

World Press Freedom Day

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## **PROFILE OF JOURNALISTS IN LEBANON:**

**WHO THEY ARE, HOW THEY SEE THEIR  
REALITY, AND WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT  
THEIR ROLE**

## Report on the Profile of Journalists in Lebanon: Who They Are, How They See Their Reality, and What They Say About Their Role

Maharat Foundation prepared this report in the context of World Press Freedom Day.

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## Profile of Journalists in Lebanon: Who They Are, How They See Their Reality, and What They Say About Their Role

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## Introduction

Every year on May 3, the world celebrates **World Press Freedom Day** as an occasion to assess the state of journalism and to express solidarity with journalists who face pressure and violations while defending the public's right to know.

This year, the day comes amid an **extraordinary and difficult year** for Lebanon's media sector. In late 2023, journalists in Lebanon found themselves at the heart of a war that directly targeted them, endangering their safety and resulting in the deaths of 11 journalists while carrying out their professional duties.

War, however, was not the only **burden weighing on journalists**. Longstanding **challenges persisted**, including deep economic and social crises and relentless efforts to fulfill an oversight role in highly sensitive matters such as reforms, anti-corruption, and financial transparency. These challenges played out in a media environment saturated with disinformation and rumors, threatening reform efforts and complicating the pursuit of truth.

In addition, the media sector in Lebanon—like elsewhere in the **world—is undergoing rapid transformations driven by technological developments** and artificial intelligence. These shifts are taking place in a difficult economic context that endangers the sustainability of media institutions and the job security of media workers, raising existential questions about the future of journalism and the role of journalists in the digital age.

Against this backdrop, Maharat Foundation launched a **survey to gather journalists' perspectives on their professional, economic, and watchdog roles** and to analyze their vision for the future of journalism amid the many challenges they face. This report seeks to highlight the realities journalists face on their international day, serving as a critical step toward understanding the profession and working to improve its conditions.



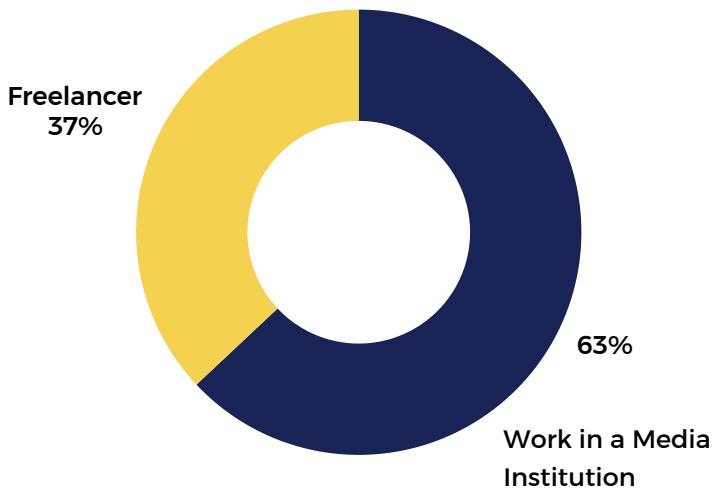
## Introduction

### Key Findings of the Report

- The professional safety environment remains fragile and lacks any institutional or legal protection, leaving journalists exposed to violence and risk, without training, insurance, or accountability mechanisms.
- Meanwhile, Lebanese newsrooms are witnessing scattered individual efforts to adapt to digital transformation, but in the absence of institutional frameworks, technology shifts from being an enabling tool to becoming an added burden.
- Despite this, journalists in Lebanon still believe in their oversight role. However, this belief is undermined by a fragmented political and media landscape, unenforced legislation, and a fragile professional structure that hinders their ability to confront propaganda and disinformation.
- Regarding working conditions: journalists often operate under verbal agreements, experience wage disparities, suffer from weak union representation, and live in constant fear of arbitrary dismissal. Journalism in Lebanon thus resembles an individual risk rather than a protected profession.

As such, this report serves as a call to restore the value of press freedom—not as a celebratory slogan, but as a collective responsibility that requires the protection of journalists' lives and professional dignity, and the empowerment of their vital role in serving truth and democracy.

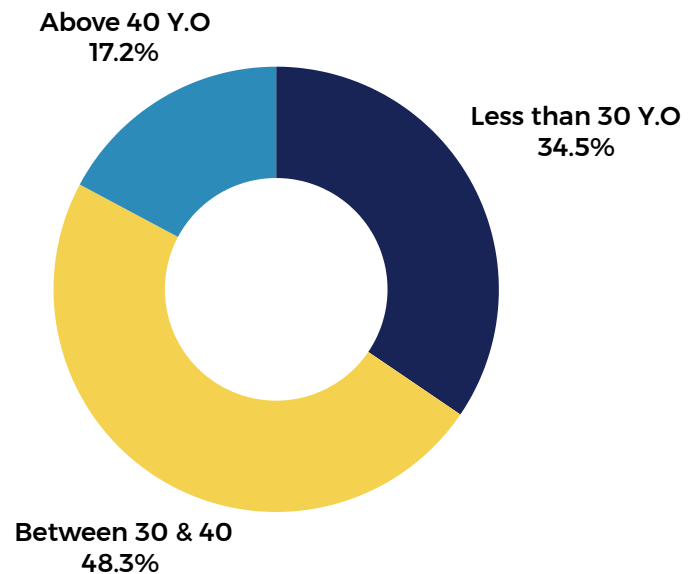
## Introduction



The ages of the journalists who participated in the survey varied as follows: those under 30 years old made up 34.5%, those between 30 and 40 years old constituted the largest group at 48.3%, and those over 40 years old accounted for 17.2%

## Methodology of the Report

The survey covered a sample of 87 journalists. About 63% work in media institutions, including local TV stations—among them Tele Liban (22 journalists)—as well as Arab satellite channels (5 journalists), newspapers, digital outlets, and alternative media platforms. Around 37% work as freelancers contributing to multiple media organizations.



