ACME AFRICAN CENTRE FOR MEDIA EXCELLENCE

A PORTRAIT OF UGANDAN JOURNALISTS IN TURBULENT TIMES

JUNE 2021

AFRICAN CENTRE FOR
MEDIA EXCELLENCE

A Portrait of Ugandan Journalists in Turbulent Times

A SURVEY REPORT

JUNE 2021

Published by
African Centre for Media Excellence
Plot 130 Kalungu Road (Bunga-Soya), off Ggaba Road
P. O. Box 11283 Kampala, Uganda
Tel: +256 393 202 351
info@acme-ug.org
www.acme-ug.org
Facebook: ACME.UG
Twitter: @ACME_Uganda

Layout & Design by: Murshid Lutalo, murshid.lg@gmail.com

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS V

INTRODUCTION 1

BACKGROUND 3

- Media regulation 6
- Journalism in Uganda 9
- Journalism training 11

RESEARCH QUESTIONS 13

METHODS 14

FINDINGS 15

- Demographics and work 15
- Membership in professional associations 21
- Use of social media 24
- Professional autonomy and freedom 26
- Threats to journalists 28
- Perceptions on roles of journalists in Uganda 29
- Views on ethics 31
- Influences on work 34
- Trust in institutions 35

DISCUSSION 36

- Age, education, and experience of Ugandan journalists 36
- Lack of specialisation 37

Ugandan journalists remain poorly paid 38
Limited number of women in newsrooms 39
Journalists continue to embrace social media 39
Physical threats worry journalists 40
Controversial ethical practices 40
Journalists' role perceptions 41

CONCLUSION 42

APPENDIX 1: MEDIA HOUSES FROM WHICH RESPONDENTS WERE DRAWN 44

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research report was written by ACME Executive Director Peter G. Mwesige (PhD), Media Monitoring and Research Programme Manager Gerald Walulya (PhD), and Monitoring and Research Associate Brian Ssenabulya.

We also recognise the contribution of other ACME staff Clare Muhindo and Rachel Mugarura-Mutana. Director of Programmes Bernard Tabaire edited the report.

Damali Mukhaye, Eronie Kamukama, Moses Kyeyune, and Samuel Sanya collected the data for this survey.

ACME thanks the Delegation of the European Union to Uganda for funding the research as part of our two-year project titled "Enhancing Media Capacity for Inclusive Development" or EMCID. The overall objective of the project is to improve media's capacity to offer quality coverage of public affairs that can promote responsive governance and inclusive development in Uganda.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, the role of journalists and the media especially in providing accurate information that can help the public make informed decisions has been widely recognised by both the World Health Organisation and governments all over the world. In Uganda, despite his publicly stated distrust of the media, President Yoweri Museveni declared media workers among "essential workers" when he announced the first lockdown in March 2020. The media industry, unlike public transport for example, was never shut down.

During times of crisis and uncertainty, the media not only play an important role in informing society, they also "are critical in contributing objectively to the discussion over how to respond, and ensuring communities have access to life-saving information".[1] The media contribute to public understanding of public health threats and provide a platform for debate on the policy options that governments should consider in response. Furthermore, the media also play a watchdog role by holding to account government officials and others with a role in the response.[2]

But even without pandemics and crises, journalism and the media have always been important. In general elections[3], for instance, the media not only play the essential role of providing information to enable voters make informed decisions, they also provide platforms for debate amongst the different contending groups and citizens; act as watchdogs for fairness during election campaigning and polling; educate the public about election processes; and provide voice to the voters.[4]

1 (n.d.). Media in Crisis and Disaster Situations - Unesco. Retrieved 5 June 2020 from https://en.unesco.org/themes/media-crisis-and-disaster-situations

2 See: Hilton, S., & Hunt, K. (2011). UK newspapers' representations of the 2009–10 outbreak of swine flu: one health scare not over-hyped by the media? *J Epidemiol Community Health*, *65*(10), 941-946.
And;
Kato, M., & Ishikawa, H. (2016). Media Coverage of a global pandemic in Japan: content analysis of A/H1N1 influenza newspaper articles. *Journal of Mass Communication & Journalism*, *6*(10.4172), 2165-7912.

3 Uganda held its last general elections in January 2021.

4 Marie-Soleil Frère (2010). *The Media and Elections in Post-Conflict Central African Countries*. Brussels: University of Brussels.

Although a lot has been written about the intersection of journalism/media and public affairs in Uganda, not much has been written about the people who work in journalism save for the threats they usually work under.

This study profiles Ugandan journalists at a time when the role of the media occupies the centre stage. It explores their demographics, role perceptions, professional attitudes and beliefs, and major threats to their freedom to do their work.

The media cannot play the roles that democracy requires of them if journalists do not have the wherewithal, knowledge, skills, and freedom required to investigate all matters of public concern (Mwesige 2004). That is why it is important for us to have a sense of Uganda's news people.

BACKGROUND[5]

The media landscape in Uganda has expanded significantly over the last two decades, particularly in terms of multiplicity of platforms. By December 2020 the number of radio stations authorised to operate was 199.[6] The actual number of radio stations operating in Uganda could be in excess of 250 stations due to some radios operating without a valid licence. By December 2020, Uganda had 40 local TV stations[7] in addition to at least 10 print publications, and a host of online-only news sites. The backdrop against which this expansion continues to occur is quite complex: the media space is characterised by a liberal regime of investment and (at least on paper) stringent regulation, which coupled with viability concerns, have made the media operating environment uncertain; the upholding of professional standards is mixed; and changes in communications technologies are upending business models and testing professional standards even further. All this has adversely affected the quality of public affairs journalism Ugandan media deliver.

Radio remains the biggest source of information for 80% of Ugandans (Afrobarometer, 2020)[8], although many stations dedicate very little time to news and public affairs programming.[9] Television comes second at 31%, followed by the internet (14%), and social media (13%). While newspapers come last at 12%, they remain influential agenda-setters for the public, political class, as well as other media.

Although Uganda has some of the most vibrant media in east and southern Africa, for very many years the country has been characterised by the international press freedom watchdog Freedom House as "partly free". The country's constitution provides for the right to freedom of expression, including press freedom, but several factors undermine these guarantees. They include obnoxious

5 This section borrows heavily from an unpublished ACME 2021 study: The Media in Uganda: A Landscape Analysis.

6 Uganda Communications Commission https://www.ucc.co.ug/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/REVISED-LIST-OF-AUTHORISED-FM-RADIOS-AS-OF-10-DECEMBER-2020.pdf (22/10/2021)

7 Aga Khan University, Graduate School of Media and Communications https://mediainnovationnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Media-Vibility-in-Uganda-8.pdf (21/10/2021)

8 Afrobarometer (2020)."Feasible but unsuitable? Examining the practicality of a media-only 2021 election campaign during COVID-19: Findings from the Afrobarometer Round 8 Survey in Uganda."

9 ACME (2021). Preliminary report on monitoring media coverage of the 2021 elections in Uganda.

laws and regulations, government interference, regulatory overreach, harassment and intimidation by security officials, advertiser influence, media ownership, professional and human resource challenges within newsrooms, and low levels of media literacy among the population. There are also growing concerns about the phenomenon of "media capture", which often involves control over the news media by political and business interests as well as licensing and regulatory bodies that are usually not independent of governments.

These challenges notwithstanding, the media landscape has grown from only state broadcasters in the early 1990s to a multi-player, diversified industry today. The two biggest media houses — with interests in radio, television, print and online — are the majority state-owned Vision Group (publishers of *New Vision*, *Bukedde* as well as proprietors of Bukedde TV, TV West, Urban TV, and XFM) and Nation Media Group-Uganda, part of the Kenya-based conglomerate that runs *Daily Monitor*, *The EastAfrican*, NTV Uganda, KFM and Ddembe FM). Next Media Services, which owns NBS TV, Next Radio and the online news site, Nile Post, has grown rapidly in the last five years.

The state-run Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) has the widest TV and radio reach, broadcasting in multiple local languages as well as English and Kiswahili. Although UBC was supposed to have transformed into a public broadcaster, until recently it remained very much a state broadcaster subservient to the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party and was rarely critical of the government.[10]

Other notable media houses include (newspapers) *The Red Pepper*, *The Observer* and *The Independent* and (television) BBS TV.

Although radio still maintains the widest reach in Uganda, some media analysts question whether it should be considered a true news medium. Radio in Uganda remains largely entertainment-based with most stations only dedicating about five minutes every hour to news. Several stations, however, run popular weekly (a few daily) political and public affairs talk shows.

Some of the radio stations that stand out for their news and public affairs programming include the following as shown in Table 1:

10 In 2016 ACME executive director Peter Mwesige was appointed by the Minister of Information & National Guidance to Chair a Review Committee to assess the performance of the national broadcaster against its public service mandate and make recommendations for improvement. A number of changes have since been implemented, the major one being that opposition politicians and government critics are getting more airtime on UBC.

TABLE 1: Key radio stations across the country

REGION	RADIO STATION
Kampala	Capital FM CBS FM KFM Radio Sapientia Radio Simba Radio One Akaboozi Ku Bbiri
Central Region	Buddu FM Heart FM Mbabule FM Radio Ssese
Eastern	Baba FM Busoga One Etop NBS FM Open Gate Step FM Teso Broadcasting Service
Northern Region	Mega FM Mighty Fire Radio Rupiny Unity FM Radio Pacis[11]
West Nile	Arua One Paidha FM Radio Pacis
Western Region	Kasese Guide Radio Kitara Radio West Voice of Kamwenge Voice of Kigezi Voice of Muhabura Voice of Toro

The Radio News Network (RNN), popularly known as Uganda Radio Network (URN), is Uganda's only news agency. Its content is sold at a heavily discounted rate to more than 60 radio stations and

11 Radio Pacis is based in Arua (West Nile) but has repeater stations in other regions, such as Northern Uganda.

at least two publications, including *The Observer* and *The Independent*. Funded by the Democratic Governance Facility[12] (a donor basket fund supported by the European Union and several European governments with embassies in Uganda), URN was started by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) and has since been transformed into a locally owned not-for-profit news agency.

There are concerns that many private radio stations are owned by NRM politicians or business people who are close to the ruling party, and that this plays a major role in determining the content of these stations, and who gets access to them.[13] Although UCC has in the past put radio ownership by politicians at about 15 per cent, some media watchers contend that it could be well over 70 per cent, especially in the countryside.[14] Such ownership patterns have raised concerns about media diversity, especially given that many radio stations owned by politicians have been known to turn away members of the opposition and other voices of dissent. The Catholic Church and other faith-based groups also own several radio stations that are influential in their regions of operation.

There are also fears that conglomeration could in future undermine the media pluralism and diversity that democracy demands.

Meanwhile, as elsewhere in the world, traditional media are under stress from the disruption unleashed by the growing reach of digital and social media, which have become major sources of news for millions of people. Newspaper circulation has continued to plummet (the combined daily circulation of Uganda's three dailies had fallen to below 80,000 by June 2020 from about 100,000 four years earlier)[15], while most radio stations are unable to attract enough advertising to remain viable businesses.

Online news platforms have grown in the last five years. The main ones include ChimpReports, (https://chimpreports.com/), PML Daily (https://www.pmldaily.com), Nile Post (https://nilepost.co.ug/), Soft Power News (https://www.softpower.ug/), Watchdog Uganda (https://www.watchdoguganda.com/), The Investigator (https://theinvestigatornews.com/), and Mulengera News (https://mulengeranews.com/).

Media regulation

Uganda's constitution recognises the right to freedom of expression (including free media) and access to information as not only fundamental, but also important for the protection of other basic human

12 DGF's operations were in February 2021 suspended on the directives of President Yoweri Museveni, who claimed the attorney general and his cabinet had not been consulted when the Ministry of Finance signed a memorandum of understanding operationalising the facility. The president and other government officials have accused western donors of undermining Uganda's sovereignty through funding local groups pushing for democratic reform and accountability.

13 COG (2011). Uganda Presidential and Parliamentary Elections (18 February 2011). Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group. Commonwealth Secretariat, London

14 Report of the International Mission on Freedom of Expression in Uganda, September 2010.

15 Audit Bureau of Circulation, April-June 2020 report.

rights. Maractho (2014) has argued that the constitution takes a facilitative approach to media rights and development.[16] Article 29 (1a) guarantees the right to "freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media", while Article 41 provides for the "right of access to information in the possession of the State". Similarly, media policies recognise the "important role" of the media. For instance, the National Broadcasting Policy of 2006 notes that the media "play an important role in promoting good governance, accountability and transparency in public institutions". Over the years, the country's higher courts — the Constitutional Court and Supreme Court — have generally ruled in favour of expanding free speech and media. In 2004, for instance, the Supreme Court annulled Section 50 of the Penal Code Act, declaring that the publication of false news was not an offence. In 2010, the Constitutional Court annulled the law on sedition.

