

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

Worlds of Journalism Study 2.0. Journalists in Aotearoa/ New Zealand

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Introduction

This is the third survey of journalists undertaken by the Worlds of Journalism Study group. The WJS is a collaboration of academics from more than 120 countries.

The second survey, undertaken 2012–2016, mapped journalists in 66 countries and provided the first globally comparative, statistically robust picture of journalists worldwide ever undertaken.

This second global survey, which is still underway, will extend the coverage to up to 120 countries and allow us to map changes since 2016. The first global results will be available in 2024.

These preliminary results are from the Aotearoa/ New Zealand part of the WJS study. There are several new items measured in this round at a global level, including journalists' safety, their experience of covid, and their stress levels.

In addition, this is the first time NZ journalists have been asked about their attitudes to the Treaty of Waitangi and their job satisfaction.

Highlights

- Journalists, particularly females, have serious concerns about their safety on the job, particularly public discrediting, threats, surveillance, physical attack, sexual harassment and stalking, and say they are not getting enough protection.
- Women increasingly dominate the profession, making up nearly 60% of the workforce. Since the last survey, they have closed the pay gap and are now equally represented at all levels.
- Māori now make up a tenth of all journalists, a 20% increase in five years, but Pasifika and Asian communities remain under-represented.
- Journalists overwhelmingly support the Treaty of Waitangi in their work.
- Covid has dominated news coverage for many.
- Pay has increased in real terms in the past five years, adjusted for inflation.
- While still committed to the traditional non-biased neutral observer role, journalists now feel their most important role is no longer letting people express their views, but educating the public.
- Journalists are less influenced by commercial considerations than they were five years ago, and more concerned to hold to journalism ethics and editorial policy.
- Journalists are still very satisfied in their work.

Method

Journalists from all known media organisations were sent an email invitation to an online survey.

Approximately 1200 invitations were sent. Of these, 359 completed the full survey, a response rate of 29.9%.

We estimate we have a confidence interval of 4.56% at the 95% confidence level, giving a margin of error of + or – 2.25%.

We base this on an estimated population of 1600 full-time print (inc online) and broadcast journalists.

This is the population as recorded in the most recent NZ Government census (2018), which recorded approximately 1200 print and 400 broadcast journalists.

Results

Who are New Zealand journalists?

The largest group (40 %) still work in newspapers, or print-based news organisations, such as Stuff and NZME (table 1). More than a quarter (28%) of those surveyed worked in radio or television, similar to the census proportion of 25%.

Two thirds (67 %) worked for privately-owned or commercial media, and a fifth (22%) for public service (such as TVNZ or RNZ) media. 4.6 % worked for community owned or non-profits. Over three quarters (78%) worked for national organisations, the rest for regional or local. Four fifths (79%) were in main cities, the rest in smaller centres.

Table 1: NZ journalists by medium 2015–2022	2015 (%)	2022 (%)
Newspaper	50.2	40.1
Magazine	16	7.3
Radio	16.5	11.9
Television	10.8	16.8
Online only	4.3	13.1
Other (e.g. news agency)	.6	5.5
Not specified	1.6	5.2
Total	100	100

Rank and role

Over two thirds (71%) had no management role, a quarter (23%) were in middle management, and 6% in top management (table 2).

Two thirds were reporters (64%), 2 percent VJs or photographers, 14% were section editors or producers, 8% news directors/ chief reporters or bureau chiefs or executive producers, 9% were managing editors, and 3 % senior managers/publishers/ owners. Less than half (43%) were union members.

Table 2: NZ journalists by job description 2015–2022	2015 %	2022 %
Senior management	20.2	6.5
Middle management	15.4	23.7
Rank and file	64.4	69.7
Total	100	100

Job security and unionisation

Three quarters (76%) were on a permanent contract, 5% part-time permanent, 5 % full-time fixed term, and 11% freelance or self-employed. Most (55%) did not belong to a union, compared to 42% who did, and 3% who did not know.

