

MAPPING PUBLIC INTEREST JOURNALISM IN WALES

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Study approach	6
1. Diversity and inclusion in journalism.....	7
1.1. The diversity of journalists in the sector.....	8
1.2. Representation in the news.....	14
1.3. Exploring news deserts and the Welsh language	16
1.3.1 News coverage in Wales.....	17
1.3.2 Identified news deserts and implications	21
2. Workforce development.....	24
2.1. Working conditions in Wales.....	25
2.2. Career progression of journalists.....	31
2.3. The efficiency of funding schemes	34
3. Journalism needs, demands and skills	37
3.1. News production and needs	38
3.2. Understanding journalists' skills	43
Recommendations for the future	46
Bibliography	49

Executive Summary

Welsh public interest journalism, integral to democracy, is at a critical juncture due to declining readership and digital disruption. This sector, essential for civic engagement and oversight of power, is confronted with the complexities of Wales's distinct cultural and linguistic identity. This study conducted by the Centre for Creative Economy at Cardiff University and funded by the Welsh Government seeks **to bridge knowledge gaps and chart a course for the industry's future by providing stakeholders with actionable insights**. This study is grounded on three pillars and this executive summary highlights the main findings around:

1. inclusivity and representativeness of journalism in Wales,
2. the current state and development of the workforce, and the
3. alignment of news production with consumer needs in Wales.

Our survey data reveals a **gender disparity**, with approximately 63% male and 37% female journalists amongst those that identify as gender-binary. However, in a number of respects – in terms of ethnicity, caring responsibilities, sexual orientation and disability - our sample are more diverse than the general population. Alongside gender, the exception to this is in terms of social class. Over half come from a background with at least one parent in a professional role, significantly higher than in the general population.

Journalists still perceive a lack of inclusivity, with 54% believing **news does not adequately cover diverse stories**. Half see no barriers related to protected characteristics, but 25% observe such barriers for colleagues, and 15% experience them. Most journalists in our survey have some Welsh language proficiency, and 36% work on Welsh-language stories. Welsh-language coverage varies by area, with certain regions identified as news deserts for both Welsh and English.

Most journalists like their jobs (74% express contentment with their roles) but worry about keeping them - only 35% of journalists hold permanent contracts. **Employment anxiety** is tangible, with 28% fearing job loss within a year. Our qualitative data echoes these findings, with journalists recognizing workplace improvements yet still facing systemic challenges. Discrimination, excessive workloads, and the blurring lines between personal and professional life contribute to a **culture of burnout**. Full-time roles, especially in major outlets, are coveted for stability, but are scarce and fraught with ethical dilemmas.

The study finds **limited engagement with available funding and support schemes**, although those that are engaged report benefits, particularly from the Google Digital News Initiative and Welsh government funds. Qualitative insights highlight a sector reliant on such funding yet plagued by its transitory nature, fostering an environment of financial precarity and concerns over future sustainability.

Welsh journalism exhibits a commitment to current affairs and arts coverage, yet there's an awareness of a **mismatch between such traditional focuses and the viral nature of tabloid content** on for example social media. Journalists place trustworthiness at the forefront of their work, perceiving this as a key priority for audiences. While reader feedback plays a role in shaping content, economic considerations such as profits and advertising hold less sway for journalists in Wales, differing from wider UK patterns.

Technological adoption in Welsh journalism is cautious, particularly with Artificial Intelligence (AI), contrasting with the widespread use of social media for sourcing and disseminating news. Although data analytics tools are used by many, a lack of comprehensive training in digital competencies persists. Our research indicates editorial dilemmas in balancing in-depth journalism with the allure of social media engagement, and a recognition of the public's inclination towards lighter news. Time constraints and economic pressures challenge the pursuit of investigative journalism and editorial independence in Wales.

Based on our findings, we developed the following key recommendations to support the future of public interest journalism in Wales:

1. **Inclusive Journalism Support:** Enhance diversity in newsrooms and content by backing organizations and training programs for underrepresented groups.
2. **Socioeconomic Inclusion:** Address the representation gap of journalists from lower socioeconomic backgrounds through outreach, mentorship, and subsidized training programs.
3. **Freelance Journalist Support:** Provide resources, networking, legal advice, and mental health support for the substantial freelance journalist population, acknowledging their unique challenges.
4. **Development in News Deserts:** Populate under covered areas with Local Journalism Grants, exchange programs, and training to ensure widespread coverage.
5. **Bilingual Journalism Enhancement:** Promote bilingual content to mirror Wales's linguistic diversity, utilizing grants and awards to recognize exemplary bilingual journalism.
6. **Journalism Technology Adoption:** Encourage the use of advanced technologies through training in generative AI, data science, and digital literacy, building on successful past initiatives.
7. **Pan-Wales News Service:** Propose the creation of a centralized news service to aggregate diverse news sources, enhancing accessibility and inclusivity in media coverage across Wales.

Study approach

We have collected data from numerous stakeholders using a comprehensive survey and qualitative methods, including focus groups and interviews, to capture a broad spectrum of experiences in Welsh journalism. **We engaged around 800 stakeholders in Welsh public interest journalism** through Cardiff University's Centre for the Creative Economy and the Welsh Government's Working Group. Our comprehensive survey of 40 questions, achieved a response rate of 8-10%, reflecting a high engagement relative to the Welsh population and in comparison, with similar, UK-level studies and reports.

Participants included a wide range of journalism professionals and those in supporting roles. Most respondents to our survey are journalists, editors, or both, as Figure 1 indicates. Despite the **plurality of stakeholders** in our sample, for simplicity, we refer to them collectively as “journalists” in the rest of this report. A significant portion of all respondents hold managerial positions and over 10 years of experience. Geographical data indicated a concentration of journalists in urban centres like Cardiff and Newport.

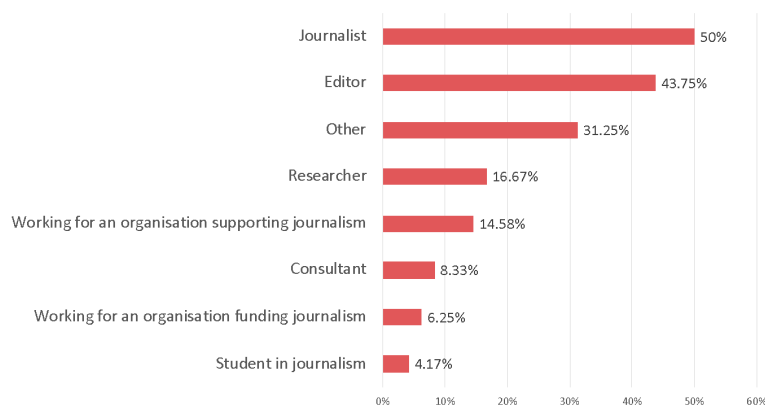


Figure 1: Respondents' types of stake held in the Welsh Journalism Sector (respondents were allowed multiple choice options).

To complement the quantitative data, we conducted online focus groups and interviews, ensuring inclusivity and anonymity. Our diverse participant pool offered insights into the nuances of Welsh journalism, with a concentration of responses from South Wales and the print journalism sector. We analysed the qualitative data to extract key trends, which are detailed in the report's body.

1. Diversity and inclusion in journalism

Participation in public interest journalism is essential to maintaining the media's relevance and efficacy in a democratic society. A varied workforce of journalists is crucial in ensuring participation both from the journalists' and readers' side. As Couldry and Mejias (2020) make clear, the media help form the narratives that shape society. Representation is especially important in Wales, where there is a substantial presence of both Welsh and English speakers, as well as many other dimensions of cultural diversity. Shaker's (2014) research suggests that, when journalists from a variety of backgrounds contribute distinctive viewpoints, it helps comprehension and interaction with more diverse audiences (see also Nielsen and Linnebank, 2011).

Diversity in the media also increases public confidence. A lack of representation and perceptions of bias are two factors contributing to the global loss in public trust in media outlets. People are more likely to trust the media when they perceive themselves and their communities to be truthfully and sympathetically portrayed. For all of these reasons, Welsh public interest journalism needs to embrace diversity and inclusion as an essential part of its purpose to serve the public interest.

The following sections present our findings on the diversity of journalists in the Welsh journalism section (1.1.) and representation and inclusion in news content in Wales (1.2) reflecting on participation both from the journalists' and readers' side in Welsh public interest journalism and as well as our analysis on so-called news deserts in Wales (1.3).

1.1. The diversity of journalists in the sector

Our survey results suggest a **limited degree of diversity in Welsh media**, with some characteristics well represented (such as first language Welsh speakers, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, and having caring responsibilities) and others under-represented.¹

Figure 2 shows that men outnumber women by 63% to 37% of them, suggesting a clear **gender imbalance**. The gender imbalance was recognised by an editor from a mainstream publication in our focus groups.

“One of the greatest risks in the workplace are the difficulties of women being able to access positions of power.”

Another editor echoed this point, positing that wider gender imbalances such as women carrying out more domestic labour could increase the risks of burnout and therefore negatively impact career progression.

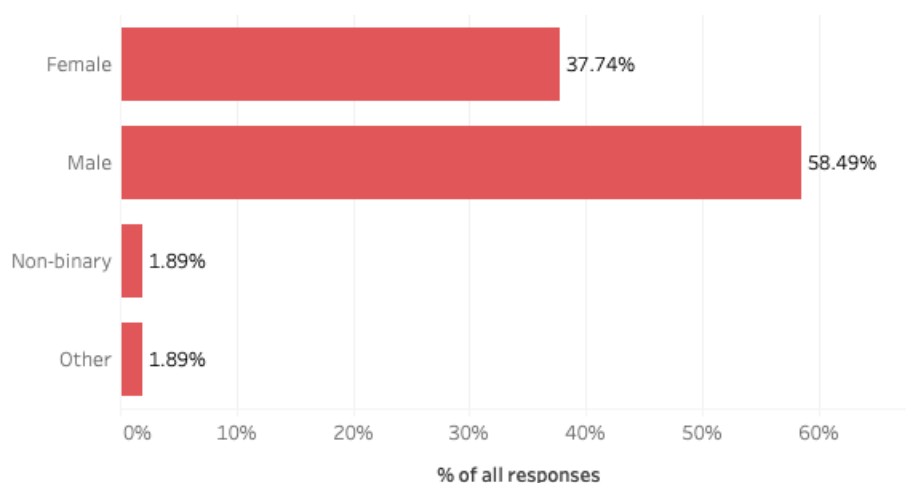


Figure 2: Declared genders of the surveyed Welsh journalists.

In terms of **sexual orientation**, roughly 70% of all our respondents identify themselves as heterosexual, 13% bisexual and 7.5% gay or lesbian at 7.5%, with other orientations at roughly 2%. These figures are much more varied than in the general population ac-

¹ Note that our sample in the survey is skewed towards men from more privileged backgrounds.

According to the 2021 Census, where almost 90% of the population identified as heterosexual, with gay or lesbian at 1.5%, bisexual at 1.2% and all other sexual orientations at 0.3%.²

The **age breakdown** of respondents to our survey is shown in Figure 3 below. The largest group is aged between 45 and 54 years. While this is statistically representative of the working population of the UK, members from our focus groups suggested barriers for young people entering journalism. These included the lack of internships, which we discuss further in section 2.2, and the disillusionment many young people feel about the current state of news. As one of our focus group respondents put it:

“If you're a young person, would you listen to the news? Would you take it seriously? Would you consider a career in journalism?”

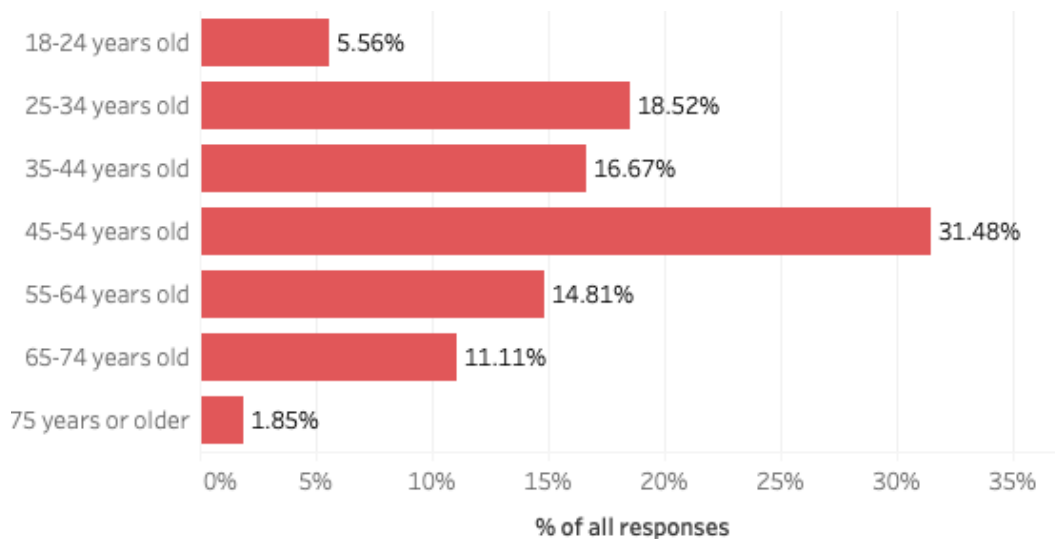


Figure 3: Age breakdown of journalists in Wales.