In contrast to the past judgements of the judicial branch, the legislation that regulates the media in Uganda such as The Press and Journalist Act, 2000; The Uganda Broadcasting Corporation Act, 2005; The Uganda Communications Act, 2013; as well as The Computer Misuse Act, 2011, contain provisions that water down free expression rights (ACME, 2010; BBC Media Action, 2012; FES Media, 2010; Freedom House, 2017).[17] For instance, under Section 5, The Uganda Communications Act, 2013 gives broad powers to the minister responsible for information and UCC to "monitor, inspect, license, supervise, control and regulate all communication services". Some of the minimum broadcasting standards laid out in the law are overly broad and open to politically expedient interpretation.

The Press and Journalist Act and The Uganda Communications Act established two statutory bodies — the Media Council and the Uganda Communications Commission respectively— in contravention of the principles of independence of regulatory bodies from the government. The information minister has broad powers in the appointment of the members and operation of the two regulators.

The Press and Journalist Act also introduces restrictions on who can be a journalist by compelling journalists to enrol with the National Institute of Journalists of Uganda after which they are supposed to receive practising certificates from the Media Council which is supposed to issue practising certificates upon payment of a prescribed fee. The certificate may be suspended for up to six months if a journalist is "guilty" of "professional misconduct". These restrictions are considered an affront to free speech and freedom of expression. However, these provisions of the law have not been implemented for more than 17 years, and when the Media Council issued a directive forcing journalists to be accredited ahead of the 2021 general elections, the High Court declared it illegal and irregular following an application by the Uganda Editors Guild and the Centre for Public Interest Law.

16 Maractho, E.C. (2014). Do legal and policy frameworks facilitate media diversity and independence? A critical study of Uganda, 1993-2013.

17 See, ACME (2010) Freedom of Expression in Uganda. ACME Briefing Paper No. 1. African Centre for Media Excellence: Kampala; BBC Media Action (2012). Country Case Study: Uganda—Support to media where media freedoms and rights are constrained. London. FESMedia (2010). Africa Media Barometer, Uganda 2010, http://fesmedia.org/uploads/media/AMB_Uganda_2010_English_final.pdf; Freedom House, "Freedom of the Press 2017: Uganda" available at https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/uganda

The court, in a judicial review, ruled that the Media Council could not proceed with the registration of journalists in the absence of a functioning National Institute of Journalists of Uganda.[18]

In the past the government has forced the closure of media houses over their reporting of controversial issues. In May 2013, the government launched what some described as the "largest media crackdown" with the closure of *Daily Monitor*, *Red Pepper*, Dembe FM and KFM. The closures followed the *Monitor* and the *Red Pepper's* publication of a letter by controversial army general David Sejusa who claimed there was a plot to assassinate senior government and military officials opposed to an alleged plan to have the president's son succeed him.[19]

Four years earlier, the government had ordered the Broadcasting Council to close four radio stations, including the Buganda Kingdom-owned CBS FM over their coverage of the Buganda riots of 2009. The government accused the media houses of inciting violence and "sowing seeds of hatred among Ugandans".[20] Many observers argued that when the radio stations were re-opened after nearly a year, their reporting was timid. More recently the government ordered the closure of *Red Pepper* over its reporting on tensions between Uganda and Rwanda.

In general, Uganda's media laws appear to prioritise control over the means of expression rather than the primary objective of promoting and protecting the rights of Ugandans spelled out in the constitution. This can be seen in the workings of broadcast regulator UCC. Whereas the Media Council, the print media regulator, was largely inactive until 2020, UCC routinely engages in regulatory overreach. For example, in April 2019, it directed several broadcast media outlets to suspend 39 broadcast journalists following coverage of opposition politician Robert Kyagulanyi aka Bobi Wine.

Meanwhile, attempts at self-regulation by the media have faltered. The Independent Media Council of Uganda, which should be playing this role, has suffered from funding and organisational challenges and exists only in name.[21]

The restrictive laws and absence of media self-regulation have opened the way not only for state regulatory overreach, but also for routine harassment and intimidation of journalists, sometimes including physical attacks. State security services have been at the centre of such attacks on journalists. This has had a chilling effect, often forcing self-censorship. News consumers are the worse off when some stories are withheld because journalists fear they will offend authorities. A pestered and cowering media shies away from doing more comprehensive and probing public affairs journalism that is vital for accountable government and inclusive national development (Freedom House, 2017).[22]

18 https://acme-ug.org/2021/01/19/court-rules-media-council-accreditation-of-journalists-illegal/

19 https;//acme-ug.org/2013/05/30/uganda-government-launches-widest-media-crackdown-yet/

20 https;//acme-ug.org/2010/08/23/court-dismisses-govt-case-against-closed-radio-station/

21 The establishment of the Uganda Editors Guild in 2019 was an attempt to resurrect industry attempts at self-regulation.

22 Freedom House, "Freedom of the Press 2017: Uganda" available at https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/uganda (4/2/2021).

Although most Ugandan journalists enjoy the freedom to report on many aspects of public affairs, there are reports of self-censorship when it comes to stories especially about the military, the president's family, and certain types of official corruption.

Journalism in Uganda

It has been said that Ugandan journalists see themselves as "disseminators, advocates and watchdogs".[23] A study profiling Ugandan journalists 20 years ago showed that they highly value the journalistic roles of information provision, analysis and interpretation and investigation of official claims while at the same time showing strong support for 'populist mobiliser' functions such as giving ordinary people voice and setting the political agenda.[24]

According to some media watchers,[25] several aspects of journalism in Uganda have improved over the last decade while others appear to have remained the same or regressed. On television, the biggest improvements are in picture quality and the diversity of voices (including those that are critical of the government) in the news. Television has moved away from the "protocol news" of the past where pronouncements by government officials, starting with the president, were always the first items in the bulletin. Apart from improvements in design and use and presentation of data, the verdict is more mixed with newspapers. Some argue that the quality of newspaper content has deteriorated. The Uganda Radio Network and a host of media houses have revolutionised radio news, although most stations are still mired in old ways of storytelling that privilege officialdom while steering clear of critical, probing approaches.

Overall, major concerns persist over the state of professionalism. They revolve around low ethical standards, including the pervasive practice of journalists accepting money from sources; journalists acting as newsroom spies for the state and business interests; and the flouting of basic journalistic principles of accuracy, fairness, context and perspective, completeness, depth, and follow-up.

Ugandan journalism passes on a commendable volume of information on public affairs. That said, skills and knowledge deficiencies amongst journalists as well as low media literacy amongst sources and the public[26] means that the information is sometimes inaccurate and misleading. And it is often devoid of analytical rigour and context or is generally insufficient. Pressure from advertisers, owners,

23 Mwesige, P.G. (2004). Disseminators, advocates, and watchdogs: A profile of Ugandan journalists in the New Millennium. *Journalism*, Vol. 5(1): 69-96.

24 Mwesige, P.G. (2004). "Disseminators, advocates, and watchdogs: A profile of Ugandan journalists in the New Millennium." *Journalism*, Vol. 5(1): 69-96.

25 Personal Communication with Dr Gerald Walulya, Lecturer, Journalism & Communication, Makerere University, 5 February 2021.

26 The Media Strategy of the Democratic Governance Facility (2018) identifies these, particularly "low professional journalistic standards" and "low media literacy" among the hindrances to quality independent journalism in Uganda.

as well as politicians is also blamed for the uncritical or promotional reporting that often fills several newspaper sections and the airwaves.[27]

Professional associations have largely not enforced the observance of ethics, which is part of the failure of self-regulation, while statutory regulators only use ethical codes as a smokescreen to steer the media away from reporting what is critical of the establishment.[28]

Although journalists and the media put accountability of power holders at the forefront of their work, they don't exercise the same when it comes to their own conduct and work. For example, audiences are rarely told why journalists sometimes do not use their names when reporting and why they do not name some of their sources.

The industry internally suffers from poor quality monitoring and control, a lack of in-house training programmes, pressure and influence on editorial content from the business side of news organisations, and so on. These lead to an imbalance in public affairs subjects covered, under-representation of some groups and over-representation of others, and a lack of in-depth or investigative reporting.

ACME research shows, for instance, that between January and September 2020, only about 12% of the stories published on public affairs in Uganda's five major newspapers were in investigative or enterprise-reporting formats.[29] More commonly, developments related to public affairs are relayed in an episodic manner, giving readers little depth and context within which to understand the events or their implications. Ugandan media also fall short on representing the various voices with a stake in public affairs. Indeed, ACME research[30] further shows that less than a quarter (23%) of people quoted in the news are women, only 1.9% of quoted sources are from civil society, and just 19% are ordinary citizens. As a result, officialdom gets more than its fair share of representation in the media with little pushback from civil society or feedback from the governed. Episodic coverage and limited inclusion in the news of the various societal voices means that journalists are providing incomplete and narrow coverage of public affairs.

Another key challenge for the media in Uganda is the lack of specialisation in most newsrooms. Although the country's newsrooms increasingly employ journalists who have graduated from university, very few of them come with specialised knowledge of important fields such as business, finance, and economics; energy, mining and petroleum; land and environment; health, science and technology; rights, rule of law and justice; peace and conflict resolution. Many of them quickly turn into general reporters who very often jump from one issue to another without adequate contextual knowledge about the immediate developments/events they report on.

27 Africa Media Barometer, Uganda 2010, http://fesmedia.org/uploads/media/AMB_Uganda_2010_English_final.pdf

28 Fojo Media Institute (2019). Challenges and Entry Points for Regional Media Development Support in Sub-Saharan Africa.

29 Research Report On Ugandan Media Coverage Of The Covid-19 Pandemic And Other Public Affairs

30 African Centre for Media Excellence (2018). Press Coverage of Public Affairs in Uganda. Volume 4; July 2016 – June 2017

Ugandan journalists are also still challenged in data journalism. The high levels of innumeracy in the newsroom, which partly explains the dearth of data journalism, means several story ideas especially on government service delivery and government policy implementation remain untold.

Uganda's Second National Development Plan, 2015/16–2019/20, notes: "...the media has been instrumental in exposing misappropriation of public resources, abuse of office, inadequacies in service delivery hence promoting accountability, transparency and good governance. However, the media still faces a number of challenges resulting mainly from the existing capacity gaps which have constrained its ability to adequately execute its oversight function."

Mwesige and Kalinaki (2007) cite inadequate university education; lack of newsroom investment in journalism in terms of staff development programmes and support in tools, time and money to do in-depth stories; poor pay as well as brain drain from the media to more lucrative fields such as advertising, marketing, and public relations.[31] More recent surveys of journalists suggest these challenges endure.[32] And while these issues remain a problem for all media, they are exponentially pronounced among up-country-based journalists, in part because the majority of FM radio stations outside of Kampala are mostly small enterprises that tend to prioritise entertainment over news content, elevating the bottom line (profits) over the public-interest mission of journalism.[33]

Limited public debate on media performance in Uganda also means journalists and their managers are not held accountable by their audiences.

Journalism training

When questions about media standards and quality come up, fingers usually point first to the institutions that train journalists.[34] Broadly, journalism training in Uganda is conducted by three types of entities: academic institutions that offer three-to four-year degree courses and one-to two-year diploma courses; a handful of NGOs offering one-off training sessions on various topics related to their issues of advocacy; and others such as ACME that provide an integrated support package for practising journalists. The work of NGOs such as Africa Freedom of Information Centre, CIPESA, Hub for Investigative Media, Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda, Uganda Radio Network, Uganda Media Women's Association, and Wizarts Foundation is also critical for the practice of journalism in Uganda.

31 Mwesige, P.G & D.K. Kalinaki (2007). East Africa: 50 years of media, in E. Barratt & G. Berger (Eds.). *50 Years of Journalism: African media since Ghana's independence*. (pp. 97-109). Johannesburg: African Editors Forum, Highway Africa, and Media Foundation for West Africa.

32 UNESCO (2018). Assessment of Media Development in Uganda Based on UNESCO's Media Development Indicators. Paris: UNESCO. Also BBC Media Action (2012). Uganda Case Study: Support to Media Where Media Freedoms and Rights are Constrained. London: BBC Media Action,

33 James Tumusiime (2016) A non-profit approach to market-driven journalism challenges in Uganda: A case study of Uganda Radio Network.