Ethnicity

Two thirds (67%) were NZ European, 10% Māori, 7% European, 3% Asian and 2% Pasifika. The most notable change is the increase in the numbers of Māori in the workforce (table 3).

Table 3: NZ journalists' ethnicity	% 2015	%2022
NZ European	86.1	67.6
Māori	7.9	9.7
Pasifika	1.8	1.8
Asian	1.6	3.2
European	n/a	6.8
NZ or Asian Indian	n/a	1.5
Other (Australian, American, African)	2.6	9.4
Total	100	100

Gender

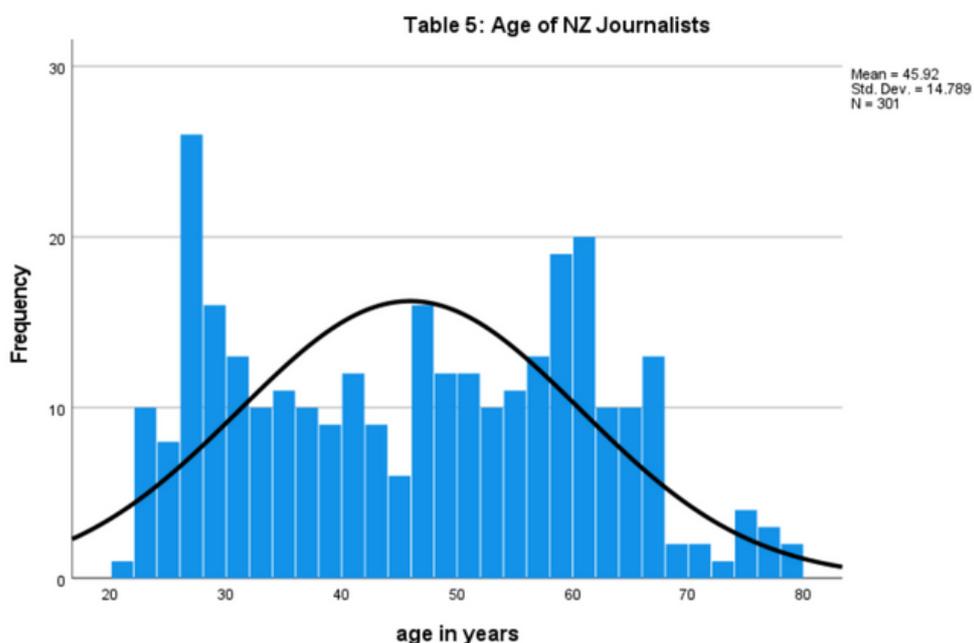
The proportion of women in journalism continues to climb, up to 58% in this survey. 41% identified as male, and 0.6 percent, or 2, as other. In 2015, females made up 50.4% and males 49.6% of the workforce.

There has been a steady increase in the proportion of females in journalism since the 1970s. Furthermore, women have now reached equal proportions at all levels of the profession, with no significant differences by gender in the rank of journalists, showing that the 'glass ceiling' appears to have been shattered. This was confirmed by Chi-square test.

Table 4: Crosstabulation of gender and rank	No management role	Middle management role	Top management role	Total
Female	126	46	11	183
Female % within gender	68.9%	25.1%	6.0%	100.0%
Female % within rank	57.8%	59.7%	52.4%	57.9%
Male	90	31	10	131
Male % within gender	68.7%	23.7%	7.6%	100.0%
Male % within rank	41.3%	40.3%	47.6%	41.5%

Age

The average age was 45.8 years, down from the previous survey in 2015, when the average age was 47 years (table 5). As table 5 shows, there is a relative lack of those in their early-mid 40s, possibly due to the pull of higher wages elsewhere while they are in family-building years. The profession is mostly made up of younger (25-30) and older (50-65) year-olds.