27% of Welsh journalists declare themselves as **having a disability**, slightly higher than the 21.1% in the general population.³ Despite this, our focus groups suggested that the Welsh journalism sector is not a totally welcoming or accessible space. In our focus groups, the main barriers journalists have faced or witnessed in the journalism industry

² ONS, 2021 Census, see [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualorientationenglandandwales/census2021#:~:text=straight%20or%20heterosexual%20\(89.4%25%20of,in%20both%20England%20and%20Wales\).](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualorientationenglandandwales/census2021#:~:text=straight%20or%20heterosexual%20(89.4%25%20of,in%20both%20England%20and%20Wales).)

³ ONS, 2021 Census, see [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocial-care/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/disabilityenglandandwales/census2021#:~:text=In%20Wales%2C%20in%202021%2C%20a,\(21.2%25%2C%20567%2C000\).](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocial-care/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/disabilityenglandandwales/census2021#:~:text=In%20Wales%2C%20in%202021%2C%20a,(21.2%25%2C%20567%2C000).)

were connected to disability. The fast-paced, demanding culture within traditional newsrooms act as a hurdle for people with disabilities. One journalist was turned down from a job at a major news company and was relieved after hearing some “horror stories” of other journalists being burnt out by their experience working there. Multiple neurodivergent journalists also reported being deterred by high workloads and long hours, referring to accounts they’d heard from employees of the very same major news company. On the other hand, there do seem to be slow but steady strides towards creating a more conducive work environment for disabled and neurotypical journalists. This is reflected by the handful of editors who claimed to be working towards more inclusive practices, such as through diversity training and outreach programmes.

“I think a lot of workplaces are more aware of disabilities. I've not found somewhere that's a hundred percent as inclusive as I would love them to be. I think that is because of capacity. However, I have worked for some places that are trying really hard.”

Most journalists in Wales have no **religion** (roughly 65% of them), while only two identifiable faiths were quoted in our responses, which are Christian at 25% and Muslim at 4%. While numerous other religions were listed as answer options in our survey, these were not chosen by the respondents. Overall, Welsh journalists have a higher incidence of having no religion or being Muslims than journalists in the UK overall, as well as in the Welsh population in general. At the same time, they are significantly less likely to declare themselves as Christians.

With regards to **ethnicity**, most journalists in Wales are white (83%), followed by Asian (7.5%), mixed ethnicity (4%) and black (2%). These figures are significantly different from journalists in the rest of the UK, who are 94% white, 2.5% Asian, 2.3% of mixed ethnicity and 0.2% black.⁴ It is also significantly different from the composition of the

⁴ Thurman N., Cornia A. and Kunert J.: Journalists in the UK, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, page 12, available online at <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research/files/Journalists%2520in%2520the%2520UK.pdf>.

Welsh general population, where 93.8% of people are white, 2.9% are Asian, 1.6% mixed ethnicity and 0.9% black.⁵

As Figure 4 shows, roughly 20% of Welsh journalists have primary **carer responsibilities**, while a further 8% of them act as secondary carers of children or older persons. Consequently, 28% of them provide some sort of unpaid care, which is almost three times higher than the Welsh average of 10.5%.

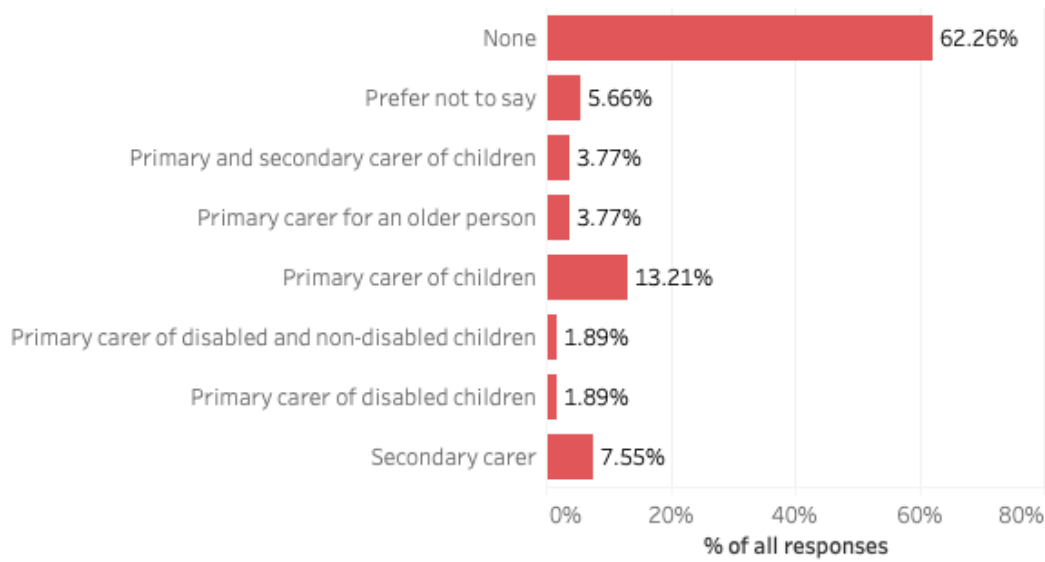


Figure 4: Caring responsibilities of Welsh journalists.

The **socioeconomic status** of Welsh journalists' backgrounds has been approximated by using the measure of their parents' occupations when they were 14 years of age. The breakdown on this metric is shown in Figure 5 below. More than half of all respondents come from a household with at least one parent having worked as a manager or as professional. Only a third of all respondents have had their parents work routine manual or technical jobs when they were 14. These results are in sharp contrast with the professional composition of Welsh society at large. Currently, less than a third (28%) of all workers are managers or professionals, while more than 40% of them hold technical or routine manual jobs. This discrepancy therefore embodies the largest difference between journalists and the rest of the Welsh population in our research on the diversity of journalists. Journalists tend to come from households with relatively

⁵ ONS, Census 2021, see <https://www.gov.wales/ethnic-group-national-identity-language-and-religion-wales-census-2021-html>

high socioeconomic status and standing. Our focus groups suggested that the lack of paid entry level schemes, non-academic training, and a culture of being paid in “exposure” rather than actual money all create palpable barriers for journalists from low-income or working-class backgrounds. This was illustrated by one editor who - although now runs a successful independent news outlet - did not feel the industry is set up to sufficiently encourage or support those who cannot afford to go to university.

“I’m from a working-class background. It was a real struggle for me to get my relevant journalism qualification and then start my career. Now, I would probably say, it’s even harder. I think there needs to be easier routes into journalism.”



Figure 5: Welsh journalists' parents' occupations.

We asked journalists who indicated that they have at least one of the protected characteristics whether: *“My protected characteristic has been a significant barrier for my work in the journalism sector”*. We also asked whether: *“In my line of work, I have regularly witnessed colleagues face barriers in the journalism sector due to their protected characteristics.”* In both cases, around half of all respondents disagree with the statement that **protected characteristics are barriers to working in the journalism sector**. Nevertheless, 25% of respondents claim to have witnessed others facing barriers because of their protected characteristics, while only 15% of respondents report having themselves been subject to barriers because of their own protected characteristics. We note that these findings are in line with the “Journalists at Work” report that

surveyed journalists across the UK, 18% of whom state that they had suffered some form of discrimination at work, while 69% stating that they had not.⁶

Finally, we also looked at the location of journalists in Wales. Most journalists who responded to the survey work in central Cardiff and Newport. Most of our focus group participants were from South Wales, and almost all of them recognized that there is a “Cardiff-centric” culture in Welsh journalism. This **bias towards the South Wales makes it difficult for those based in more rural areas to further their careers** or be part of the wider industry.

“It can be hard when a lot of magazines are based in Cardiff for people in North Wales or more rural places to commute or to come down and work in those places. So that can be a bit tricky. If you're interviewing someone you can do it online. But still, you know, that can be a barrier when there are in-person events.”

This statement shows that even with remote working practices, physically being outside of the capital hub could negatively impact journalists' careers, especially with social activities such as networking. North Wales was mentioned by numerous participants who reported it being seen as “parochial” or feeling that it might as well not exist in national news. There is clearly an issue if a large-scale news story cannot be reported on by a member of the community where it took place. A journalist based in Eryri, where a recent tragedy occurred nearby, complained that:

“most of the national newspaper coverage was London journalists coming to North Wales, showing complete disrespect for the local community. There was no sensitivity.”

⁶ Spilsbury, Mark: Journalists at Work, National Council for the Training of Journalists, October 2018, page 78, available online at <https://www.nctj.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/JaW-Report-2018-web.pdf>.

1.2. Representation in the news

We asked Welsh journalists about various aspects of the impacts that inclusion has on public interest journalism in Wales. This covers the areas of personal, lived experience and overall representation in the content that public interest journalism in Wales produces. When asked the question, *“Do you think the Welsh journalism sector is inclusive?”* most of our focus group participants suggested it was not. Many felt that there is a **distinct lack of diverse voices being represented in Welsh media**, as well as an oversaturation of “white, middle-class, non-Welsh speaking” editors and decision makers. A young freelance journalist who has worked for a variety of publications stated:

“There should be more roles created for underrepresented people, more roles for people of colour, queer people, disabled people, and people who are Welsh speakers, from Wales, or from working-class areas, so that Wales is more roundly represented by the actual community of Wales.”

Figure 6 shows the reactions to the statement *“The Welsh Journalism Sector adequately covers news stories primarily involving people with protected characteristics residing in Wales.”* 54% of Welsh journalists disagree with this statement, while only 2% of respondents strongly agree with it.

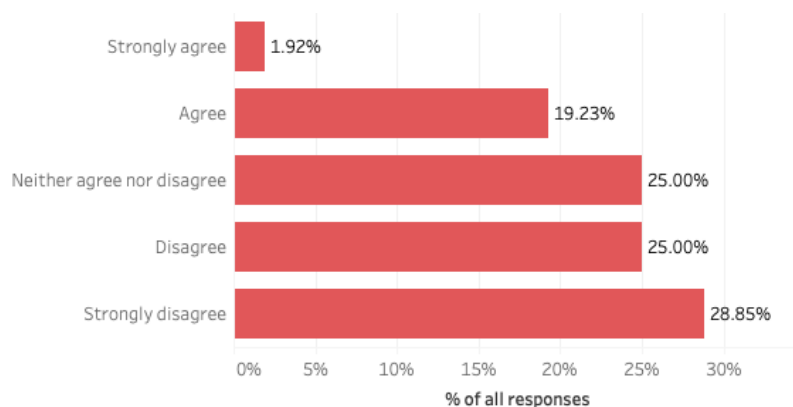


Figure 6: Percentage breakdown of the reactions to the statement: “The Welsh Journalism Sector adequately covers news stories primarily involving people with protected characteristics residing in Wales.”

7 Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are the following: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. See <https://www.acas.org.uk/discrimination-and-the-law> for more details.

This shows systemic issues with the **coverage of news stories involving people with protected characteristics**. It also indicates that the relative diversity of Welsh journalists compared to the rest of the population (see above) does not necessarily translate into more in-depth coverage of stories involving persons with protected characteristics. Our focus groups reflect this perception. A common theme that emerged was a lack of sensitivity, training, and awareness for journalists that would make news more inclusive. As one focus group journalist put it about representation of disabled communities:

“A lot of the language used by Welsh journalists is pretty offensive around disability. And even when they report on issues affecting the disabled community, it's often written in a really offensive, problematic way. And I think there's a complete reluctance to consult disabled people. In Wales the disabled community is definitely not represented in the media.”

Many focus group participants also said that even in Cardiff, a multicultural capital city, they have noticed a **decrease in content that reflects the prevalent, and indeed growing, ethnic minority communities** that exist there.

“I don't see as many multilingual publications within Cardiff. I know that the BAME demographic has grown so much, so it feels unusual not to see publications that that use other languages [apart from Welsh and English].”

One journalist from an ethnic minority who felt that their pitches had been consistently ignored by editors and commissioners, and that they were only approached when outlets needed a spokesperson. On top of feeling pigeon-holed and demeaned, they were also expected to talk about their experiences for free, the implicit pressure behind it being, “*Don't you want us to be more representative?*” **When news content does focus on people from diverse backgrounds, it may perpetuate stereotypes**, such as consistently portraying Latin American people as “poor” or in connection with “music and salsa.” One journalist from a Latin American background themselves said about people in their community:

“It is not that they don't read the news because they are not interested. It is because the news here doesn't orient them well enough. They don't see themselves in Welsh news.”