34 Prof. Monica Chibita, the Dean of the Faculty of Journalism & Communication at the Uganda Christian University, has in recent years questioned whether universities are doing enough to feed the demands of the media industry.

The number of journalism degree-awarding institutions has steadily increased, especially in the last 15 years. According to the National Council for Higher Education, there are 26 universities and other degree-awarding institutions offering journalism training. The main ones are Makerere University, Uganda Christian University, Islamic University in Uganda, Uganda Martyrs University, Nkumba University, Kampala International University, Ndejje University, Bugema University, Cavendish University, and Victoria University.

Major institutions such as Makerere University and Uganda Christian University graduate about 80–100 journalism students per year while the smaller ones graduate between 20 and 30. The number of students who eventually practice journalism is generally much lower compared to the enrolment. On average, 17–30% of journalism students who graduate join journalism practice.[35]

35 Dr Gerald Walulya, Personal communication, 9 February 2021.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the demographics, education, and professional experience of Ugandan journalists?
2. How do Ugandan journalists use technology and social media?
3. How do Ugandan journalists perceive their roles or the functions of the news media?
4. What are the professional attitudes, beliefs and values of Ugandan journalists?
5. How do Ugandan journalists perceive their freedom to do their work?
6. What are the major threats to journalistic freedoms in Uganda?
7. How (if at all) has the portrait of Ugandan journalists changed over time?

METHODS

This study relies on primary data from a national survey of Ugandan journalists conducted by ACME between October 2020 and March 2021.

A systematic random sample of journalists was obtained from a list of 50 media houses from across the country. The list was selected purposively to include print, broadcast and online platforms. Respondents were randomly selected from staff lists obtained from the media houses. The sample of each newsroom was 20% of the staff size.

Self-administered questionnaires were shared with all the selected respondents. Out of the 404 respondents, 137 had completed their questionnaires by the end of the survey period. The questionnaire contained both closed and open-ended questions.

Journalists working for print media constituted 46.7% of the respondents, followed by radio (34.3%), and television (16.1 %). Kampala-based journalists made up 61% of the respondents and while 39% were from upcountry. Up to 58% of the respondents were reporters, 10% news writers, and 8% editors. Half of the respondents were full time employees, 42% were freelancers, while 7% were part-time employees. Eight out of every 10 respondents were men, with women making up only 20%.

The study also relied upon informant interviews with journalists and media managers who attempted to explain some of the quantitative findings. The findings were presented at an external validation meeting held online on 14 July 2021 and at a meeting of International Training Programme on Media Regulation in a Democratic Framework held in Entebbe on 30 September 2021. Both meetings provided valuable feedback that has been incorporated in this report.

The survey was modelled on the Worlds of Journalism surveys, which have been administered in different parts of the world.[36]

A major weakness of the study is the low response rate, which calls for caution in generalising the findings to the wider population of Ugandan journalists.

36 https://worldsofjournalism.org/ (4/02/2021).

FINDINGS

Demographics and work

This section looks at the distribution of journalists at different media platforms, location of work station, designation, status of employment, levels of specialisation, gender, age, education, work experience, and membership in professional associations.

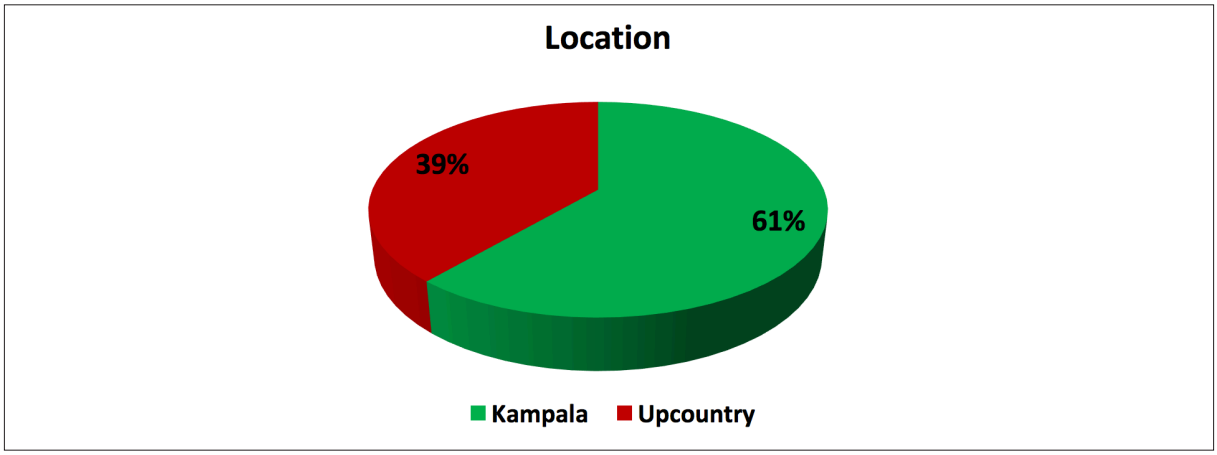
TABLE 2: Type of media platform worked for

Type of news media	Frequency	Percent
Newspaper (daily, bi-weekly, tri-weekly, or weekly)	64	46.7
Radio	47	34.3
Television	22	16.1
Magazine	2	1.5
News agency	1	0.7
Online outlet (stand-alone)	1	0.7
Total	**137**	**100.0**

Location

Kampala-based journalists made up 61% of the respondents. This is because most of the biggest media houses are based in the capital.

Fig 1: Location of respondents



Most of the respondents (57.7%) were reporters. The rest were, for the most part, divided fairly evenly across a range of editorial positions.

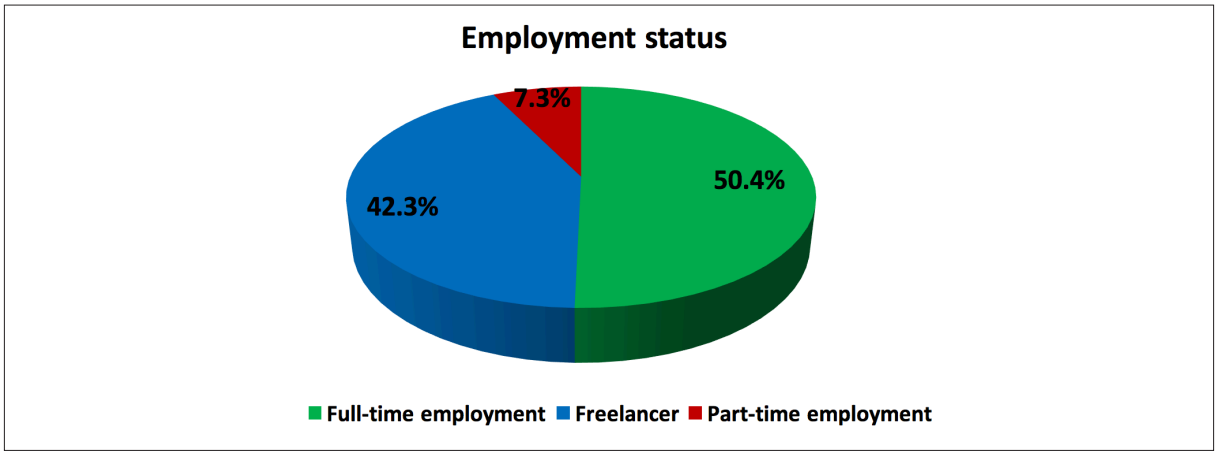
TABLE 3: Designation of respondents

Designation	Frequency	Percent
Reporter	79	57.7
News writer	13	9.5
Senior editor	11	8.0
Department head	6	4.4
Producer	6	4.4
Desk head or assignment editor	5	3.6
Editor in chief	4	2.9
Sub editor	4	2.9
Managing editor	3	2.2
News anchor	2	1.5
Creative editor	1	0.7
Presenter	1	0.7
Programmes director	1	0.7
Public editor	1	0.7
Total	**137**	**100.0**

Employment status

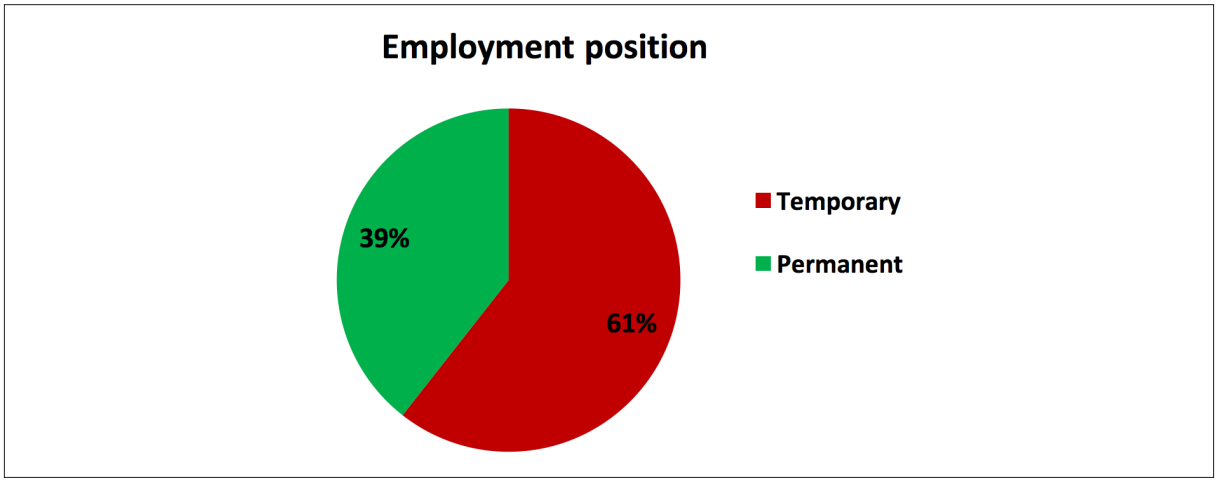
Journalists in full-time employment edged freelancers when respondents were asked to select the category that best described their current employment status. It should be noted, however, that in most Uganda newsrooms "freelancers" generally work full-time and are often not allowed to work for other outlets, especially competitors. The major distinction between them and full-time employees is the salary and benefits. Print media had far more freelancers (54.5%) than broadcasting (31%).

Fig. 2: Status of employment



A majority of respondents (61%) were working in temporary positions. Only 39% of the respondents had permanent positions. A much higher percentage of editors (73.8%) occupied permanent positions compared to reporters (24.2%).

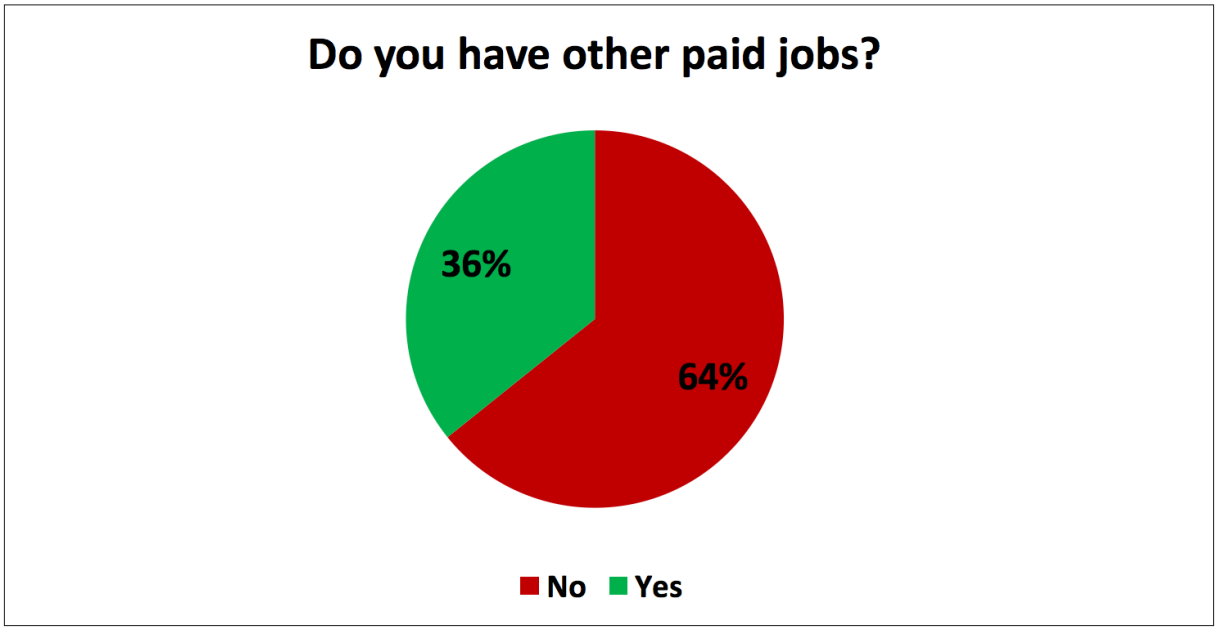
Fig. 3: Employment position



Quite a significant number of the respondents (36%) said they had other paid jobs outside journalism. Journalists working in broadcasting were more likely to have other paid jobs than their print

counterparts. This may be because broadcasting platforms tend to act as a marketing avenue that helps journalists to do other jobs, for instance being a master of ceremony at public and private events. Participants at the external validation meeting for the report noted that some journalists also double as politicians (or spokespersons for politicians), while others are farmers and businesspeople. The most mentioned reason why journalists engage in other types of work was to supplement the little income they get from journalism.

