and they have strong incentives to take advantage of technology to save time and make work more efficient — they want to take advantage of all available resources to do their jobs.[8]

About one-in-three journalists (35%) say that their news organization had used AI tools to build their own internal AI systems (or models), based on their specific content rather than using a more general commercial model.

Some journalists are also already experiencing negative consequences of widespread AI adoption: 15% of journalists surveyed say that in the past year they had learned about someone using technology to reproduce their image, and 10% said they had learned about someone using technology to reproduce their voice. All in all, 17% experienced at least one of these types of impersonation.

Journalists use multiple social media apps to do their work

We also asked which social media apps our respondents were predominately using to conduct journalistic work, and allowed them to select up to four options. Three-quarters (78%) of people who selected at least one option selected four options.

Three-quarters of respondents who selected at least one option selected the maximum number of social media apps allowed

Number of apps selected	%
1	3%
2	5%
3	14%
4	78%

Note: Most of the respondents who selected zero options did not see this question.

Facebook was the most popular app used, with 68% of people selecting it as one of their top four apps; Twitter/X was the second most popular with 64%, then WhatsApp with 59%, Instagram with 45%, Youtube with 43% and Linkedin with 37%. Between 5% and 15% of journalists used Reddit, Signal, Telegram or TikTok most often, and less than 5% used Discord, Snapchat, Threads, Twitch or WeChat.

[8] The responses may also reflect social norms: given their overall assessment of technology, journalists in the Global North may under-report their use of technology, while those in the Global South may over-report it. It's also possible that journalists in the Global South have more expansive definitions of "technology." Furthermore, there is known variability in survey responses across countries regarding social desirability and acquiescence.

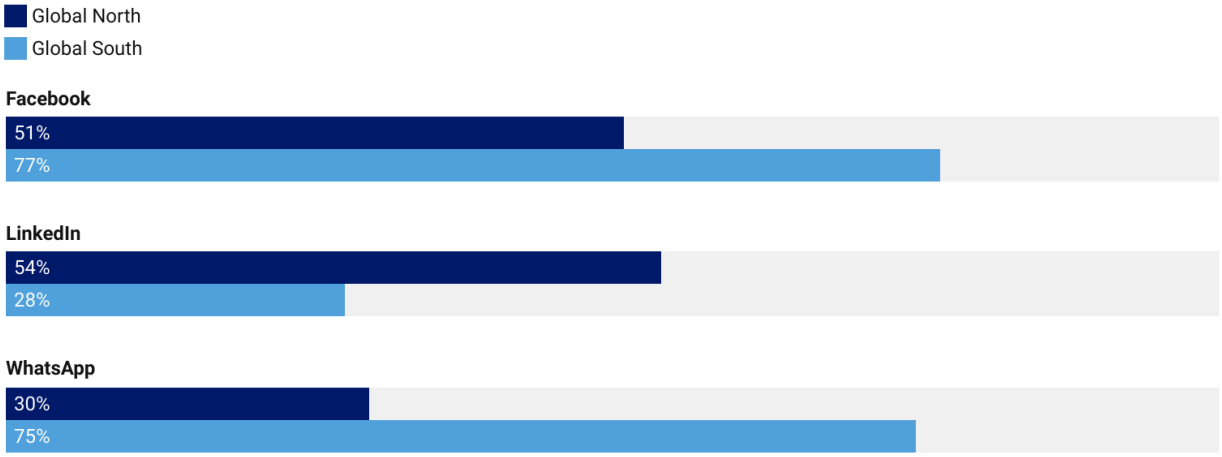
More than half of respondents use Facebook, Twitter/X and WhatsApp

Name	%
Facebook	68%
Twitter/X	64%
WhatsApp	59%
Instagram	45%
YouTube	43%
LinkedIn	37%
TikTok	15%
Telegram	12%
Signal	9%
Reddit	7%
Threads	2%
Discord	2%
Snapchat	1%
WeChat	1%
Twitch	0%

We also saw some noticeable regional differences. Facebook and WhatsApp, in particular, are much more popular in the Global South than the Global North. The United States is an outlier in its low use of WhatsApp: 11% of U.S. respondents list WhatsApp as one of their top apps, whereas 43% of respondents in the rest of the Global North do. On a global scale, WhatsApp is the most popular messaging app; nearly everyone uses the app in Brazil, India and many other countries. On the other hand, LinkedIn is more popular with journalists in the Global North than the Global South.

LinkedIn is more popular in the Global North while Facebook and WhatsApp are more popular in the Global South

Question: Which apps or platforms do you use most in your work as a journalist? Select up to four.



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Journalists are mostly positive about how technology uses are communicated

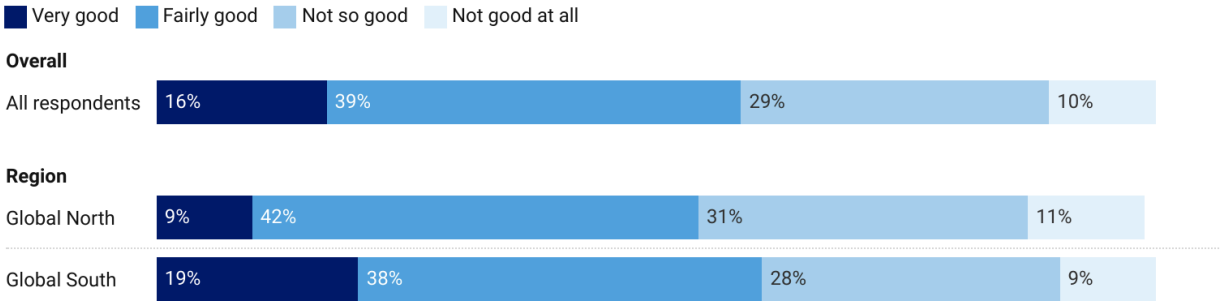
One key issue related to the increased use of technology and machine learning in journalism production is the practice of disclosure: when and how should the public be informed about automation in the writing, editing or production of articles and other publications?

Leaders within and beyond the news industry have been considering various approaches and standards specifically when it comes to AI; but the question of disclosure is broader, especially as technology continues to advance: it is ultimately about the balance of human labor and technology or machine involvement in the content the public receives.

Journalists offer mixed reviews about how well their organization communicates with the public about the various ways technology is used in the reporting process. They are overall more positive than negative, but not emphatically so. Of the 55% who express a generally positive sense, the largest portion, 39%, say their organizations were doing a fairly good job with less than half as many, 16%, calling the job "very good." On the other end of the spectrum, 39% feel their organization was doing either not so good (29%) or not at all good (10%) of a job. This finding is generally consistent across regions, although journalists in the Global South are a bit more likely to say "very good." These findings are also broadly consistent with their feelings about how well the value of journalism is communicated.

Journalists are more positive than negative about the job their organization does communicating technology uses to the public

Question: How good of a job do you think your news organization is doing in communicating different uses of technology, including AI, to the public?



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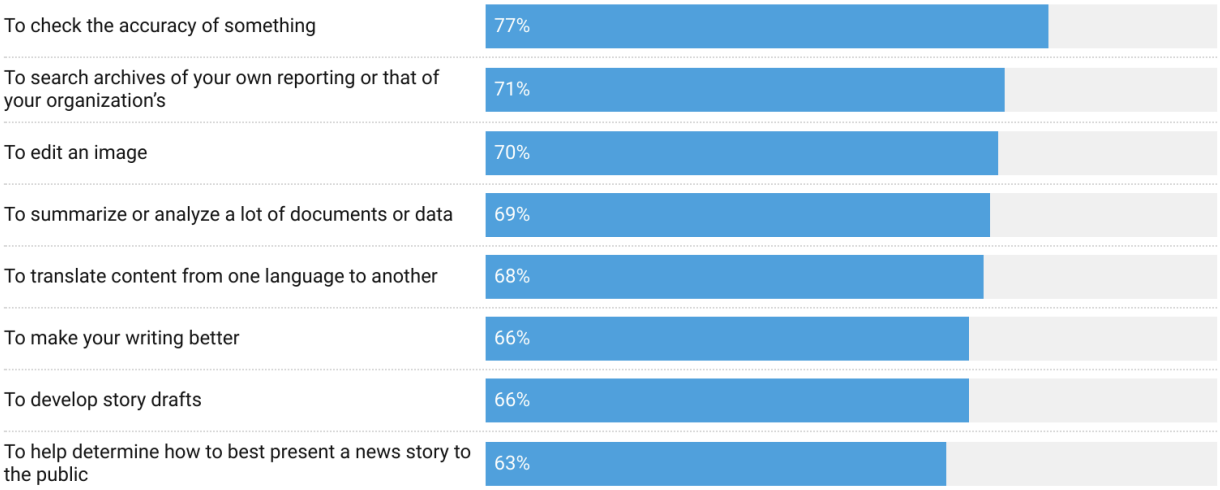
When it comes to specific ways that journalists say they themselves used technology, most say that their organization does communicate that use to their audiences.[9]

[9] The number of people ranges from 134 who used technology "to develop story drafts" to 230 who used technology "to translate content from one language to another."

More than three-in-five technology users say that they disclose their use

Question: Which of these uses of technology do you or your organization usually communicate to your audience? Technology used [...]



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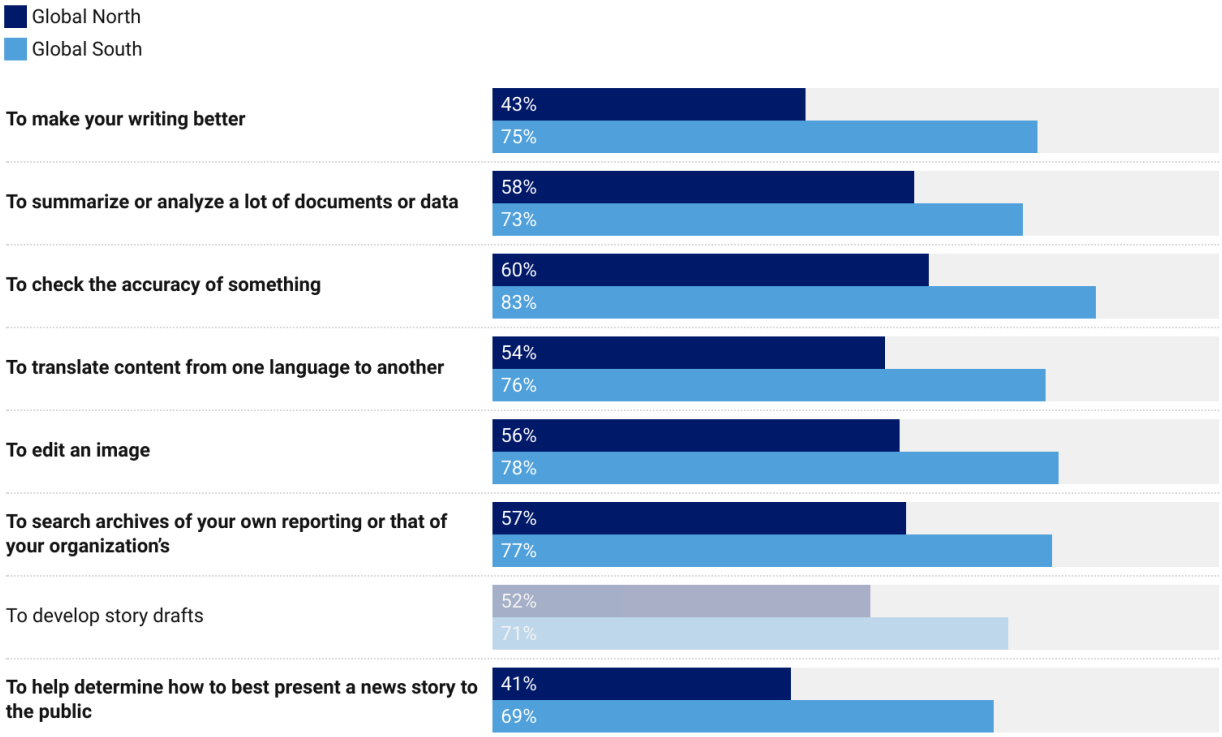
Just as more journalists in the Global South report using technology for each of these purposes, far more journalists in the Global South say that their organizations disclose each of these uses (except for developing story drafts, which was not meaningfully different).