# Profile of Journalists in Lebanon: Who They Are, How They See Their Reality, and What They Say About Their Role

Based on the results of a survey conducted by Maharat Foundation on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day 2025



## Who are the surveyed journalists?

- A diverse professional body comprising both freelancers and institutional employees, most of whom lack written contracts and endure precarious working conditions.
- The majority are editors and field correspondents, working without insurance or dedicated health coverage, and facing significant risks in the field amid the absence of any effective institutional or legal protection.
- They are experienced journalists with varied specializations, yet their access to training and professional development remains limited—especially in areas such as safety, technology, law, and specialized topics like economics and public finance.



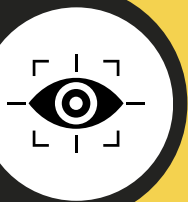
## How do they see their reality?

- **In a risk-filled environment:** They work without physical or psychological protection frameworks, often moving through dangerous field zones, particularly during wars or crises.
- **With limited tools and individual initiatives:** Despite lacking infrastructure and institutional support, many are turning to AI tools (such as ChatGPT and Canva) for editing, translation, research, and fact-checking.
- **Amid stark wage disparities:** Journalists face significant financial inequalities across institutions, as well as internal discrimination based more on personal connections or "fame" than on professional standards.
- **Without genuine union protection:** Many feel that existing unions are unable to represent or defend them, prompting them to rely on self-advocacy or explore alternative initiatives.

## Profile of Journalists in Lebanon: Who They Are, How They See Their Reality, and What They Say About Their Role

Based on the results of a survey conducted by Maharat Foundation on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day 2025

### What do they say about their role?



- **They still believe in their watchdog role:** Despite all challenges, 90% affirm their belief that journalism must serve as a genuine oversight power, capable of holding authorities accountable and exposing corruption.



- **They are concerned about impunity and chaotic technology use:** Journalists feel that the lack of legal accountability puts them in constant danger. They also fear the unethical use of technology and the rise of disinformation and fake news.



- **They are eager for development:** They call for specialized training, legal and professional support, and real independence that frees them from political and financial dependency.

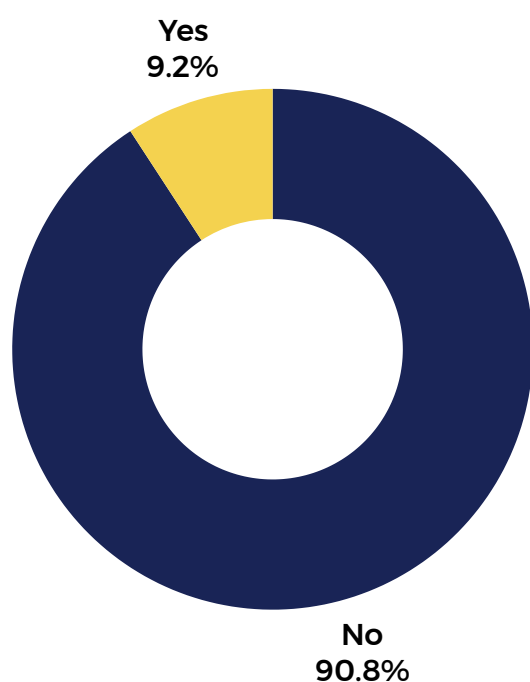


- **They aspire to fair and sustainable journalism:** One in which competence is valued and rights are protected.



## Part One:

### On Safety and Protection - A Fragile Reality and a Culture of Impunity

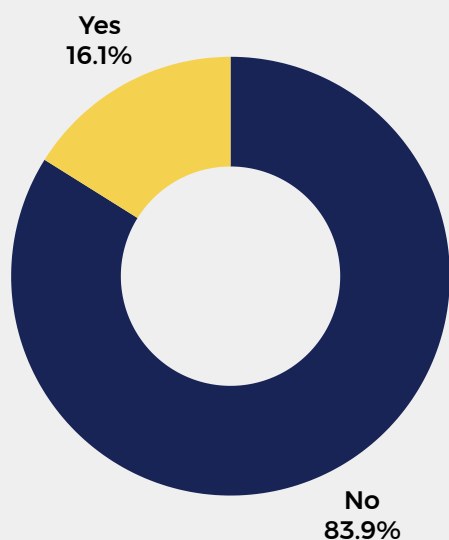


The survey results reflect the state of protection that journalists in Lebanon are supposed to enjoy. A striking 90.8% of respondents indicated that they do not feel that protective frameworks for journalists are in place, highlighting the absence of a safe professional environment that enables media workers to carry out their roles without constant threats to their lives and safety.

This general sense of insecurity aligns with what Maharat Foundation documented over the past year, particularly in its report on [A War Without Red Lines: Threats and Risks Facing Journalists in Lebanon](#). The report recorded the direct targeting of journalists in the field and the absence of any concrete measures by authorities or media institutions to protect them.



### Lack of Training as an Additional Risk

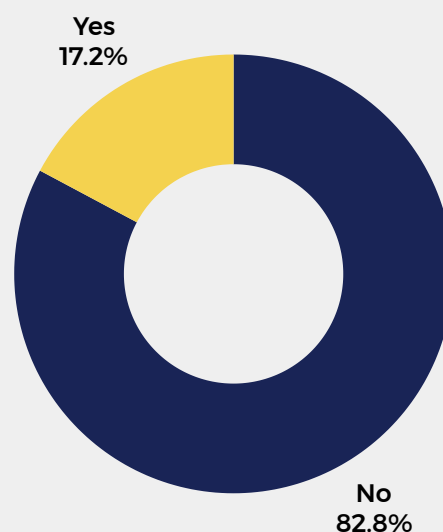


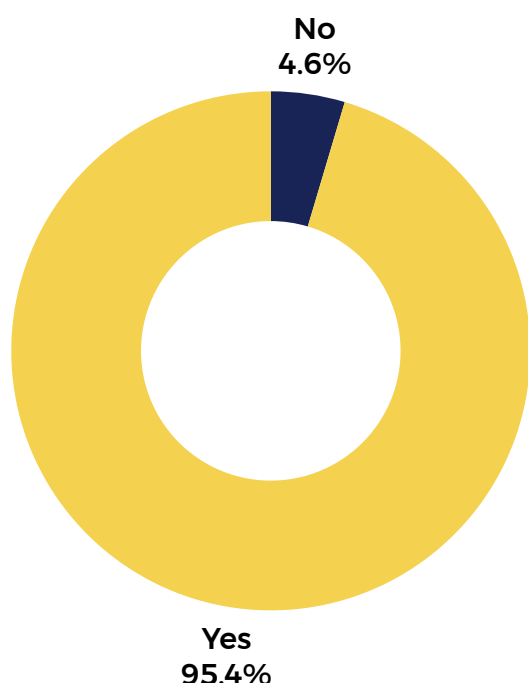
According to the survey, 84% of participants stated that they had not received any training from their institutions on how to cover wars or crises. The minority who had received training (16%) referred to limited and unstructured initiatives, such as workshops organized by the Lebanese Red Cross or journalist training organizations like SKeyes and Maharat, as well as self-initiated learning through universities or academic research.