Fig. 4: Percentage with other jobs outside journalism

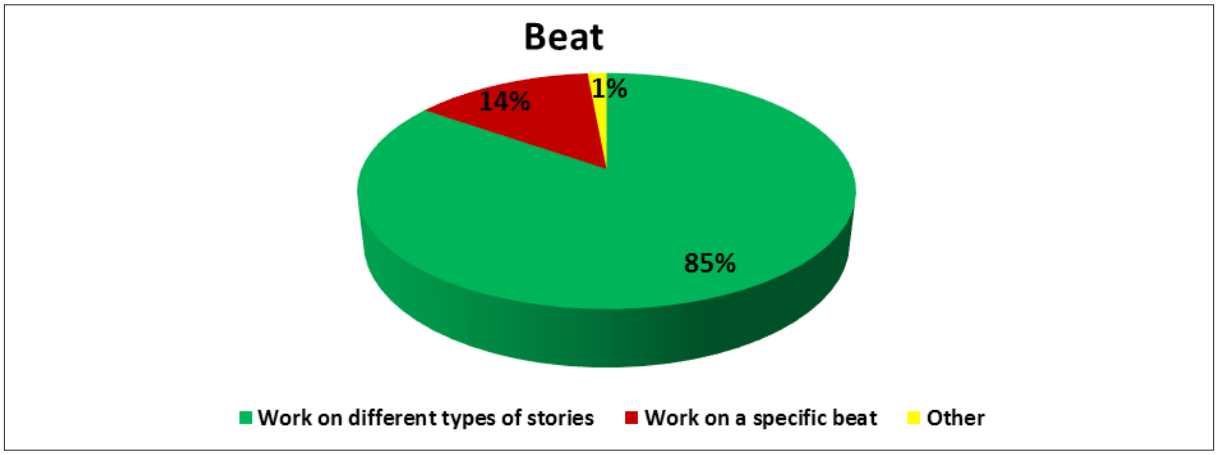


Specialisation

Only a small percentage of the respondents work on specific beats, while a huge majority (85%) are general reporters or editors working on various types of stories. This is consistent with previous studies that have shown limited specialisation in Ugandan newsrooms. In this latest survey, slightly more respondents working in print (16.7%) indicated they worked on specific beats than those who worked in broadcasting (11.3%). Participants at the external validation meeting mostly attributed the lack of specialisation to the low staff numbers at most media houses. Participants at the International Training Programme[37] meeting suggested that media houses should project the likely stories that may dominate the media in the next five years so that they can invest money in them as well as identifying teams around those beats. They noted that the focus on an all-round journalist should emphasise cross-platform competence and content specialisation.

37 One of the aims of the International Training Programme — Media Development in A Democratic Framework is to provide an opportunity for capacity development and shared learning on issues related to media regulation. In Africa, it is currently operating in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It is funded by Sida and implemented primarily by the Fojo Media Institute, both Swedish entities.

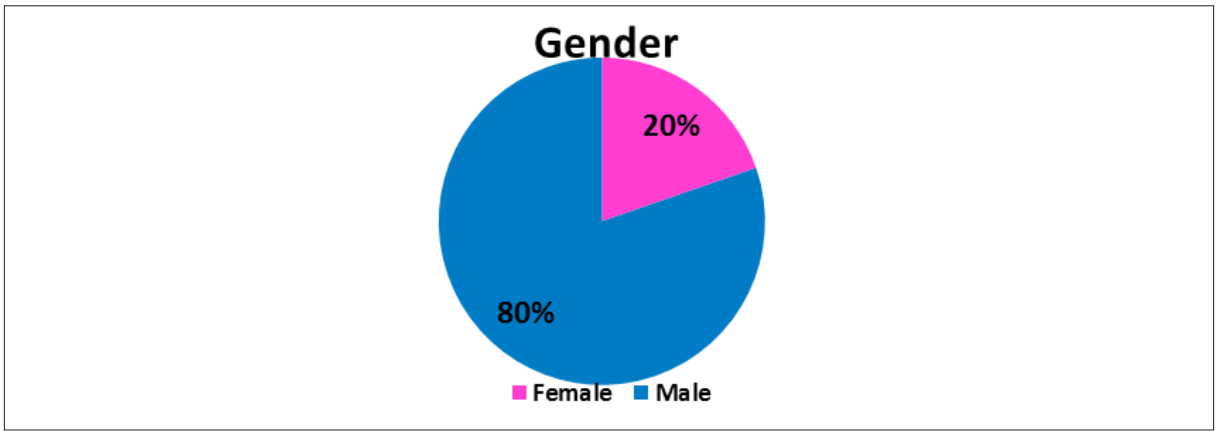
Fig. 5: Percentage working on specific beats



Gender

More than three quarters of the respondents were male. Twenty years ago, 73% of Ugandan journalists were male.[38] This suggests that the number of women in Ugandan journalism has gone down over the years. Although the gender equity challenge was pronounced across the board there were some differences between editors and reporters, Kampala-and upcountry-based journalists as well as respondents working in print and broadcasting. Among the editors 23.8% of the respondents were women compared to 17.9% among reporters. In Kampala, 22.5% of the journalists were women compared to 15.1% upcountry. Similarly, a slightly higher number of respondents working in print were women (22.75) compared to 16.9% among journalists working in broadcasting.

Fig. 6: Gender of journalists

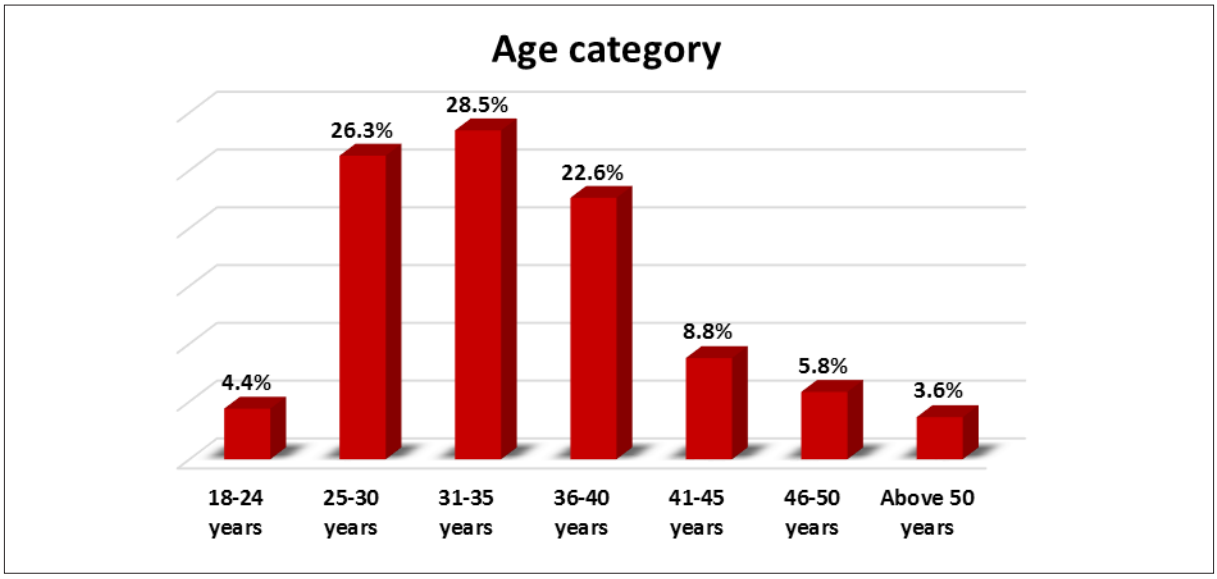


38 Mwesige, P.G. (2004). "Disseminators, advocates, and watchdogs: A profile of Ugandan journalists in the New Millennium." *Journalism*, Vol. 5(1): 69-96.

Age

The median age of the respondents was 33 years. Nearly 82% of the respondents were 40 years or younger, with a majority falling below 35. Only 3.6% were above 50.

Fig. 7: Age distribution



Experience

The average media experience of the respondents was nine years. Nearly two-thirds had worked in journalism for one to 10 years. Only 3.6% of the respondents had worked in journalism for more than 20 years. Participants at the International Training Programme meeting attributed the low experience of journalists to poor pay and lack of career growth opportunities. They noted that media houses need to motivate journalists to stay longer on the job by either offering them some shareholding or making their schedules flexible by allowing them to work part-time.

Education

Most of the respondents reported having completed university education, with 51.8% claiming bachelor's degrees and 5.8% masters. In Mwesige's 2001 survey, a slightly smaller number of respondents (54%) had graduated from university. In the latest survey, another 36.4% had either acquired post-secondary school diplomas and certificates or undertaken some university studies but were yet to be awarded degrees.

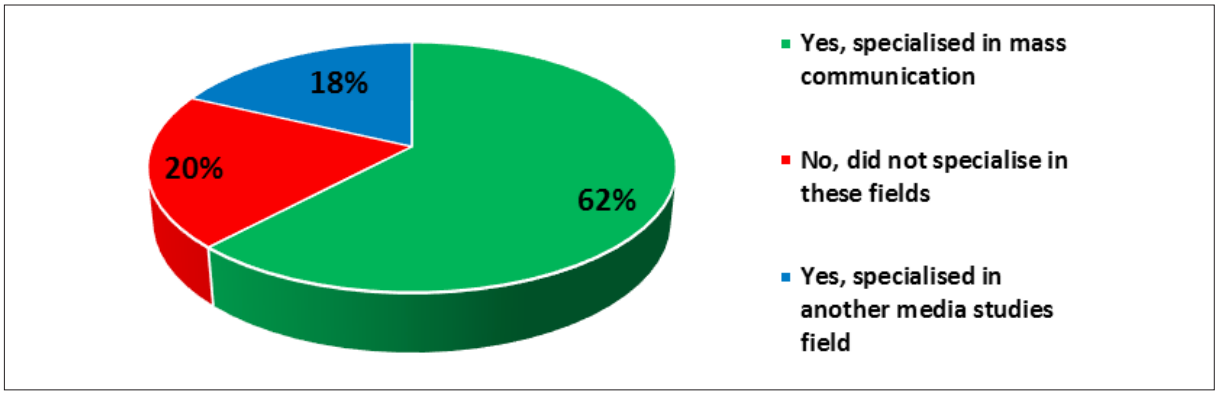
A far higher number of editors (slightly more than three quarters) reported having a university degree compared to reporters (49.5%). An equally higher percentage of respondents working in print (68.2%) reported having a university degree than journalists in broadcasting (47.9%).

TABLE 4: Highest level of education attained

Highest level of education	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor's degree or equivalent	71	51.8
Vocational or technical school beyond secondary school	27	19.7
Undertook some university studies, but no degree	15	10.9
Master's degree or equivalent	8	5.8
Diploma	8	5.8
Completed secondary school	5	3.6
Diploma in journalism	3	2.2
Total	**137**	**100.0**

Of those who had graduated from university or other tertiary institution, 62% had specialised in mass communication, while 18% specialised in another media studies field.

