



Changing Newsrooms 2023

Media Leaders Struggle to Embrace Diversity in Full and Remain Cautious on AI Disruption

Federica Cherubini and Ramaa Sharma

REUTERS INSTITUTE REPORT • DECEMBER 2023



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Published by the Reuters Institute for the Study of
Journalism at the University of Oxford.



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DOI: 10.60625/risj-khyh-ct64

About the Authors

Federica Cherubini is a news media expert with twelve years of experience spanning publishers, research institutes, and editorial networks around the world. She works at the intersection between people, organisational processes, research and strategy, and specialises in newsroom operations, organisational change, and audience-first strategies.

As Director of Leadership Development at the Reuters Institute, she hosts RISJ programmes for the current and next generations of newsroom leaders. These courses aim to equip senior editors and media managers with the skills, evidence-based research, experience, and network they need to shape the future of journalism and build a better and more sustainable future for the industry.

Previously, she worked for Hearken, an audience consulting company that helps organisations better listen to and engage with their stakeholders in order to build sustainability and was Audience Projects Editor at Condé Nast International, working on audience growth, best practice and knowledge-sharing. Her work there focused on newsletter strategies, membership projects and editorial initiatives that drive audience loyalty.

Federica participated in the Online News Association's 2018 Women's Leadership Accelerator and she is a mentor with the Digital Women Leaders initiative and the News Product Alliance.

Ramaa Sharma is an award-winning media leader, an Ashridge-trained executive coach and journalist. She has over 19 years' experience in the media industry including 17 years at the BBC where she was a Senior Editor in News.

During her time at the BBC, Ramaa led large scale digital transformation initiatives and edited numerous award-winning multimedia journalism projects across the years. In 2020 she devised and led a Race and Inclusion programme for the BBC's News board.

Combining her leadership, journalism and coaching experiences, Ramaa now offers digital transformation, culture change, content strategy and D&I consultancy, as well as related CIPD sessions to leaders and fellow coaches.

Ramaa is also a member of the faculty at the Oxford University's Reuters Institute. At the Institute Ramaa speaks on the leadership courses, facilitates group coaching sessions and also presents podcasts, most recently on "Authentic Leadership."

Ramaa also conceives and presents documentaries largely on systemic inequalities. Her most recent documentary was for BBC Radio 4 called Culture on the Couch.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to Richard Fletcher, Eduardo Suarez, and Nic Newman for their feedback and input on this report.

Thank you to Matthew Leake and Priscille Biehlmann for their support and input.

The authors would like to thank the 145 news leaders from around the world, who participated in the survey and contributed with their interviews.

Executive Summary

Since the first *Changing Newsrooms* report in 2020, this annual piece of research has aimed at exploring how news organisations around the world are adapting their working practices to external changes and internal dynamics, with a specific eye on their strategies towards attracting and nurturing talent, as well as cultivating a diverse, inclusive, and representative culture.

When looking at external forces, remote working was obviously the main focus of the report in 2020, when the global Covid-19 pandemic forced our social interactions to a halt and many news organisations moved their staff to work from home. The killing of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests brought attention to issues of racial injustice and social inequalities, sparking debates and conversations that reverberated through news organisations and led many of them to reconsider their own practices, both in terms of their internal representation, and in how they covered the news (Cherubini et al. 2020).

In the two following years, a mix of remote and in-office work made the ‘hybrid newsroom’ a widespread reality, but questions remained about how exactly to implement it and with what consequences on the social and collaborative working dynamics, as well as on staff’s feeling of belonging towards their organisations (Cherubini 2022). Hybrid working practices not only put a spotlight on real and perceived inequalities between people working in front of their bosses and those working away from them (also known as ‘proximity bias’), but likewise on the benefits that an increased flexibility could bring to creating a more diverse and distributed workforce as well. Yet, despite being the topic of several industry discussions, investing in talent and improving diversity remained fundamental, largely unmet, challenges (Cherubini et al. 2021).

Fast forward to 2023. While in May the World Health Organisation declared the Covid-19 pandemic over, other external challenges have come into play, namely an economic slowdown, increasing inflation, international wars and geopolitical disruption.