Journalists in the Global South say they communicate uses of technology to audiences more than those in the Global North

Question: Which of these uses of technology do you or your organization usually communicate to your audience? Technology used [...]



Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Responses include only those who report using technology in a given way. Percentages factor in attrition. No and Refused/NA responses not shown.

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One-in-Three Journalists Regularly Face Serious Risks, but Their Level of Preparedness Varies; Most Want to Talk About It

The digital security of journalists is under threat in many parts of the world. Cyberattacks, including malware, spyware and digital surveillance increasingly target journalists and news organizations, putting their private data at risk for unauthorized access and misuse. In addition to cybersecurity breaches, journalists and news organizations are faced with new forms of online harassment and abuse. Such harassment takes many forms, but can be defined as "technology — like cellphones, computers, social media or gaming platforms — [used] to bully, threaten, or aggressively hassle someone." Women journalists and journalists from racial, sexual or religious minority backgrounds report high rates of sexual and gendered harassment online.

There is evidence that digital and physical threats to journalists are connected, with the use of spyware connected to hundreds of acts of physical violence. Beyond physical violence, cyberthreats and online abuse affect journalists in significant ways, imposing emotional and psychological distress, resulting in the self censorship of content and causing journalists to distance themselves from their audience to avoid further harassment or threats.

This survey received responses from journalists in more than 60 countries. More than 50 responses each came from three countries: Mexico, Nigeria and the United States, each of which has a different type of government. In Reporters Without Borders' (RSF) 2024 Press Freedom Index, the U.S. ranked 55th among 180 countries, while Nigeria and Mexico ranked 112th and 121st, respectively. Mexico is particularly dangerous for journalists; several high-profile leaks of journalists' personal information, including from the highest levels of government, have left journalists shaken. In Nigeria, journalists often face intimidation and harassment. During protests in August 2024, at least 56 journalists were attacked and harassed. Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID)'s press attack tracker documented 135 attacks on journalists in Nigeria during 2024. The Cybercrimes Act, and specifically the interpretations of cyberstalking, has been used to prosecute journalists since enforcement began in 2015.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has historically been a relatively safe country for journalists, with bedrock press freedoms. At the time of the survey, this was still the case, but more recently, the Committee to Protect Journalists has warned that the new administration is likely to curb press freedoms. In December 2024, AP News reported that journalists are anticipating renewed hostility. Initial steps in this direction have included the Executive Order "Restoring Freedom of Speech and Ending Federal Censorship" which takes aim at content moderation and fact-checking; threats to punish journalists; and actions taken to bar specific news

organizations from official press conferences and spaces like the Oval Office and Air Force One.

Survey questions related to cybersecurity and online abuse were analyzed based on regime type, considering the influence of different government systems on online freedom of speech and journalist safety. Government rhetoric toward journalists significantly shapes perception and the legal protections available to them. As a result, many answers vary widely depending on the respondents' regime type.

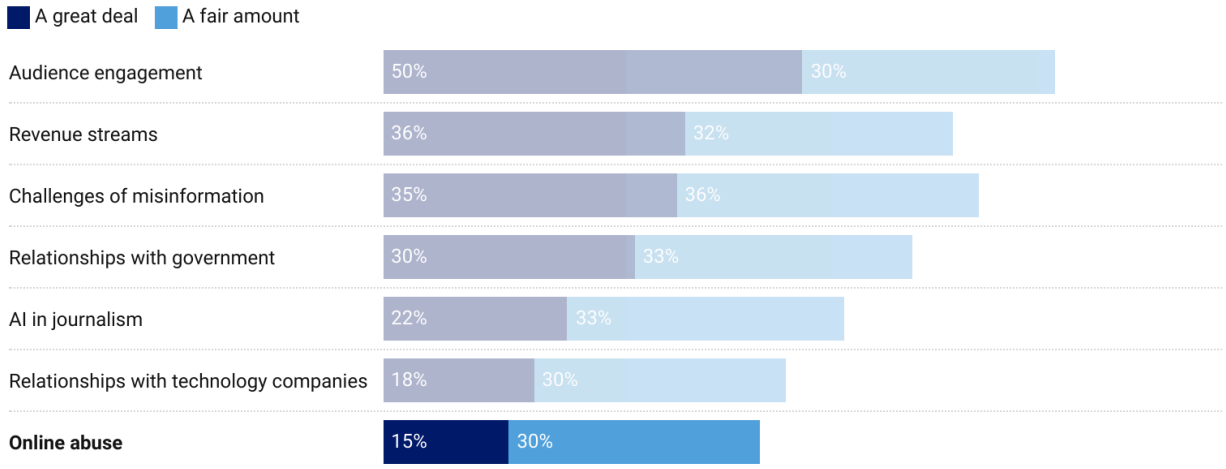
The survey results reveal that journalists face significant cybersecurity and harassment threats all over the world and under different kinds of governments. Notably, those who frequently face high levels of risk in their work feel more prepared to address them. It also reveals that, of the journalists surveyed, about two-in-ten have experienced online impersonation.

Further, journalists have only moderate confidence in their news organizations' ability to face external harassment. This varies based on regime type, with journalists in less democratic countries more likely to feel "very" confident. A similar trend is seen when journalists were asked if they themselves felt prepared to address both online harassment and security threats. Journalists in autocracies are more likely to say they felt very confident than those in liberal democracies.

Despite the growing digital threats to newsrooms, online safety, security and abuse is getting relatively little attention in newsrooms compared with other issues. This is true across regime types.

Among major issues, online abuse is getting the least attention in news organizations

Question: How much attention is each of the following getting these days in the organization you work for?



Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages factor in attrition. Not much, Not at all and Refused/NA responses not shown.

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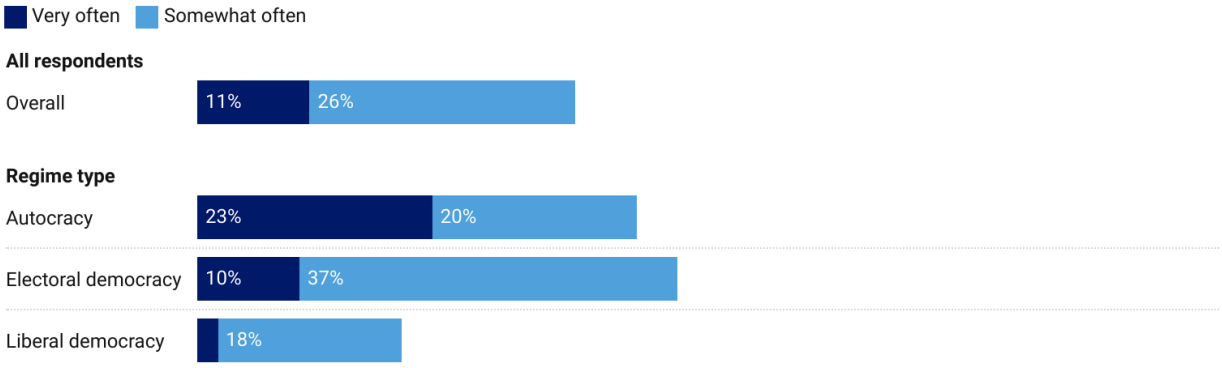
Journalists and their sources regularly face high levels of risk, especially in less democratic countries

Despite the limited attention news rooms give to online abuse, many journalists report substantial levels of risks. About one-in-ten (11%) of the journalists surveyed say they face high levels of risk (on or offline) very often while 26% said they feel high levels of risk somewhat often. About half (47%) say this occurs not very often, while 17% say not at all often.

When broken down by regime type, almost a quarter (23%) of respondents from autocracies say they face high levels of risk very often, compared with just 2% of respondents in liberal democracies and 10% in electoral democracies. It is also worth noting that another 37% of journalists in electoral democracies face high risks “somewhat often,” which means that overall their experiences are more similar to journalists in autocracies than journalists in liberal democracies.

Journalists in autocracies more than twice as likely to face high risks "very often" compared with other regime types

Question: In your work as a journalist, how often do you face high levels of risk, whether off or online?



Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages factor in attrition. Not very often, Not at all often and Refused/NA responses not shown.

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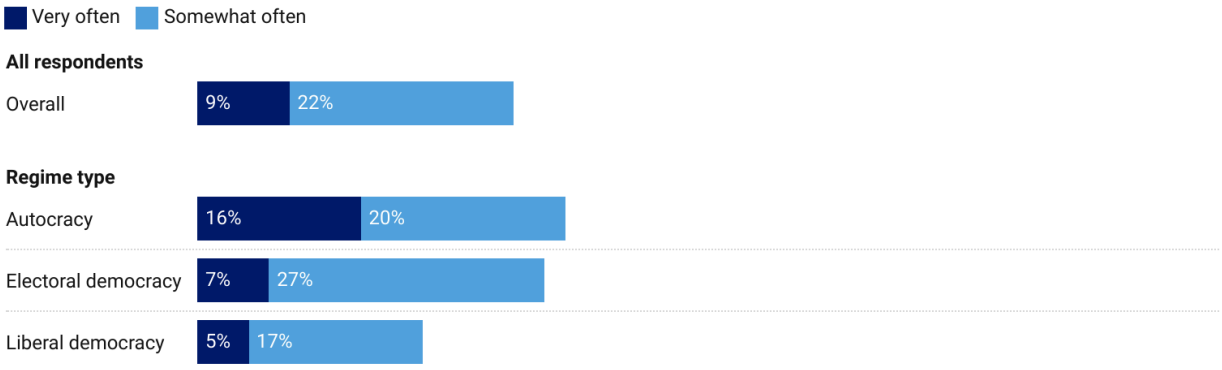
These safety concerns are not isolated to the journalists themselves; they also impact sources. Across all countries, 31% of journalists say that the sources they talk with face high levels of personal risk at least somewhat often, which is close to how they describe their own experiences. Similarly, more journalists in autocracies say that sources face risks “very often” than do journalists elsewhere.