This indicates that the vast majority of journalists are entering conflict and tension zones without the necessary readiness provided by field knowledge or technical and psychological training—leaving them vulnerable to risks without the appropriate protection tools.

### No Insurance... No Guarantees

This institutional neglect is further reinforced by the fact that 83% of the journalists who participated in the survey confirmed that their institutions do not provide them with any insurance coverage for the risks associated with war reporting. This means that Lebanese journalists are not only risking their lives, but they are doing so without any guarantees, social protection, or compensation in the event of injury or harm.





### Impunity: The Rule, Not the Exception

Perhaps the most telling finding is related to the prevailing culture of impunity. A striking 95.4% of journalists stated that they believe this culture dominates the handling of crimes committed against journalists.

This finding aligns with all of Maharat's reports—from "[A Hundred Years in Red Ink](#)" published in 2006, and its latest publication "[A War Without Red Lines: Threats and Risks Facing Journalists in Lebanon](#)"—all of which highlight the lack of serious investigations or actual accountability in cases of journalist killings and assaults. This creates an environment in which such crimes can be easily repeated without deterrence.

The survey results reveal the fragility of the professional safety environment for journalists in Lebanon, where fear and a lack of trust in institutional and legal safeguards prevail. In the absence of training, insurance, and amid a pervasive culture of impunity, journalists become vulnerable to targeting without any effective protection framework.

These findings reaffirm what Maharat Foundation has long documented in its successive reports—from "A Hundred Years in Red Ink," and "A War Without Red Lines: Threats and Risks Facing Journalists in Lebanon." All point to the absence of accountability and protection policies, leaving journalists alone in the face of violence.

These realities not only signal a threat to press freedom, but also to the fundamental rights to life and safe work—underscoring the urgent need for a comprehensive reconstruction of legal and professional protection systems in Lebanon.

## Part Two:

### Facing Technological Transformations and a Changing Information Landscape

Technology is no longer just an auxiliary tool in journalism—it has become a structural component reshaping the media landscape in terms of production, distribution, and consumption.

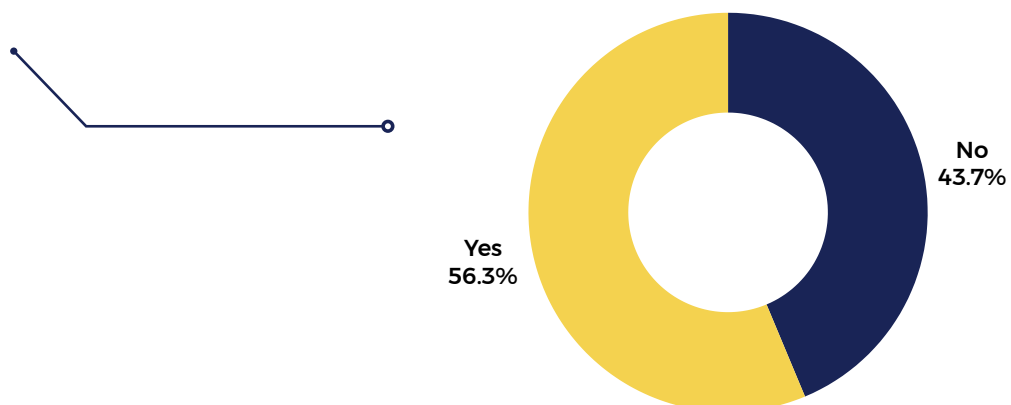
In this context, Maharat's survey shows that the journalistic community in Lebanon is experiencing a dual state: openness to opportunities for development on one hand, and concerns about the marginalization of the human role in the midst of the digital revolution on the other.

#### Fear is Justified... But Not Dominant

A total of 56.3% of journalists reported feeling afraid of the changing information landscape and the increasing use of technology. The reasons behind this fear varied, including:

- Concerns over loss of privacy or the potential replacement of journalists by artificial intelligence.
- Inability to keep up with the rapid pace of technological advancement.
- The growing chaos of information and proliferation of misleading content.
- The blurring of boundaries between serious journalism and unprofessional content.

However, a significant number of respondents expressed progressive and realistic views, emphasizing that technology in itself is not inherently dangerous—its impact depends on how it is used. Some even saw it as an opportunity to break free from routine tasks and focus more on analytical and investigative journalism, provided that the necessary skills and support are available.



Journalists' responses revealed a clear divergence in their views on the impact of technology and artificial intelligence on journalism. While many expressed concerns about job losses, the rise of misinformation, and the difficulty of verifying information amid the overwhelming flow of digital data, others saw technology as an opportunity to facilitate work, increase productivity, and improve access to information. Some emphasized that despite its challenges, technology remains a supportive tool for the smart journalist who knows how to use it to enhance rather than undermine their role. Concerns also emerged about the loss of privacy, diminishing individual distinction, and the tendency of some media institutions to rely on AI technologies instead of human staff as a cost-cutting measure. On the other hand, several responses stressed the importance of adapting to these changes and developing the necessary skills to keep up with rapid transformations. They argued that high-quality journalism—rooted in verification and in-depth analysis—will remain essential despite the digital revolution. Overall, the responses reflect a strong awareness of both the challenges and opportunities linked to the growing use of technology in the media sector, with a notable tendency to approach this evolution as an inevitable shift that requires continuous investment in learning and innovation.

- “
- For those who know how to use it, it poses no threat—instead, it becomes a helpful tool.
  - Technology Has Both Positive and Negative Sides...

.....

  - With advanced technology, it becomes harder for journalists to distinguish real news from fake.
  - It can be a source of concern when it comes to fabricating news and spreading false information...