1.3. Exploring news deserts and the Welsh language

In this section, we delve into the question of news deserts in Wales, the status of Welsh-speaking journalists and the content that they create. We identified and mapped the geographical areas that Welsh journalists systematically identify as providing poor coverage about various types of news, either in English or in Welsh.

Figure 7 shows that 71% of Welsh journalists have some **knowledge of the Welsh language**, with more than 30% first language or fluent. This is consistent with Figure 8, which indicates that 36% of Welsh journalists work on news stories in Welsh at least sometimes.

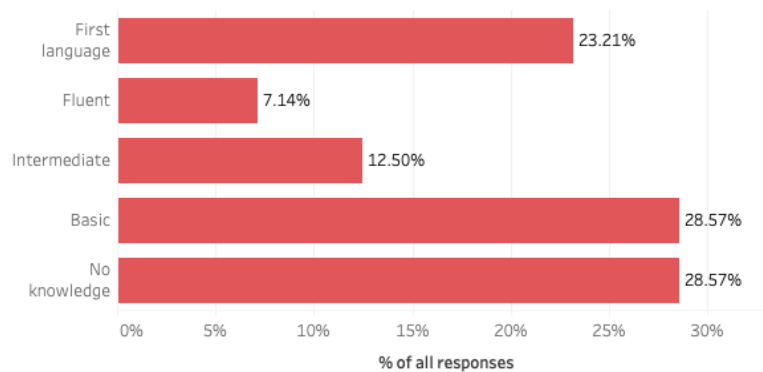


Figure 7: Level of Welsh fluency of Welsh journalists.

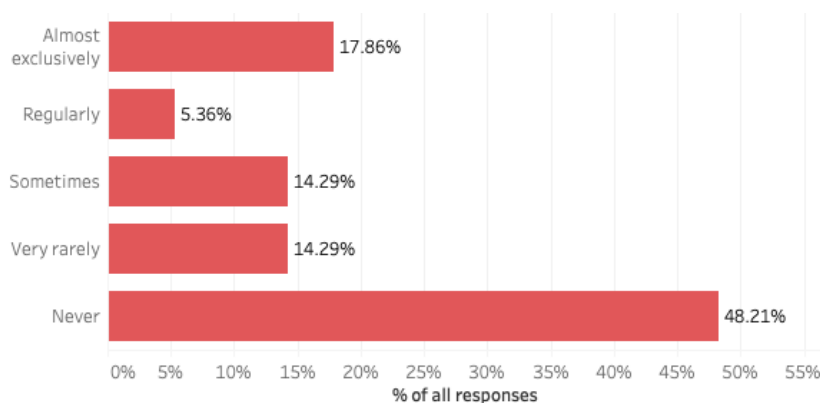


Figure 8: The frequency of working on news stories in Welsh amongst Welsh journalists.

We asked journalists in our survey whether they agree or disagree with the statement that *i) local news coverage, ii) community news coverage, iii) UK-wide news coverage, iv) global news coverage* is adequate in the Welsh language and/or in English (though, for obvious reasons, we did not ask about UK-wide news coverage and global news coverage in English). We map the results in the sections below for the Welsh and the

English language respectively. For each type of news story, we map the areas that Welsh journalists have identified as having adequate coverage in Welsh in blue, and those areas are shown that our respondents have systematically identified as having poor coverage in yellow.

1.3.1 News coverage in Wales

Regarding **local news story coverage in Welsh**, we find that most respondents have found it inadequate in several areas, including the north of Conwy, East and West central Gwynedd, parts of Wrexham and Denbigshire, East Flintshire, North and South Ceredigion, South Pembrokeshire and South Carmarthenshire, the Swansea area, Monmouthshire, the Valleys, Bridgend and the South of the Vale of Glamorgan and most areas of Cardiff. It is only in a few areas, mostly within the Vale of Glamorgan, Central Gwynedd and the Isle of Anglesey that journalists perceive of local news coverage as being adequate in Welsh. These results are shown in Figure 9. Many participants shared the view that local news stories could be covered better in Welsh, especially in nationwide publications. One editor was keenly aware of the poor news coverage in North-East and South-West Wales, and so had made it a priority to commission freelance journalists from these areas to report on local issues.

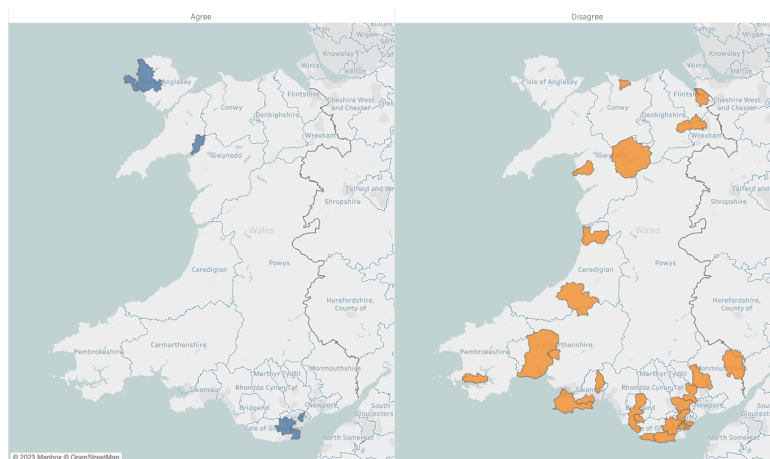


Figure 9: Reactions to the statement: “The coverage of local news stories in the council area where I reside is perfectly adequate in the Welsh language.”

We obtain very similar results regarding the coverage on **community news in the Welsh language**. These results are shown in Figure 10. The only difference between these two layers of analysis is that community news coverage in Welsh seems to be somewhat less adequate than local news coverage in parts of the Vale of Glamorgan, while certain journalists believe that Ceredigion has better community news coverage

in Welsh than local news coverage. Other than this, the areas of inadequate community news coverage almost fully overlap with those of inadequate local news coverage.

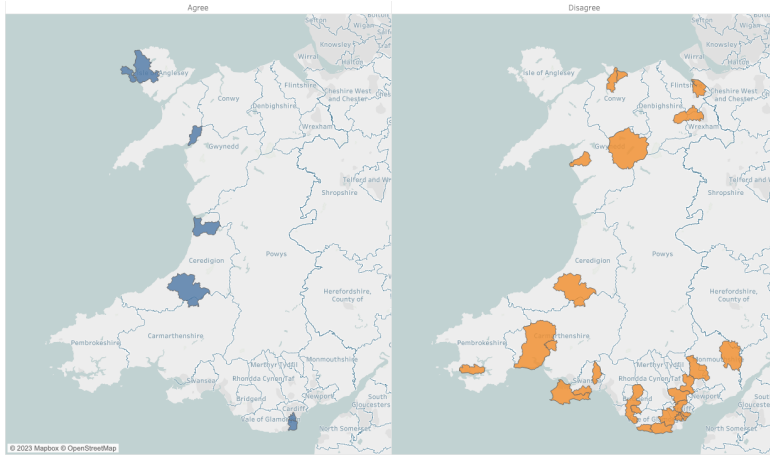


Figure 10: Reactions to the statement: “The coverage of community news stories in the council area where I reside is perfectly adequate in the Welsh language.”

Regarding **UK-wide news story coverage in Welsh**, the analysis reveals some differences. As Figure 11 shows, Welsh journalists perceive East Gwynedd, some areas of Conwy (especially Llanddulas and Abergele), the immediate vicinity to the east of the city of Swansea and south Bridgend as having adequate coverage of UK-wide news stories in Welsh. Certain areas, like east Monmouthshire have been perceived both as having adequate and inadequate UK-wide story coverage in Welsh. Welsh journalists perceive of the west of the Isle of Anglesey as showing insufficient coverage of UK-wide news stories in Welsh, while also having adequate coverage of local and community news stories in the language. An information gap has formed for many smaller communities, partly due to mass closures of local newspapers. “Papurau bro”, Welsh language, voluntary-run community newspapers can to some extent fill this gap, but they are predominantly only available in print and don’t have much reach beyond the older population.

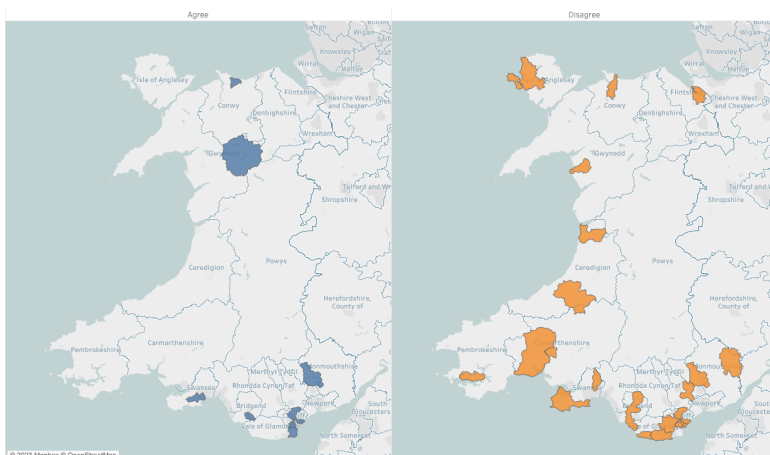


Figure 11: “The coverage of UK-wide news stories in the council area where I reside is perfectly adequate in the Welsh language.”

The perception regarding **global news coverage in the Welsh language** is virtually identical to that on UK-wide news coverage. The results regarding our inquiry on this question are given in Figure 12 below. The only substantial difference with UK-wide news stories is that while journalists consider that east Monmouthshire and south Bridgend have adequate UK-wide coverage in the Welsh language that is no longer the case for global news stories.

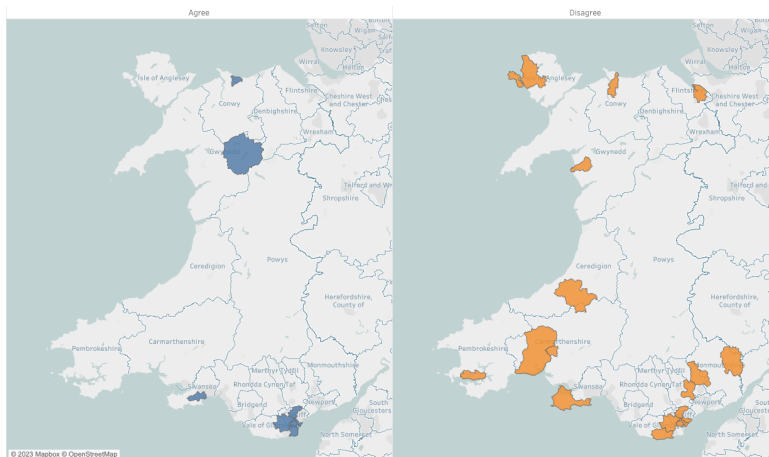


Figure 12: “The coverage of global news stories in the council area where I reside is perfectly adequate in the Welsh language.”

When we asked journalists about the coverage of **Welsh community or Welsh language affairs in English language journalism in Wales** (Figure 13), we found very similar patterns. Nevertheless, there are some differences. First, journalists perceive of the area around Welshpool and Llanfair Caereinion as having adequate coverage about Welsh community affairs in the English language. At the same time, the directly neighbouring area around Oswestry (also in Powys) seems to be perceived in the opposite way. Note that neither of these areas appear on any of the maps above, meaning that journalists were unable to assess the coverage of various news stories in these areas in the Welsh language. Another major difference is that journalists believe that the south-eastern tip of the country (the area around Chepstow) as well as areas to the north of Cardiff (including Caerphilly, Risca, Cwmbran, Pontypool for instance) have adequate coverage about Welsh community or language affairs in English. At the same time, journalists do not usually perceive of these same territories as providing adequate coverage about any type of news story in Welsh.

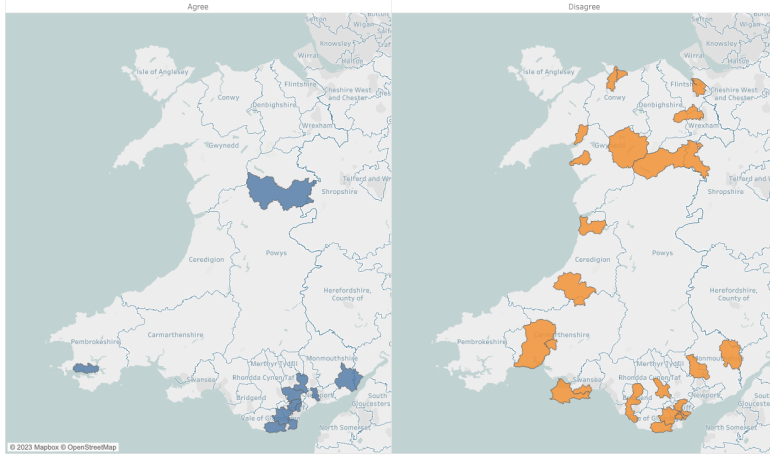


Figure 13: “The coverage of Welsh community/ Welsh language affairs is perfectly adequate in English language journalism in Wales.”