As with journalists, sources in autocracies face the most risk

Question: In your work, how often would you say the sources you talk with face a high level of personal risk by doing so?



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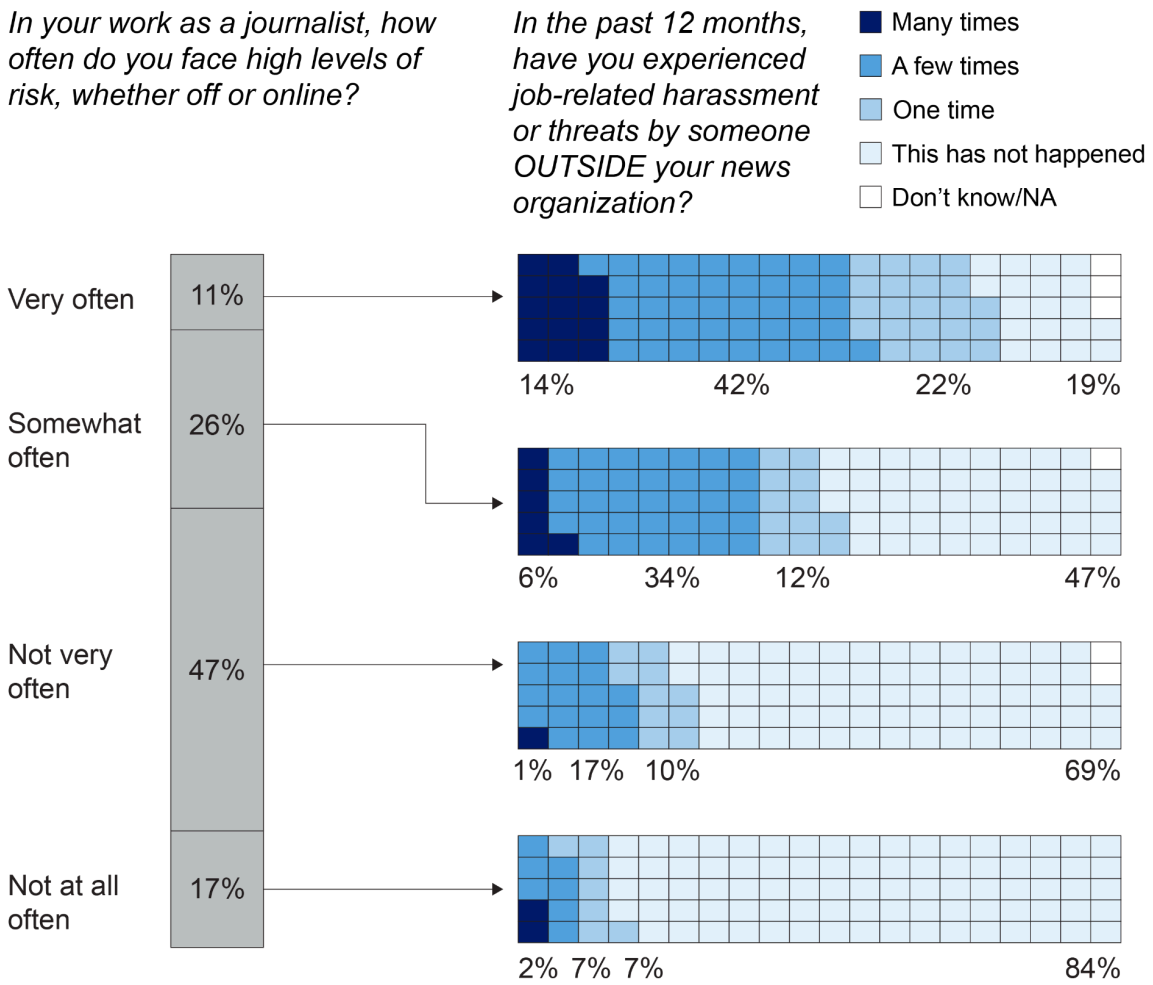
Further, journalists who say their work is more dangerous also said they experienced more online harassment and threats. About three-quarters of journalists (78%) who say they face high levels of risk "very often" report experiencing online abuse at least once in the last year, compared with about half (51%) of those who say they face high levels of risk “somewhat often” and about one-quarter (16-28%) of those who say “not very often” or “not at all often.” That is, differences in self-reported level of risk reflect real differences on the ground.

Online abuse is one component of risk to journalists: those who face more risk receive more abuse



Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages factor in attrition.

One-in-three respondents was harassed or threatened within the last year

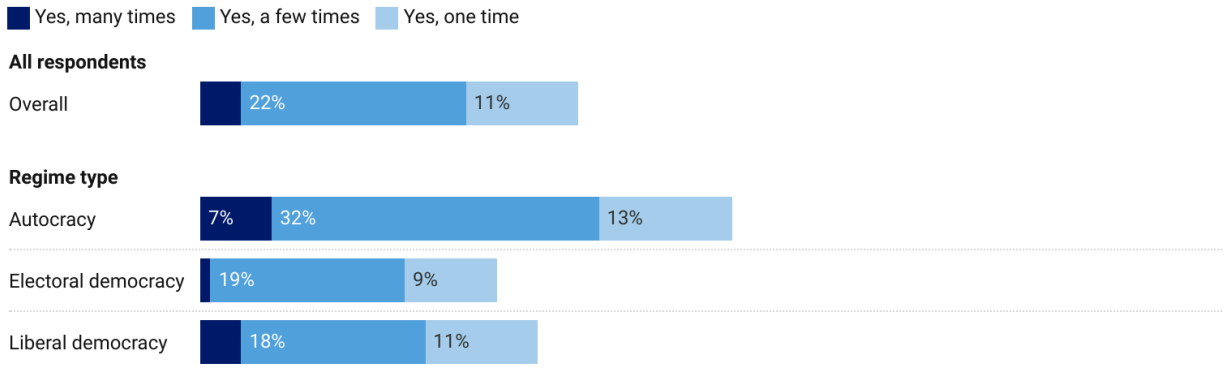
The kinds of risks journalists face vary, and can be physical or digital. Digital risks include cyber attacks that seek to gain access to accounts or devices, but they also take the form of

online harassment or threats. All these types of risks are closely connected: private accounts often contain information like phone numbers and home addresses that can further empower harassers to escalate their threats. While cybersecurity practices can help journalists defend proactively against attacks, similarly straightforward methods to prevent harassment simply do not exist. And harassment takes a toll even on those who are prepared to face it.

About one-third (37%) of our respondents say they have experienced job-related harassment or threats by someone outside their news organization at least once in the previous year — the same proportion that say they face high risks at least somewhat often. Not all of them experienced the same amount of harassment: 4% say it happened many times, while 22% say it happened a few times and 11% say it happened one time. About half (52%) of journalists working in autocracies were harassed at least once in the past year, compared with three-in-ten in liberal democracies (34%) and electoral democracies (29%).

Over a third of journalists report experiencing job-related harassment in the past year

Question: In the past 12 months, have you experienced job-related harassment or threats by someone outside your news organization?



Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. No, this has not happened and Refused/NA responses not shown.

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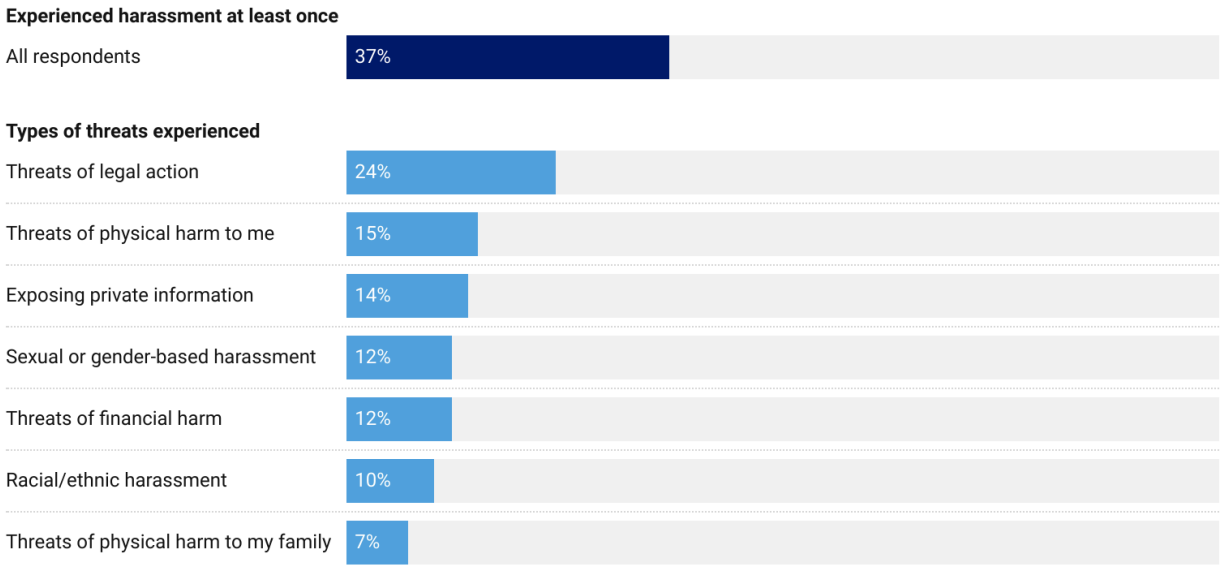
The most frequently reported form of harassment is threat of legal action, experienced by about a quarter (24%) of all respondents.

Threats of legal action are the most common form of abuse

Question: What type of harassment or threats from people outside your organization did you experience?



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Almost two-in-ten journalists have faced online impersonation

As discussed in the section on technology and AI, new technologies such as AI can help journalists in their work, but it can also be a tool used against them. Survey results reveal that it is already happening: 15% of journalists surveyed say that in the past year they had learned about someone using technology to reproduce their image and 10% say they had learned about someone using technology to reproduce their voice. All in all, 17% experienced at least one of these types of impersonation.

Journalists report facing unauthorized access to accounts and online harassment

The survey offered respondents the opportunity to detail a cyber threat or breach that they had experienced in the past year. Many respondents chose not to answer, even among those who say they had these experiences. In the end we received 51 codable responses, some of which describe multiple experiences. This small number of detailed responses helps us understand the breadth of issues and some of the interconnections between cyber breaches on the one hand, and harassment and threats on the other. These examples provide some concrete context for thinking about the larger patterns in the closed-ended responses.

Looking first at the target of the attacks, the majority (32) were directed at individual journalists. We also noted nine instances where journalism organizations were the target, five

unclear cases and four cases where the respondent describes a broad cyber attack (like a database breach) that did not seem to specifically target journalists.

Among the types of attacks, the most common was seeking to gain unauthorized access to devices or accounts (at least 32), which includes both accessing private messages or personal data (16 of the 32) and phishing (five of 32). The next largest group describes insults, threats or harassment (at least 17). Six of 17 were doxxed and three say that someone created fake social media profiles.

Only three respondents report DDoS attacks against their news organization, while five respondents describe other kinds of breaches, including theft of physical laptops and phones, falsified documents, being added to social media or text groups and fraudulent volunteers.