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  - As much as technology is important and facilitates work, the speed of change can make it harder to keep up with all the new tools and platforms...
  - As technology use increases, journalists bear a greater responsibility to verify information...

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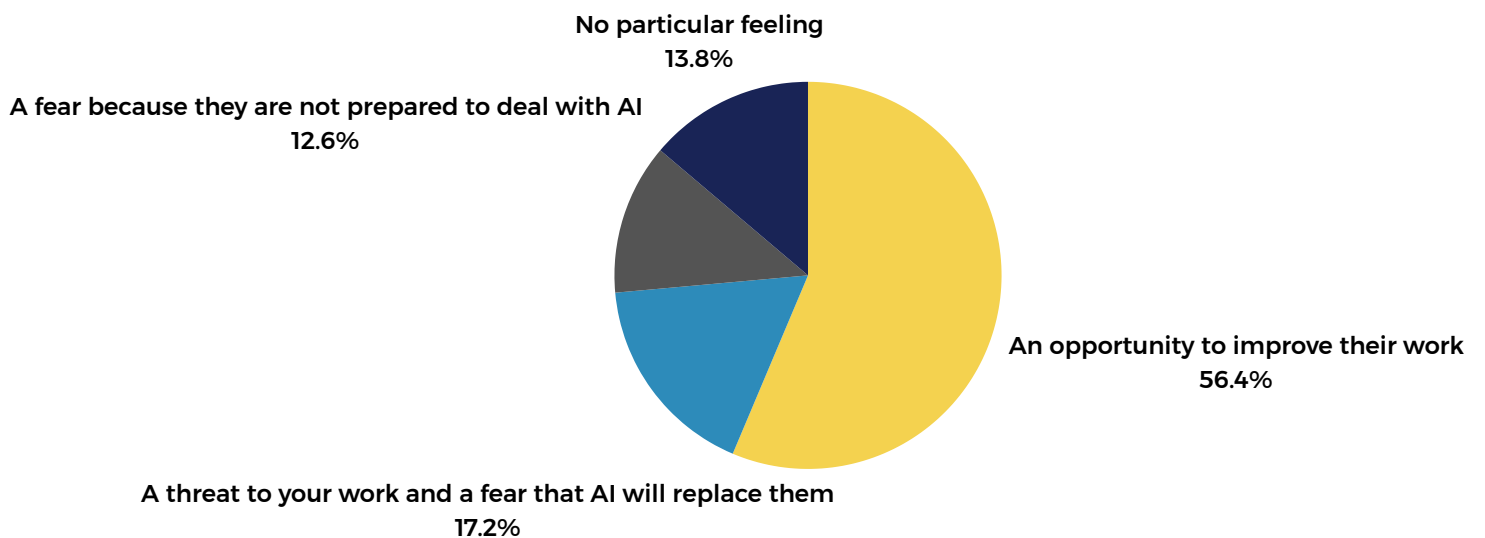
Journalists' Responses in Maharat's Survey

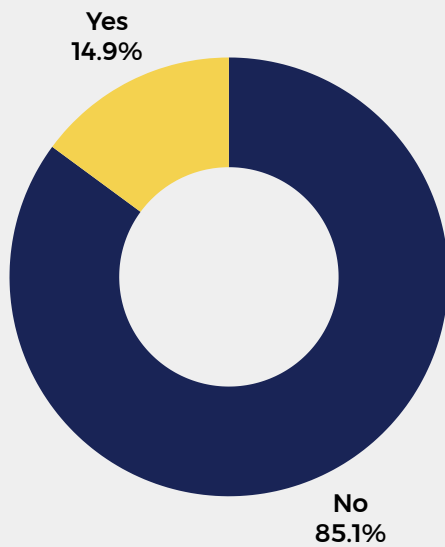


## Artificial Intelligence: Between Threat and Empowerment

When journalists were asked about their views on the increasing use of artificial intelligence in newsrooms:

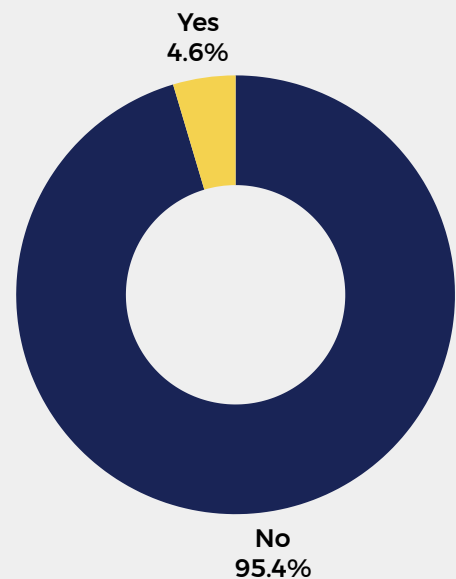
- **56.3%** saw it as an opportunity to enhance journalistic work.
- **17.2%** expressed fear that it might replace them.
- **13.8%** were not afraid but felt unprepared to deal with it.
- **12.6%** had no specific opinion.

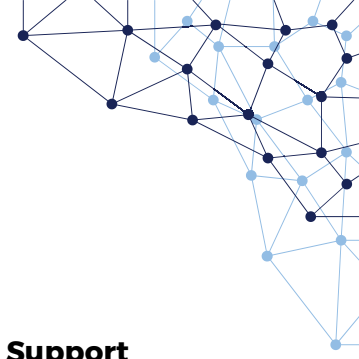




This distribution reveals a clear divide, which can be understood in light of the **lack of institutional investment in developing journalists' skills**, as **85.1%** confirmed that they had not received any training in the use of technology or artificial intelligence tools.

Even more concerning is that **95.4% said their institutions do not provide them with the necessary subscriptions** or tools, leaving them to face the digital transformation relying solely on their personal resources.