The adequacy of **local news in English** in Wales are shown in Figure 14. There are noticeably more “blue” areas than for the corresponding map for Welsh language news. The coverage of community news stories in English shows a similar picture than the one on local news coverage. The areas seen as having inadequate local coverage in English are the tri-county area of Flintshire, Denbighshire and Wrexham, the northern tip of Powys and east Gwynedd, as well as the area also in Gwynedd around Harlech, Yns and Talsarnau, north and south Ceredigion, southwest Carmarthenshire, the area to the north and west of Swansea, the entirety of Bridgend, as well as the northern vicinity of the city of Newport and east-, as well as west-Monmouthshire.

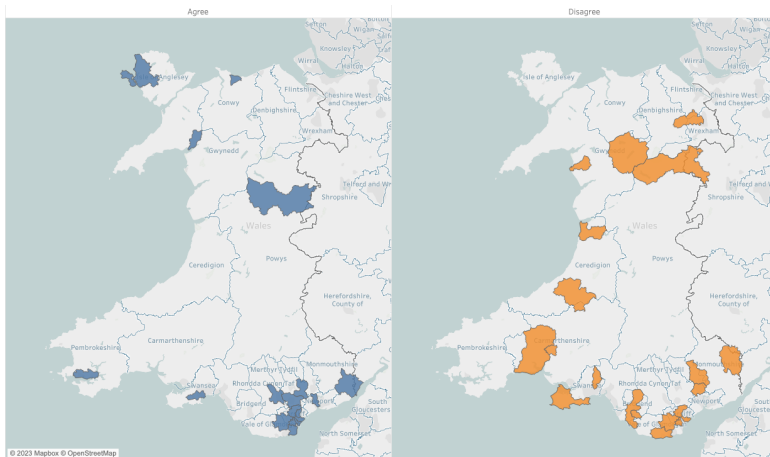


Figure 14: “The coverage of local news stories in the council area where I reside is perfectly adequate in the English language.”

1.3.2 Identified news deserts and implications

Our selection criteria for areas to be considered news deserts are the following: (1) A news desert cannot have been identified as having adequate coverage in any of the questions illustrated by the maps above; (2) A news desert must appear on all maps above as having inadequate coverage. This entails that **in this report a news desert is unequivocally be perceived by Welsh journalists as having insufficient coverage in either Welsh or English and in any form of news output.** We note, once again, that this assessment is based solely on journalists' subjective perceptions. While it is unlikely that an adequately covered area satisfies both criteria above, we are aware that the list below does not include all news deserts in Wales – notably the sparsely populated parts of rural Wales which were less likely to be mentioned by the journalists in our survey. The areas identified as news deserts in Wales are:

- **Conwy County Borough in North West Wales, district of Llandudno**
- **Carmarthenshire, St Clears area**
- **Mumbles, Swansea West Glamorgan**
- **Monmouth area (including Monmouth, Wyesham, Redbrook, Welsh Newton)**
- **Carmarthen town area in Carmarthenshire**

This list does not mean that other areas do not deserve policy attention. While certain areas do not satisfy the particularly stringent criteria that we have constructed for identifying news deserts, they never appear as having “adequate” coverage, and are mostly identified as providing inadequate coverage, such as the Wrexham area in the Llandudno district, or the area around Clase, Clydach, Cwmrhydyceirw, Morryston, Ynysforgan and Ynystawe. Monmouthshire was also identified as lacking in news coverage during our focus groups.

News deserts and a lack of news provision in regions can have substantial influence on local communities. One journalist spoke about the poor and declining quality of news in the Barry area for example. Speaking about their local newspaper, they described **content which panders to people's fears, opting for more tabloid-style, clickbait headlines.** They claimed this style of news was negatively affecting their community, such as an article which claimed that the area was a dangerous place to live. This indicates a lack of care for communities themselves, opting for attention-

grabbing journalism that stirs up worry and offers no solution, a topic we explore in more detail in section 3.1.

A recurring theme in the focus groups was that **participants felt poorly informed about Welsh politics**. There were a few discussions about the newly appointed Senedd reporter, with some pleased at its success, reporting that it translated otherwise complex policies into accessible language. Others were more sceptical, expressing concern that it is publicly funded and might not therefore be wholly objective or able to hold government figures to account. Something that many did agree on, however, is that Welsh politics is not covered adequately and that this is largely due to most people getting their news from larger UK-wide publications which don't represent Wales. An example of this, as they recalled, was going through the Sunday papers and not finding a single Wales-related story. This sense of being unseen or ignored in national news extends beyond politics, with one journalist complaining:

“It's really weird not to be able to see yourself or your community represented in UK issues. And any stats that are reported, even on poverty, are for England. It's pretty hard to find anything relevant.”

Based on the concerns of the focus group participants, **news deserts had resulted in political disengagement and ignorance** in some areas. Another participant recalled their time living in mid Wales, and struggled to think of any substantial news outlets that were available, beyond specifically farming-related publications:

“No one has a clue what's going on, I don't think most people could name their assembly member in Monmouthshire.”

Figure 15 shows that most of our participants acknowledged the **influence of online platforms in filling in the gaps of news deserts** and which have an impact on all aspects of journalism - whether that's producing, sharing or consuming news. Many felt that, despite its unreliability, social media plays a pivotal role in an otherwise sparse media landscape, often being the main source of people's community updates, through Facebook groups and neighbourhood apps. One journalist was concerned that they'd been seeing conspiracy theories flourishing in poor areas, blaming audiences' disconnect and mistrust of traditional news sources, which is:

“why it’s important that people have access to non-internet-based news.”

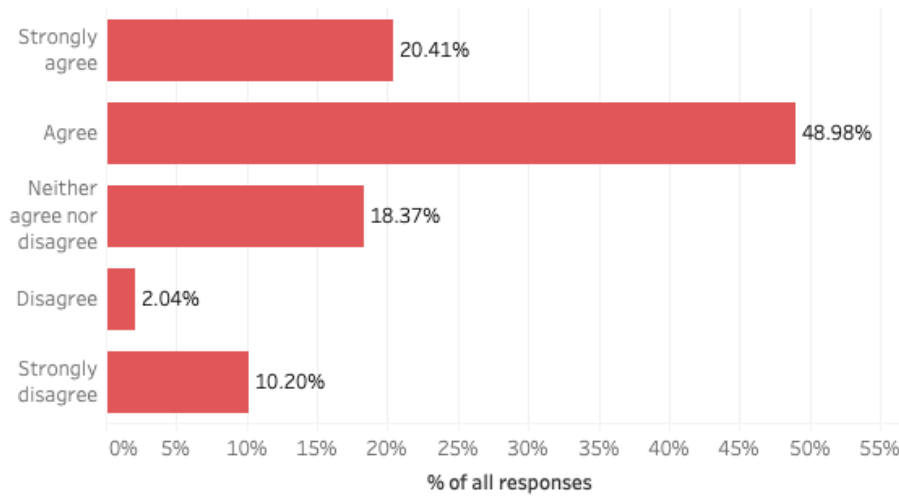


Figure 15: Percentage breakdown of reactions to the statement: “Social media has replaced numerous functions of Welsh news outlets (such as announcing local events, gatherings, classifieds, etc).”

Whether social media’s influence on news is seen as detrimental or beneficial, its power cannot be ignored. A young journalist believed that, along with editing, social media proficiency was the most important skill needed to produce high quality journalism. News outlets need to understand how to use social media platforms and analytics “because otherwise that news won’t be seen.”

2. Workforce development

This section explores the critical role of workforce development in the Welsh public interest journalism sector. We will examine the specific challenges faced by Welsh journalists, analyze their working conditions and issues faced in career progression to ensure a future generation of journalists prepared to fulfill the vital role of public interest journalism in Wales.

The main focus of this section is mapping working conditions including job satisfaction, mental and physical health outcomes, as well as job security in the Welsh journalism sector (2.1) as well as career progression of Welsh journalists (2.2) and finally the impact of funding and support schemes (2.3).

2.1. Working conditions in Wales

As Figure 16 shows for **employment**, only 28% of respondents hold a full-time permanent employment contract. Those with full-time permanent positions worked for larger organisations such as legacy media or research institutions. Most respondents are freelancers with additional work on the side (these are included in the “Other” category), making up 53% of the sample. Roughly 12% of the sample has fixed-term contracts. This incidence of uncertain career paths may generate unfavourable outcomes in terms of job satisfaction, job security and mental/physical health.

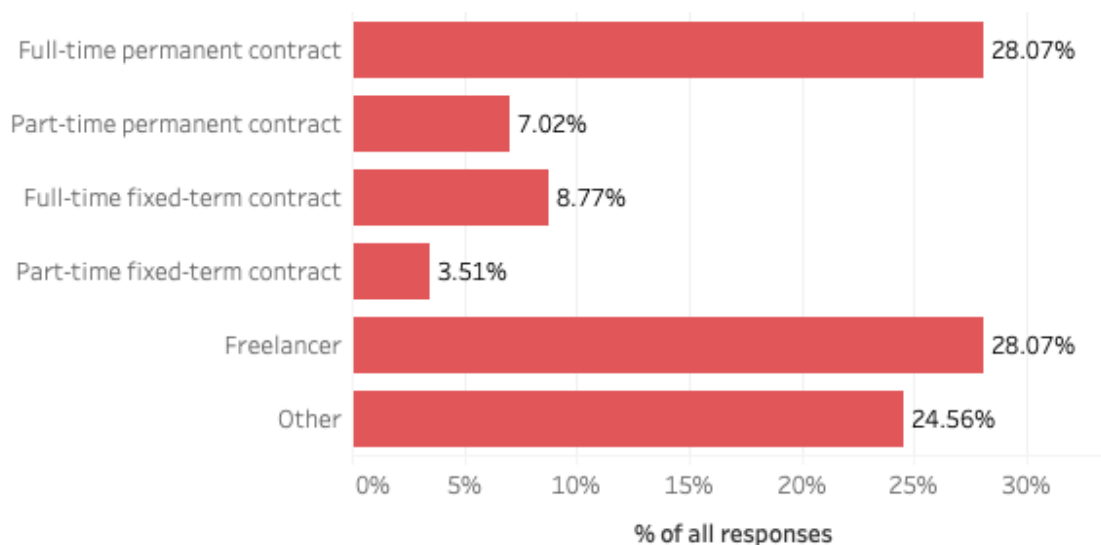


Figure 16: Contractual employment conditions of Welsh journalists.

Figure 17 shows that 47% make above £25,000 per year, with an overall **average earning** in the sample equal to £28,705. This is broadly in line with both the Journalists in the UK and the Journalists at Work survey, which found the median salary band for journalists to be between £28,812-£38,400 and between £26,629-£31,953 respectively,⁸ although we note that these estimates are for 2015 and have not been adjusted for inflation.

8 Thurman N., Cornia A. and Kunert J.: Journalists in the UK, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, page 16, available online at <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research/files/Journalists%2520in%2520the%2520UK.pdf>. The reference to the Journalists at Work survey is also embedded in this page of the Journalists in the UK report.

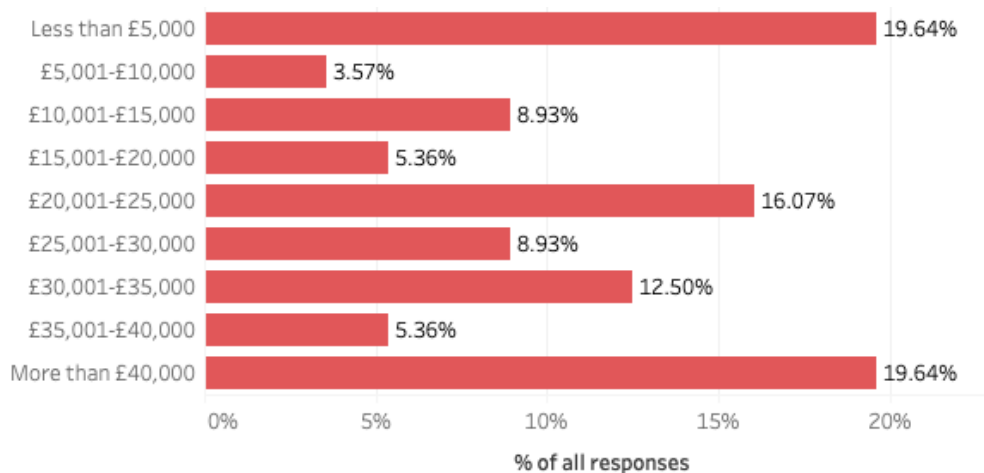


Figure 17: Yearly earnings of Welsh journalists.

Financial concerns were a dominant theme in our focus groups, especially for freelance journalists. Unpaid, voluntary work was also common, especially for those editing smaller-scale, independent publications. For example, a community radio presenter, a “papur bro” editor, and an editor for a citizen journalism publication all work on a voluntary basis.

