



# Diversity in Journalism

**An update on the characteristics of journalists**

**Report commissioned by the National Council for the Training of Journalists**



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## 1. Background

This research report updates the analysis of journalists' diversity characteristics from 2018 to 2020<sup>1</sup>. It is based on 2020 Labour Force Survey (LFS) data<sup>2</sup>. It can be read in conjunction with the NCTJ's *Diversity in Journalism* report, published in November 2017, and *Journalists at Work*, published in October 2018.

## 2. All UK employment compared to all journalism employment

The table below compares the characteristics of all in employment in the UK with those of journalists. This data covers all working, employed and self-employed, those working full-time and part-time.

Perhaps the most striking element of the journalism data does not relate to diversity at all, but to the number of working journalists identified in the data which, in 2020, is estimated at 96,000 (the highest level of journalism employment ever recorded in the LFS).

Relating more specifically to diversity, the data shows:

- **sex:** there are more women than men working as journalists (53 per cent compared to 47 per cent). This distribution is the opposite compared to the UK as a whole, where the proportions working are 52 per cent men and 48 per cent women;
- **age:** there are proportionately fewer journalists at either end of the age spectrum than the all-UK employment average, with (i) seven per cent aged under 25 (compared to 11 per cent across all UK employment)<sup>3</sup> and (ii) 26 per cent of journalists aged 50 and over compared to 32 per cent across all-UK employment. Sixty-seven per cent of journalists are in 'prime age groups' (i.e. 25 – 49 years of age) compared to 57 per cent of all-UK employment;
- **ethnicity:** 92 per cent of journalists come from white ethnic groups, a higher proportion of than across all UK workers (88 per cent)<sup>4</sup>;
- **nationality:** 90 per cent of journalists were born in the UK, with five per cent from the EU27 and five per cent from the rest of the world. This is a lower proportion from the EU than for all UK workers (five per cent compared to seven per cent);
- **health and disability:** 16 per cent of journalists report having a work-limiting health problem or disability, the same as for all UK workers;

<sup>1</sup> The analysis is based on the 2010 occupational coding classification (SOC 2471: journalists, newspaper and periodical editors). This has been improved in the new 2020 SOC coding, with the creation of two SOC codes, with a divide based on experience. The LFS will be coding to these new codes from January 2021, with data available from the summer onwards.

<sup>2</sup> The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is run by the Office for National Statistics. It is the main UK data source for regular individual key labour market statistics. It provides data at a level of precision not matched by any other regular survey. It is a household-based survey, interviewing about 60,000 households, comprising 150,000 people, each quarter.

<sup>3</sup> This is most likely linked to the higher qualifications of those who enter journalism.

<sup>4</sup> We have collapsed the data for other ethnic groups into a single 'BAME groups' because of sample size restrictions.

- **religion:** 58 per cent of journalists report having no religion compared to 48 per cent of all UK workers. 39 per cent of journalists state that they are Christian, lower than the 44 per cent for all UK workers. Three per cent of journalists identify as having some other religion, compared to eight per cent of all in UK employment;
- **qualification level:** as befits a professional occupation, journalists are highly qualified. 89 per cent have a degree-level (level 4) or higher-level qualification, compared to 48 per cent of the workforce as a whole. Only four per cent have low level, or no, qualifications compared to 34 per cent of all UK workers;
- **social class:** journalists are more likely to come from households where a parent works/worked in a higher-level occupation, one of the key determinants of social class. 75 per cent of journalists had a parent in one of the three highest occupational groups, compared to 45 per cent all UK workers. Less than one in ten (eight per cent) have a parent in the lowest two occupations compared to 20 per cent of all workers. It is also notable the relative low proportion of journalists who have parents in the skilled trades occupations<sup>5</sup> at 12 per cent compares to 22 per cent for all those in work.



<sup>5</sup> Which includes electrical trades, construction and building trades, etc

**Table 1:** Diversity data, journalists and all in work compared, UK, 2020

	All in work (UK) %	Journalists %
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	52	47
Female	48	53
<b>Age</b>		
Under 25	11	7
25-29	11	16
30-39	24	29
40-49	22	22
50 and over	32	26
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	88	92
BAME groups	12	8
<b>Nationality</b>		
UK	89	90
EU27	7	5
Rest of world	4	5
<b>Health/disability</b>		
Have work limiting health problem/disability	16	16
No work limiting health problem/disability	84	84
<b>Religion</b>		
No Religion	48	58
Christian (all denominations)	44	39
Other religions	8	3
<b>Highest qualification</b>		
Level 5	14	31
Level 4	34	58
Level 3	18	7
Level 2 and below	34	4
<b>Social class/occupation of parent</b>		
Managers, directors & senior officials	15	14
Professional occupations	20	43
Associate professional & technical occupations	10	18
Administrative & secretarial occupations	6	2
Skilled trades occupations	22	12
Caring, leisure & other service occupations	4	1
Sales & customer service occupations	4	2
Process, plant & machine operatives	11	7
Elementary occupations	9	1
<b>All (n)</b>	<b>32,457,000</b>	<b>96,000</b>

Source: Labour Force Survey quarterly tables, averaged over four quarters Jan/Mar 2020 to Oct/Dec 2020.  
Weighted to ONS 2018 population estimates.