Three years after we started talking about remote and hybrid work, have working practices in news organisations around the world really changed compared to pre-pandemic? How did a higher degree of flexibility, enjoyed by many during the past years, get translated into new established processes and workflows? What impact will advances in generative AI have on roles and responsibilities in newsrooms? What progress has really been made on having truly diverse and inclusive organisations and working cultures? And lastly, how do we hire the talent we need and invest in existing talent to meet the challenges and opportunities of an ever-changing media landscape?

We’ll try to answer these questions in this year’s *Changing Newsrooms* report, which is based on a survey of 135 senior industry leaders from 40 countries and ten in-depth interviews.

Among other things, we find that:

- Two-thirds (65%) of newsroom leaders who took part in our survey said that their organisations have implemented flexible and hybrid working models with new rules in place for staff. Newsrooms have largely settled on embracing some degree of workplace flexibility: 30% of respondents said staff are required to be in the office some fixed days per week and their company is enforcing the rule to make sure it's respected, while 22% said that, despite staff being required to be in the office some fixed days per week, no one is checking if this really happens.
- Some news leaders remain worried about a sense of disconnect within their workforce: 38% said that the shift to hybrid and flexible working has weakened staff's sense of belonging to the organisation.
- Of our respondents, 74% think that generative AI will help newsrooms increase productivity and improve workflows, without changing the essence of journalism. Just 21% said that generative AI will transform workflows and processes, fundamentally changing every role in the newsroom.
- When it comes to guiding staff through opportunities and risks of AI, 29% of news leaders report that their organisations already have in place high-level principles to guide their AI plans, while 39% say they are working on them. Only 16% of respondents report having in place detailed guidelines on how to use generative AI in different circumstances and 35% say they are working on them. Only 9% of leaders report having training programmes for staff already in place.
- When it comes to diversity, 90% of our survey participants feel their organisations are doing a good job in gender diversity but numbers are considerably lower when it comes to doing a good job with political diversity (55%), supporting staff with disabilities (54%), or ethnic diversity (52%).
- According to our survey results, newsrooms lack a structured and clear plan for diversity. Of the survey participants, 43% said their organisation has a systematic and articulated strategy for diversifying talent acquisition, but in other areas systematic strategies were relatively rare. When looking at retaining talent, only 22% of news leaders said their organisations have a systematic and articulated strategy and 37% have such an approach to reflecting diversity in stories produced.
- When we asked news leaders who participated in the survey what challenges they thought their organisations were encountering when trying to improve diversity and representation, finding diverse talent was identified as the top challenge, mentioned by 57% of our respondents. In addition, 29% said retaining diverse talent was a problem, 20% said that improving diversity and representation is not considered an organisational priority, and 17% said there is a lack of understanding of the value/merit of it.

This report is based on a survey of a strategic sample of news industry leaders, completed between 6 September and 18 October 2023, and it is complemented by in-depth interviews with ten industry leaders. Respondents include editors-in-chief/executive editors, CEOs, and managing editors, as well as other senior positions in editorial, audience, talent development, and commercial. The sample includes individuals working in a wide range of different companies with a print, magazine, broadcast background, as well as digital-born news organisations and news agencies. While the survey was sent to news industry leaders in many different countries, the majority of the respondents are from the Global North, and most of them work in mid-size and large organisations.

Our results thus do not fully capture the often very different situation faced by small organisations and those operating in poor and/or authoritarian countries. It is not a representative sample and it is not a random sample. Therefore, it does not allow for generalisation to the industry at large. Because of the strategic sample we rely on, direct year-to-year comparisons of specific figures are not possible, although the data do help us identify overall patterns. More details of the methodology and make-up of the sample are provided in the section at the end of the report.

1. The Impact of More Flexible Newsrooms on Hiring, Productivity, and Diversity

1.1 From ‘remote’ and ‘hybrid’ to ‘flexible’ and ‘distributed’

‘It’s time to retire the phrase “hybrid work”’, declared Future Forum’s Brian Elliott in August 2023 in a piece for Charter, a digital publication that provides in-depth coverage of the modern workplace.¹ The terms ‘remote’ and ‘hybrid’ came to mean too many things, Elliott explained, pointing to a Future Forum research that showed that what employees are really asking for now is ‘the freedom to work where, and when, they’re at their best. They want a blend of regular time together with their team, and autonomy at the team level to figure out what’s right for them’. In one word: flexibility. Elliott goes on to articulate that many companies looked at simple solutions (‘three days a week in the office to be with your team’ for example) instead of structurally re-evaluating their working practices and embracing the potential of having a truly distributed workforce, which in turn requires new working protocols and leadership skills to thrive.