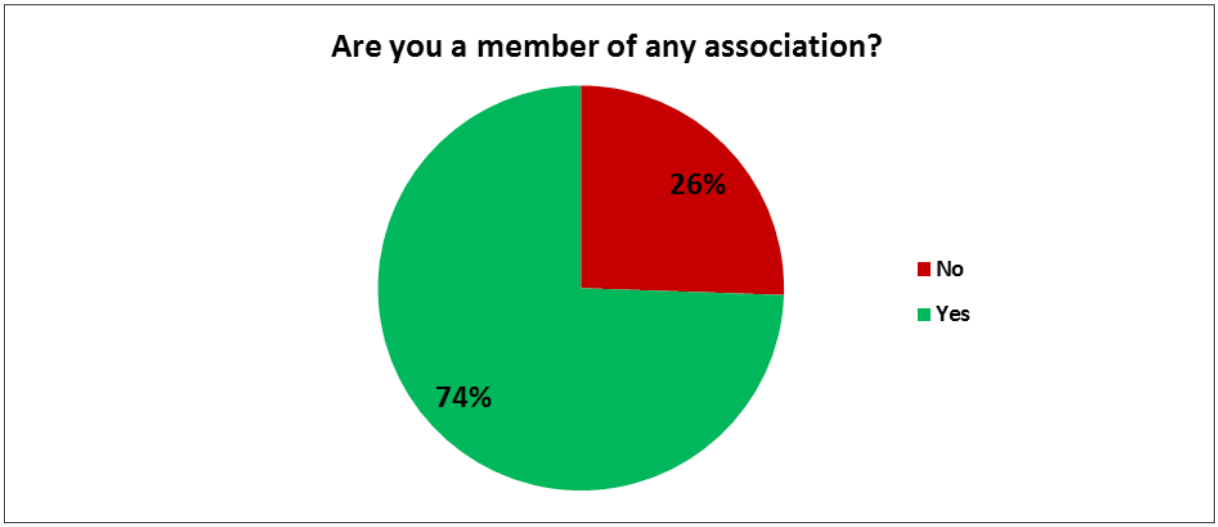
Fig. 8: Specialisation



Membership in professional associations

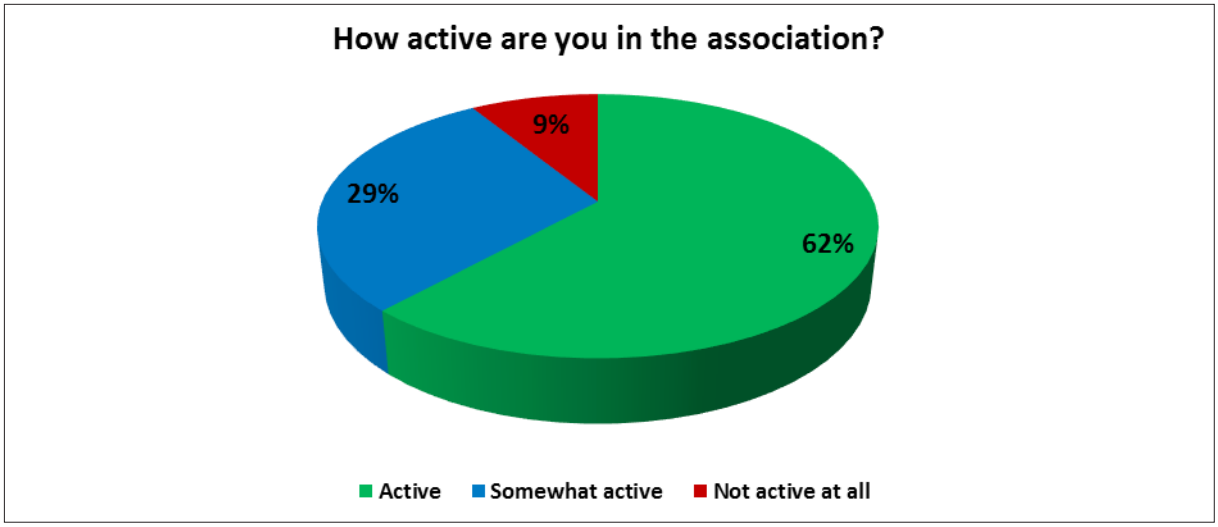
Three-quarters of the respondents said they belonged to a journalism/media or communication association.

Fig. 9: Membership in associations



However, only 62% reported being active in the associations they belonged to.

Fig. 10: Status of association membership



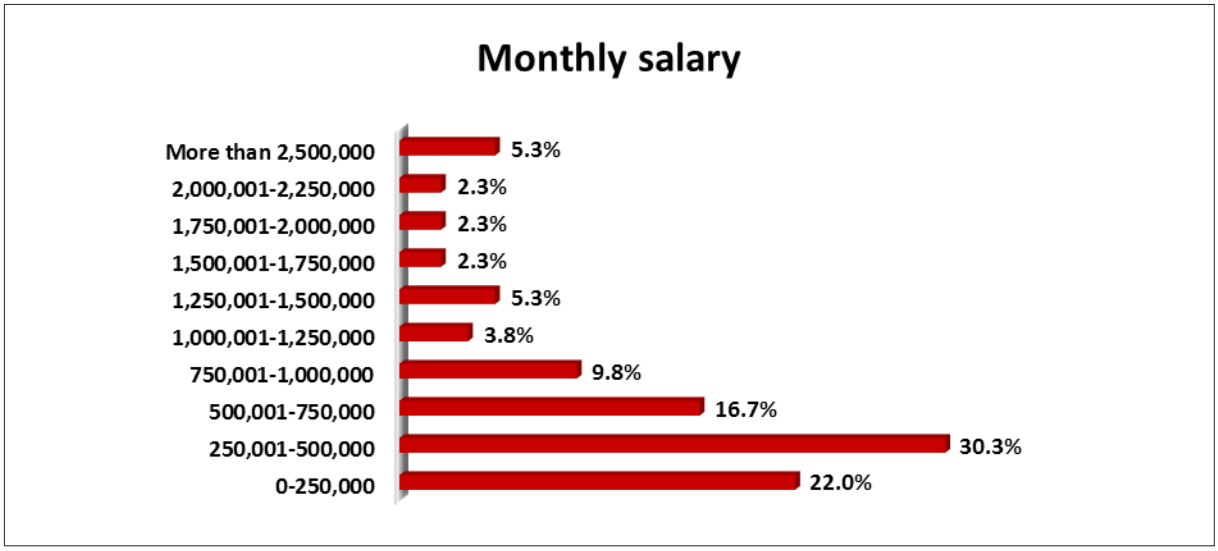
Upcountry-based journalists were more likely to belong to an association and to be active than their Kampala-based counterparts. Participants in the validation meeting attributed this disparity to the fact that upcountry journalists have more challenges that compel them to unite to overcome them. Participants at the International Training Programme meeting also noted that upcountry journalists' desire to join associations is motivated by the high likelihood of harassment, the need for training opportunities, and the lack of support from newsrooms when in trouble.

Upcountry journalists also use regional associations as coordination points from where journalists receive information about ongoing events.

Pay

Three-quarters of the respondents earned not more than Shs1,000,000 (about $280) per month, with a third earning between Shs250,000 ($70) and Shs500,000 ($140). Less than 10% of the respondents earned more than Shs2,000,000 ($560) per month.

Fig. 11: Monthly salary distribution



There were significant variations between the pay of Kampala-based journalists and their upcountry counterparts. For example, three-quarters of upcountry-based journalists earned Shs500,000 or less per month compared with 36.8% of journalists working in Kampala. Nearly 14% of Kampala-based respondents earned between Shs750,000 and Shs1,000,000 compared with only about 4% of their upcountry colleagues. No upcountry respondent earned more than Shs1,000,000. Even then, some employers do not pay this money in time.

Among editors, 45% of the respondents reported earning above Shs1,000,000 per month compared to only 11% among reporters. Higher up on the scale, 17.5% of the editors reported earning above Shs2.5 million. None of the respondents among the reporters fell in that category.

There were also some discernible variations between male and female journalists, with the latter faring better than men in the categories of high earners. However, lower down a slightly higher percentage of female respondents reported belonging to the lowest salary brackets than men.

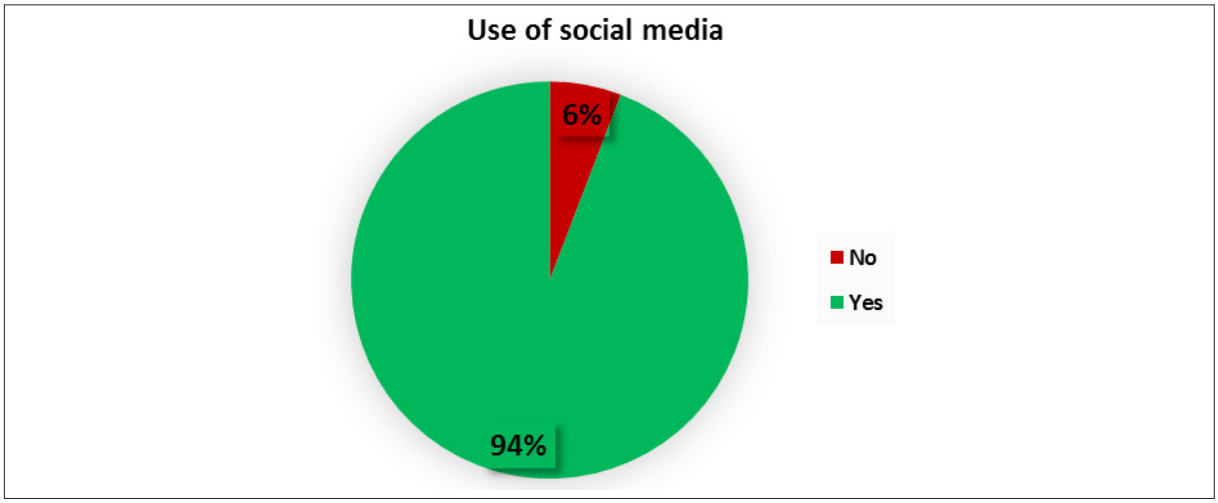
TABLE 5: Monthly salaries for Kampala- and upcountry-based journalists

Monthly salary	Kampala (n=79)	Upcountry (n=53)
0-250,000	16.5	30.2
250,001-500,000	20.3	45.3
500,001-750,000	16.5	17.0
750,001-1,000,000	13.9	3.8
1,000,001-1,250,000	5.1	1.9
1,250,001-1,500,000	7.6	1.9
1,500,001-1,750,000	3.8	0.0
1,750,001-2,000,000	3.8	0.0
2,000,001-2,250,000	3.8	0.0
More than 2,500,000	8.9	0.0

Use of social media

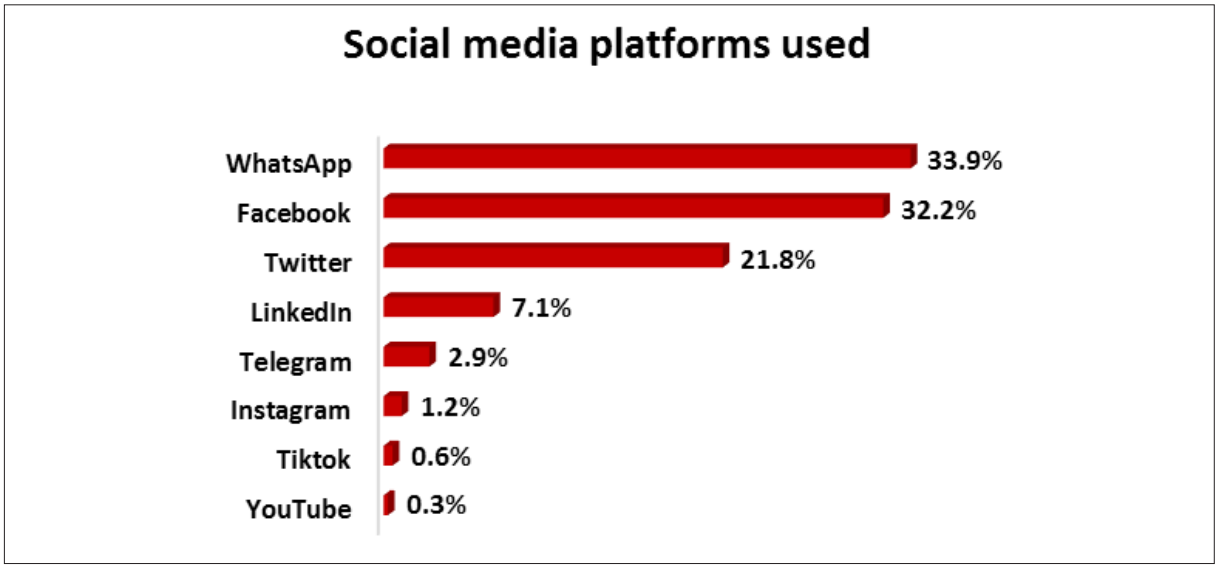
About nine out of every 10 Ugandan journalists reported using social media or messaging apps in their journalism work.