Journalists report experiencing breaches and abuse online

Type of incident	Number reported
Unauthorized access	32
- Accessing private messages or personal data	16
- Phishing	5
Insults, threats or harassment	17
- Doxxing	6
- Social media cloning	3
DDoS	3
Other	5

On the positive side, many report that they or their news organizations were able to successfully respond to unauthorized attempts to access accounts and devices. Out of the 32 people who write about unauthorized attempts to access devices or accounts, nine of them say they were able to stop those attacks, three more report mixed experiences,[10] and the other 20 say that their accounts were compromised.

One respondent's testimony succinctly lays out the issues at hand: "We have over a hundred cyber attacks a month, but we spend a lot of money on protection, although they did manage to delete the posts from last week." Furthermore, while most people do not identify the attacker in their response, one says outright that the sources of a breach were agents of their own government.

[10] For example, one person wrote that after a first experience with phishing they became much better at identifying attempts.

Journalists are fairly confident that they can respond to breaches

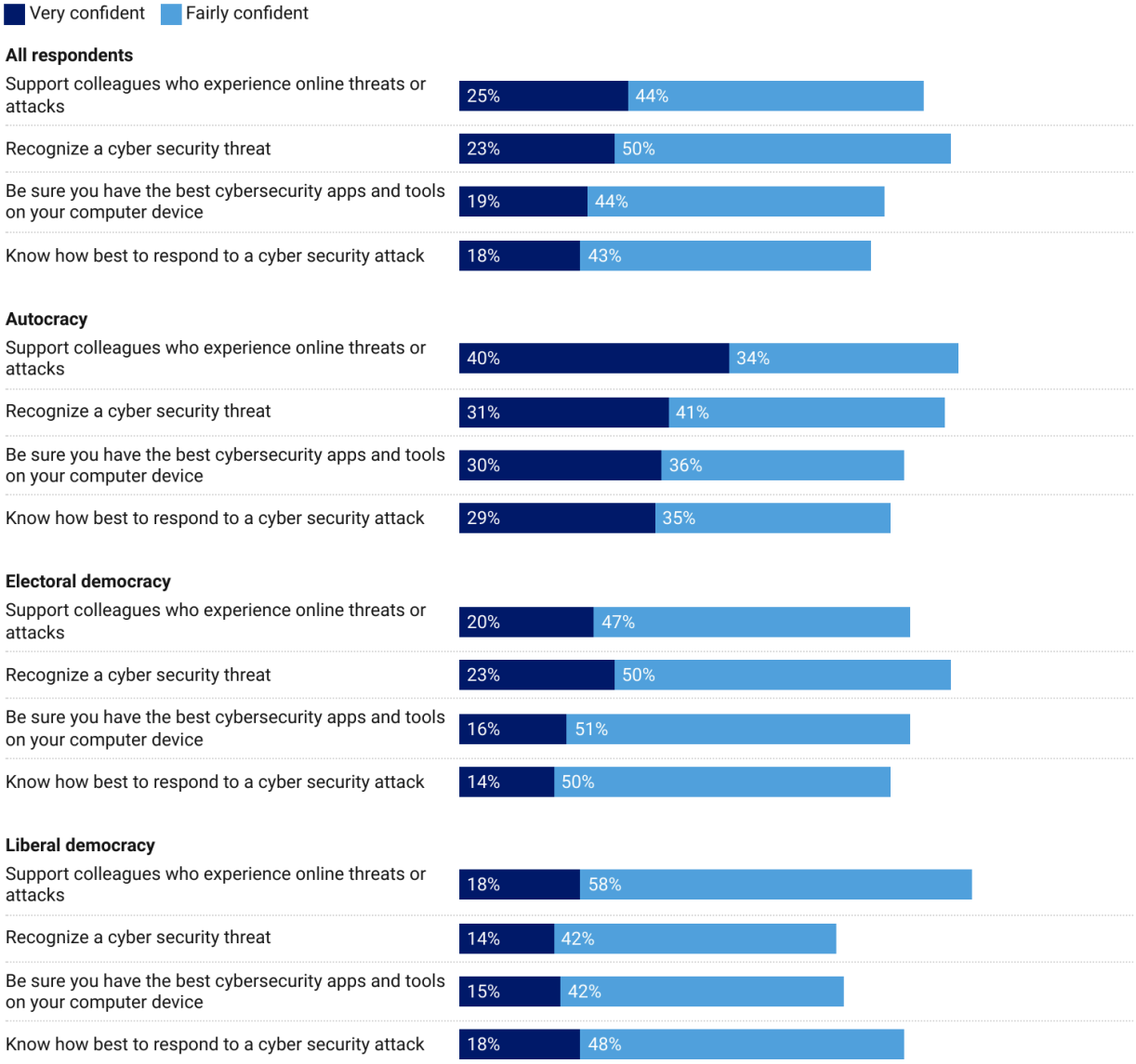
Respondents were asked to rank their confidence in four aspects of preparing for and responding to cyberattacks. Journalists are fairly confident about all four. The similarity in responses across all four items may suggest that journalists are broadly familiar with the concepts but may not have the knowledge they need to put it into action which suggests an opportunity for those who train journalists. Indeed, one point discussed in a recent CNTI convening on the topic was that effective cybersecurity needs to be ongoing and routine.

Journalists in less democratic countries are more confident in their ability to respond to breaches, but not to recognize them

Confidence levels in recognizing and responding to breaches vary noticeably based on regime type. Journalists in autocracies are twice as likely as journalists in either liberal or electoral democracies to say they were very confident in knowing how to respond, ensuring they have the best apps and tools and supporting colleagues. However, journalists across regime types report their ability to recognize threats similarly.

Journalists are fairly confident about recognizing and responding to cybersecurity threats; those in autocracies are more so

Question: How confident are you that you have the information you need to […]



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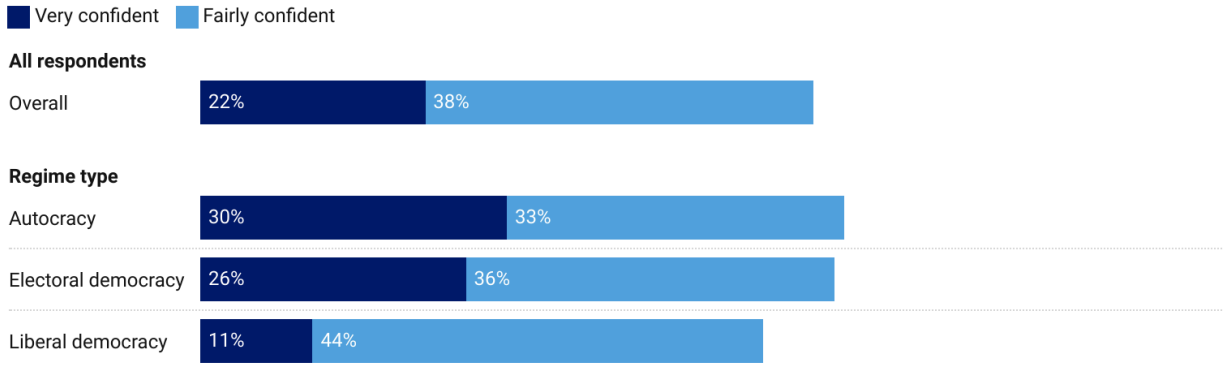
When it comes to handling online abuse, journalists are moderately confident in their news organizations

Journalists are relatively confident in their news organizations' ability to address external abuse, although journalists working in liberal democracies are less confident than their colleagues working under other government types with 11% of respondents from liberal democracies reporting they felt very confident, while 26% of respondents in electoral democracies and 30% of autocracies selected that answer.

Journalists in liberal democracies are less confident that their news organization is able to handle online abuse

Question: How confident are you that your news organization is prepared to deal with external online abuse directed toward their employees?



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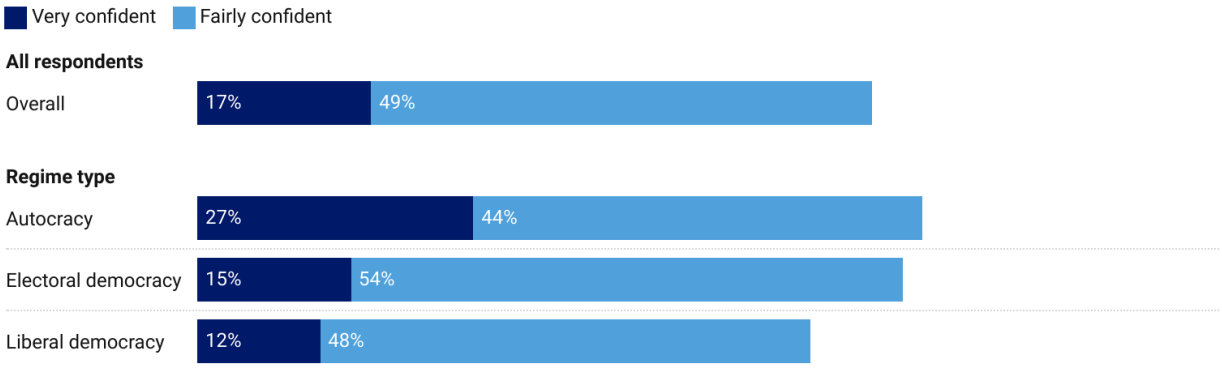
Journalists have similar confidence in themselves as they do in their news organizations, but journalists in autocracies are most confident

Journalists display similar confidence in their own ability when asked if they felt they had the information they needed to respond to online abuse or harassment. Overall, 17% feel very confident and 7% feel not at all confident. There are some differences between regime types, with 27% of those in autocracies feeling very confident, 12-15 percentage points more than those elsewhere.

Journalists in autocracies are more likely to feel "very confident" in responding to online abuse, compared with those elsewhere

Question: How confident are you that you have the information you need to know how best to respond to online abuse or harassment?