A few months earlier, *Financial Times* journalist and host of the ‘Working It’ podcast and newsletter Isabel Berwick was also wondering² whether we were ‘doing hybrid wrong’. Berwick highlighted a new study³ by the consultancy firm McKinsey that also found that few companies have taken full advantage of the possibilities offered by what it called ‘true hybrid’ work models. The study found that ‘for some, long-standing perceptions – including the notion that more days in the office is the measure of success – may stand in the way of meaningful change. For others, it may be that defaulting to old norms is easier than rethinking new ways of working.’

Indeed the culprit of failing hybrid working practices seems to be ‘poor execution’, according to a global pulse survey by business consultancy Gartner quoted here⁴.

More generally, not everyone was sold on the idea of hybrid working: across sectors, some companies⁵ opted for requiring their employees to go back to the office full time. These office mandates, however, haven’t proven very popular.⁶

Discontent with return-to-office policies was also found in media companies, becoming a contested topic in negotiations⁷ between management and newsroom unions at companies like Hearst and The New York Times.⁸

¹ <https://www.charterworks.com/vocabulary-flexible-work/>

² <https://www.ft.com/content/077ba8aa-9a04-4a65-8870-47c656501e04>

³ <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/real-estate/our-insights/is-your-workplace-ready-for-flexible-work-a-survey-offers-clues>

⁴ <https://www.worklife.news/leadership/how-hybrid-working-is-failing-due-to-poor-execution/>

⁵ <https://www.businessinsider.com/companies-making-workers-employees-return-to-office-rto-wfh-hybrid-2023-1?r=US&IR=T>

⁶ <https://www.ft.com/content/565adc40-f3a0-4117-8e9c-b5fd75305ee7>

⁷ <https://digiday.com/media/newsroom-unions-return-to-office-negotiations-heat-up-as-fall-approaches/>

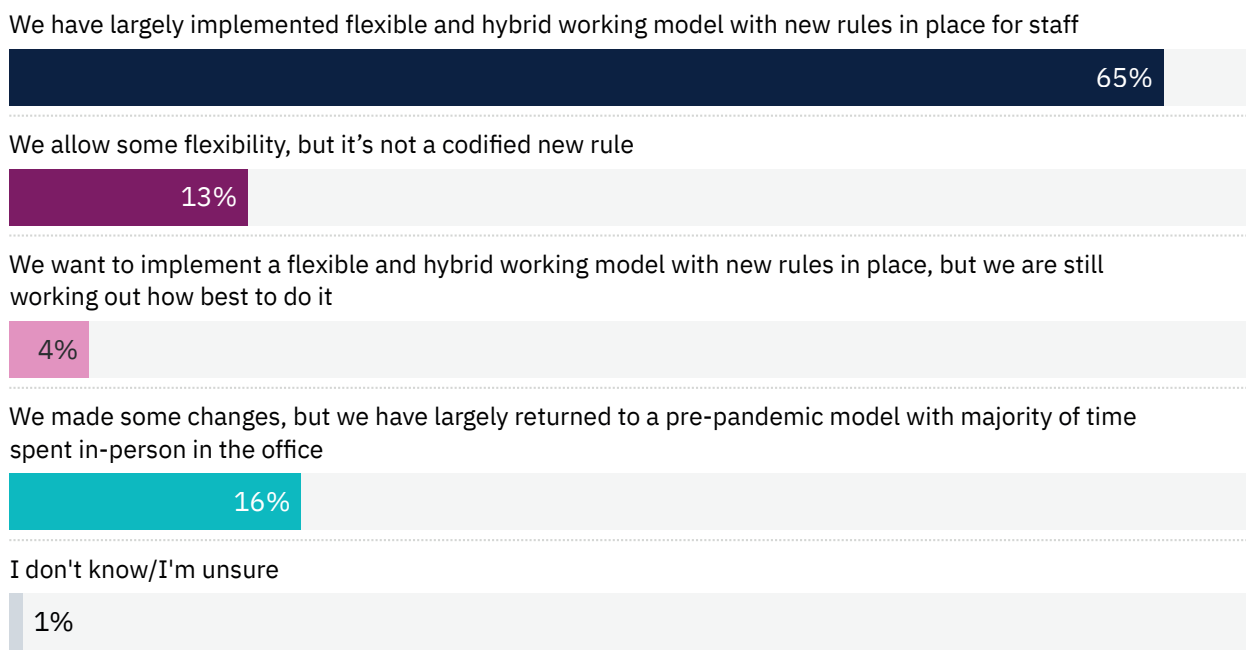
⁸ As reported by Axios, in August 2023 two of the Times’ unions sent cease-and-desist letters to management over new return-to-office policies requiring the organisation to periodically monitor its workers’ return to office via badge swipes. <https://www.axios.com/2023/08/29/nyt-unions-file-cease-and-desist-letters-return-to-office-policies>