Education

Three quarters had a degree; over half had a Bachelor's degree (53%), almost a quarter had a Master's degree (24%), 1.5% had a PhD, while another 14% had undertaken some university study (see table 6).

Only 8% had only a high school education. Four fifths (82%) had formal education in journalism; 60 percent of these at university, 40 percent by apprenticeship or cadetship.

This is a significant change since 2015, suggesting a significant number are entering the workforce without finishing their degree.

Table 6: Highest educational level of NZ journalists		
Status	2015 (%)	2022 (%)
High school only	7.6	8
Some university study, but no degree	7	14
Bachelor degree	69	53
Master's degree	15.5	24
PhD	0.2	1.5

Experience

Respondents had an average of 18.7 years' experience as a journalist. Reporters tend to be less experienced; 33% of them had 5 years or less experience, compared to 24 % of the total.

The median experience of reporters was 13.1 years. In 2015 the median experience was higher, at 14.9 years.

Income

The median income of journalists was \$74,946. Most (87%) made all their income from journalism. After tax this would equate to \$59,364, a 1.7% increase in real terms (after adjusting for inflation) over the 2015 after tax median income of \$49,640 (\$58,159 in 2022 terms).

Thus, journalists' median income has risen slightly in real terms since 2015. Another positive development is that unlike the 2015 survey, when there was a significant difference in male and female pay, this time there is no significant difference in pay by gender.

However, these broad increases conceal significant differences, with experience, rank, and medium all determining how much a journalist will earn.

A multiple regression of various potential influences reveals journalists' rank accounts for the largest share of influences on salary, explaining just over one-third of the variance in the model.

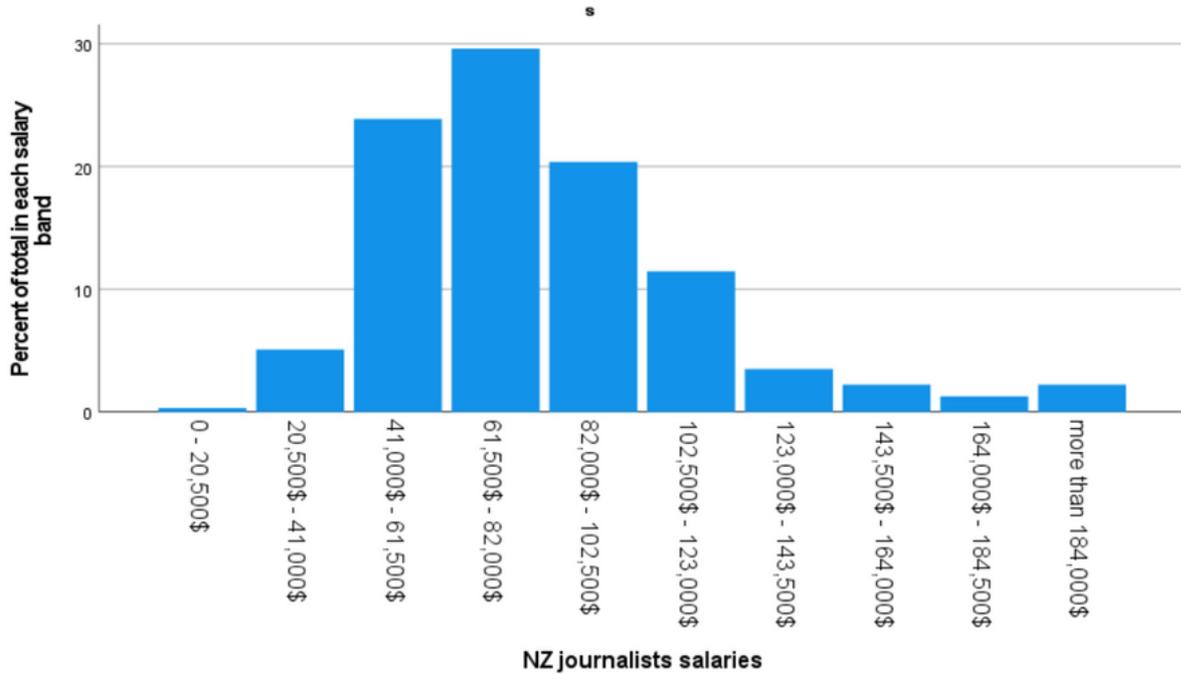
Second-most important is a journalist's work hours, then experience, measured in years in journalism. Working for a national news organisation also predicted higher pay, as it did in 2015.