## Use of AI Tools: Individual Efforts Highlight the Need for Institutional Support

Despite the lack of institutional backing, a significant number of journalists reported actively using AI tools, especially:

- ChatGPT (the most frequently used, mentioned around 64 times across various uses): for research, translation, summarizing reports, improving writing, and transcription.
- 
- Tools such as Canva AI, Perplexity, Deepseek, Gemini, Copilot, Adobe AI, among others—indicating an increasing diversity in the tools being adopted.
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- More advanced uses in some cases, such as image analysis, identifying the locations of violations, or analyzing hate speech.
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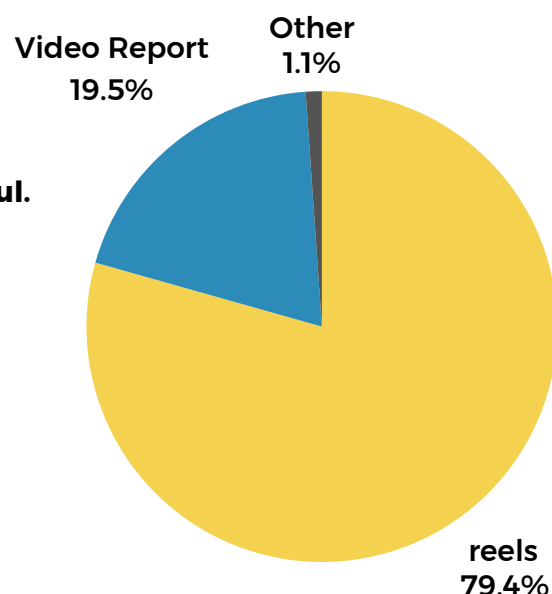
Six participants reported not using any AI tools, citing reasons such as lack of access to subscriptions or distrust in the technology.

These indicators reflect promising individual initiatives, but they remain unstructured and lack a systematic framework.

## The Shift in Content Formats: A Challenge for Print Journalism.

When asked about the most impactful content formats for audiences today, journalists unanimously identified Reels as the most influential and far-reaching. The distribution was as follows:

- **79.3% said Reels are the most impactful.**
- **19.5% chose long-form videos.**
- **Written content received a very minimal percentage.**

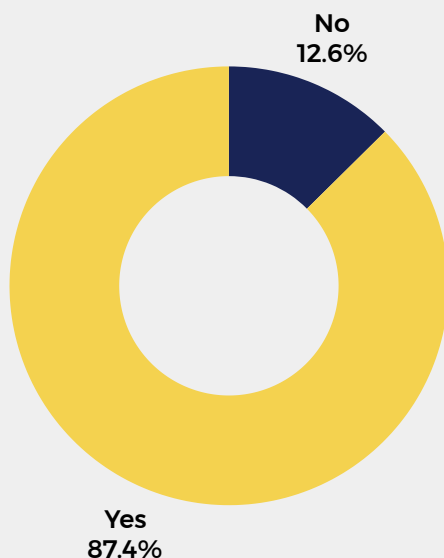
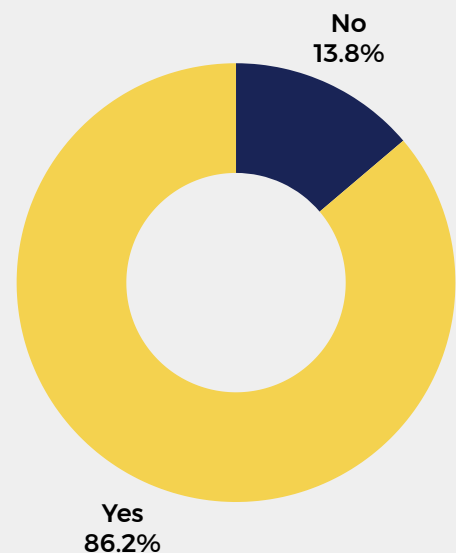






**This digital shift led some to express concerns about the decline of print journalism or the loss of “depth” in favor of fast-paced content.**

Nevertheless, 86.2% of participants stated that they possess the skills to adapt content into these new digital formats—indicating a fair level of adaptability that simply needs to be strengthened.



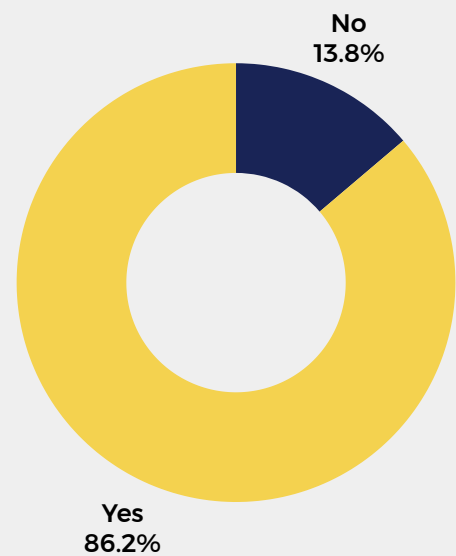
### **Use of Personal Accounts and Self-Promotion**

The survey showed that **87.4%** of journalists use their personal social media accounts to promote their work. This reflects a new reality in journalism, where the journalist is also expected to act as a digital marketer, content creator, and publisher—in the absence of organized institutional support.



### Fact-Checking: Relative Progress

A total of **60.9%** stated that they are qualified to use tools for verifying images, videos, and deepfakes. While this percentage remains insufficient, it nonetheless indicates a notable advancement in professional awareness—especially given the growing prevalence of disinformation, a topic that Maharat has given particular attention to in its guide on “Guiding Manual for Journalists: How to Address Information Disorder Online”



This section of the report reveals the **fragility of the institutional infrastructure** needed to support technological adaptation, contrasted with **individual efforts** by journalists to harness AI tools despite the lack of structured support. The fear of technology does not stem from its nature, but rather from its unethical use or from leaving journalists to confront it without proper training. Conversely, the real opportunity lies in **transforming this digital revolution into a tool for empowerment and development**—not one of threat and marginalization.



## Part Three:

### **The Role of Journalism as a Watchdog - Between Professional Commitment and Structural Challenges**

Journalism's watchdog role in Lebanon has long been a cornerstone for promoting accountability, exposing corruption, and protecting the public interest. However, the survey reveals that fulfilling this role is increasingly hindered by a range of structural, political, and technological challenges—highlighting the urgent need for a fundamental review of the journalistic work environment and for ensuring its independence.