So, within this broader context of how hybrid work is seen across sectors, where does the news industry stand? Have news organisations around the world really changed the ways they organise where and when their staff work, as a result of the increased flexibility staff got used to during the pandemic? And if flexibility is what employees are asking for, what kind of flexibility would they like to have?

According to our survey, 65% of newsroom leaders said that their organisations have largely implemented flexible and hybrid working models with new rules in place for staff. Only 16% said that their organisations made some changes, but largely returned to a pre-pandemic model, with the majority of time spent in-person in the office.

Figure 1. Current news industry thinking on hybrid and flexible working

Percentage of respondents who said that each of the following statements represents their news organisation’s thinking

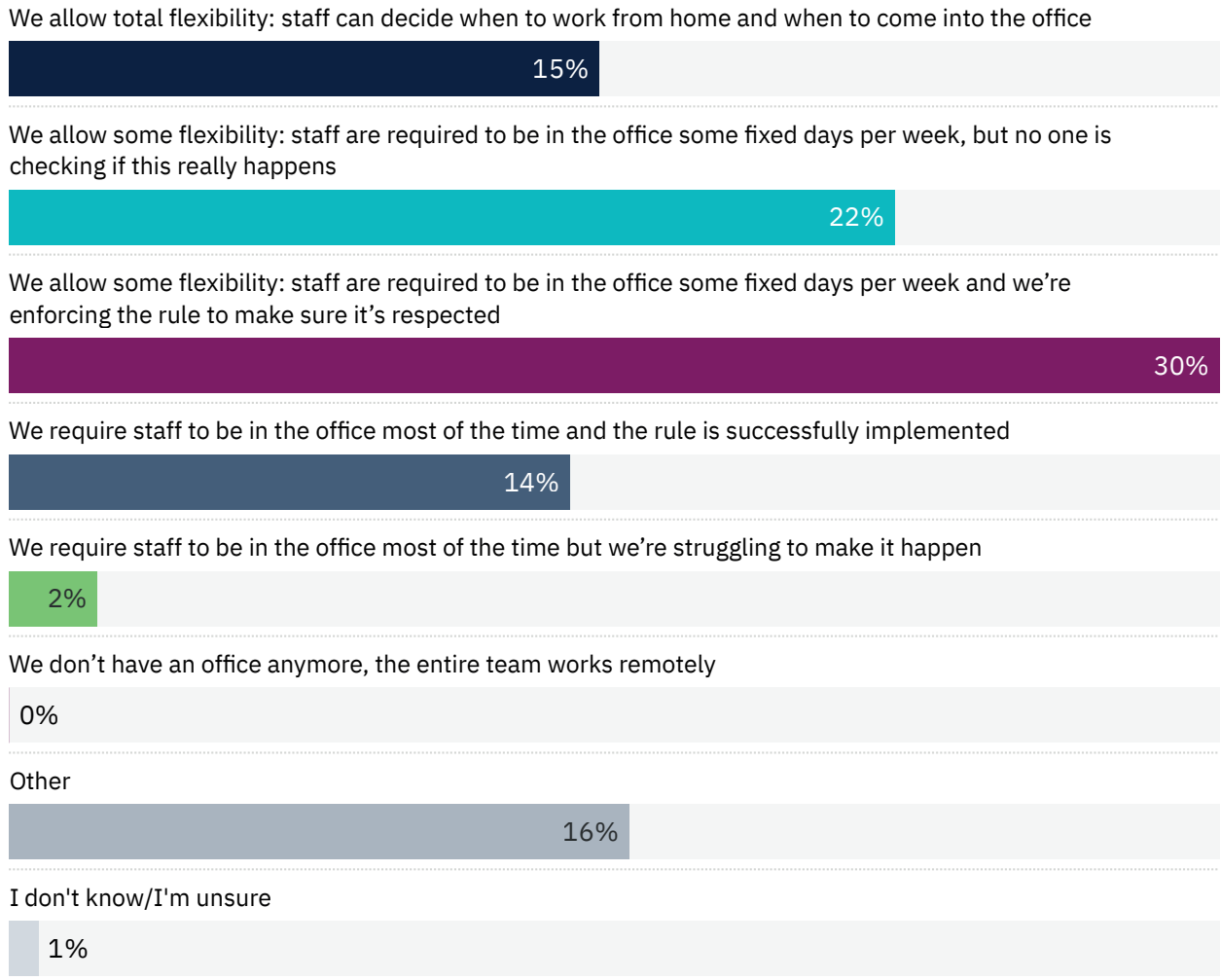


Q2. What is your organisation’s strategy when it comes to flexible and hybrid working? *Base: 134.*

Organisations vary in terms of how they have actually implemented hybrid and flexible working. While 15% of our sample offer workers total flexibility in terms of when they work from home or come to the office, it is more common for employees to be offered a degree of flexibility (52%): 30% of newsroom leaders participating in our survey said staff are required to be in the office some fixed days per week and their company is enforcing the rule to make sure it’s respected, while 22% said that, despite staff being required to be in the office some fixed days per week, no one is checking if this really happens. For 16% staff are required to be in the office most of the time.

Figure 2. Approaches news organisations are following when implementing hybrid and flexible working

Percentage of respondents who said their news organisation has chosen the following approach to hybrid and flexible workings



Q3. Which scenario comes closest to what's happening in your organisation? Base: 135.