***Fig. 12:** Use of social media or messaging apps*



WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter were the three leading social media platforms for journalists while YouTube and TikTok were at the bottom of the ladder.

Fig. 12: Social media apps used by journalists



The top reasons cited for using social media were to stay connected and network with colleagues, to promote the journalist's or employer's content, to discover new sources, and to stay connected and network with the public.

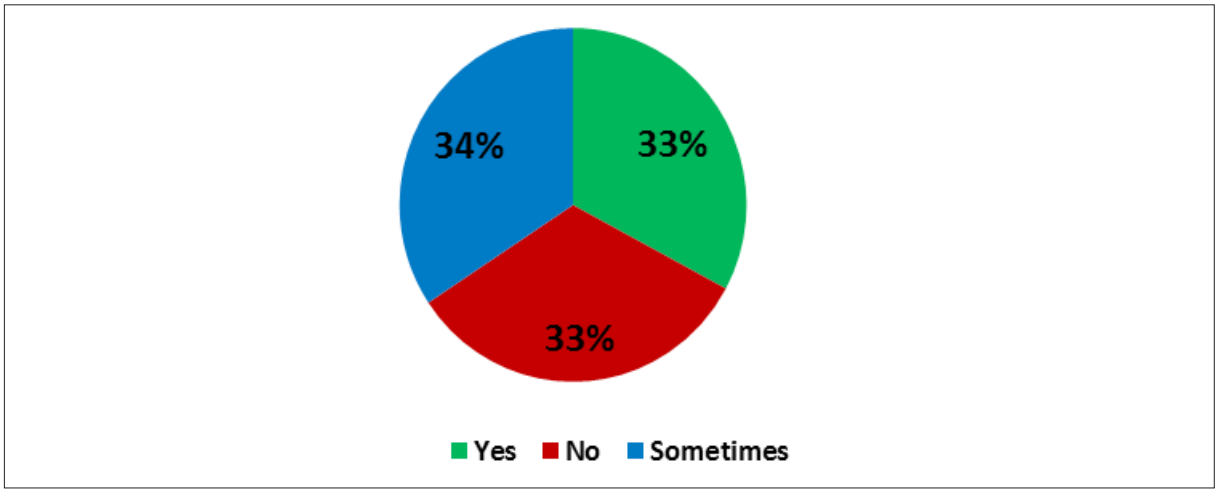
TABLE 6: Ways in which social media is used

Use of social media	Frequency	Percent
To stay connected and network with colleagues and people in my subject area	97	20.4
To promote content that I or my publication has produced	94	19.8
To discover new sources	86	18.1
To stay connected and network with the public	82	17.3
To ask questions as part of my reporting	60	12.6
To keep an eye on the competition	56	11.8
Total	**475**	**100.0**

Newsroom restrictions on journalists' social media use

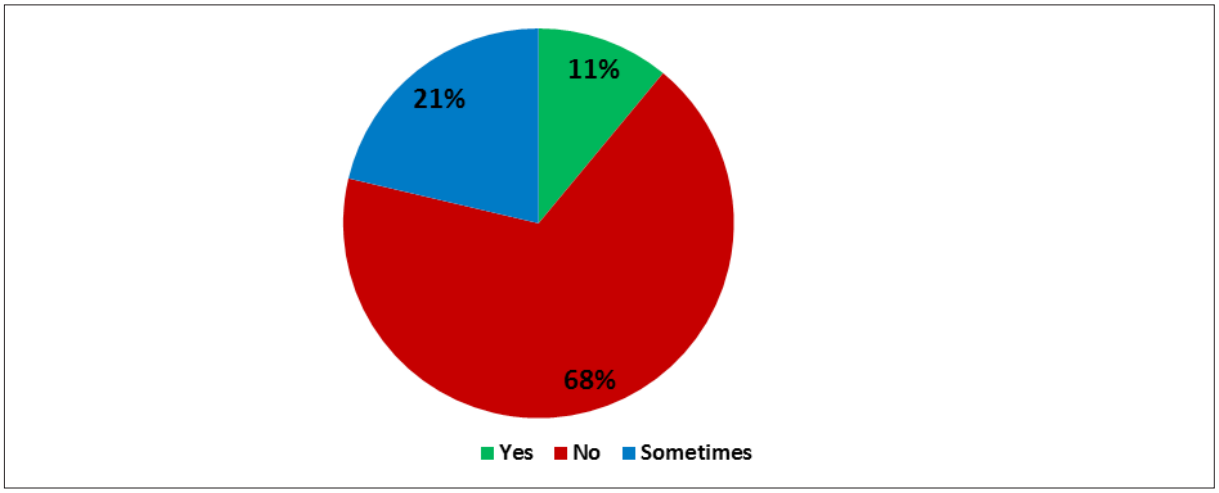
Opinion was evenly divided on whether newsrooms should impose limitations on what journalists can post on their personal social media accounts. A much high number of respondents working in broadcasting (40.8%) supported newsroom restrictions on journalists' social media use compared to their colleagues in print (24.4%). Interestingly, a higher proportion of reporters (34.7%) supported limitations on what journalists can post on their social media accounts than editors (28.6%).

Fig. 13: Perceptions on restrictions on social media use



However, a majority of respondents (slightly more than two thirds) said it was wrong for journalists to break the news first on their personal social media accounts rather than their media organisations' official online platforms. And here, tables turned, with a higher proportion of editors (73.8%) opposing the practice of journalists breaking the news first on their social media accounts compared to 64.9% of reporters.

Fig. 14: Perceptions on breaking news on social media



Professional autonomy and freedom

To measure professional autonomy and freedom, journalists who do reporting were asked about their freedom in selecting stories they worked on and deciding which aspects to emphasise.

Freedom in story selection and treatment

A small majority of respondents (52.5%) reported having either a great deal of freedom or complete freedom personally in selecting news stories they work on. Nearly 4 in 10 journalists reported having only "some freedom" in selecting stories they work on.

TABLE 7: Freedom in selecting news stories to work on

Selecting news stories	Frequency	Percent
No freedom at all	4	2.9
Little freedom	8	5.8
Some freedom	53	38.7
A great deal of freedom	44	32.1
Complete freedom	28	20.4
Total	**137**	**100.0**

Similarly, 52% of the respondents reported having either a great deal of freedom or complete freedom personally in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasised. However, a significant 35.8% reported having only some freedom while 12.4% said they had little or no freedom at all in deciding which aspects to emphasise.

TABLE 8: Freedom in deciding which story aspects to emphasise

Aspects of the story to emphasise	Frequency	Percent
No freedom at all	2	1.5
Little freedom	15	10.9
Some freedom	49	35.8
A great deal of freedom	46	33.6
Complete freedom	25	18.2
Total	**137**	**100.0**

Freedom in deciding what to post on social media

A higher number of respondents, (62%) reported having either a great deal of freedom or complete freedom in personally deciding what to post on social media.

TABLE 9: Freedom in deciding what to post on social media

Posts on social media	Frequency	Percent
No freedom at all	5	3.6
Little freedom	12	8.8
Some freedom	35	25.5
A great deal of freedom	34	24.8
Complete freedom	51	37.2
Total	**137**	**100.0**

Threats to journalists

Respondents were asked what they considered the biggest threats facing journalists and the major sources of threats.

Biggest threats to journalists

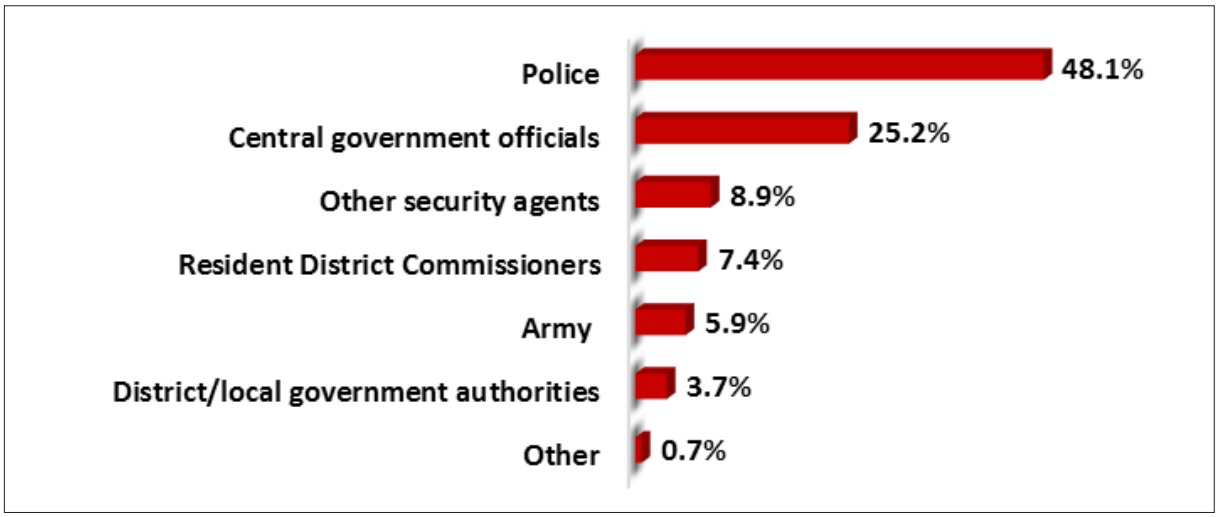
Respondents cited being arrested or detained by authorities as the biggest threat facing them. This was followed in a distant second by being personally threatened.

TABLE 10: Perceptions on the biggest threat facing journalists

Biggest threats to journalists	Frequency	Percent
Being arrested or detained by authorities	55	40.4
Being personally threatened	30	22.1
Being prosecuted	15	11.0
Being sacked, demoted or reprimanded at work	13	9.6
Security/safety of informants/sources	8	5.9
Having their friends or family threatened	3	2.2
Cyber harassment and bullying	3	2.2
Having their emails intercepted or data stolen	2	1.5
Having their publications attacked or publication site hacked	2	1.5
Having identities exposed against their wishes	1	0.7
Having their websites hacked or attacked	1	0.7
Others	3	2.2
Total	**136**	**100.0**

Police were cited as the biggest source of threats to journalists, followed in a distant second by central government officials. This finding is consistent with what recent studies on journalists' safety in Uganda found. For example, Human Rights Network for Journalists – Uganda found that from 2009 to 2020, the police have been the leading violators of media freedoms in Uganda.[39]

Fig. 15: Biggest source of threats to journalists



Perceptions on roles of journalists in Uganda

Respondents listed informing, educating, and entertaining as the three most important roles of journalists in Uganda. Roles such as holding leaders to account and setting the agenda were not rated as highly.

TABLE 11: Three most important roles of journalists

Most important roles of journalists	Frequency	Percent
To inform	106	37.9
To educate	79	28.2
To entertain	45	16.1
To hold leaders to account	22	7.9
To act a voice for the voiceless	17	6.1
To set the agenda	9	3.2
Other	2	0.7
Total	**280**	**100.0**

39 https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/police-tops-list-of-media-freedom-violators-again-1911462 (23/7/2021).

Q. Please tell me, in your own words, what should be the three most important roles of journalists in Uganda?

When they were prompted, with a close-ended question, respondents rated 'disseminator', 'interpretive', 'watchdog' as well as 'populist mobiliser' or 'activist' roles of the media highly. This is consistent with what Mwesige (2004) found in a survey of Ugandan journalists in 2001.[40]

Giving people a platform to express themselves, educating the public, analysing current affairs, providing information people need to make political decisions were the top-rated functions of the news media. An overwhelming majority of more than 88% rated these functions as either extremely important or very important. A big majority of the respondents (87.6%) also rated supporting national development as extremely or very important, while 82.5% said the same about advocating social change. Some 80% of the respondents said it was extremely or very important to monitor and scrutinise (the activities of) political leaders. According to the respondents, the least important functions of the news media were setting the political agenda, being an adversary of the government, and conveying a positive image of the political leadership.