#### **What matters most to journalists in their work?**

When asked to choose the most important aspect of their journalistic work among professional standards and ethics, access to information, protective media laws, or editorial oversight, journalists responded as follows:

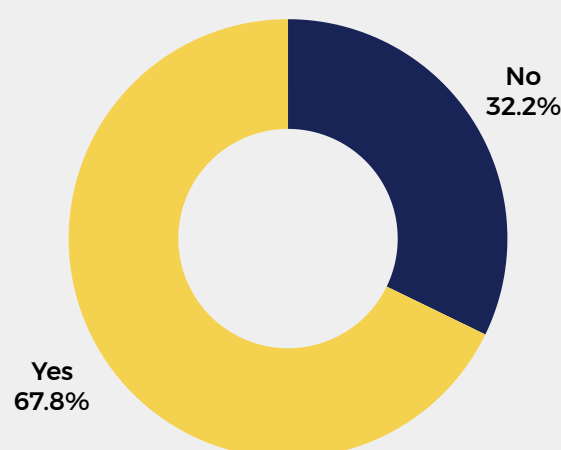
- **Respect for professional standards and journalistic ethics ranked first among the majority of participants (47 votes).**
- 
- **Access to information came in second in terms of importance (23 votes as a top priority, and 28 as important).**
- 
- **In contrast, aspects such as media laws that protect journalists and the protection of sources ranked lower.**
- 
- **Editorial oversight was considered the least important, with 50 votes stating it was not important.**

These results reflect a strong professional and ethical priority among journalists, but also reveal a low level of trust in the laws and institutions that are supposed to ensure a safe and independent working environment. This aligns with Maharat Foundation's previous recommendations on the need to reform Lebanon's legal framework for media and to strengthen protective systems. It also echoes Maharat's recent report on the **"Law on the Right to Access Information: Journalists Describe the Reality"**



## Are Journalists Still Independent?

Despite the fragmented media landscape, the concentration of media ownership, and the lack of transparency regulations concerning ownership and funding, **67.8%** of participants expressed that they feel independent in their journalistic work. This indicates their commitment to maintaining professional distance, even within a highly polarized political and media environment.



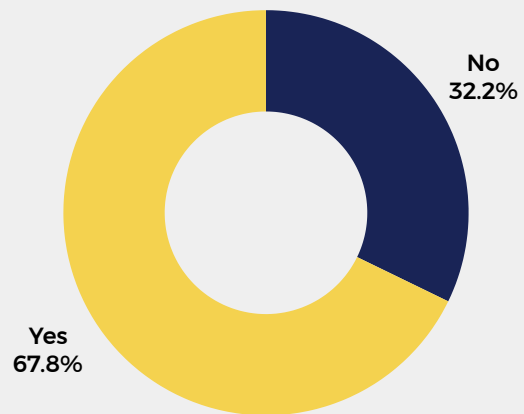
However, this percentage does not imply the absence of obstacles. The qualitative responses revealed a broad awareness of the difficulty in exercising a watchdog role, with some participants describing the current environment as a “system of political propaganda dominating the media” and citing the “lack of infrastructure needed to counter rumors and disinformation, particularly in matters of financial transparency and the economy.”

## Confronting Rumors and Disinformation: Relative Readiness and Critique of the Reality

A large share of participants stated that they are ready to confront political propaganda and disinformation. However, the nature of their responses revealed significant variation in levels of preparedness:

- Some journalists pointed to their professional experience and noted the difficulty of accessing reliable sources, especially on topics related to financial transparency and the economy.
- Others expressed the need for specialized and in-depth training, particularly in dealing with complex economic and financial files.
- A number of participants highlighted that legal knowledge is weak or lacking altogether, and that effective confrontation requires analytical tools and areas of expertise that are not provided by media institutions or local training opportunities.

There were repeated calls to establish internal fact-checking units and sustainable training frameworks to counter propaganda—based on verification tools, understanding political agendas, and critically analyzing public discourse.



The responses clearly reflected that professional independence alone is not sufficient; it must be accompanied by knowledge-based, technical, and legislative support structures—otherwise, the journalist risks becoming “an individual facing massive politicized institutions,” as one participant put it.

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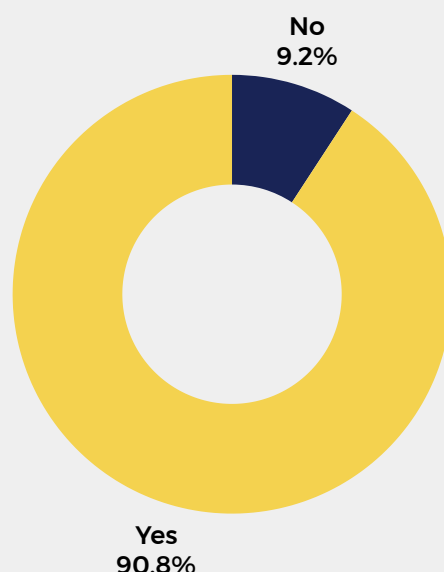
- I don't think any journalist is capable of confronting the political propaganda of massive media institutions and entities with armies of journalists and social media platforms.
- As long as there are difficulties in accessing information and a state of information disorder, we cannot confront political propaganda, nor even do our job professionally, and we are deprived of fulfilling the role of the fourth estate
- We need training and background knowledge to understand it.
- I'm not an expert in financial and economic affairs.
- The massive influx of rumors and political propaganda can create an alternate reality, misleading journalists away from real sources of information.
- In reality, ideology infiltrates every topic, but financial transparency is the most sensitive and vulnerable to it, given the number of people backing those implicated in our financial and economic collapse. Facing this challenge requires more courage and professionalism than any other

Journalists' Responses in Maharat's Survey



## Belief in the Watchdog Role... Still Standing

Despite all challenges, the survey revealed a clear commitment to journalism's role as a watchdog. **90.8%** of participants stated that they still believe in their role as the fourth estate—an outcome that reflects a strong sense of professional dedication and a genuine desire to serve the public interest, despite the obstacles.



But this percentage does not imply the absence of obstacles. The qualitative comments revealed a broad awareness of the challenges involved in exercising a watchdog role, in light of what some participants described as a “political propaganda system dominating the media” and the “lack of infrastructure needed to counter rumors and disinformation on issues of financial transparency and the economy.”