This survey did not measure pay by region, but it is likely that regional journalists remain significantly less remunerated than their national or major metropolitan counterparts.

Working for television was also better paid but working on a social media distribution platform predicted a lower salary.

Interestingly, education was no longer a significant factor. As noted above, gender was no longer a predictor of salary, showing the pay gap between men and women has closed.

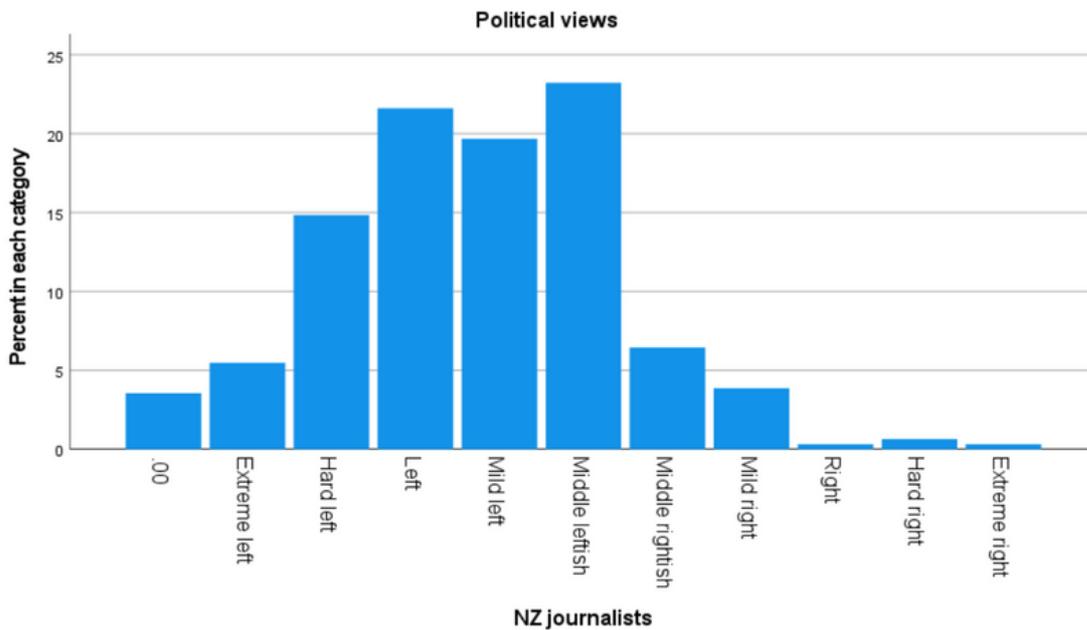
Table 7: NZ journalists' salaries



Politics

The median political orientation was 4.4, on a scale of 1-10 where 1=left, and 10=right. As the bar chart below shows, there are very few strongly right-wing journalists, but a substantial number of moderately or strongly left-wingers.

Table 8: NZ journalists' political views



COVID-19

Nearly all journalists were heavily preoccupied by covid-related stories; for some nearly all their stories were about covid. The median proportion of stories about covid was 33% – in other words the median proportion was one third.

Satisfaction

These journalists were very satisfied with their jobs. The average job satisfaction, on a scale of 1-5, was 4.15, equating to 82%. This was slightly higher than in 2015 (79%) but the same as in 2013. Nonetheless, many felt stressed out in their work, with 93 percent sometimes or more, and 59% often or very often stressed. Also, a concerning proportion of journalists felt unsafe in their work (see SAFETY).