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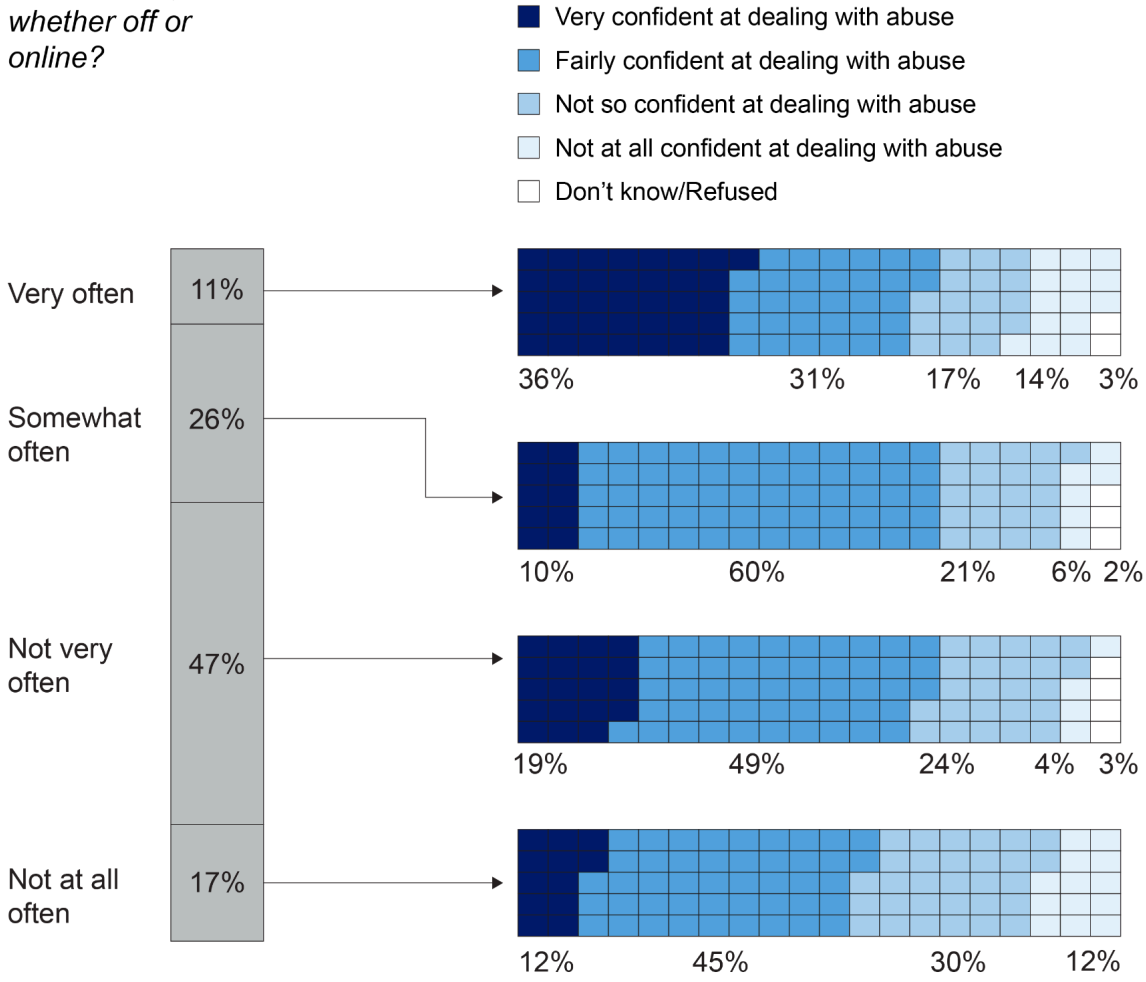
Journalists who face more risks have more confidence in their own ability to handle abuse

While facing risk does not have a strong relationship with journalists' confidence in their news organizations' ability to handle external abuse, it bears a stronger relationship to their self-confidence. Of respondents who say they face high levels of risk very often, 36% say that they are very confident they have the information they need to know how best to respond to online abuse or harassment. This confidence drops by 17 percentage points or more for everyone else, although the relationships are not fully linear.

Journalists who face more risks have more confidence in their own ability to handle abuse

In your work as a journalist, how often do you face high levels of risk, whether off or online?

How confident are you that you have the information you need to know how best to respond to online abuse or harassment?



Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages factor in attrition.

Journalists take some cybersecurity precautions, but not always the ones experts recommend

There is no shortage of cybersecurity guides aimed at journalists, which offer many useful tools. At the same time, these guides are not always well suited to their work, particularly given the time pressure under which journalists work. In general, experts recommend:

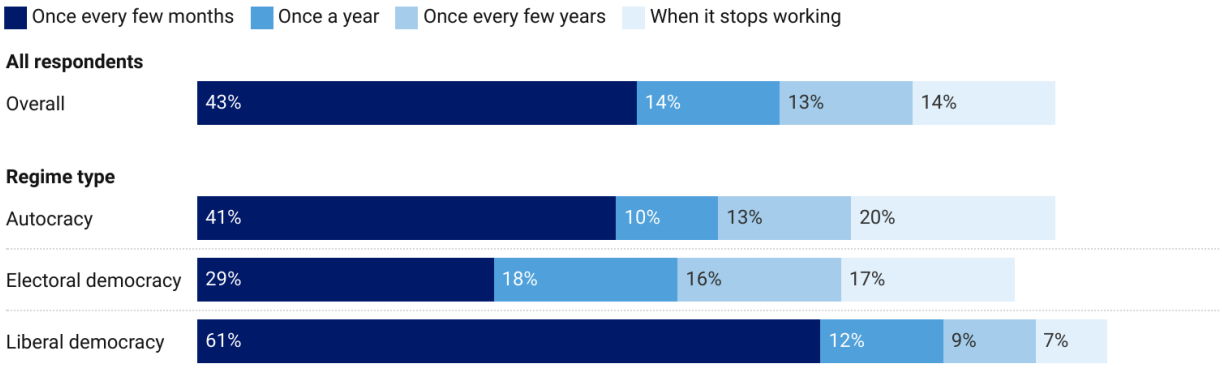
- Using secure passwords and a password manager rather than changing passwords frequently.
- Installing software updates as soon as they become available, especially security patches.
- Using encrypted peer-to-peer apps for text messages and phone calls, as well as email encryption.

Journalists in liberal democracies update their software and passwords more frequently, but those in autocracies replace their devices more often

From the above results, we can understand that journalists are facing a multitude of threats from numerous sources, from both the public and the government. To better understand how journalists are responding, we asked about some of their practices related to technology. Journalists who took our survey change passwords and update software and hardware on devices frequently; about 40% say they do each once every few months on average, and 30% or less say they did so once every few years or when the device stops working. Of journalists in liberal democracies, 73% say they update the software/hardware on their devices at least once a year compared with 47%-51% in electoral democracies and autocracies.

Journalists in liberal democracies update their software/hardware more often

Question: How often, on average, do you or your news organization [...] update with new hardware or software [...] the device you use most often to do your reporting?

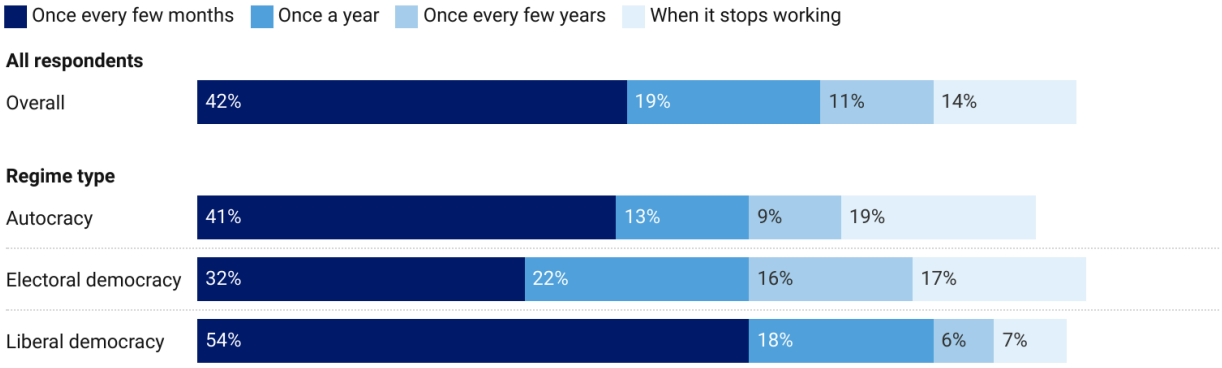


Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages factor in attrition. I don't know and Refused/NA responses not shown.

Chart: Center for News, Technology & Innovation • Source: What It Means to Do Journalism in the Age of AI: Journalist Views on Safety, Technology and Government • Created with Datawrapper

Almost one half of journalists update their passwords every few months

Question: How often, on average, do you or your news organization [...] require password updates [...] to the device you use most often to do your reporting?



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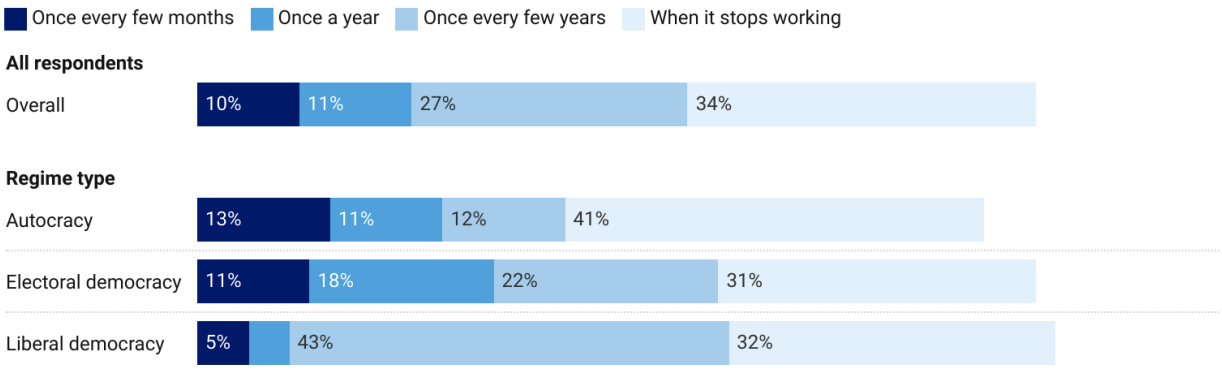
This result is particularly striking because journalists in liberal democracies generally report that they face less risk than do their colleagues in autocracies. There are no financial costs associated with either of these actions, but they can be time-consuming. We also suspect that the regional differences may be due in part to differences in education and the relative professionalization of IT support.

All journalists surveyed, across regimes, replace devices less often than they update them and change passwords with 21% saying they replace them once a year or more often, while 27% say they replace them once every few years and 34% say they only replace devices when they stop working. Journalists in liberal democracies replace their devices less often than others: only about 9% say they replace devices annually or more often, compared with 29% of journalists in electoral democracies and 24% in autocracies.

Of the three actions recommended by experts, replacing devices is the only one that bears a financial cost, so it may be surprising that journalists in less democratic countries — which also tend to be less affluent — are replacing their devices more often. One explanation may be that they use less expensive devices, such as prepaid phones, which are not intended to be used for as long.

Journalists in liberal democracies replace their devices less often than those elsewhere

Question: How often, on average, do you or your news organization [...] replace [...] the device you use most often to do your reporting?



Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages factor in attrition. I don't know and Refused/NA responses not shown.

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Journalists use a mix of secure and insecure methods to communicate with sources

Just as protecting their technology is crucial for journalists to prevent cyberattacks, the communication methods they use with sources are equally important for ensuring the safety of both the journalist and their source. In general, journalists communicate with sources through a range of practices. Phone calls are the most common option, followed by email, peer-to-peer encrypted messaging apps and social media.