“I would have no confidence in being able to pay my bills as a freelancer”, said one journalist, who is employed full-time in another field of work. “I think moving forward if I did want to, and it is something that I am working towards, becoming a writer full time in whatever form would be incredibly difficult.”

Even though this brings obvious challenges around sustainability and capacity, some suggested that working voluntarily may be advantageous, as they are not subject to an employer’s agenda.

“I like being independent because I want to be able to do what I want to do and say what I want to say.”

This was echoed by one journalist who lamented the precariousness of freelance and unpaid work, but admitted they wouldn’t consider working for larger organisations because of their outspoken political views. Conversely, there was the acknowledgement that voluntary work is not sustainable in this current financial climate.

“You’re expected to do things for free because they’re good for your CV, or they’re good for your networking opportunities and things like that. But I really

feel that in the cost-of-living crisis that it is not a safe thing to do, because people must pay their rent and their bills. And I think next year it's set to get worse.”

One editor discussed relying on **unpaid writers**, which is a norm in citizen journalism. Because it is only writers who can afford to give their time and energy, the majority tend to be “older, white, straight males”, an insight reflected in section 1.1. Working in Welsh language journalism, one freelancer stated that they had only received payment from one Welsh language publication in their entire career, and that it was only recently they had been paid for articles written in English. They had built up their journalism career almost solely on unpaid work, writing about their areas of interest through blogs and smaller online outlets. We spoke to a “papur bro” editor who, like almost all of their counterparts, works voluntarily. This brings its own challenges, including not being able to commission professional journalism, and indeed finding anyone with the time or capacity to work for free. They suggested this could be one of the reasons why the Welsh Government are keen to keep funding “papurau bro”, because it’s a clear gesture of supporting community journalism at low cost.

In spite of this, as Figure 18 indicates about **job satisfaction**, 74% of Welsh journalists are either very satisfied or reasonably satisfied in their current positions. Only 15% of them support some level of dissatisfaction. This finding is consistent with those stemming from comparable reports for the entirety of the UK, indicating that 75% of journalists find that *“journalism is a job that they enjoy doing”*.⁹

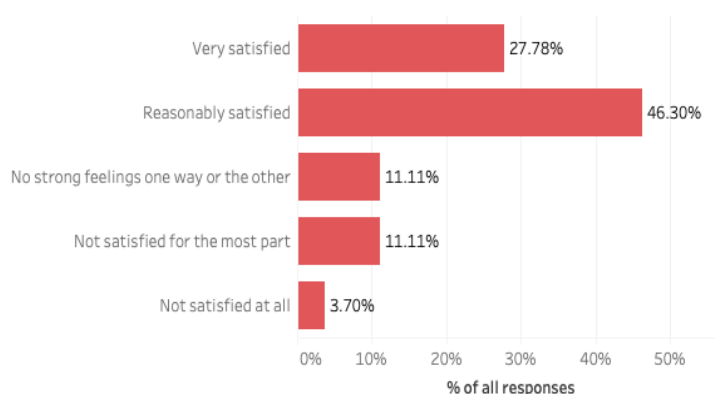


Figure 18: Welsh journalists' job satisfaction.

⁹ Spilsbury, Mark: *Journalists at Work*, National Council for the Training of Journalists, October 2018, page 67, available online at <https://www.nctj.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/JaW-Report-2018-web.pdf>.

It is important to state that, despite the glaring issues many journalists in Wales face in terms of their **workplace situation**, which we encounter in this report, many acknowledged that the sector has significantly improved. Some claimed various workplaces to be safe and welcoming spaces, and that there is better support available around mental health etc. One journalist compared the situation in Wales to their home country, where it is often dangerous to be a journalist, and felt grateful for their experience working here. Many others expressed a lack of threat, aside from some negative feedback from readers.

This stands in contrast with the **desire of Welsh journalists to leave the sector**. As Figure 19 shows, more than 65% of Welsh journalists have thought of leaving the sector in favour of another profession. 31% of them are in imminent danger of leaving, which exceeds the proportion of dissatisfied journalists (15% as shown in Figure 18). Journalists elsewhere in the UK are more determined to stay in the journalism sector, with 64% of them intending to do so.¹⁰

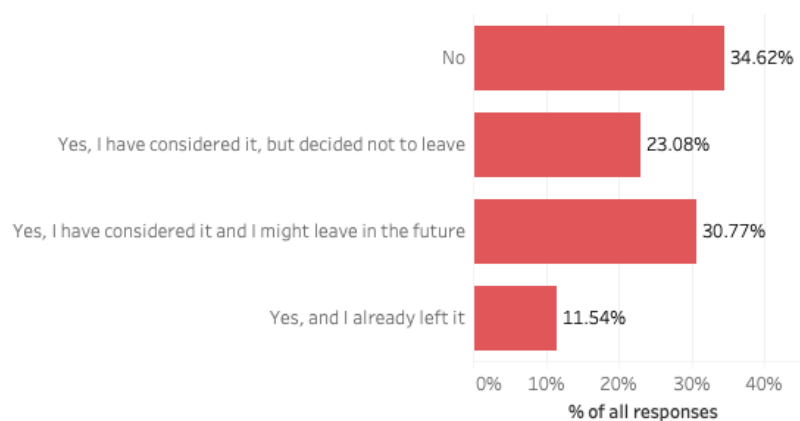


Figure 19: Percentage breakdowns of the answers to the question: “Have you considered leaving the journalism sector for another profession?”

The most often quoted **reasons for leaving** the journalism sector are job security (21%), pay (18%) and stress & burnout (18%). The sheer volume of workloads and time pres-

¹⁰ Spilsbury, Mark: Journalists at Work, National Council for the Training of Journalists, October 2018, page 67, available online at <https://www.nctj.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/JaW-Report-2018-web.pdf>.

sures were also major factors in participants' work dissatisfaction. Because of redundancies in larger news outlets, journalists reported an increased strain on their workload. Smaller publications sometimes depend on only one editor/reporter.

We asked journalists about their most **common worries**. When discussing how unsafe participants felt working in Welsh journalism, the biggest reason they reported was job insecurity. Full-time employment was seen as "the Holy Grail" and almost exclusively reserved for major news outlets, where, according to some journalists, you could risk compromising your morals and wellbeing. Recent redundancies proved to be a major concern for those working in the legacy industry. As one editor put it:

"You can't expect a secure career in the Welsh print industry." Another editor described this as a "low-level anxiety or dread which has perhaps become normalised."

As Figure 20 indicates, roughly 28% of all journalists are worried about losing their job in the next 12 months.

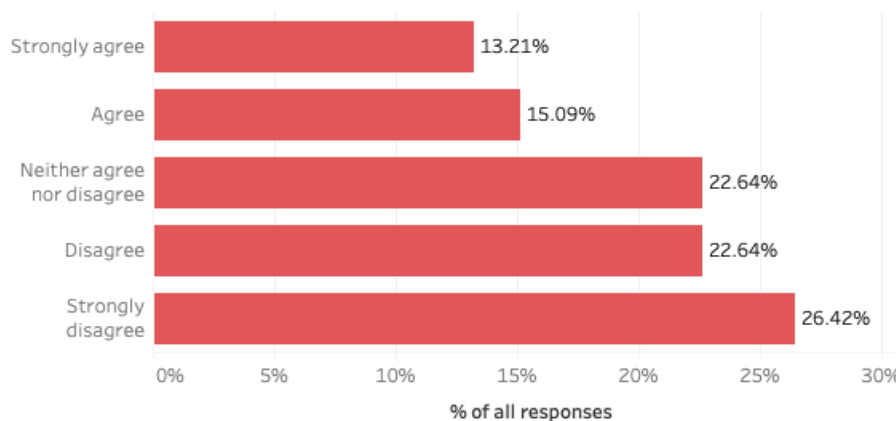


Figure 20: Percentage breakdown of reactions to the statement: "I am worried about losing my job in the next 12 months".

We asked journalists about the **support mechanisms** that may or may not be available to them to cope with these hardships. In spite of the precarious working conditions, only 18% of journalists have sought help in disputes with their employers or regarding their freelancer status. Of the few that have sought help, 70% indicated that they have received the help they had been looking for.

Figure 21 shows that 38% of Welsh journalists are concerned about their mental **well-being**, and 30% are concerned about their physical well-being.

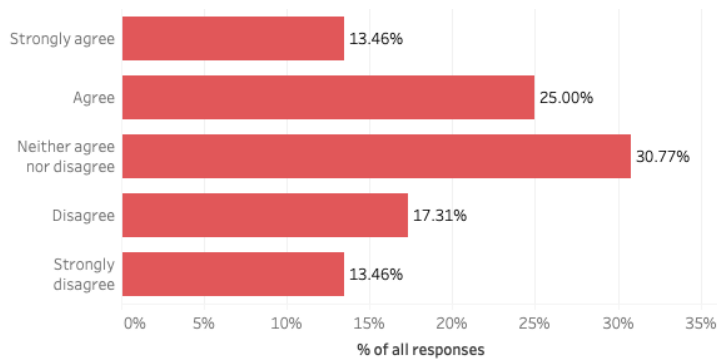


Figure 21: Reactions to the statement: "I am concerned about my emotional and mental well-being".

More journalists sought help for their health and well-being (including mental health) than employment rights advice - 35% compared with 18% for employment rights, although those that did were, in this case, less likely to have received the assistance that they had been looking for (57% of respondents are in this case). We also asked whether the organisations they work for had efficient frameworks in place for mental health support. Only 21% of journalists agreed and 29% of them disagreed. Only 10% of Welsh journalists in our sample agree that there public or private initiatives in place in the journalism sector to assist with various mental health issues, while more than a third of them disagree with this statement.

2.2. Career progression of journalists

As Figure 22 shows, the most typical **workplace of a Welsh journalist** is a Welsh-owned and operated journalistic outlet, followed by community journalism titles, 30% of our sample work with non-Welsh owned or multinational news outlets.

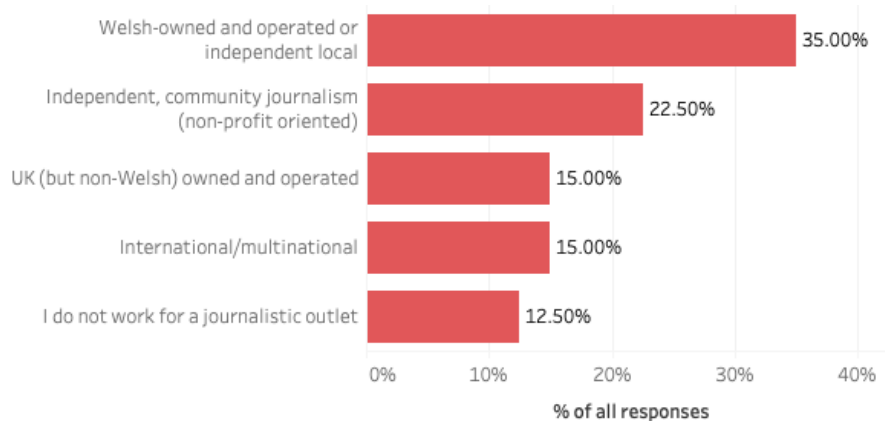


Figure 22: Types of journalistic outlets that Welsh journalists work for.

Roughly half of our sample holds a formal journalism or communication degree. This is much lower than the national average of 81%.¹¹ While many had a higher education **qualification in journalism**, many forged their own paths.

“Not everyone can get into journalism courses, because they’re difficult. I personally didn’t get in, so I had to follow alternative routes, going after freelancing positions to get into the field and create my own connections,” said one editor in a national Welsh language publication.

Some had started their careers by volunteering for a local magazine as a teenager, or even stumbling into it “by accident”. Even though our data shows that only half of journalists have a journalism-related qualification, employers still seem to prefer hiring those who do. Speaking to a young freelance journalist about their employment history, they said that they were denied a Wales-based journalist position because they

¹¹ Spilsbury, Mark: Journalists at Work, National Council for the Training of Journalists, October 2018, page 8, available online at <https://www.nctj.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/JaW-Report-2018-web.pdf>.

lacked specific training, even though they had substantial work experience in journalism related positions. They suggested that this bias towards academic experience perpetuates financial inequality in the sector.

“I feel like that was kind of unfair. You shouldn't have to have certain qualifications, because, for one thing, you often must pay for these yourself, which, again, isn't accessible for a lot of people.”

75% of survey respondents have not had to do an **unpaid internship** to start working as a journalist, in stark contrast to elsewhere in the UK, where 64% of journalists have had to do an unpaid internship¹².