**This commitment to the watchdog role**, as reflected in many of the responses, is tied to concepts such as:

- **Verifying information from multiple sources.**
- **Relying on data rather than statements.**
- **Monitoring public policies and holding officials accountable.**
- **Engaging in investigative journalism on transparency and corruption.**
- **Using artificial intelligence tools to detect suspicious patterns.**

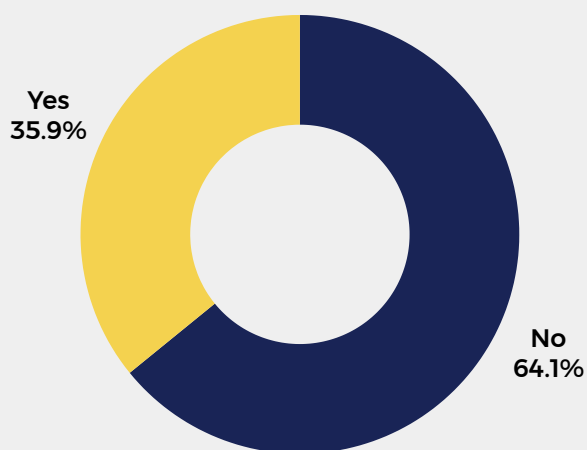


In short, journalists in Lebanon still believe in their mission—but they face this belief with limited resources, ineffective legislation, and a fragmented media landscape dominated by the interests of money and power. There is readiness to confront disinformation and political propaganda, but it requires institutional support and specialized professional training, especially in financial and economic fields, which have become central to the battle for transparency and accountability. Preserving this watchdog role demands investment from media institutions, unions, and the state in capacity building, strengthening the legal environment, and reinforcing the independence of the media as a genuine—not merely symbolic—fourth estate.



## Part Four:

### Working Conditions and Journalists' Rights - Fragility and Union Abandonment

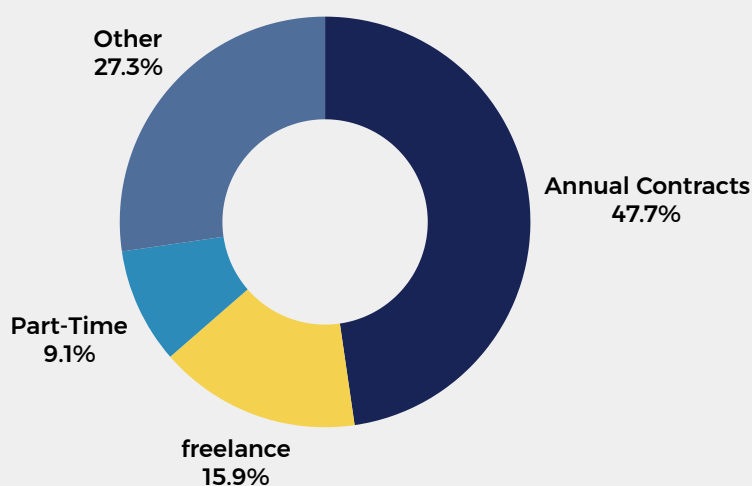


#### Absence of Contracts: Working Without Guarantees

Survey results revealed that **64.1%** of journalists do not have a work contract with the media outlet they work for, indicating the widespread prevalence of unprotected and unregulated employment arrangements—where journalists bear all forms of risk without any legal or social safeguards.

As for those who do have contracts (**39.1%**), the types of contracts were distributed as follows:

- **47.7%** annual contracts
- **15.9%** freelance contracts
- **9.1%** part-time contracts
- **27.3%** responded “Other”



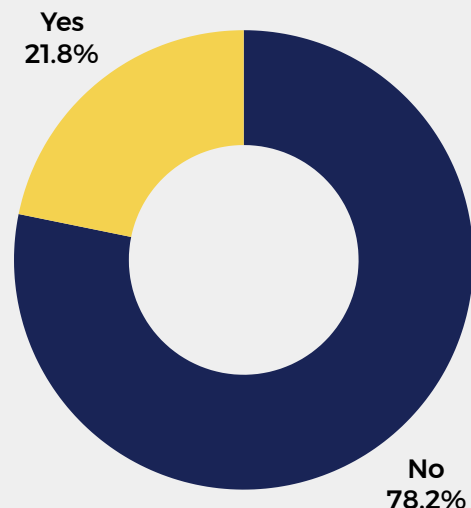


### Satisfaction with Contracts is Limited... But Alternatives Are Lacking

Despite the limited availability of contracts, **52.2%** of those who have one expressed satisfaction with it, while **47.8%** said they were dissatisfied—highlighting weak bargaining power or the absence of viable alternatives in the media market.

### Fair Pay: Absent in the Eyes of the Majority

A total of **78.2%** of journalists stated that they do not consider their pay to be fair. This high percentage reflects a disconnect between the effort invested in their work and the financial compensation they receive—particularly in the absence of clear standards for wage evaluation and the declining real value of salaries amid a collapsed economic environment.



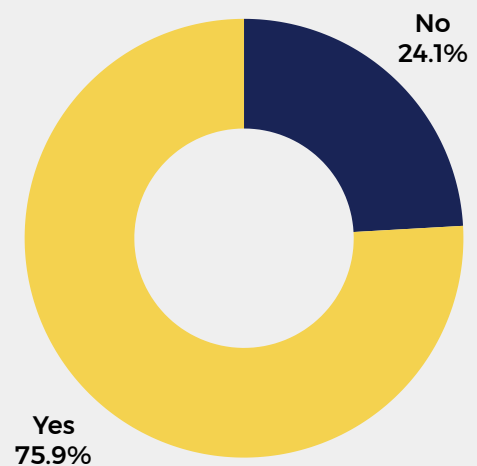


### Significant Standards

### Disparities...

### Without

**75.9%** said they observe differences in salaries and allowances either within their institutions or between different media outlets.