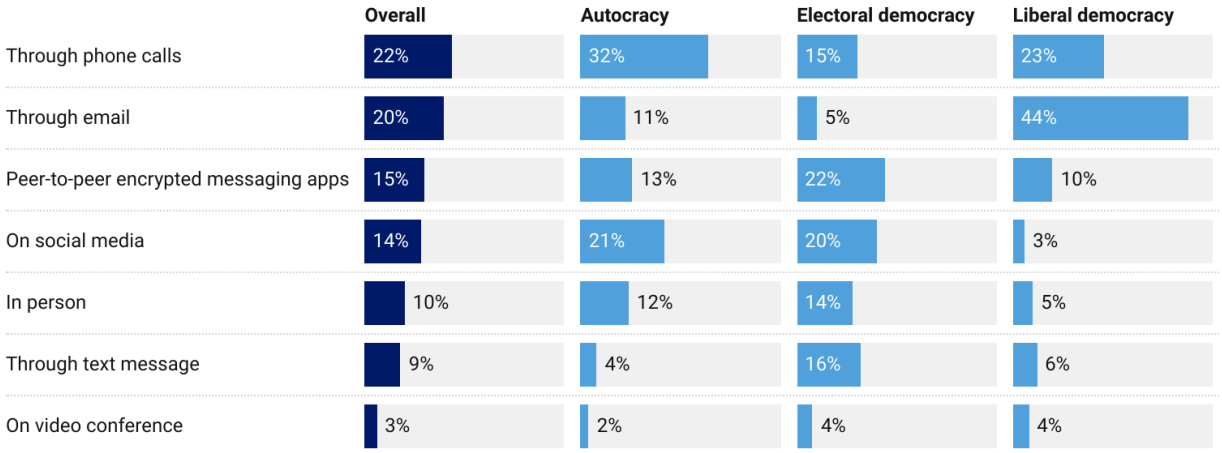
Encrypted peer-to-peer messaging is the most secure option available, but relatively few journalists rely on it as their primary form of communication with sources. Relatively few (15%) journalists in the survey pool say these apps were their go-to. (It is difficult to classify the relative security of the most popular option, phone calls, because our questions did not

differentiate between relatively insecure voice calls using phone networks and relatively secure voice calls through encrypted apps like WhatsApp or, the even more secure Signal).

The respondents choose both highly secure and relatively vulnerable methods of communication in all three regime types, although there are meaningful differences. Journalists in liberal democracies are the only group with a clear convergence: they use email far more than any other method and they also use it far more often than journalists anywhere else do.

The methods journalists use to communicate with their sources vary greatly by regime type

Question: What is the most common way that you communicate with your sources these days?



Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages factor in attrition. No and Refused/NA responses not shown.

The percentage totals in this figure are interpreted within column rather than within rows.

Chart: Center for News, Technology & Innovation • Source: What It Means to Do Journalism in the Age of AI: Journalist Views on Safety, Technology and Government • Created with Datawrapper

Journalists could be better informed about the risks colleagues are facing — even though they're fairly comfortable talking about these topics

About one-in-three journalists feels very informed about online harms against their immediate colleagues, and far fewer say the same about their global ones

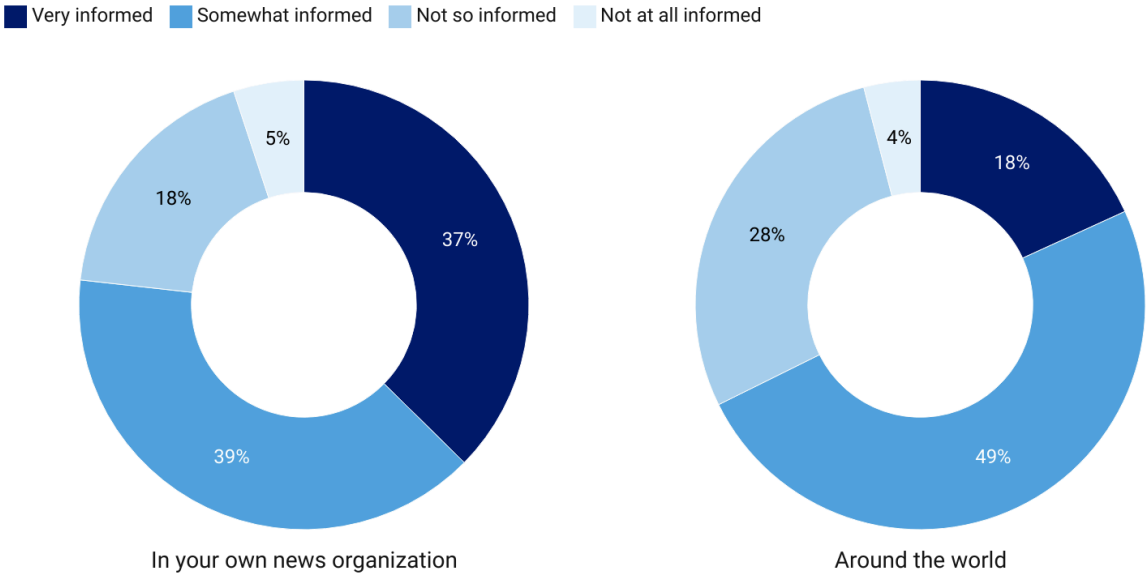
Sharing experiences is one way to build awareness and aptitude in response to online harms. It is striking then that even within the journalistic community — including inside one's own newsroom, awareness about each others' experience with online harms is limited at best. As

might be expected, journalists surveyed feel more informed about online abuses and security breaches experienced by colleagues in their own news organizations than by their colleagues around the world — though neither figure is very large. This is true across regime types where journalists work.

Overall, 37% of journalists say they feel very informed about online harms experienced by colleagues in their own newsroom. This figure falls to 18% when it comes to their colleagues around the world. While most feel at least somewhat informed about each (76% and 66% respectively) there is opportunity to build awareness amongst journalists and with the public to build solidarity and collaborate on responses.

Journalists feel informed about abuse and breaches

Question: How well informed do you feel about online abuses and security breaches experienced by colleagues?



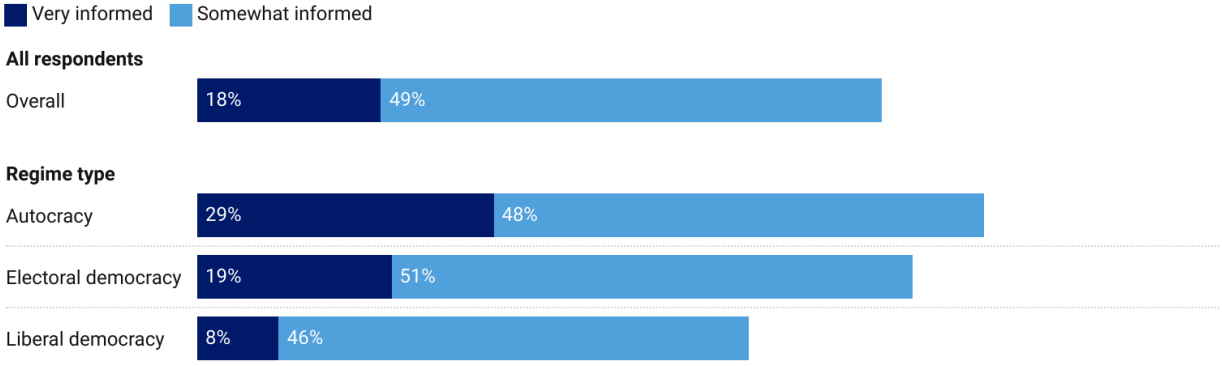
Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages factor in attrition. Refused/NA responses not shown.

Chart: Center for News, Technology & Innovation • Source: What It Means to Do Journalism in the Age of AI: Journalist Views on Safety, Technology and Government • Created with Datawrapper

When broken down by regime type, 8% of journalists in liberal democracies feel that they are very informed about security breaches and abuse around the world, compared with 19% of those in electoral democracies and 29% in autocracies.

Journalists in liberal democracies feel less informed about abuse and breaches around the world

Question: How well informed do you feel about online abuses and security breaches experienced by colleagues [...] around the world?



Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages factor in attrition. Not so informed, Not at all informed and Refused/NA responses not shown.

Chart: Center for News, Technology & Innovation • Source: What It Means to Do Journalism in the Age of AI: Journalist Views on Safety, Technology and Government • Created with Datawrapper

Strong majorities of journalists are comfortable talking about abuse, censorship and cybersecurity with their managers, although they are a little less comfortable talking about online abuse or censorship than security breaches

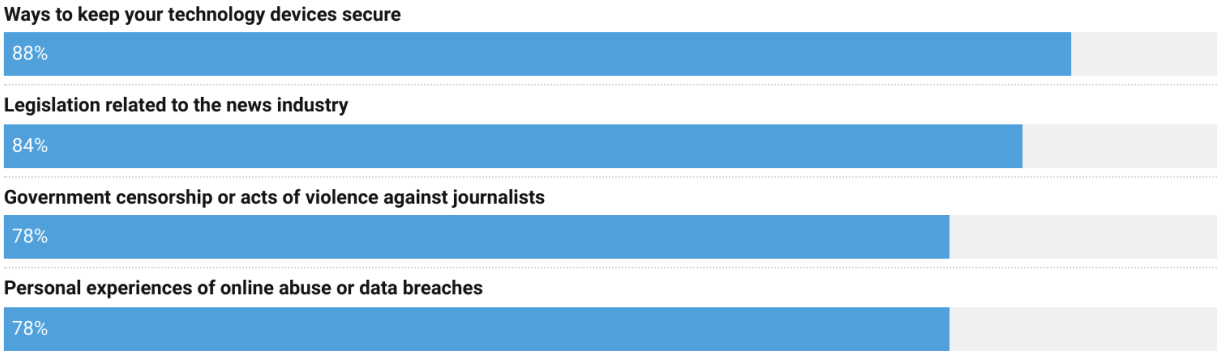
Strong majorities of journalists are comfortable discussing topics related to abuse, censorship and cybersecurity. At least three-quarters were comfortable discussing all four topics we asked about with managers:

- Keeping technology devices secure (88%).
- Legislation related to the news industry (84%).
- Personal experiences of online abuse or data breaches (78%).
- Government censorship or acts of violence against journalists (78%).

We see meaningful differences between regime types for personal experience of online abuse or data breaches, and government censorship or acts of violence, which are more sensitive topics. Journalists in less democratic countries are more likely to face both abuse and government censorship — and they are more hesitant to discuss these issues at work. Even so, large majorities say that they do feel comfortable discussing these issues with managers.

Strong majorities of journalists feel comfortable discussing all of the following topics with managers

Question: Do you generally feel comfortable or uncomfortable talking about and sharing experiences with your manager in each of the following areas?



Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages factor in attrition. Not comfortable and Refused/NA responses not shown.