Naturally, even within organisations, it's not a one-size-fits-all strategy. Different teams have been following different approaches, with editorial and engineering for example adopting different in-office and remote work rules. Roles that require specific office equipment also enjoy more limited flexibility.

A couple of teams are required to work mostly from office, e.g. the video production team (all days), IT team (all days), product team (3 days a week), but all other teams are flexible and are only required to come to office for weekly or monthly meetings.

Ritu Kapur, CoFounder and Managing Director, Quint Digital Media Limited, India

In the survey we asked what type of flexibility newsroom leaders felt their staff were asking for. According to the open-ended answers we received, flexibility about where to work seems to be most desirable. Beyond the home or office options, there were mentions of the city where the organisation is based vs. the countryside or a different location in the same country. Several

participants also cited requests for greater flexibility during holiday time to allow employees to work from other countries or locations. Several newsroom leaders also cited requests for flexibility to accommodate caring responsibilities like childcare.

It's not just about the place of work though. Some newsrooms allow a high degree of flexibility in relation to working hours: 'We allow flexibility on [the] work schedule: staff members can plan breaks during their work day, for example, to exercise, run errands, attend family matters, or simply relax,' said Maye Primera, Editorial Director of El Timpano, in California, US.

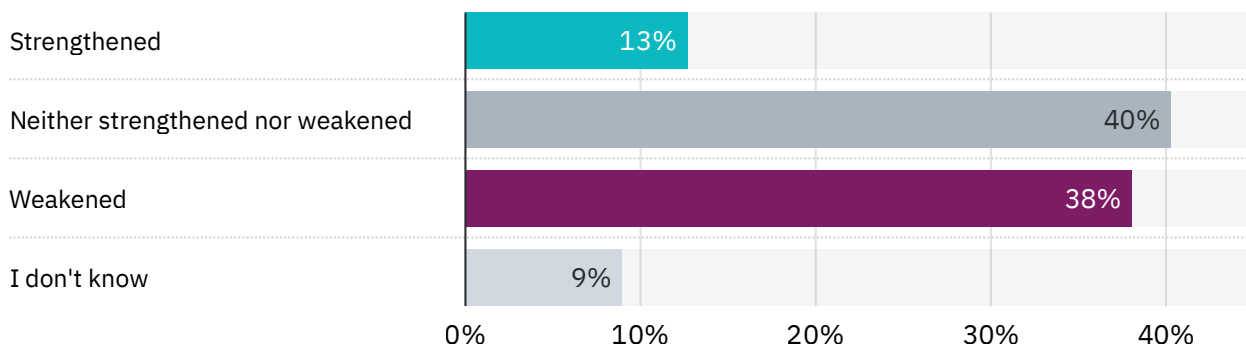
There are also generational differences in preferences for working practices. Although not always the case, early-career journalists sometimes see the office as an opportunity to establish relationships with more experienced colleagues and learn to navigate different work scenarios.⁹ On the other hand, they might have only experienced a high degree of flexibility in their work life and therefore expect that to be the norm. But, as a British editor noted, 'it is hard to tell if this is a generational divide or a situation created by the new rules of work post-pandemic'.