Figure 23 records the **perception of Welsh journalists about how influential various layers of higher authority are on their work**. These include editorial policy, the owners of news organisations, their business managers, editorial supervisors and higher editors, as well as their colleagues and peers (these questions mirror those from the Journalists in the UK report).¹³ Peers and editorial policy are the most important drivers of Welsh journalists' career progression, both exhibiting at least moderate influence for 50% of the surveyed professionals. The owners and business managers of news organisations do not appear to be very important for Welsh journalists' work, both being important to some degree only to less than a third of them. Editorial supervisors' influence seems somewhat higher than this, but lower than that of editorial policy or journalists' peers. Journalists elsewhere in the UK report similar perceptions, especially regarding owners and business managers of news organisations. They are significantly less influential for them as well than peers or editorial policy. Nevertheless, editorial supervisors exert the most profound impact on journalists elsewhere in the UK, while they do not seem to be overly important for Welsh journalists' careers.

12 Spilsbury, Mark: Journalists at Work, National Council for the Training of Journalists, October 2018, pages 41 and 42, available online at <https://www.nctj.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/JaW-Report-2018-web.pdf>. Figures quoted in this report have been obtained by multiplying the 87% of journalists who have had to do an internship with the 74% of them, who have reported that this internship was unpaid.

13 Thurman N., Cornia A. and Kunert J.: Journalists in the UK, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, page 12, available online at <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research/files/Journalists%2520in%2520the%2520UK.pdf>.

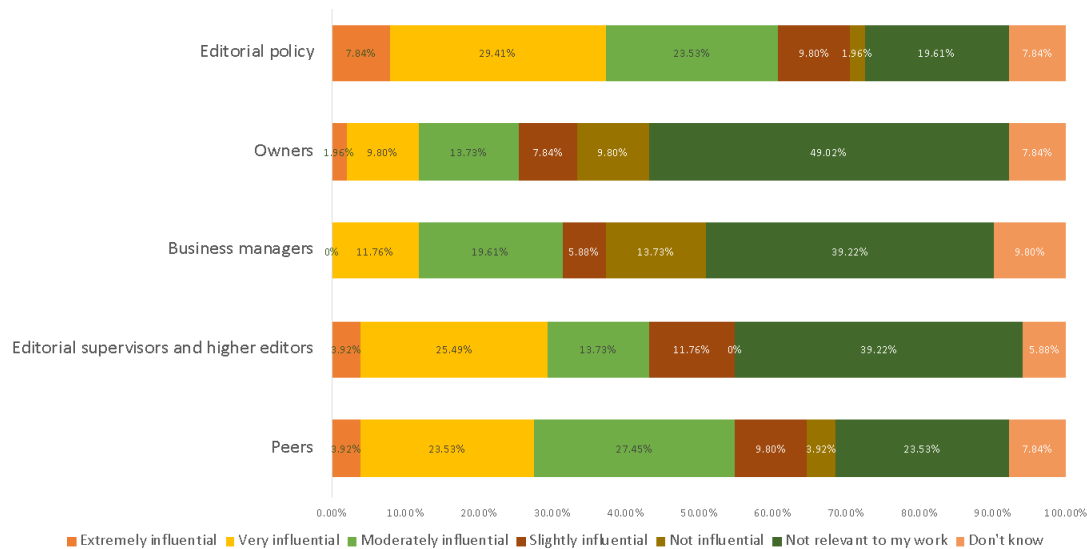


Figure 23: Welsh journalists' rankings of various organisational structures' and personnel's influence on their work.

Overall, two-thirds of Welsh journalists attribute their **career success** to the skills that they have acquired during their tenure, shown in Figure 24 below, while 38% of Welsh journalists attribute their career success to their professional networks (Figure 25 suggests).

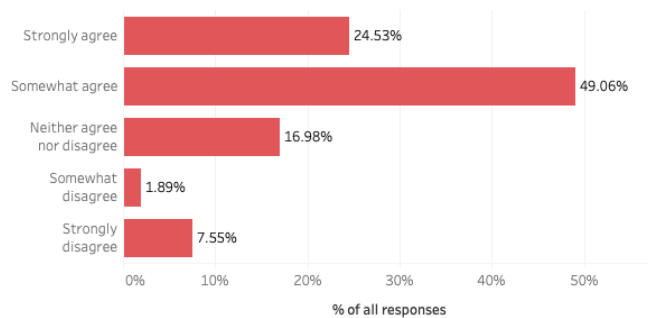


Figure 24: Reactions to the statement: "My career progression thus far has been primarily shaped by the skills that I have acquired".

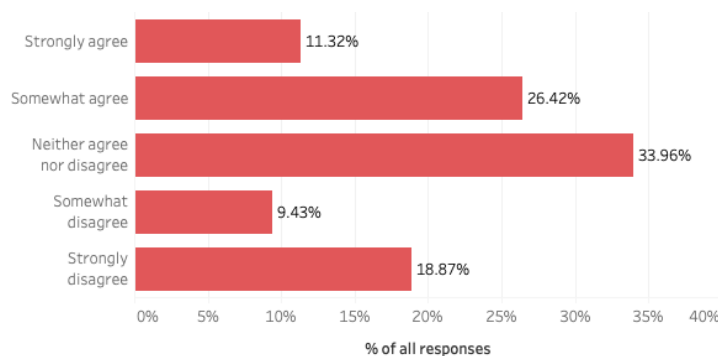


Figure 25: Reactions to the statement: "My career progression thus far has been primarily shaped by the quality and size of my professional network".

2.3. The efficiency of funding schemes

We asked survey respondents e about the various funding schemes that they have participated in or directly benefitted from. While we have proposed over 40 grants and other schemes for respondents to choose from, they have only declared participating in 6 of them. These schemes are shown in Figure 26. Naturally, respondents were free to choose multiple options, which is why the sum of the percentages below add up to over 100%.

Almost half of those in our sample have not benefited from any funding schemes. Most **sources of funding** that journalists did receive were Welsh public interest groups or governmental bodies. These schemes include Welsh Government Funding, Books Council of Wales, Welsh Public Interest News Accelerator and the Welsh Public Interest Journalism Fund. Other programs and schemes that journalists have mentioned (and that we have omitted to include as possible options) included Inclusive Journalism Cymru and NUJ Training Wales.

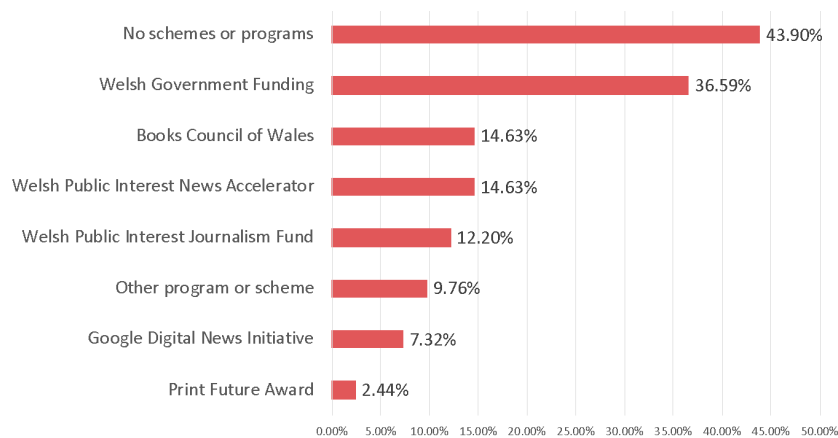


Figure 26: Schemes and programs that Welsh journalists have participated in.

We asked journalists to rate the **impact and usefulness that these schemes** have had on their careers, as well as on their organisations/primary workplaces. Respondents were given the following options: *essential*, *useful*, *somewhat useful*, *marginal*, *inexistent*. For each of the well-delineable schemes above, we have counted the percentage of recipients, who declared the scheme to be at least *somewhat useful*. All recipients of the Google Digital News Initiative indicated that the scheme was at least somewhat useful to their careers and workplaces. This is followed by Welsh Government Funding

at 89%, Books Council of Wales at 83% and the Welsh Public Interest Journalism Fund at 80%. Respondents were somewhat less enthusiastic about the impact and usefulness of the Welsh Public Interest News Accelerator and the Print Future Award.

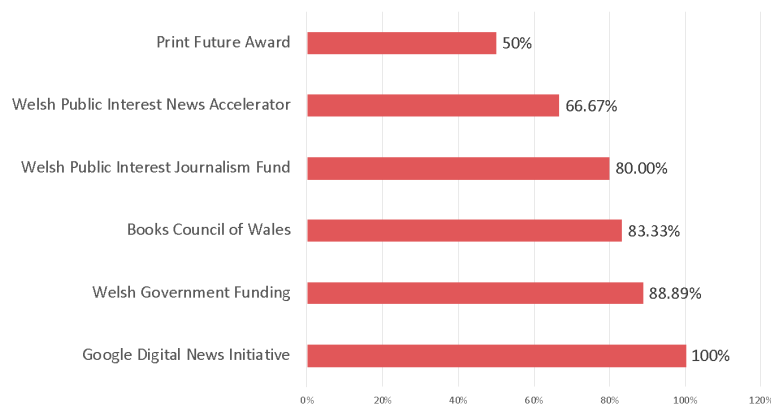


Figure 27: Percentage of the recipients of each award or scheme, who characterised it as at least somewhat useful for their careers and their organisations or workplaces.

Funding was a major topic for our focus groups. The overall sense was that even though **many publications relied on financial support, there was not enough available and the project-based, short-term nature of grants incurred anxiety and instability.** Many others shared the same experience of living funding round to funding round, uncertain of what lay ahead. When funding is cut, organisations have to rethink their strategies in order to survive, often being forced to cut down members of staff and therefore lose valuable experience in their newsrooms. All participants who spoke on the matter agreed that it has been a significantly difficult period financially. Many participants expressed concerns about the cost-of-living crisis and its effects on their careers. For one journalist, these wider financial crises were causing substantial worries for the future of their organisation which depends heavily on public funding.

“We are worried about our rents and our bills. When you go through lots of different funding, you think, are you going to get another contract? Is it going to get renewed? Am I going to lose my job?”

Another factor when considering the effectiveness of **funding schemes and their approach to diversity and inclusion.** Though many have good intentions of fostering a more diverse workforce and supporting people from marginalised backgrounds, participants agreed that for any real change to take place, sustained efforts have to be made, and should focus predominantly on building capacity. As one editor put it:

“It is harder to dedicate the time, the capacity, the attention, and the means needed to get people involved properly without it feeling tokenizing or potentially draining for them if the cost of the organisation is not covered. If that's not taken into consideration, that's always going to come at the cost of the people who are recipients of those diversity schemes.” As one focus group member put it: “Diversity is a long-term investment.”

There is also the issue of **journalists feeling that certain stories are not being picked up by publicly funded outlets**. For example, one journalist believed that they were not being given a platform because they were bringing uncomfortable truths to light in stories about race and its relationship to deprivation. This was echoed by other journalists who were aware of implicit censorship due to government funding. It should be noted, however, that some had a similar view of publications funded by advertising; that they were beholden to their stakeholders' views and motivated by clicks, so were therefore less inclined to produce impartial news that truly served their communities.

Though many of our participants acknowledged that **funding was crucial for many publications to survive**, a common complaint was their short-term, project-based approach to funding, left many feeling uncertain, often resulting in having to let staff go. Many argued that deeper, structural changes must take place to ensure that smaller publications - who are often the ones who support marginalised people the most - can financially keep afloat and further direct their capacity to mentoring and building a safe, inclusive workplace. Another common theme that arose was the tick-box nature of diversity and inclusion funding schemes, which boast good intentions, but ultimately fail if there isn't the infrastructure in place to foster sustainable careers after the funding round.

3. Journalism needs, demands and skills

A thriving public interest journalism sector in Wales relies on a skilled and adaptable workforce. In this section we map the content created by Welsh journalists (3.1). Do Welsh journalists have the autonomy to create audience-centric content, or do they need to treat the needs of the audience as a relatively secondary consideration compared to business rationales?

We further explore the adaptability of Welsh journalists to technological change in terms of their skills (3.2). We also map the avenues through which Welsh journalists upskill, and whether they use private or public funding to do so.