Note: Religion statistics apply to GB only, NI not included



### 3. Change in journalism diversity levels

The table below shows the change from 2016 to the latest 2020 data. It should be borne in mind that these are (in LFS terms) small sample sizes and changes observed in the data below may well be the result of sampling variability rather than ‘real’ changes in the underlying population. We should ideally see a pattern of change over time rather than comparing just two points.

Again, perhaps the most striking point of the data is not one that relates to diversity but to the overall number of working journalists. At 96,000, this is an increase of 18,000 over the 2018 level of 78,000, which itself is an increase on the 2016 level of 73,000.

Looking at the trends in diversity indicators:

- **sex:** the latest 2020 data shows a continuation in the increase in the proportion of women employed in journalism so that they are now in the majority (53 per cent compared to 47 per cent of men);
- **age:** the 2020 data suggests that the journalism workforce is getting younger, with the proportion aged below 30 increasing from 16 per cent in 2018 to 23 per cent in 2020. The proportion aged over 40 has decreased from 64 per cent in 2018 to 48 per cent in 2020;
- **ethnicity:** there is a slight decrease in the proportion coming from white ethnic groups (from 94 to 92 per cent);
- **nationality:** there is a slight decrease in the proportion with UK nationality (from 92 per cent to 90 per cent), with an increase in the proportion with EU27 nationality (increased to five per cent from three per cent);
- **health and disability:** there is a slight increase in the proportion with a disability (from 15 to 16 per cent), which is a continuation of the trend from 2016;
- **religion:** the proportion who hold no religion has decreased from 62 per cent to 58 per cent, with those who are of Christian faith increasing from 34 to 39 per cent;
- **qualification:** the data shows a continuation of the trend towards higher levels of qualification, with the proportion having a level 4 and above increasing to 89 per cent; the proportion with low or no qualifications has continued to fall and is now at four per cent;
- **social class:** there is an increase in the proportion coming from the highest social classes (from 55 to 75 per cent), which actually restores this proportion to the same level seen in 2016. This suggests that the 2018 data was a ‘rogue’ result and there is no real sign of a decrease in the proportion coming from higher social groups.



**Table 2:** Diversity of journalists' data, change 2016 - 2020

	2016 %	2018 %	2020 %
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	55	54	47
Female	45	46	53
<b>Age</b>			
Under 25	5	4	7
25-29	11	12	16
30-39	25	19	29
40-49	27	32	22
50 and over	32	34	26
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
White	90	94	92
Other ethnic groups	10	6	8
<b>Nationality</b>			
UK	-	92	90
EU27	-	3	5
Rest of world	-	5	5
<b>Health/disability</b>			
Have work limiting health problem/disability	10	15	16
No work limiting health problem/disability	90	85	84
<b>Religion</b>			
No Religion	-	62	58
Christian (all denominations)	-	34	39
Other religions	-	4	3
<b>Highest qualification</b>			
Level 5	32	32	31
Level 4	55	55	58
Level 3	7	6	7
Level 2 and below	7	6	4
<b>Social class/occupation of parent</b>			
Managers, directors & senior officials	23	19	14
Professional occupations	35	24	43
Associate professional & technical occupations	14	12	18
Administrative & secretarial occupations	7	13	2
Skilled trades occupations	9	18	12
Caring, leisure & other service occupations	*	1	1
Sales & customer service occupations	4	3	2
Process, plant & machine operatives	3	4	7
Elementary occupations	3	5	1
<b>All (n)</b>	<b>73,000</b>	<b>78,000</b>	<b>96,000</b>

Source: Labour Force Survey, 2016, 2018 and 2020

Note: Religion statistics apply to GB only, NI not included

## 4. Concluding remarks

The most notable feature of the 2020 data is the increase in the number of journalists employed, with an increase from 78,000 to 96,000.

With regard to diversity, we have to be careful not to read too much into changes over two time points: the LFS is a sample survey and it is to be expected that there will be changes which are due to the vagaries of the research method as much as underlying trends. On that basis:

- there do not appear to be underlying changes in the proportions of journalists coming from BAME groups or from lower social groups; but
- there does appear to be a continuation of the trend for (i) the increasing proportion of women,<sup>6</sup> (ii) journalists to be on average younger (with lower proportions over the age of 40) and (iii) higher levels of qualifications.

The continuing increase in the ‘graduatisation’ of journalism could be acting against attempts to increase some aspects of diversity. Entrants to higher education are not themselves representative of the wider population. To the extent that journalism continues to increasingly recruit from a pool which is itself under-representative of BAME and lower social groups, it is likely that under-representation will continue.

<sup>6</sup> Although we cannot examine whether this is extending into higher positions *within* journalism until the new SOC 2020 data is available.



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