Religion

Three quarters (76%) did not affiliate with a religion. Of the remaining 24%, most (17%) were Christian (4% Catholic, 13% non-Catholic), with the rest either Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh or other. No one identified as Muslim. One described themselves as a witch.

The role of a journalist in NZ

As far back as the 1970s, surveys of journalists have asked them what the role of a journalist should be, usually by asking their level of agreement with a standard battery of statements, such as “The role of a journalist is to let people express their views.” As table 10 shows, NZ journalists’ perceptions of their roles have shifted slightly since 2015.

The mean (average) response on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being “extremely important” shows where most journalists sit. So, the mean of 3.99 for “educate the audience” in 2022 shows that on average New Zealand journalists think this is an extremely important role in journalism. On the other hand, the mean of 1.89 for “support government policy” shows most think this is not at all important.

The table below shows that most journalists still believe strongly in the traditional roles of the journalist, such as to “educate the audience” and “provide analysis of current affairs” and be a watchdog of business and politics.

In general journalists are less interested in a more activist role, such as influencing public opinion, or being for or against the government.

However, there has been an interesting change; journalists’ support for the traditional neutral/observer role (such as being a detached observer and letting people express their views) is dropping.

What is known as the “accommodative” or consumer-led role (such as providing news that attracts the largest audience or entertainment and relaxation) is also dropping. Journalist support for the watchdog role of monitoring and scrutinising political leaders and the activist roles of advocating for social change has grown. Journalists’ concern about the rise of fake news and information disorder is reflected in the fact that they rate their role in countering this new trend as their most important job.

Somewhat surprisingly, there has been an increase in journalists favouring supporting government policy and conveying a positive image of political leadership, but overall journalists still rank these roles very unimportant.

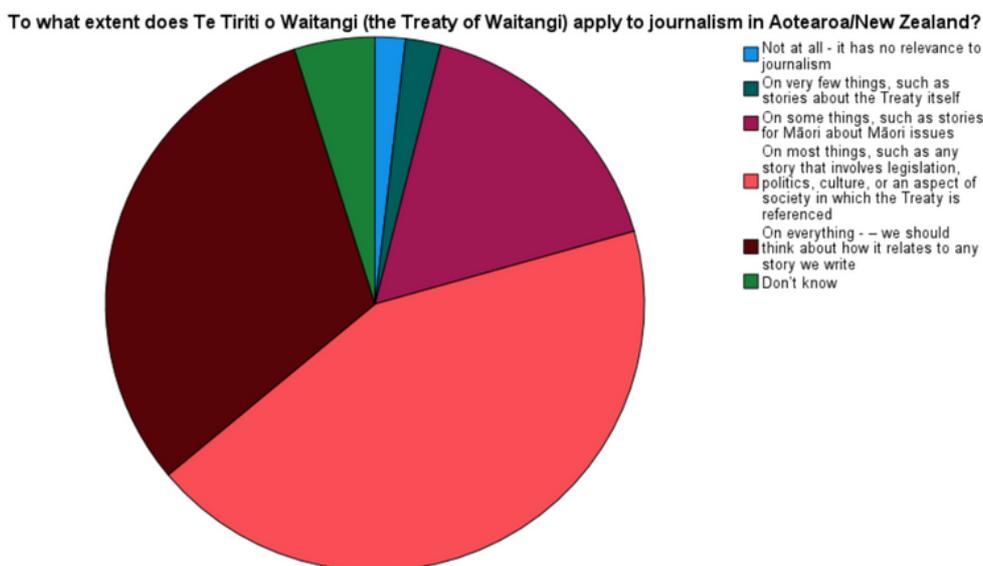
Table 10: Roles of NZ journalists	Mean 2015	Mean 2022	% change '15-'22 (rounded)
Educate the audience	Not asked	3.99	
Counteract disinformation	Not asked	3.95	
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	3.69	3.92	+5
Let people express their views	3.96	3.56	-8
Speak on behalf of the marginalised	Not asked	3.55	
Be a detached observer	3.95	3.53	-8
Provide analysis of current affairs	3.83	3.42	-8
Provide information people need to make political decisions	3.54	3.38	-3
Support efforts to protect public health	Not asked	3.29	
Advocate for social change	3.07	3.16	+2
Tell stories that emotionally move the audience	Not asked	3.14	
Promote peace and tolerance	Not asked	3.12	
Provide entertainment and relaxation	3.12	2.88	-5
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	3.27	2.81	-9
Support national development	2.63	2.8	+3
Motivate people to participate in political activity	2.72	2.76	+1
Influence public opinion	2.8	2.7	-0.2
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	2.7	2.45	-5
Set the political agenda	2.42	2.28	-3
Support government policy	1.37	1.88	+10
Convey a positive image of political leadership	1.46	1.68	+4