3.1. News production and needs

Most respondents in our sample produce **journalistic content** for online platforms, such as websites and social media, as shown in Figure 28. 50% often produce content for print media. There are fewer broadcast journalists in the sample, with 18% producing content for radio and 9% for television. In contrast to the composition of our sample, the way that consumers acquire news in the UK is mostly through broadcast media, such as television, which 75% of all adults use to inform themselves of the latest news. 66% of all adults in the UK use the internet for consuming news, while only 38% of them turn to print media.¹⁴

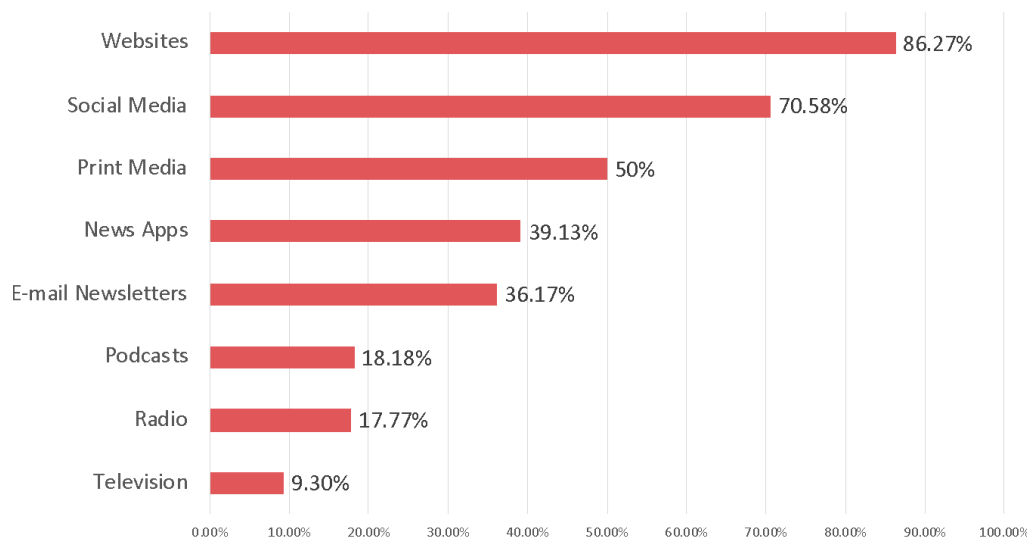


Figure 28: Percentage of journalists in our sample producing output at least “often” for various platforms.

Figure 29 maps **the type of content created (sorted by topic) by our sample of Welsh journalists and contrast it with the content that is most in demand**. We approximate the latter by asking for journalists’ views on what types of stories they consider to be particularly popular on social media, quickly gaining substantial traction after their publication. We have used social media traction as the benchmark, as it is the most often cited competing platform for Welsh journalists’ outputs. The most common topics for content amongst our sample are current affairs news stories (77%), arts & culture stories (73%), politics (59%) and editorials (36%). The types of news stories that

¹⁴ Jigsaw Research: News Consumption in the UK, 21 July 2022, Ofcom, p. 12., available online at https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0027/241947/News-Consumption-in-the-UK-2022-report.pdf.

journalists believe are popular on social media broadly follow the same ranking, although only 19% of journalists believe that arts & culture topics quickly gain traction on social media, while 73% of them create news stories in this area. And while only 9% of Welsh journalists create tabloid/gossip stories, while 24% of them believe that such stories gain quick popularity on social media.

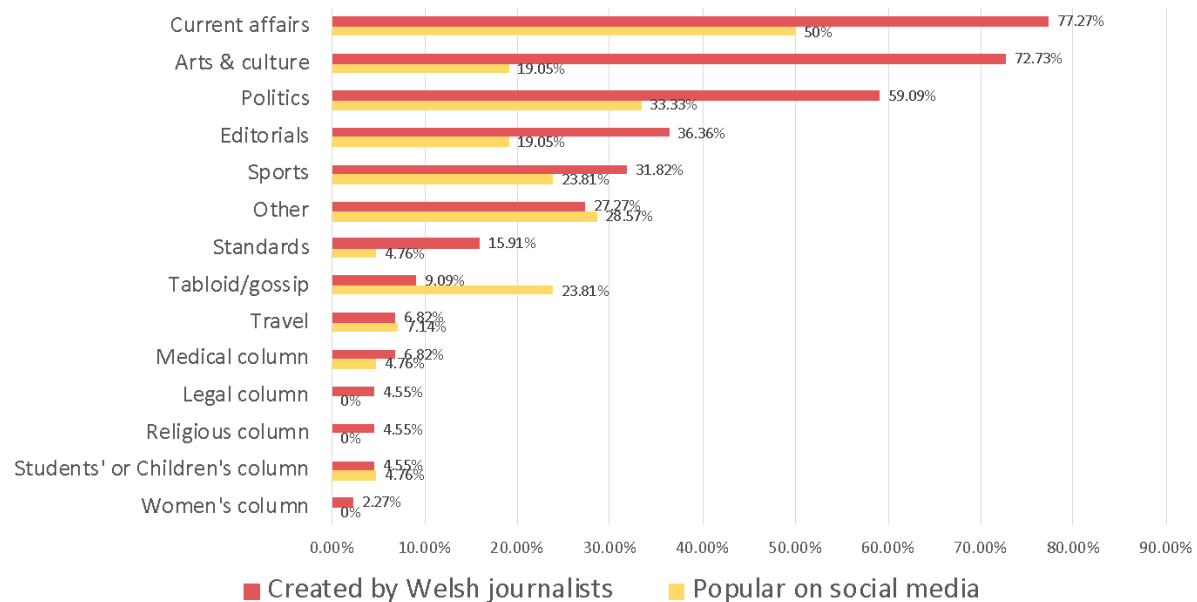


Figure 29: The percentage of journalists indicating having often worked of the types of content (in red) and the percentage of journalists believing that various types of content quickly gain traction on social media (in yellow).

Some editors we spoke to talked about a constant balancing act between commissioning stories *they* would like to see, and those that get the most social media engagement. This discrepancy can be seen in the graph above, where the type of content that journalists create do not necessarily correlate with what they perceive as the most popular content. As one editor put it:

“Maybe I would like to see more content about the Senedd, but maybe not everyone would. Most people don’t want to know. They want something about celebs.”

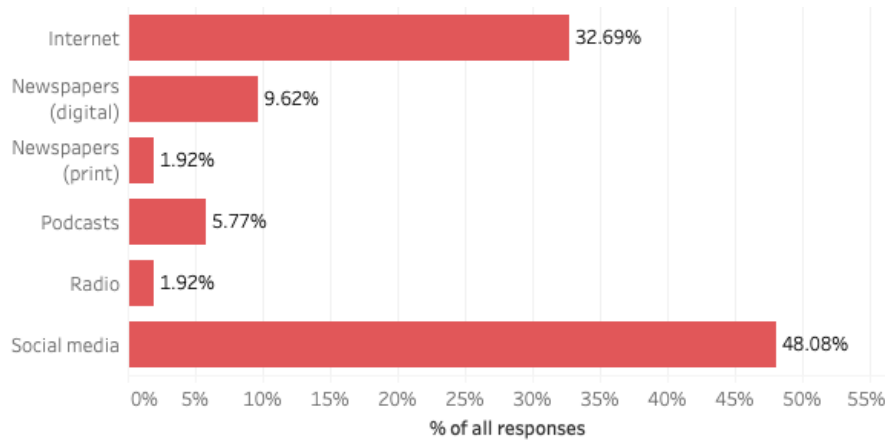


Figure 30: Percentage breakdown of answers to the question: “Which platform is the primary competitor for the attention that your output seeks to capture?”

In Figure 31 below, there appears to be little mismatch between the characteristics of a good news story that journalists and readers (reportedly) value (although we should stress that this involves our sample’s perception of what their readers want, rather than any audience data). Two thirds of the journalists in our sample (67%) believe that ‘trust’ is especially important to news consumers (although we note that, apart, perhaps, from the BBC, audience data shows that there is a very weak correlation between the most popular news sources and the most trusted news sources).

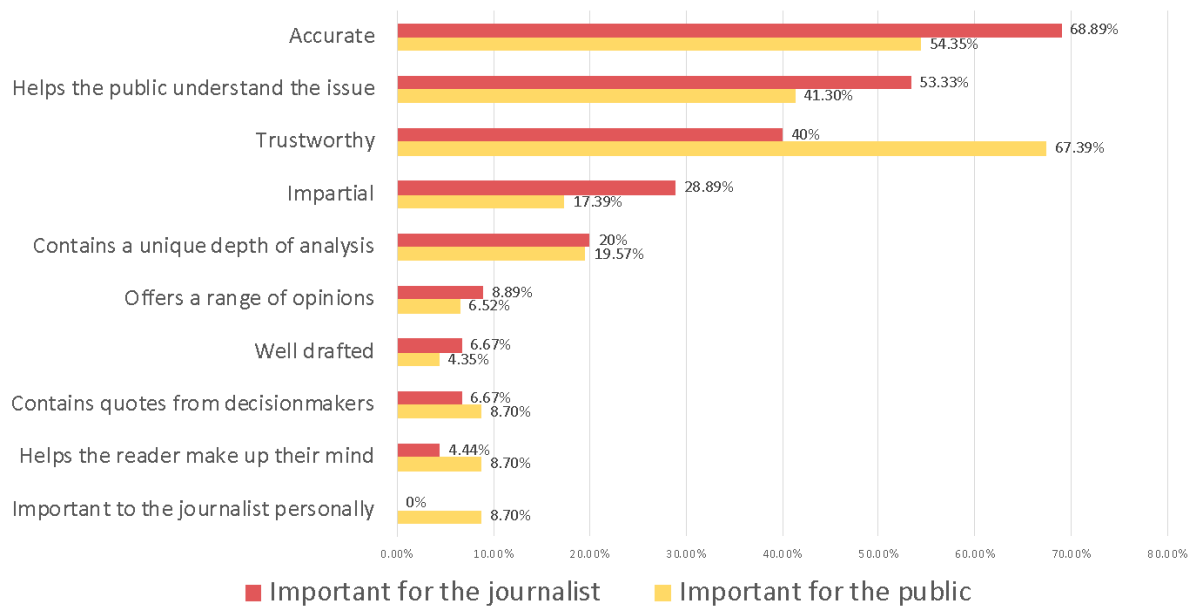


Figure 31: Attributes of a good news story that are important to Welsh journalists compared to those that they believe are important for the public.

Trustworthiness was also a key theme in our focus groups, with a majority citing this as one of the most important aspects to producing high quality journalism. Particularly in this current climate of misinformation and the mushrooming of conspiracy theories online, accurate and reliable information is at the core of what people expect - and need - from news. Another factor is relevance: *Why does this story matter? How will it impact me?* One editor found that the stories which got the most engagement were ones where they had clearly stated the purpose of the piece to its readers and why it should be of interest to them. As well as this skill of communicating and packaging content for specific readerships, contextualisation was frequently mentioned as a desirable component of a good news story.

There was a need for more in-depth analysis, journalism which connects the dots and helps people see “the bigger pictures and patterns.”

Figure 32 looks at **how much influence journalists in our sample perceive various factors have on their work**. This shows that they see their own values and structural constraints as the most important influences on their work, notably: journalism ethics (78%), time limits (77%), the availability of news-gathering resources (72%) and personal values (51%). Reader feedback (62%) is seen as more important than more systemic forms of data, such as audience research and web metrics (44%), while profits and advertising are seen as less pressing influences on day to day journalism. This contrasts with 43% of UK journalists who report that profit expectations and 47% of UK journalists who report that advertising considerations influence their work.¹⁵ Audience research and data analytics are also more important for journalists elsewhere in the UK than for Welsh ones, with 80% of them considering it at least somewhat influential.

15 Thurman N., Cornia A. and Kunert J.: Journalists in the UK, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, page 42, available online at <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research/files/Journalists%2520in%2520the%2520UK.pdf>.

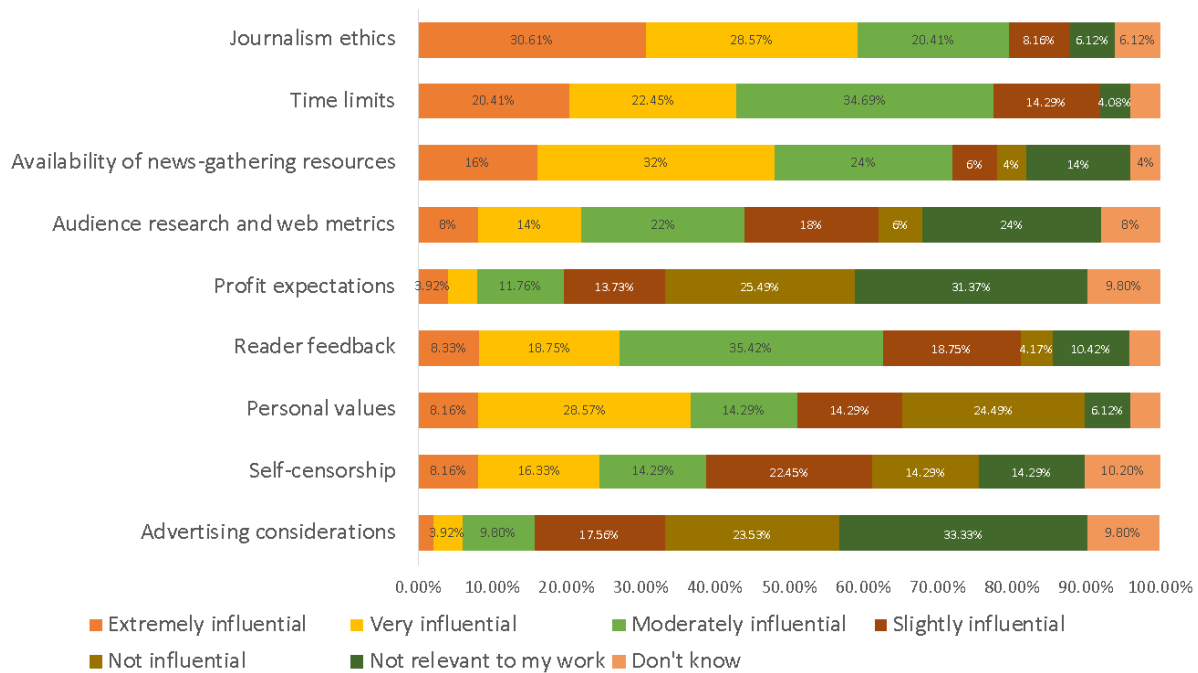


Figure 32: Welsh journalists' perceptions of the impact that various economic, organisational and ethical considerations have on their work.