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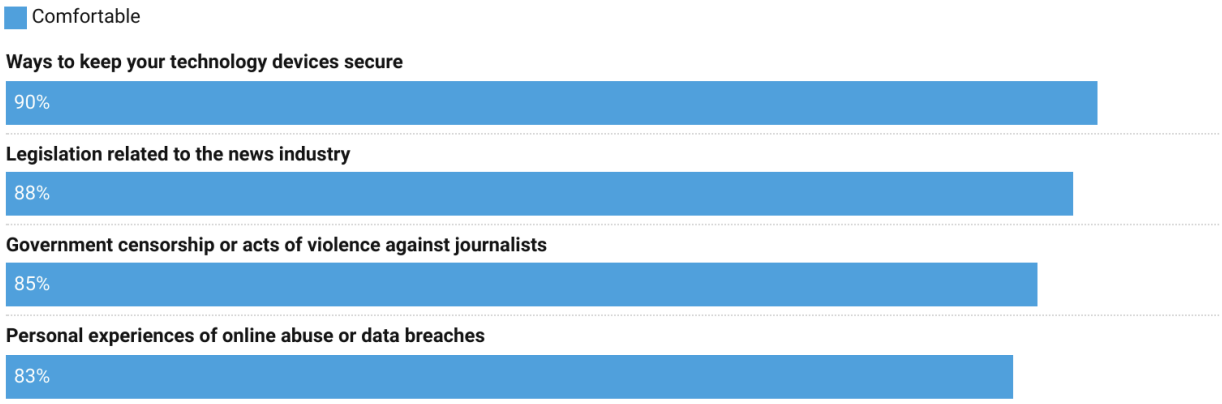
Journalists are similarly comfortable talking to colleagues about these topics. While respondents feel the least comfortable talking about personal experiences of online abuse or data breaches with colleagues, the differences are small. Again, strong majorities of journalists (83-90%) feel comfortable discussing even the most sensitive issues with their colleagues.

The same regime type differences also occur when talking to colleagues: journalists in less democratic countries are generally more guarded in what they are willing to discuss. For personal experiences of online abuse or data breaches, 91% of respondents in liberal democracies say that they feel comfortable discussing with colleagues, compared with 78% in electoral democracies and 79% in autocracies. For government censorship or acts of violence against journalists, 96% of those in liberal democracies say that they feel comfortable — 15 percentage points more than journalists elsewhere.

Strong majorities of journalists feel comfortable discussing security topics with colleagues

Question: Do you generally feel comfortable or uncomfortable talking about and sharing experiences with your colleagues in each of the following areas?



Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages factor in attrition. Not comfortable and Refused/NA responses not shown.

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Journalists who experienced abuse did not always report it

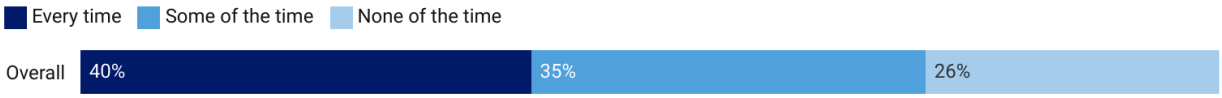
Beyond handling device security and managing cybersecurity threats, we wanted to understand how journalists are responding to the personal threats they receive. Not everyone who had the chance to report harassment or threats did so. We asked the 113 journalists who said that they had experienced at least one type of external harassment in the last year how often they reported it to a supervisor, human resources or some other official at their news organization. Of those that said they had experienced external harassment, 40% say they reported it every time, followed by 35% some of the time and 26% none of the time. Results are consistent across regime types.[11]

The main reason journalists do not always report harassment is because they did not think it would make a difference. This reason far outpaces other options listed which include concerns about safety or future harassment, not knowing who to tell, because it was too emotionally difficult to discuss and concerns that sources would stop sharing information.

[11] Given the relatively small numbers of journalists who experienced abuse, this result is unsurprising.

Less than half of journalists reported external harassment every time it occurred; 26% never did

Question: How often did you report external harassment or threats to a supervisor, human resources or some other official at your news organization?



Note: Survey of journalists across 63 countries (N = 433) conducted between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024. Percentages factor in attrition. Refused/NA responses not shown.

Figure only includes journalists who reported experiencing harassment or threats.

Chart: Center for News, Technology & Innovation • Source: What It Means to Do Journalism in the Age of AI: Journalist Views on Safety, Technology and Government • Created with Datawrapper

About this Study

Why we did this study

This project is a continuation of CNTI's Defining News Initiative which seeks to understand how journalism is defined today. Technology, social media and AI have significantly influenced how journalism is defined which impacts its role in democracy.

Over the last few decades, the widespread adoption and use of new communications technology have rapidly reshaped global information ecosystems. For journalists and news organizations, these changes have both empowered their work and presented new challenges. These technological and social changes have given the public many more options, disrupting how news outlets have historically interacted with them. Concurrently, governments around the world are increasingly impinging on press freedom and weaponizing the law against journalists, while questions about revenue models and digital content valuation remain unresolved.

Social media platforms have offered new opportunities to meet the public where they are, but social media has also decoupled distribution from news outlets' function as a clearinghouse for vetted and verified information. It has never been easier for journalists to have meaningful exchanges with their audiences; however, these same channels leave journalists on the receiving end of continuous legal threats and harassment.

Most recently, the convenience and expediency of AI[12] tools help individuals and teams produce more content — but these tools are resource-intensive and prone to inaccuracy, and the opacity of their algorithms can leave journalists unsure about how their own work is being repurposed. While these technologies can be harnessed to support the work of journalism, they also raise a host of ethical and legal questions that threaten the field.

Access to information is not just important for its own sake; it makes democracy possible. In 2024, the United Nations outlined Global Principles for Information Integrity in response to growing challenges around misinformation, disinformation and hate speech. These principles highlight the importance of societal trust and resilience; healthy incentives; public empowerment; independent, free and pluralistic media; and transportation and research. Multiple actors, such as technology companies, advertisers, news media and journalists, civil society organizations, states and political actors, and the UN play a key role in upholding the resiliency of the information ecosystem and their good faith efforts are essential to the public's ability to access information.

[12] Given the lack of consensus about what "Artificial Intelligence" encompasses, we use the term broadly to refer to "sciences, theories and techniques whose purpose is to reproduce by a machine the cognitive abilities of a human being." While there is no agreed-upon technical definition, it's helpful to consider examples like Large Language Models (LLM), which are "trained" on data to recognize statistical patterns and use those patterns to generate plausible text. These kinds of models typically have too many parameters to be fully transparent or explainable, even for their creators.

Building on the Defining News Initiative, CNTI conducted a survey of journalists to explore
(1) how they view their industry,
(2) their (and their organizations') uses and perceptions of technology,
(3) their perspectives on government action and cyber security and
(4) their experiences with online harassment and abuse.

Importantly, respondents to CNTI's study come from a global mix of journalists that provide an international perspective to how journalists are navigating, understanding and defining their rapidly changing industry.

How we recruited participants

Surveys are a snapshot of what people think at a particular moment in time. These data were collected between October 14, 2024 and December 1, 2024, which means they highlight the perspective of journalists around the world during that time frame.

CNTI partnered with journalism organizations in multiple continents. The questionnaire was crafted with input from the partner organizations who knew the current situations and challenges of their members across various country contexts. These partner organizations also shared the survey with their membership:

- Centre for Journalism Innovation & Development (CJID)
- Frontline Freelance Mexico
- FT Strategies
- Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD)
- Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN)
- Internews
- Online News Association (ONA)
- Organización Editorial Mexicana (OEM)
- Society of Freelance Journalists

The survey was also shared through several journalism email groups and Slack spaces, including:

- Institute for Nonprofit News (INN)
- News Nerdery
- Newspack Community
- Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy

Who took the survey

CNTI collected responses from 433 journalists across 63 countries between October 14 and December 1, 2024.[13] Because there is no global census of journalists it is not possible to create

[13] Full demographic tables are available in the topline.

a representative sample. So, CNTI's results should be interpreted based on the group of journalists who took part in the survey.

The journalists in our survey hold a range of jobs. They are about equally divided between content specialists (e.g., reporters, photojournalists and bloggers), content managers (e.g., news directors and editors) and people in hybrid or other roles. A strong majority of them — 80% or more — work full-time, in-house at a single news organization and nine out of ten say their audience is located primarily in the same country as them.

The majority of respondents are relatively experienced journalists: 61% have more than 10 years of experience in journalism.

While we received responses from all regions of the globe, some places had more respondents than others. For example, 256 respondents are from just three countries: Nigeria, the U.S. and Mexico. The other 177 respondents are from 60 different countries with the highest number of responses in a single country at 23. We do not provide exact numbers of responses for countries that have less than 25 responses to minimize the risk of participants being identified.

Region	N	%
Latin America & Caribbean	124	30%
Sub-Saharan Africa	102	24%
Europe & Central Asia	77	18%
North America	74	18%
East Asia & Pacific	25	6%
South Asia	5	1%

To better understand the results, we grouped countries into two larger categories:[14]

Broad region: Like many other global research studies, we grouped countries into Global North and Global South, which share many demographic, economic and political similarities. In general, countries in the Global North are wealthier, have older populations and wield disproportionate geopolitical power. While the conceptualization of Global South has received criticism for its melding of diverse countries into one binary group, the term is helpful for understanding similarities in country development, history and overall geopolitical

[14] There is known variability in survey responses across countries regarding social desirability and acquiescence.

perspective. A little more than a third (38%) of our respondents live in the Global North, and the rest live in the Global South (62%).[15]

Regime type: In addition to Global North and Global South, we used the Regimes of the World (RoW) measure found in the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) data which responds to the question "How can the political regime be classified considering the competitiveness of access to power as well as liberal principles?" Electoral democracies are separated from liberal democracies because they lack at least some aspect of personal liberties, transparent law procedures or judicial and legislative constraints on an executive leader typically found in liberal democracies. Autocracies, in contrast, either have no multiparty elections or do not have elections that are free and fair and are missing aspects of freedom of expression found in democracies. Of our survey respondents, 27% live in an autocratic country, 35% live in a liberal democracy and 39% live in an electoral democracy.[16]

We include these categories in our analysis of cyber security and safety because regime type is associated with harassment (though not necessarily by government actors), the censorship of journalists and the ability of the rule of law to protect them. Democracies tend to have more robust protections for civil liberties like freedom of expression compared with autocracies — a protection that is central to an informed public.

How we addressed attrition

The survey was lengthy (with an estimated completion time of 20 minutes) and consisted of five distinct sections on different topics. We treated each section as a drop-off point: that is, if a respondent answered at least one question within a section, non-responses were treated as true non-responses. Respondents who answered no questions within a section were not included within the section's *N*.

For transparency, topline tables include both percentages of the full survey *N* (Percent) as well as percentages of the section *N* (Valid Percent).

How we tested for statistical significance

We analyzed the results using Chi-squared proportion tests to assess differences in responses. We used a standard threshold of $p < 0.05$ for assessing statistical significance. Differences mentioned in the report text are statistically significant.

[15] We use the United Nations' definitions with two exceptions: we consider Mexico and Turkey to belong to the Global South.
[16] Regime type classifications come from V-Dem (p. 292). A breakdown explaining the four regime types is available here. We use V-Dem's data for 2023, which was published in March 2024, and we collapsed the two types of autocracies into a single category both because of relatively small numbers and because constraints on freedom of expression (e.g., government censorship, media bias) are a defining trait of both types.

How we protected our data

CNTI did not collect any identifiable information that risked the privacy and confidentiality of participants. The data collection was supervised by CNTI staff only. The survey included individual-level information such as gender and the country where one worked and resided. It would be very difficult to identify study participants because CNTI did not collect their personal contact information or contact participants directly and the participants' personal information was not shared by the partner organizations. The data are securely stored in an encrypted folder which is only authorized to the core research team at CNTI.