Treaty of Waitangi

This is the first time journalists have been asked about the Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In the period immediately before this survey, Stuff announced its apology for its historic racial coverage. Other organisations, such as Radio New Zealand and TVNZ, started to work harder to be more inclusive.

The survey results show that journalists by and large agree with this. Asked to what extent did the Treaty apply to what they wrote, almost a third (31%) said it applied to everything journalists wrote about. Another 43% said it applied to most things, such as any stories that involve legislation or politics, culture or society in which the treaty is referenced. A minority (16 percent) thought it only related to some things, such as stories for Māori about Māori issues, while 2% thought it had no relevance to journalism.

Table 9: Journalists’ views on Te Tiriti o Waitangi



Journalists and ethics

Journalists’ have been regularly surveyed about their approach to ethical problems. Again, there has been an interesting shift; journalists are much less interested in blindly adhering to their professional codes; support for this has dropped 28% since 2015.

Now journalists think it more important to set professional standards if extraordinary circumstances require it, a 20% increase. Thus journalists seem to be becoming more critical and independent in their thinking. This shift is confirmed by the change in standard deviation for these measures. In 2015 the low SD of 0.649 show a great majority of journalists agreed closely with always adhering to professional ethics; by 2022 there was a much wider range of views amongst journalists on this point.

Table 11: Ethical views of NZ journalists	N 2022	Mean 2015	Mean 2022
What is ethical for journalists should always be determined by professional standards regardless of situation and personal judgment	338	4.64	3.25
What is ethical in journalism depends on each specific situation	337	3.24	3.17
What is ethical in journalism should be a matter of personal judgment	338	2.63	2.46
What is ethical for journalists should be determined by professional standards unless extraordinary circumstances require disregarding them	338	2.63	3.65

Journalistic practices

Journalists have also been asked in many surveys about whether they believe certain more aggressive newsgathering practices are justified. They were asked whether they thought each practice was not approved under any circumstances, justified on occasion, or always justified. Journalists are still strongly supportive of using leaked official documents or documents of powerful people. They also support using hidden recording devices, which is permissible under New Zealand law, provided the journalist is a party to the conversation being recorded.

They are deeply divided about using documents of ordinary people, such as from social media, without their permission, with almost half thinking it not justified under any circumstances. While they will tolerate deception and intrusion in newsgathering in certain circumstances, particularly in order to uphold their watchdog role of holding the powerful accountable, they are generally strongly opposed to anything that appears as deception of their audience, as can be seen in their dislike of producing promotional stories or using information which is not verified.