These comparisons suggest that Welsh journalism appears to have a **strong particularly commitment to ethical reporting**, while being less constrained by commercial pressures than journalism in the rest of the UK. Many journalists and editors in our focus groups cited their readers' needs as central to their endeavours. They were confident that people wanted local, community-based news, or national news told through a local lens. A nationwide Welsh-language publication told us that they were attempting to cater for these needs through employing more community reporters based in under-served areas, working towards a culture where every area in Wales feels sufficiently seen and heard.

Time limitations were a popular topic in our focus groups, with many editors complaining that the pressure to continuously report on fast-paced, short-lived news stories left little room to gather broader pieces which develop over a long period of time, and arguably offer more context and thorough understanding. Investigative journalism has become a luxury few journalists can afford.

3.2. Understanding journalists' skills

The fast **adoption of digital and AI tools for producing journalistic output** is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, if it happens, it speaks to the versatility of the sector, as well as its adaptability to fast evolving technologies. On the other hand, at least on the short run, it is possible that various tools, such as automated or robot journalism, generative AI or parse.ly may crowd out routine journalist tasks, setting ever higher barriers to entry for journalists. There has been a paradigm shift in the journalism industry because of the quick adoption of technological tools, with both transformative and difficult implications. Against this backdrop on **adoption of digital tools by Welsh journalists**, Figure 33 shows how often Welsh journalists use different tool.

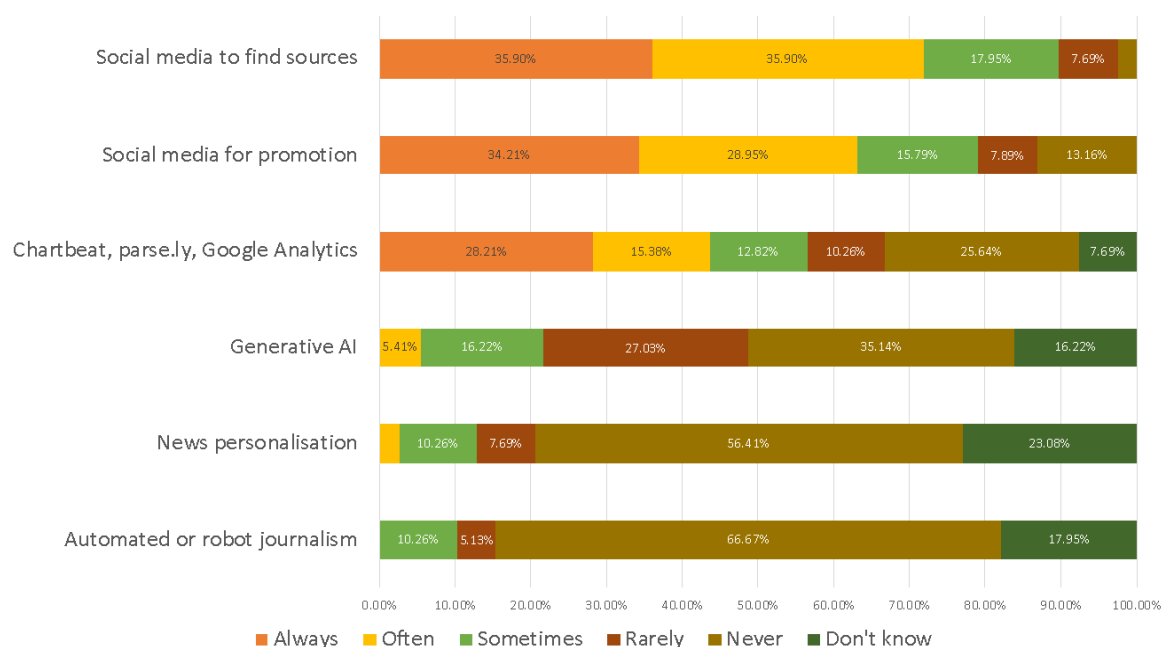


Figure 33: High-tech journalistic tools and their adoption levels by Welsh journalists.

The findings show that they very rarely **use algorithmic techniques or news personalisation tools**. They do, however use social media, both to scope for sources, potentially newsworthy events, information, and opinions for stories and to promote journalistic output produced on other platforms (such as in print media). 89% of Welsh journalists report using social media for the former purpose at least sometimes and 79% for the latter purpose (again, at least sometimes). Analytical tools, such as Chartbeat, parse.ly or Google Analytics are also relatively popular with Welsh journalists. 56% of them report using these tools at least sometimes.

Participants in our focus groups expressed **distrust and scepticism towards AI**, both in terms of its accuracy and impartiality, and in because concerns over job losses. Not surprisingly, even fewer Welsh-language journalists use software such as ChatGPT, which is predominantly available in English.

In contrast, the more **widespread use of analytics and social media platforms** indicates a deliberate adoption of digital technologies that are perceived as less disruptive to established journalistic practices. Utilising social media for content sourcing and distribution demonstrates a shift to the digital media environment and acknowledges the significance of these channels for audience interaction and modern news distribution. The fact that Welsh journalists are fond of analytical tools indicates that they value insights derived from data. This development is consistent with a global trend in journalism towards a focus on audiences and reader engagement. Consequently, the Welsh journalism scene demonstrates a nuanced interaction between the careful assimilation of new technologies and established journalistic principles. It implies that integrating technology more subtly in ways that honour established journalistic norms while progressively bringing in novel ideas that can improve the calibre of reporting and audience participation.

At the same time, we note that Welsh journalism culture – in line with the UK – is not informed by **regular training in new techniques or forms of understanding**. As Figure 34 shows, 41% of Welsh journalists have done no training, and a further 41% attended no more than 1 or 2 training sessions or workshops in the past year. Across the UK, 36% of journalists have reported that they do not feel that they require additional or new skills.¹⁶

¹⁶ Spilsbury, Mark: Journalists at Work, National Council for the Training of Journalists, October 2018, page 59, available online at <https://www.nctj.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/JaW-Report-2018-web.pdf>.

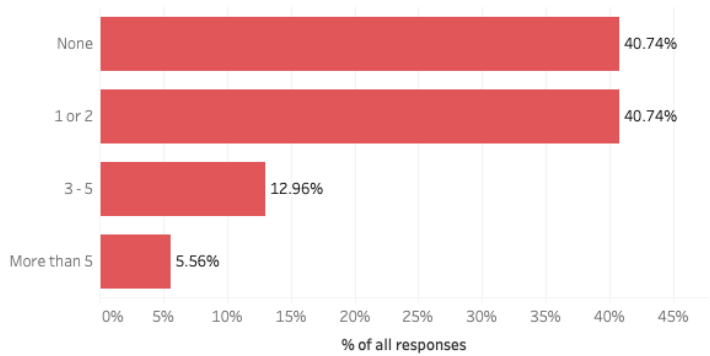


Figure 34: Number of trainings attended by Welsh journalists in the past year.

Nonetheless, the importance of training came up time and again in our focus groups. One editor reported a distinct **lack of training opportunities** in the Welsh language, while many journalists and editors are largely carrying out their work alone, meaning there is less opportunity to bounce ideas off colleagues or transfer skills within a team. One community radio host said this has led to a sense of insecurity in the quality of their content, as even though it's possible to gain skills online, this has its limits, and they were often under pressure to generate content rapidly and didn't have the capacity to ask for second opinions. Mentorship schemes could be an answer to this, an idea shared by a significant number of participants.

41% of Welsh journalists report that their primary workplace pays for training (Figure 35). Only 22% of journalists have reported going out of pocket occasionally or regularly for training programs.¹⁷

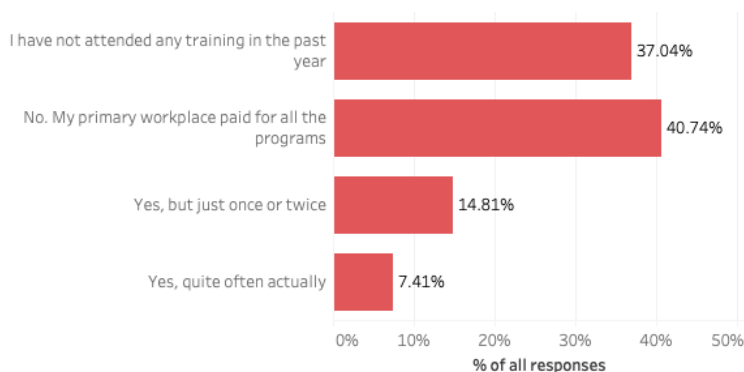


Figure 35: Sources of funding for Welsh journalists' training.

¹⁷ We recognise the discrepancy across Figure 53 and Figure 54 in regard to the percentage of journalists that report not having attended training courses during the past year. This discrepancy can be explained by the fact that the absolute number of journalists who have filled out these two questions is slightly different across them.

Recommendations for the future

1. Targeted support for inclusive and diverse journalistic content

While the demographic composition of Welsh journalists is much more diverse than elsewhere in the UK in most dimensions, this does not necessarily translate into the representativeness of journalistic output. In fact, only 21% of all Welsh journalists believe that Welsh journalism adequately covers issues regarding people with protected characteristics residing in Wales. While initiatives aimed at further diversifying newsrooms is useful, grants could also encourage new forms of content creation, to produce journalism that has diverse and wide-ranging audiences who learn from and engage with its content. This support could be complemented by Inclusive Journalism Training Initiatives, offering training on inclusive reporting and focus on sensitively covering stories involving diverse communities. As one of the journalists in our survey put it:

“Creating the systemic conditions for good journalism to take place - rather than by funding journalism directly. That means supporting initiatives that foster sustainability, equity, innovation, and a wider range of perspectives.”

2. Inclusion of people from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds

This might include social outreach programs (including scholarships, internships and outreach in schools and communities), community-based journalism workshops, mentorship and career guidance programs, and subsidised training for people from low-income backgrounds.

3. Establishing support mechanisms for freelance journalists in Wales

Such mechanisms could include the provision of access to professional development resources, networking opportunities and legal advice (our research shows freelancers are reluctant to seek help on their own). Additionally, creating a digital platform for collaboration would support these journalists, fostering a sense of community and shared resource pooling. Finally, a digital transformation hub for freelancers would also

be welcome. Such a hub may aim to provide support for small, independent media outlets and freelance journalists, many of whom might lack the financial means or technical know-how to invest in digital technologies. There are some initiatives in place in Wales for supporting freelancers in general, as well as freelance journalists, such as the Bureau of Investigative Journalism's bursaries available to freelancers, or the Wales Freelance Taskforce. As an additional faucet to these supporting mechanisms, a general framework for promoting mental health among journalists would also be important, as our research shows that Welsh journalists do not have such support frameworks at their disposal.

4. Grassroots Journalism Development in News Deserts

The report has identified several well-delineable news deserts, with a perception of inadequate coverage, independently of the type or language of journalism. To address the issues around these news deserts, we recommend a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches, offering grants and resources to encourage the development of local news outlets.

5. Bilingual Journalism Enhancement

Reflecting the bilingual nature of Welsh society, grants could encourage the development of innovative bilingual content. They would support projects that serve both Welsh and English-speaking audiences, fostering a more inclusive media landscape and preserving Welsh linguistic heritage. While there are already frameworks in place for supporting journalism in Wales, such as the Welsh Government's funding schemes for supporting Welsh language media, or the work of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee, there is still work to be done in this area.

6. Launch a 'Journalism Technology Adoption' Program

Given that only a minority of Welsh journalists are currently using advanced technologies like generative AI, such a program would focus on increasing the adoption rate of such technologies. It would provide hands-on training and access to new tools, helping journalists to integrate these technologies into their daily reporting and content creation without compromising standards or integrity.

7. Develop a Pan-Wales News Service

Inspired by models like The Scottish Beacon, we recommend the establishment of a Pan-Wales news service that emphasizes diversity and broad coverage, including better representation of Welsh politics and arts & culture. This service could serve as a central hub, aggregating news from various sources and offering individual article purchases, thereby enhancing accessibility and reach. It would be instrumental in filling coverage gaps and promoting a more inclusive media landscape that resonates with a wider audience. This initiative would not only provide a platform for diverse journalistic voices but also offer an alternative to traditional subscription models, making it more financially accessible for the public.

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