TABLE 12: Importance of news media functions/journalistic roles

	% saying extremely important or very important	%saying somewhat important	% saying little importance	% saying unimportant
A. Let people express their views.	95.6	3.7	0.7	0
B. Educate the audience.	94.1	4.4	1.5	0
C. Provide analysis of current affairs.	89.8	8.8	0	1.4
D. Provide information people need to make political decisions.	88.3	9.5	1.5	0.7
E. Support national development.	87.6	6.6	5.8	0
F. Tell stories about the world.	83.3	13.1	2.2	1.4
G. Report things as they are.	83.2	12.4	2.2	2.2
H. Promote tolerance and cultural diversity.	83.2	13.2	2.9	0.7
I. Advocate for social change.	82.5	13.1	3.7	0.7
J. Monitor and scrutinize political leaders.	80.3	15.3	2.2	2.2
K. Motivate people to participate in political activity.	78.1	15.3	3.7	2.9
L. Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life.	77.4	17.5	4.4	0.7

40 Mwesige, P. G. (2004). Disseminators, advocates and watchdogs: A profile of Ugandan journalists in the new millennium. *Journalism*, *5*(1), 69-96.

	% saying extremely important or very important	%saying somewhat important	% saying little importance	% saying unimportant
M. Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience.	76.7	13.9	5.8	3.6
N. Influence public opinion.	72.3	16.8	4.4	6.5
O. Monitor and scrutinize business.	71.6	21.9	3.6	2.9
P. Support government policy.	67.2	21.9	3.6	7.3
Q. Be a detached observer	66.4	18.3	5.8	9.5
R. Provide entertainment and relaxation.	57.7	27.7	10.2	4.4
S. Convey a positive image of political leadership.	41.6	30.7	16.8	10.9
T. Be an adversary of the government.	40.1	24.8	18.3	16.8
U. Set the political agenda.	13.1	23.4	26.3	37.2

Views on ethics

Three-quarters of the respondents strongly agreed with the proposition that "journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context". Another 21.2% somewhat agreed. However, a small majority (55.5%) also strongly or somewhat agreed that "what is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation". Yet a slightly smaller majority (51.1%) also strongly or somewhat agreed that it was "acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances required it". It appears that although a big majority of Ugandan journalists support adherence to professional standards, many also see ethics as situation-based.

TABLE 13: Views on ethical approaches

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Undecided	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
A. Journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context	74.5%	21.2%	2.9%	0.7%	0.7%
B. What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	24.8%	30.7%	12.4%	9.5%	22.6%
C. What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	15.3%	23.4%	16.8%	11.7%	32.8%
D. It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	27%	24.1%	16.1%	12.4%	20.4%

The survey also sought to get the views of journalists on controversial ethical practices. Respondents were asked: "Given an important story, which of the following, if any, do you think may be justified on occasion and which would you not approve of under any circumstances?"

A majority of respondents said half of the hypothetical situations presented were always justified or justified on occasion. This included paying people for confidential information, using confidential official documents without authorisation, claiming to be somebody else, undercover employment to get inside information, using hidden cameras, re-enactments or dramatization of news by actors, as well taking employment in the private sector while continuing to work as a journalist.

However, most respondents said they would not approve the following practices under any circumstances:

- Publishing stories with unverified content (81%)
- Altering or fabricating quotes from sources (81%)
- Altering photographs (77.4%)
- Accepting money from sources 67.1%)
- Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story (64.9%)
- Publishing/airing paid-for content without labelling it as such (64.2%)
- Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission (56.9%)

It's noteworthy that a significant 23.4% said accepting money from sources was justified on occasion while another 9.5% said it was always justified. Accepting the "brown envelope" perhaps remains one of the most discussed ethical practices in Ugandan journalism. A slightly higher proportion of upcountry-based respondents (35.8%) justified accepting money from sources than their colleagues working in Kampala. One participant at the validation meeting for this report noted that the practice of taking money from sources seems to have been normalised.

> "On ethics, I have been meeting journalists across the country who don't seem to see any problem with taking money from sources, or even taking bribes. At one training on election reporting in Fort Portal, one female journalist openly said she picks money from sources and shares with the editor. Her problem was not taking the money, but that the editor wanted a bigger share of what she got."

TABLE 14: Perceptions on controversial ethical practices

Syndrome	Always justified	Justified on occasion	Not approve under any circumstances
A. Paying people for confidential information	13.9%	54.7%	31.4%
B. Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	13.1%	46.7%	40.2%
C. Claiming to be somebody else	13.8%	43.1%	43.1%
D. Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	11.7%	23.4%	64.9%
E. Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	10.2%	32.9%	56.9%
F. Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	21.2%	51.8%	27%
G. Using hidden microphones or cameras	31.4%	56.2%	12.4%
H. Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	16.8%	43.8%	39.4%
I. Publishing stories with unverified content	8.8%	10.2%	81%
J. Accepting money from sources	9.5%	23.4%	67.1%
K. Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	8.8%	10.2%	81%
L. Altering photographs	8.8%	13.8%	77.4%
M. Taking employment in the private/corporate sector while continuing to work as a journalist	24.8%	43.8%	31.4%
N. Publishing or airing paid-for-content without labelling it as such	8.8%	27%	64.2%

The biggest influences on journalism standards among the respondents were editorial policies, followed by journalism ethics, availability of newsgathering resources, time limitations, supervisors and editors, as well as personal values and beliefs.

TABLE 15: Influences on ethical approaches to work

	Extremely influential	Very influential	Somewhat influential	Little influential	Not influential
A. Your personal values and beliefs	40.5%	24.4%	16.8%	13%	5.3%
B. Your peers on the staff	18.2%	20.5%	29.5%	20.5%	11.3%
C. Your editorial supervisors and higher editors	45.2%	35%	13.9%	4.4%	1.5%
D. The managers of your news organization	39.7%	35.3%	19.9%	2.2%	2.9%

	Extremely influential	Very influential	Somewhat influential	Little influential	Not influential
E. The owners of your news organization	40%	22.5%	22.5%	7.5%	7.5%
F. Editorial policy	69.9%	21.2%	3.7%	3.7%	1.5%
G. Advertising considerations	23.9%	23.1%	32.8%	14.2%	6%
H. Profit expectations	25.6%	24.8%	30.4%	12.8%	6.4%
I. Audience research and data	38.5%	34.1%	18.6%	4.4%	4.4%
J. Availability of news-gathering resources	53.3%	30.7%	10.2%	2.9%	2.9%
K. Time limitations	51.8%	32.1%	13.9%	1.5%	0.7%
L. Journalism ethics	66.2%	27.9%	4.5%	0.7%	0.7%
M. Religious considerations	23%	21.3%	27%	18%	10.7%

Influences on work

Respondents cited access to information, media laws and regulations, feedback from the audience, relationships with news sources, censorship, as well as competing news organisations as major influences on their work.

TABLE 16: Influences on work

	Extremely influential	Very influential	Somewhat influential	Little influential	Not influential
A. Media laws and regulation	58.4%	28.4%	10.2%	1.5%	1.5%
B. Information access	60.6%	25.5%	10.9%	1.5%	1.5%
C. Feedback from the audience	43.8%	36.5%	14.6%	5.1%	0.0%
D. Relationships with news sources	36.5%	34.3%	16.8%	5.8%	6.6%
E. Competing news organizations	21.9%	42.3%	20.4%	8.8%	6.6%
F. Censorship	23.4%	32.8%	24.1%	12.4%	7.3%
G. Public relations	22.6%	27.8%	24.8%	16.8%	8.0%
H. Government officials	16.1%	29.2%	25.5%	16.8%	12.4%
I. The military, police and state security	19.7%	24.1%	27.8%	10.9%	17.5%
J. Your friends, acquaintances and family	13.9%	25.5%	21.2%	16.8%	22.6%
K. Colleagues in other media	16.1%	21.9%	32.1%	18.2%	11.7%
L. Politicians	13.1%	21.9%	26.3%	20.4%	18.3%
M. Business people	11.7%	20.4%	28.5%	24.1%	15.3%
N. Pressure groups	9.5%	17.5%	23.4%	21.9%	27.7%

Trust in institutions

The respondents had their highest level of trust in the news media, followed by religious and cultural leaders. Politicians and the police attracted the lowest level of trust among the journalists surveyed. These findings are fairly consistent with the Afrobarometer survey that found that religious and cultural leaders were among the top three most trusted institutions in most African countries, including Uganda.[41]

TABLE 17: Trust in institutions

	Complete trust	A great deal of trust	Some trust	Little trust	No trust at all
A. The news media	22.6%	46.7%	28.5%	0.7%	1.5%
B. Religious leaders	21.9%	37.9%	29.2%	5.9%	5.1%
C. Cultural leaders	22.6%	30.7%	25.5%	9.5%	11.7%
D. The judiciary/the courts	10.9%	27.0%	43.1%	13.9%	5.1%
E. Trade unions	13.9%	22.6%	40.9%	11.7%	10.9%
F. The government	11.7%	17.5%	49.7%	13.1%	8.0%
G. The parliament	9.5%	19.0%	46.7%	17.5%	7.3%
H. The army	8.8%	16.8%	43.1%	18.9%	12.4%
I. The police	4.4%	12.4%	32.9%	29.9%	20.4%
J. Political parties	5.8%	10.2%	43.8%	28.5%	11.7%
K. Politicians in general	3.6%	10.2%	29.2%	35.8%	21.2%

41 Bratton, M., & Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2016). Do Trustworthy Institutions Matter for Development? Corruption, Trust and Government Performance in Africa.

DISCUSSION

This section looks mainly at eight key themes that emerge from the findings. These are demographics such as age, education, experience, gender and how they have shaped Ugandan journalism; the lack of specialisation and its implications; poor pay as a threat to quality journalism; journalists' role perceptions; and ethical approaches and practices. Other themes are the growing use of social media; the limited number of women in newsrooms; and growing concerns over physical threats to journalists. Finally, we discuss the implications of this portrait on the quality of Ugandan journalism.

Age, education, and experience of Ugandan journalists

Uganda has decidedly young newsrooms. The typical journalist is below 35 years and has worked in journalism for not more than 10 years. Today's journalist is more likely to be a university degree holder, who has read journalism, mass communication or a related field. The apparent strides on the education front could be informed, in part, by the requirement in the Press and Journalist Act 2000 for all journalists to hold a degree as well as the growing number of university-based journalism training programmes. However, the impact of this increase in the number of university-educated journalists on the quality of journalism is not very clear. Many newsroom leaders complain about the quality of graduates they receive, which has in part popularised continuing training and education programmes for journalists run by media support organisations such as ACME. Overall, however, one is more likely to find a higher number of journalists today who can report and write clearly and analytically than in the past.

However, working conditions, and in particular poor pay, which we discuss later, continue to provoke a brain drain from journalism. And because today's journalists are more educated than those who came before them, they are more likely to find jobs outside the media within a few years in the sector. It is a common trend in Uganda for many journalists to use journalism as a stepping-stone to better paying jobs within civil society, the government, international organisations, and corporate

communications. This finding is consistent with what Frere (2011)[42] found in six central African countries of Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo Brazzaville, Central African Republic, and Chad.

In the end, the limited experience of those who remain in the newsroom has a bearing on the quality of journalism. Inexperienced reporters who are paid poorly are more likely to focus on event-based reporting rather than enterprise and investigative forms of journalism. The lack of experience coupled with poor pay has inhibited the media's ability to set the agenda and to hold those in power to account.[43] ACME's recent reports on media performance[44] show that episodic reporting that is thin on context and depth remains the dominant form of reporting in the Ugandan media. However, other factors such as lack of specialisation and threats to journalists, which we discuss in this section, also work to undermine the quality of Ugandan journalism.

Lack of specialisation

This survey confirms that only a small percentage of Ugandan journalists work on specific beats such as business, education, and health. A majority, about 8 out of every 10 journalists, are general reporters or editors working on various types of stories. Most Ugandan media houses have not invested enough in hiring or training specialists. Many of them simply don't have the resources. Most upcountry radio stations have a skeleton staff that they keep deploying at whatever event that is unfolding. And even the bigger media houses that return a healthy profit can't always compete with the other sectors that are ready to employ journalists with specialty knowledge who are already good communicators.

As a result, most journalists in Uganda lack a mastery of specific fields such as business, finance, and economics; energy, mining and petroleum; land and environment; health, science and technology; rights, rule of law and justice; peace and conflict resolution. Despite the surge in graduate journalists, specialisation has not taken root in most newsrooms partly because most graduate journalists lack specialised training in specific beats. Organisations such as ACME have made an effort in skilling journalists through short-term "knowledge-based" training workshops in specialised fields such as business, health, energy, extractives (oil, gas and mining). These efforts are, however, frustrated by the high rate of occupational mobility from journalism and the inability of most newsrooms to give journalists resources, freedom and time to develop their knowledge and experience in specific fields. Lack of specialisation inhibits journalists from gaining adequate contextual knowledge and important sources in many important areas of public affairs. This also partly explains why much of the reporting remains superficial and episodic.