Table 12: views of NZ journalists on various aggressive reporting practices	Percentage of journalists who think the practice is always justified or justified on occasion		
	2015	2022	% change
Using confidential business or government documents without authorisation	93	87	-6
Using the personal materials of powerful people, such as documents and photos, without their permission	Not asked	79	n/a
Using hidden recording devices	76	76	0
Using the personal materials of ordinary people, such as documents and photos, without their permission	49	54	+10
Accepting a free product or service from sources		38	n/a
Claiming to be someone else	26	35	+25
Publishing or broadcasting stories with information that is not yet verified	23	35	+34
Paying people for confidential information	36	19	-47
Producing content that mimics news stories but hides its promotional nature		6	n/a
Accepting money from sources	2	1.2	-40

Safety

This is the first time journalists have been asked about their safety, and the results are disturbing. Two thirds (68%) reported experiencing demeaning or hateful speech sometimes or often, with over a third experiencing it often or very often.

Similar proportions experienced public discrediting, a third experiencing it sometimes, and 60% sometimes or more often. Over half (57%) had their personal morality questioned sometimes or more often. Almost a quarter (22%) had experienced workplace bullying.

A small but concerning number had experienced more serious threats, such as surveillance (16%), hacking 12%, arrests or detentions (4.5%), legal action (11%), stalking (8%), other threats (36%), sexual assault or harassment (10%), physical attack (2.4%), coercion (8%), office raids or seizures (2.7%) or intimidation of their families (10%). Journalists were asked to rate, on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (very often) how often they had concerns for their safety.

The mean score for each safety issue is reported in table 13 below. Women feel much less safe than men in the workplace, reporting significantly higher levels of demeaning or hateful speech, public discrediting, stalking, other threats or intimidation, sexual harassment, questioning of their personal morality, of others disseminating personal information and workplace bullying.

Men reported more coercion. The biggest difference was for sexual assault or harassment with a mean difference of .538, showing that this is almost exclusively a problem faced by women journalists. These differences were confirmed by an independent-samples t-test comparing the safety experiences for these practices for females and males, which found significant differences ($p < .05$) in nine of the practices, marked in orange in table 13.

Table 13: NZ journalists' safety concerns	Gender	N	Mean
demeaning or hateful speech	Female	184	3.24
	Male	131	2.89
public discrediting	Female	184	2.9
	Male	130	2.62
surveillance	Female	183	1.53
	Male	130	1.54
hacking or blocking	Female	184	1.45
	Male	131	1.47
arrests, detentions or imprisonment	Female	184	1.03
	Male	131	1.08
legal actions	Female	184	1.46
	Male	131	1.6
stalking	Female	184	1.39
	Male	131	1.2
other threats or intimidation	Female	184	2.26
	Male	131	1.92
sexual assault / harassment	Female	184	1.58
	Male	131	1.04
other physical attacks	Female	184	1.13
	Male	131	1.21
coercion	Female	184	1.27
	Male	131	1.43
questioning of personal morality	Female	184	2.89
	Male	131	2.55
others using byline	Female	184	1.18
	Male	131	1.11
disseminating personal information	Female	184	1.51
	Male	131	1.33
workplace bullying	Female	184	1.85
	Male	131	1.6
abductions	Female	184	1.01
	Male	131	1.01
office raids or seizures or damage	Female	184	1.03
	Male	131	1.04
intimidation that targets family	Female	184	1.13
	Male	131	1.15

Journalists reported threats, bullying, stalking and rape and death threats. One had a faux Facebook page set up in their name. "Since the pandemic began, at protests anger and verbal intimidation of reporters and photographers from my regional newsroom has been occurring at protests, although I haven't experienced it. This is a real change in the regional city where I work."

"[I get] abusive email." "[I have] been told media is bought by Govt and lies." "Sexual harassment. I mean online - rape threats + threats of murder: online stalking is also common."

Real life stalking - just one needed a protection order." "Death threats of a serious nature have left me scared to work in the office in case I am followed home."

Others said they were stonewalled by organisations and had interviewees reluctant or refuse to speak due to distrust in journalists as a profession or industry." Two said they were concerned about having to run written paid (but labelled) content partnership stories, another at "harassment from PR professionals." One noted their frustration at "too much power of communications teams."