1.2 The impact of flexible working on productivity and sense of belonging

Last year's report highlighted a growing concern about a sense of disconnect between staff and their organisations (Cherubini 2022). The same feeling remains this year, with 38% of news leaders who participated in the survey saying that the shift to hybrid and flexible working has weakened staff's sense of belonging to the organisation.¹⁰ In contrast, just 13% said that it had strengthened belonging, with 40% saying there had been no effect.

Figure 3. How flexible and hybrid working has impacted staff's sense of belonging to the organisation

Percentage of our respondents who said flexible and hybrid working has strengthened/weakened staff's sense of belonging to an organisation



Q5. In your opinion, has the shift to hybrid and flexible working strengthened or weakened staff's sense of belonging to the organisation? *Base: 134.*

⁹ <https://www.ft.com/content/565adc40-f3a0-4117-8e9c-b5fd75305ee7>

¹⁰ Although people have experienced different levels of hybrid and flexible working, including some who have said they have returned to a pre-pandemic in-person model, most people expressed an opinion on the questions on the impact of hybrid and flexible working on staff's sense of belonging and productivity.

Sense of cohesion and building of a shared culture came up a few times in comments as an ongoing challenge for aspects of hybrid and flexible working arrangements:

During the pandemic the pendulum swung too far in the direction of remote working resulting in declines in cohesion and motivation. Despite digital tools, communication still suffered. In the wake of the pandemic, we are now trying to rebalance flexibility with team effectiveness and integrated communication.

María Lorente, Regional Director Latin America, Agence France Presse, Colombia

I think the biggest challenge with the hybrid/flexible organisation is guaranteeing the internal communications flow and the organisational culture to be shared. For that we are experimenting with some live activities and other ways. Let's see how it turns out.

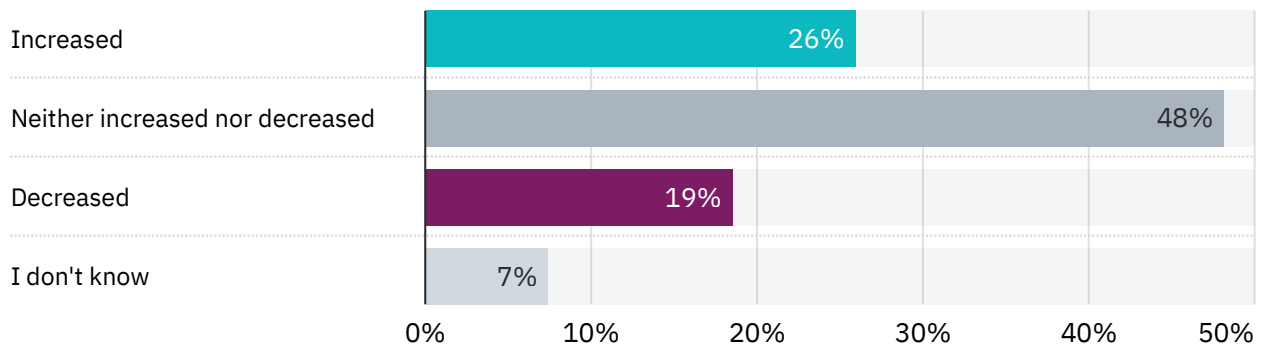
Director of a Brazilian organisation

In conversations around flexible and hybrid working, the issue of productivity often arises, together with the question of whether or not this working model enhances or hinders it.

Continuing the trend we saw in last year's report, many of our survey respondents do not think it has had much of an effect: 48% say that productivity has neither increased nor decreased as a result of the shift to hybrid and flexible working, while a quarter (26%) think that it has increased. However, it is important to point out that a clear minority, just 19%, think that flexible and hybrid working has decreased productivity.

Figure 4. How flexible and hybrid working has impacted productivity

Percentage of respondents who say that the shift to hybrid/flexible working has increased/decreased staff's productivity



Q6. In your opinion, has hybrid and flexible working increased or decreased productivity? Base: 135.