42 Frère, M. S. (2011). *Elections and the media in post-conflict Africa: Votes and voices for peace?*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

43 ACME (2016). Monitoring Media Coverage of the 2016 Elections. Research Report, p.31. African Centre for Media Excellence, Kampala.

44 Research Report on Ugandan Media Coverage of The Covid-19 Pandemic And Other Public Affairs

Ugandan journalists remain poorly paid

This study has demonstrated that Ugandan journalists remain poorly paid across all media platforms, with slightly more than three-quarters earning less than $280 a month. This is slightly lower than what journalists in neighbouring Kenya earn. A recent survey put the monthly pay for a majority of Kenyan journalists at between $375 and $625 per month.[45] It is not surprising that as many as 36% of Ugandan journalists have other paid jobs outside journalism. This is likely to be a consequence of lack of a satisfactory living wage in a country where the estimated living expenses for an individual per month is about $478 (1,696,373UShs).[46]

The major cause of poor pay for journalists is mainly the poor financial standing of most media houses in Uganda. They are dependent on a small advertisement kitty offered by the corporate sector and the government. In 2015, for instance, Ugandan advertisers spent a paltry $181 million on advertising across all media platforms compared to neighboring Kenya, where candidates spent a staggering $77 million on radio advertising alone in the 2013 elections.[47]

Of the $181 million Ugandan media houses earned in 2015, at least 58% of this revenue went to radio advertisement, 25% to television, and 17% to print media (IPSOS, 2015)[48]. Consequently, most media houses do not bring in enough money to grow their media businesses and to remunerate their workers well so that they can stay longer on the job as well as remain independent. To compound matters, this study has shown that a majority of Uganda journalists, especially reporters, work in temporary positions. With only four out of every 10 respondents working in permanent positions, job security is shaky.

As Lange and Ward (2004)[49] have observed, the quality of journalism in a country is closely associated with the journalists' working conditions. Journalists who lack the basic professional and human needs cannot be expected to provide independent journalism upon which people can base their important decisions. The most important factor in guaranteeing the independence of journalists as a condition for their professional conduct is the income they get from their work on a stable and permanent basis. If such income is insufficient to make a normal living, journalists become vulnerable to payments from vested interests as we shall discuss later.

45 Ireri, K. (2017). A national survey of demographics composition of Kenyan journalists. *Journalism, 18*(2), 241-261.

46 https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/country_result.jsp?country=Uganda#:~:text=A%20single%20person%20estimated%20monthly,lower%20than%20in%20United%20States. (21/7/2021).

47 Ogola, G. (2017). Why the role of the media is so important to free and fair elections in Africa. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/why-the-role-of-the- media-is-so-important-to-free-and-fair-elections-in-africa-77568 (Accessed on 21/10/2021).

48 IPSOS (2015). Media landscape. A presentation made by IPSOS Uganda country manager at a stateholders workshop on the state of media advertisement in Uganda in May 2016 in Kampala.

49 Lange, B. P., & Ward, D. (Eds.). (2004). *The media and elections: A handbook and comparative study*. Routledge.

Limited number of women in newsrooms

This study has further found that Ugandan newsrooms are overwhelmingly dominated by men. Only two out of every 10 journalists are women, a significantly smaller number than in neighbouring Kenya, where a 2015 study put the number of female journalists at 33%.[50] In Uganda the number of women in newsrooms appears to be declining. Mwesige (2004) reported that the country's newsrooms employed 27% female staff.[51] Although the number of female journalism students at most universities remains higher than that of male students, few of them end up or stay in journalism. Most of the female journalism graduates wind up working in the corporate communication sector. Some of the most cited reasons why female graduates shun newsrooms range from fear of sexual harassment in the field, poor pay, a harsh working environment that does not favour the special needs of women, and the tendency to assign women 'soft news'.[52] This deficit of female journalists in Ugandan newsrooms may be partly responsible for the gender stereotypes in the media and the perennial underrepresentation of women in the news. According to the 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project report,[53] female journalists are more likely than their male counterparts to select women as news sources. A recent ACME research report[54] noted that less than a quarter (23%) of people quoted in the Ugandan news are women.

Journalists continue to embrace social media

The last 10 years have witnessed a remarkable increase in the use of social media. Journalists have not been left behind. This study has shown that most journalists use social media for a variety of reasons, including connecting with their sources, colleagues, and audiences as well as marketing their content. However, the current government restrictions on the use of social media may frustrate this trend. One such restriction is the recent ban on Facebook, which has led to a steep decline in the number of users of this social media platform.[55] The remaining few who use it must access it through a virtual private network (VPN). As journalism/communication trainers Florence Namasinga and Kristin Orgeret[56] have noted, journalists living in a semi-democratic setting such as Uganda need social media to reach sources with less access to traditional means of communicating with the media.

50 http://erepo.usiu.ac.ke/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11732/1383/A%20National%20Survey%20of%20Demographics%20Composition%20of%20Kenyan%20Journalists.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y (24/7/2021).

51 Mwesige, P. G. (2004). Disseminators, advocates and watchdogs: A profile of Ugandan journalists in the new millennium. *Journalism*, *5*(1), 69-96.

52 Personal communication with a former female journalism student at Makerere University (24/7/2021).

53 ACME, New report: Want more women in the news? Hire more women journalists. https://acme-ug.org/2015/12/12/3093/ (21/7/2021).

54 African Centre for Media Excellence (2018). Press Coverage of Public Affairs in Uganda. Volume 4; July 2016 – June 2017

55 https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-22/uganda-to-maintain-facebook-ban-indefinitely-new-vision-says (06/7/2021)

56 Namasinga Selnes, F., & Orgeret, K. S. (2020). Social media in Uganda: revitalising news journalism?. *Media, Culture & Society*, *42*(3), 380-397.

Interestingly, a significant number of journalists supported newsroom restrictions on how they use social media. This response might have been prompted by previous criticism that some journalists have faced for breaking news on their social media accounts and expressing their opinions on partisan issues. The use of social media can sometimes put journalists and their media organisations in a spot of bother, or even compromise their safety and security if journalists, for instance, engage in debate on polarising issues or use abusive language against some individuals or organisations.

Physical threats worry journalists

Ugandan journalists continue to do their work amidst an environment of fear due to both the perceived and real threats that they face. For example, in 2020, Human Rights Network for Journalists–Uganda recorded 174 cases of press freedom violations, with police being the leading perpetrator of these abuses.[57] As a result, journalists are less willing to engage in reporting stories that set them up as potential targets for physical attack and arrest. This means that important developments and issues in public affairs are sometimes unreported. As Walulya and Nassanga (2020) have noted, Ugandan journalists use self-censorship as a strategy to survive attacks by perpetrators of press freedom violations. [58]

Controversial ethical practices

The study has further found that major ethical concerns endure, particularly revolving around the widespread practice of taking money from sources to publish/broadcast stories (or not) and taking employment in the corporate sector while continuing to work as a journalist. Some journalists cite poor pay as the reason for soliciting or accepting money from sources. With nearly a third of respondents saying that accepting money from sources was justified on occasion or always justified, it is clear that this practice is quite entrenched in Uganda.

A 2016 survey by the African Media Barometer noted a worsening trend of corruption among especially radio journalists in Uganda.[59] The report argued that this tendency was not unique to journalism but reflected what is happening in the wider society. The practice of "brown envelopes" is also widespread in many other African countries, carrying different coded names depending on the local context. For example, the term *soli* is used in Ghana, *camora* in Congo Brazzaville, and *final communique* in some French-speaking African countries (Frere, 2011).[60] Other euphemisms used in other African countries include *blessing fee* in Ethiopia and *mshiko* (sitting allowance) in Kenya

57 https://www.hrnjuganda.org/download/reports/Press-Freedom-Index-Report-2020.pdf (06/7/2021).

58 Walulya, G., & Nassanga, G. L. (2020). Democracy at stake: Self-censorship as a self-defence strategy for journalists. *Media and Communication*, *8*(1), 5-14.

59 African Media barometer - Uganda, 2016 http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/africa-media/13547.pdf (06/7/2021).

60 Frère, M. S. (2011). *Elections and the media in post-conflict Africa: Votes and voices for peace?*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

and Tanzania. Zambia probably has the most hilarious one: *ndalama yamatako*[61]or "money for the buttocks". It says that the payment is compensation for the journalists' sitting time in conferences, seminars, and press conferences. As Mwesige[62] has noted, regardless of which media house a journalist works for, accepting money from sources degrades the integrity of journalism.

Journalists' role perceptions

It appears that Ugandan journalists continue to embrace 'disseminator', 'interpretive', 'populist mobiliser' or 'activist' as well as 'watchdog' roles of the media. So while most respondents highly valued providing information and reporting things as they are (disseminators), they also considered educating the audience, supporting national development, advocating social change, motivating people to participate (populist mobilisers or activists) as extremely important. Respondents equally highly rated the media role of providing analysis of current affairs (interpreters) as well as monitoring and scrutinising political and business leaders (watchdogs).

61 Skjerdal, T.S. (2010) Research on brown envelope journalism in African media: *African Communication Research journal* 3 (3), 92-118.

62 https://acme-ug.org/2010/09/21/the-shame-of-brown-envelope-journalism/ (17/6/2021)

CONCLUSION

The survey suggests that the typical Ugandan journalist is male, below 35 years, has less than 10 years of experience on the job, isn't specialised in covering one or two beats, and earns not more than Shs1,000,000 ($280) per month.

Most Ugandan journalists are more educated today than ever before, and a good number have received specialised training in journalism and mass communication or such media-related fields. They have embraced social media not only for personal networking but also to connect with sources, peers, and audiences. Besides the journalists also use social media to share their content.

Low pay, poor working conditions, precarious job security as well as threats to journalistic freedom all combine to contribute to high occupational mobility within Ugandan newsrooms. The high attrition rate has left behind young newsrooms. The inexperience of journalists in many newsrooms directly affects the quality of the journalism they deliver.

Ugandan journalists embrace several controversial ethical practices such as accepting money from sources, paying for confidential information, claiming to be somebody else, using hidden cameras as well as working for private companies outside the media sector while continuing to work as a journalist. The justification cited for these practices tend to revolve around poor pay as well as lack of access to information.

Most Ugandan journalists appear to see themselves as information disseminators, interpreters, advocates, activists, and watchdogs. They embrace the role of providing information and analysis, but also highly value the importance of holding power to account. Ugandan journalists also don't see themselves as dispassionate observers but rather citizen activists who have a responsibility to mobilise people to action and support national development and social change.

Most respondents reported to have a fair amount of professional autonomy, but they lived in fear of being arrested or detained over their work. The police remain the biggest source of threats to journalists, followed by government officials. Media owners who value the bottom line or political

considerations more than the public interest mission of journalism are also a major influence on the content that Ugandan journalists produce.

If the number of strong media houses that can invest in journalists and good content remains limited, the quality of Ugandan journalism will continue to suffer. While there are some journalists who stand out of the crowd and deliver powerful and impactful stories, many are not able to rise above the limitations within their newsrooms and the perilous political environment within which they work.

APPENDIX 1: MEDIA HOUSES FROM WHICH RESPONDENTS WERE DRAWN

REGION	MEDIA HOUSE
Kampala	Bukedde TV Capital CBS FM Daily Monitor Dembe FM BBS Terefayina Beat FM NTV NBS TV New Vision The Independent The Observer Sanyu FM KFM UBC TV Uganda Radio Network Urban TV Radio Sapientia Life Magazine
Central Region	Buddu FM Mbabule FM Heart FM

REGION	MEDIA HOUSE
Eastern	Baba FM Baba TV Eastern News Network Step FM Kamuli Broadcasting Services (KBS 105.9FM) Ateker FM Etoil A' Karamoja Eye FM
Northern Region	Radio Rupiny Pol FM Tembo FM Unity FM Wan Luo TV
West Nile	Arua one Paidha FM
Western Region	Radio West Radio Kinkizi TV West Voice of Kamwenge Voice of Kigezi Voice of Muhabura Voice of Tooro Kagadi Kibaale Community Radio KRC Messiah Radio Ngabu Radio Spice FM The Informer Uganda

AFRICAN CENTRE FOR
MEDIA EXCELLENCE

African Centre for Media Excellence
Plot 130 Kalungu Road (Bunga-Soya), off Ggaba Road
P. O. Box 11283 Kampala, Uganda
Tel: +256 393 202 351
info@acme-ug.org, www.acme-ug.org
Facebook: ACME.UG
Twitter: @ACME_Uganda