Sexual abuse included "public speculation or commentary about my body, mental health, sex like, marriage, which political commentators/etc I must have had sex with, etc." Others experienced viewers trying to be friends on their private social media accounts.

"There's been an editorial decision not to give oxygen to anti-vax positions which has at time felt uncomfortable - for example there was not much appetite for stories about the personal stories of teachers or health workers who gave up their jobs because of the vax mandate rules. I felt those voices should be heard even if it meant avoiding any arguments about the 'science'."

Related to these concerns, journalists were asked about their concerns for their personal and job security. While most felt job secure, a majority (52%) felt those who harm journalists go unpunished. Almost half (46%) felt concerned about their physical and emotional wellbeing, 20 % had no opinion, and 33% were not.

Almost a quarter (23%) were concerned about losing their job in the next year, compared to over half (54%) who were not, and another quarter with no opinion.

Media freedom

Three quarters say they have a great deal or complete freedom in selecting stories and deciding which aspects of stories to emphasise. Four fifths believe there is either a great deal or complete media freedom in New Zealand.

Use of technology

Technology is central to newsgathering and often distribution. More than four fifths (87%) now use social media to find information sometimes or more often, with two thirds (67%) using it often or always.

Forty percent use it promote journalism often or always, and two thirds use it sometimes or more often. A third (34%) use analytical tools to measure the behaviour of online audiences, and over half (53%) do this sometimes or more.

Very few, however (only 6 %) are using automated journalism, in which computers converts data into news texts. Nor do many (10%) use news personalization, which automatically selects which stories are shown to users and how prominently.

Influences on journalists

Journalism surveys have often asked journalists who and what they consider influential. These batteries of questions have proved useful in showing how journalists resist or conform to social, workplace and personal pressures.

In general, journalists seem to think most things are less influential than they did seven years ago. The exceptions are their workplace peers and supervisors, who have become more influential. As table 14 below shows, they consider journalism ethics the most important influence on their work, demonstrating they cleave more to professional norms than commercial or social pressures.

This is followed closely by access to information, possibly reflecting the oft-stated concern about declining access to official information due to increased government and corporate control over information.

Table 14: Perceived influences	2015 Mean	2022 Mean	Change (%)
Internal: peers on the news staff where you work	2.6	2.96	+6
Internal: editorial supervisors/ higher editors	3.4	3.48	+2
Internal: business managers	2.8	1.67	-22
Internal: owners	2.2	1.63	-11
Internal: Editorial policy	3.5	3.15	-7
Internal: Advertising considerations	2.2	1.30	-14
Internal: Profit expectations	2.2	1.47	-15
Internal: Audience research	3.1	2.42	-14
Internal: news-gathering resources	3.7	3.28	-8
Internal: Time limits	3.9	3.54	-7
Internal: Journalism ethics	4.2	3.77	-8
Internal: Self-Censorship		2.26	
Internal: Your personal values and beliefs	3.3	3.01	-6
External: Colleagues in other media	2.5	2.40	-2
External: friends, acquaintances and family	2.4	2.08	-6
External: Feedback from the audience	3.2	2.54	-13
External: Competing news organizations	2.9	2.41	-10
External: Media laws and regulation	3.8	3.38	-8
External: Access to information	3.8	3.73	-1
External: Government censorship	2.5	1.64	-17
External: Government officials	2.1	1.83	-5
External: Politicians	2	1.75	-5
External: Businesspeople	2.1	1.79	-6
External: Public relations	2.3	1.99	-6
External: Relationships with news sources	3.4	3.07	0
External: Police	0	1.65	0
External: Issue advocacy groups	0	2.03	0
External: Scientists or health experts	0	2.81	0
External: Religious groups and institutions	0	1.20	0

This battery asked journalists to state how much influence each of the following has on their work. 5 means it is extremely influential, 4 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 2 means little influential, and 1 means not influential. The mean is the average score for all journalists on a scale of 1-5.

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