The survey was administered using Qualtrics online survey platform. CNTI implemented several protocols to maintain privacy — including removing IP addresses from individual responses — and settings to avoid duplicate responses from a given person. Alpha IRB provided independent ethical review.

How we coded open-ended items

A few items allowed for comment if the respondent selected "other" and four questions on our survey were fully open-ended. Because we were conservative in drawing inferences, we note that themes were present in "at least" the number of responses where we identified them.

We were conservative in large part because of the multilingual nature of our data set. Terms do not necessarily have exact equivalents between languages. Moreover, many responses were very brief (five words or fewer) and the absence of context made interpretation challenging even within a single language.

The survey itself was available in nine languages (Arabic, English, French, Hindi, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swahili and Ukrainian). We received free-text responses in six of these languages (Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Ukrainian), as well as one response in an additional language (German). All responses were translated to English by the same translation company who prepared the questionnaire, with the exception of the German response, which was translated in-house by a researcher working on the project.

Wherever possible, categories were informed by preceding CNTI and external research.

We did not receive enough responses to any individual item for robust tests of inter-coder reliability; instead, we reached consensus through repeated discussion of responses.

Specific analysis methods for each of these four questions are outlined below.

Technology Trends

We asked, "What technology trend or development related to journalism is most on your mind these days?"

After researchers read through the full set of responses, these responses were coded for the presence or absence of four main ideas: artificial intelligence, social media, algorithms and data. These categories were not treated as mutually exclusive. Responses were also coded for their valence (positive, negative, neutral or mixed).

Definitions

We asked, "In just a few words, how do you define journalism?"

We first coded responses in terms of whether they referred to **the social role of journalism** or **professional practices and norms**. These themes were not treated as mutually exclusive.

> **Social role of journalism:** Responses that focus on the impact of journalism on audiences or society fall under this theme, as do responses that highlight journalism's relationships to ideals like "democracy" and "the public interest." (Focusing on journalism's power to educate, inform, or entertain people would all fall into this category — as would focusing on journalism's power to hold powerful actors accountable or support decision-making.) In general, these responses are about *what journalism does*.
>
> **Professional practice and norms**: Responses coded under this theme focus on the process of journalism and professional norms widely shared among journalists. Examples of processes include fact-checking, publishing stories and obtaining information. Examples of norms include that journalism should be objective, verifiable, truthful and independent. In general, these responses are about *how journalism is done*.

A small number of responses were too ambiguous to code, and several additional responses focused on **downsides of journalism**, especially poor pay and safety risks.

Category	Number of responses	% of total
Professional practice	223	69%
Social function	181	56%
Neither of these (including downsides	9	3%
Total	323	-
Too brief or clear to code	30	-

We analyzed the 181 responses that addressed the social function of journalism using six categories defined by the Journalistic Role Performance project (JRP). Meanwhile, we took a bottom-up approach to the 223 responses that addressed professional practice to identify categories that were emergent in our data, starting from oft-repeated words and phrases, which provided five additional categories.

Rather than treating categories as mutually exclusive, we also coded them independently of one another.

Social Functions

1. **Interventionist:** The JRP defines intervention journalism as "a kind of journalism where the journalist has an explicit voice in the story, and sometimes acts as an advocate for individuals or groups in society."[17] For responses that fall under at least this category, cues included journalists explicitly presenting their point of view; explaining or interpreting causes, meanings, and consequences; or offering calls to action.

2. **Watchdog:** The watchdog role is defined as functioning "to protect the public interest and to hold various elites in power accountable, serving as a 'fourth estate.' Journalism performance closer to the watchdog role entails being a custodian of conscience, making visible facts hidden by those in power." Answers in this category included holding those in power accountable, other references to accountability or uncovering things that are hidden.

3. **Loyal facilitator:** As defined by the JRP, journalists acting as loyal facilitators include two variations. "First, journalists cooperate with those in power, and accept the information they provide as credible … In its second variation, journalists support their nation-state, portraying a positive image of their country, encouraging a sense of belonging, and strengthening national prestige." Cues for definitions in this category included praising, promoting or defending government actions or policies, presenting positive images of those in power or explicit patriotism.

4. **Service:** According to the JRP, "this role combines the rights and self-interests of the audience, creating a client-professional relationship between the journalist and the public. As an answer to the growing complexity of modernity, this model of role performance provides helpful information, knowledge and advice about goods and services that audiences can apply in their day-to-day lives." Answers coded under the service category mentioned references to consequences for individuals' everyday life (not at the societal level), references to tips or advice or specific personal appeals.

5. **Infotainment:** Infotainment is defined as "journalism [that] uses different stylistics, narrative and/or visual discourses in order to entertain and thrill the public … the logic here is to shock the audience's moral and aesthetic sensibilities. This type of

[17] See this document.

journalism addresses the public as spectators, where the audience's relaxation and emotional experiences become the center of attention." Cues for this category included details about individuals' private lives, sensationalism, references or appeals to emotion or graphically morbid details.

6. **Civics:** The JRP defines the civic role of journalism as a focus on "the connection between journalism, the citizenry and public life. Journalistic performance that reflects these ideas encourages the public to get involved in public debate, and to participate in social, political and cultural life. The space given to sources without social empowerment who demand recognition or reinstatement of a right is an important aspect of this role. This role does not assume that it is the journalist who can create an improved community via their own resources; rather the emphasis is on supporting the citizens' efforts to do so." Answers categorized in this section included mentions of getting involved in public debate, change at the societal level, local impact, contextual background for citizen decisions and supporting citizen movements.

Professional Practice

Responses focused on professional practice were coded into at least one of the following five categories. The first three categories focus on processes that journalists follow, while the latter two emphasize professional norms.

1. **Journalism requires newsgathering.** One core journalistic process is conducting research and investigation to learn about things that are happening.
2. **Journalism requires verification.** A second core journalistic process is verifying and assessing the truth of that information before sharing it.
3. **Journalism requires distribution.** A third core journalistic process is distributing or disseminating those stories. These responses typically focused on large-scale broadcast communication, which was almost always unidirectional.
4. **Journalism is factual.** A core norm is that journalism is based on facts that are reliable and truthful.
5. **Journalism is objective.** A core norm is that journalism is objective, fair and independent of political or economic influence.

Journalists' Traits

We asked, "What top three traits or characteristics do you most associate with the job of a journalist?"

The research team read these responses and discussed possible groupings. Because of the brevity of most responses — most of them were just one word long — we identified clusters associated with particular words and phrases.

Here we provide the major cues to each cluster.

Journalists rely on verifiable facts

truth, truthful, fact, factual
credible, credibility, accurate, accuracy, reliable, reliability
trust, trustworthy
precise, precision
verify, verification, verified

Journalists have clear ethical standards
ethics, ethical
professional, standards
independent, independence, incorruptible
honest, honesty, transparency, sincere, sincerity
accountable, accountability, public interest, commitment to [community/public], watchdog

Journalists are objective
objective, objectivity, fair, fairness, balance, balanced, neutral, impartial, impartiality, unbiased

Journalists are analytical
research, investigation, analysis, investigate, analytical, logic
skeptical, cynical, critical
gather, dig
context

Journalists have "grit" and work hard
grit
persistent, persistence, perseverance, tenacious, tenacity, determined, determination
hard-working, painstaking, detail, detailed, diligent
courage, courageous, bravery, brave
passion
commitment (without modifier), responsibility, responsible
intense, intensity

Journalists have mental acumen
intelligent, smart,
curious, inquisitive,
knowledgeable, educated

Journalists can communicate complicated topics clearly
clear, clarity
communicate, write, story
creative, innovative

Journalists provide work that is timely and proximate to happenings on the ground
immediate, immediacy, speed, deadlines, 24/7
at/on the scene
source, witness, connection
flexibility, adaptability

perspective

Threats and Breaches

We asked, "If you feel comfortable, please share an example of a cyber threat or breach (e.g., stealing personal information, accessing private messages, etc.) you experienced in the past year."

This question received far fewer responses than the other four questions, and a number of the responses were comments that the respondent had either not experienced a breach or did not feel comfortable providing an example. After those non-responses were removed from the set, researchers read all responses and coded them in a bottom-up fashion. Specifically, responses were coded for the presence or absence of several forms of cyber threats and breaches, which were not treated as mutually exclusive.

1. **Unauthorized access**. This category refers to others gaining or attempting to gain unauthorized remote access to devices or accounts (hacking).
    a. **Accessing private messages or personal data theft**. This sub-category includes only responses that specified that the hacks successfully accessed private messages or data and, in some cases, published them. (Some personal data theft occurred through breaches of consumer databases.)
    b. **Phishing**. This sub-category refers to legitimate-appearing emails or links used to collect data such as login credentials or personal information that can then be used for account access, identity theft, etc.
2. **Insults, threats, and harassment**. This category includes a range of harassment, insults and threats in public forums (e.g., comments) and private ones (e.g., email, direct messages, etc.).
    a. **Social media cloning**. This category includes online impersonation and setting up false profiles.
    b. **Doxing.** This category refers to the release of personal information that can enable threats and harassment from third parties, including contact information and physical addresses. (In some cases, doxing was linked to unauthorized access as well.)
3. **Distributed denial of service (DDoS)**. DDoS attacks are attempts to overwhelm a website or server with fake traffic to render it inoperable.
4. **Other.** This category includes a number of rarer incidents, such as theft of physical devices.

We also tried to identify who was targeted by attacks:

1. **Journalists**: This category refers to cyber attacks that respondents indicated were a targeted attack against them personally; these responses may specify that attacks took place because they are journalists or it may be implied.
2. **News organizations**: This category refers to cyber attacks that impacted a news organization's journalistic process in some respect. These types of attacks were likely

not targeted at an individual journalist specifically, but were meant to limit an organization's capacity to produce or distribute journalism.

3. **Journalism incidentally**: This category refers to large-scale data leaks and other cyber threats that are not necessarily an attack against journalism. The average person with a digital presence is routinely susceptible to cyber threats and some of our respondents specifically indicated that breaches were of this type.
4. **Not clear**: Responses were coded into this category if they did not clearly fall into one of the other categories or if the intention of their attacker was unclear.

We also tried to indicate whether an attack led to a breach or not; these categories were only relevant to incidents classified under unauthorized access:

1. **Breaches** were defined as an external actor achieving some sort of access to a person or entity's private online information or successfully taking down a site.
2. **Attempts** were defined as attacks that were thwarted by cybersecurity practices or tools.
3. Some responses were coded as **not applicable**. Specifically, online threats and harassment cannot necessarily be stopped by good cybersecurity practices and they have a variable impact on the victim.

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- Centre for Journalism Innovation & Development (CJID)
- Frontline Freelance Mexico
- FT Strategies
- Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD)
- Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN)
- Internews
- Online News Association (ONA)
- Organización Editorial Mexicana (OEM)
- Society of Freelance Journalists

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- Institute for Nonprofit News (INN)
- News Nerdery
- Newspack Community
- Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy

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