The reasons varied, according to the qualitative responses provided:

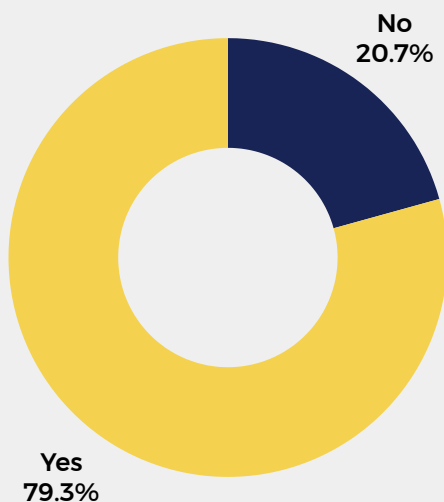


- The absence of unified or transparent standards within media institutions.
- Favoritism and personal connections replacing merit and competence.
- Differences in funding between local and international media, with some journalists noting that local outlets offer significantly lower salaries compared to Arab or international institutions.
- Regional disparities (e.g., between Beirut and Tripoli).
- Meager compensation for freelancers, with several testimonies highlighting the lack of fairness in payment distribution and the exploitation of freelance journalists by some platforms for minimal fees.
- Unspoken discrimination based on gender, age, or public recognition.

Some journalists pointed out that “reputation,” “public relations,” or even “physical appearance” can influence salary levels—undermining the meaning of professional journalism and turning media work into a closed network of privileges that disregards merit. There were also repeated complaints about the lack of health coverage and protective equipment, as well as the absence of clear and transparent wage standards. Nonetheless, a few journalists noted that salaries may vary depending on the nature of the work and area of specialization, and that some institutions adhere to relative standards. Overall, the responses reveal a deep crisis in Lebanon’s media labor market, marked by disorder and injustice—threatening the profession’s stability and weakening journalists’ professional motivation.

### Gender-Based Discrimination Exists... Even If Not Publicly Acknowledged

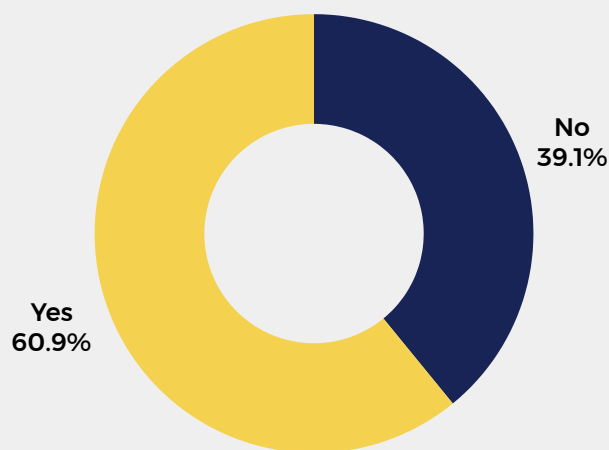
Although **52.9%** of participants stated that there is no gender-based discrimination in contracts or wages, **47.1%** acknowledged the existence of disparities in contracts, salaries, or benefits based on gender—indicating the absence of institutional policies that ensure equality.



### Flexibility and Specialization: Some Structure Amid the Chaos

Despite these conditions, **79.3%** of journalists indicated that they have flexibility between office work and remote work—a high percentage that reflects adaptability to the digital shifts following the COVID-19 pandemic.

As for specialization in coverage, **60.9%** responded that they focus on specific topics (such as the environment, economy, human rights, etc.). However, qualitative analysis revealed that this specialization is not always professional or supported by training. In many cases, assignments are made based on capacity, personal interest, or availability—rather than through a structured institutional vision for specialization and professional development.



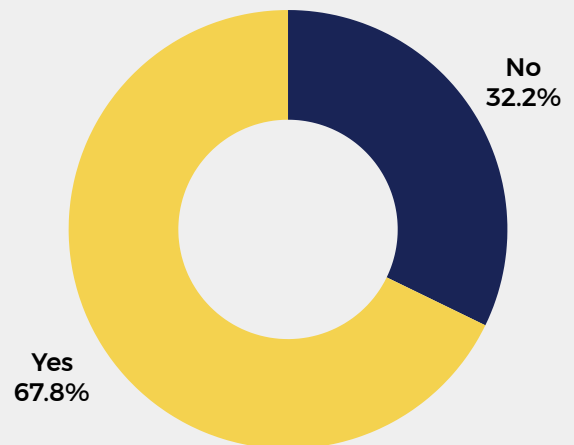
Journalists' responses reflect a clear disparity in how media institutions approach the issue of journalistic specialization in covering specific topics or fields, such as the economy, environment, or human rights. While many participants noted the presence of relative specialization based on the journalist's experience and personal interests—particularly in institutions that assign specific beats to enhance depth and professionalism in coverage—other responses highlighted the lack of a systematic approach to specialization in many media outlets. In these cases, journalists are often required to cover multiple topics based on need, urgency, or available funding, regardless of their expertise.

A recurring observation was that some institutions, especially local ones, lack support for developing specialization among journalists, which affects the quality of coverage. On the other hand, some freelance journalists indicated that they establish their own specialization by choosing topics aligned with their experience, even in the absence of institutional support.

In conclusion, the responses indicate that journalistic specialization does exist, but it is often driven by individual initiative rather than being part of a clear and sustainable institutional policy.

### Fear of Arbitrary Dismissal: A Valid Concern

**67.8%** of journalists expressed fear of arbitrary dismissal—a percentage that reflects the fragility of the relationship between institutions and their employees and reinforces a general sense of professional instability, in the absence of protection mechanisms or an effective legal framework that obliges institutions to honor their contractual obligations.



### Union and Association Abandonment: The Voice Exists, But Action Is Absent

When journalists were asked about their views on the performance of unions and associations in defending their rights:

- Phrases like “decorative,” “cliquish,” “ineffective,” and “completely absent from the defense scene” were frequently repeated.
- Several participants noted that most unions limit themselves to issuing condemnatory statements without taking any concrete action.
- Some considered that alternative unions and organizations such as Maharat, Samir Kassir Foundation, and SKeyes are making notable efforts.
- A small number pointed to the presence of moral or legal support, but most responses agreed that the union landscape falls short of meeting the daily challenges faced by journalists.

This section reveals a fragile reality regarding journalists’ rights in Lebanon—marked by a lack of job security, widening wage gaps, and the absence of effective union representation. Journalists are caught between work pressure and lack of protection, operating under “verbal contracts” and “disguised favoritism,” all in the absence of a modern legal framework that reflects the nature of the profession and its requirements.

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