The discourse around 'productivity paranoia' is not new. A Microsoft Work Trend Index Report in 2022¹¹ reported 85% of leaders surveyed as saying that the shift to hybrid work had made it challenging to have confidence that employees were being productive, while at the same time workers were reporting high levels of productivity. This disconnect fuels a 'productivity theatre',¹² where workers feel compelled to show they are working, in a largely performative way.¹³

¹¹ <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/hybrid-work-is-just-work>

¹² <https://www.inc.com/jessica-stillman/productivity-asynchronous-remote-work.html>

¹³ <https://www.worklife.news/leadership/productivity-paranoia/>

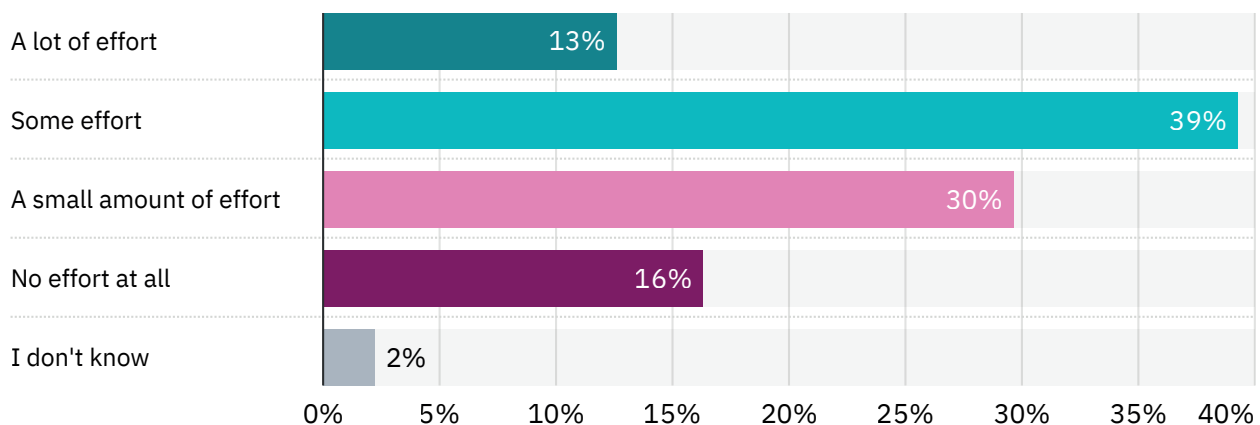
A recent Slack State of Work in 2023 report¹⁴ found that most executives rely heavily on visibility and activity metrics as the main way to measure productivity, with 53% of desk workers saying they feel the pressure to respond to messages quickly, even if sent after working hours. Most individual contributors, on the other hand, would prefer to be measured on what they produce or achieve (with 27% indicating ‘achieving goals/KPIs’ as their top preferred measure).

Inspired by the conversations happening across industries, we wanted to see how newsroom leaders were thinking about productivity. In our survey we asked how much effort participants feel their organisations are putting into measuring productivity. (Please note that this is a report that focuses on the views of newsroom leaders so we don’t have data about how staff think about the issue.)

Only 13% of the leaders who participated in the survey said their companies put ‘a lot of effort’ into measuring productivity, while many more (39%) reported ‘some effort’. Perhaps most strikingly, nearly half (46%) said that their organisation makes either a small effort to measure productivity or no effort at all (16%).

Figure 5. The amount of effort organisations are putting into measuring productivity

Percentage of respondents who say they are putting various degrees of effort into measuring productivity



Q7. In your opinion, how much effort does your organisation put into measuring productivity? Base: 135.

We also included an open-ended question in the survey asking leaders whether their organisation or their team had changed the way it measures productivity as a result of flexible working and if yes, how. The majority of those who answered reported no significant changes. We received a few examples of post-pandemic changes but they mainly involved non-editorial teams.

In mid 2020, we implemented a new system of measuring the productivity of our development [team] using a system of ‘effort points’ for each task. Because our development teams work mostly from home, this has been very useful for measuring its productivity. It’s not the same with the newsroom because journalists are working mostly at the office, so changes about

¹⁴ <https://slack.com/intl/en-gb/blog/news/state-of-work-2023>

measuring productivity with them has to be more about business challenges – like reader revenue shift, IA impact – than with flexible working.

Head of revenue department at an organisation in Spain

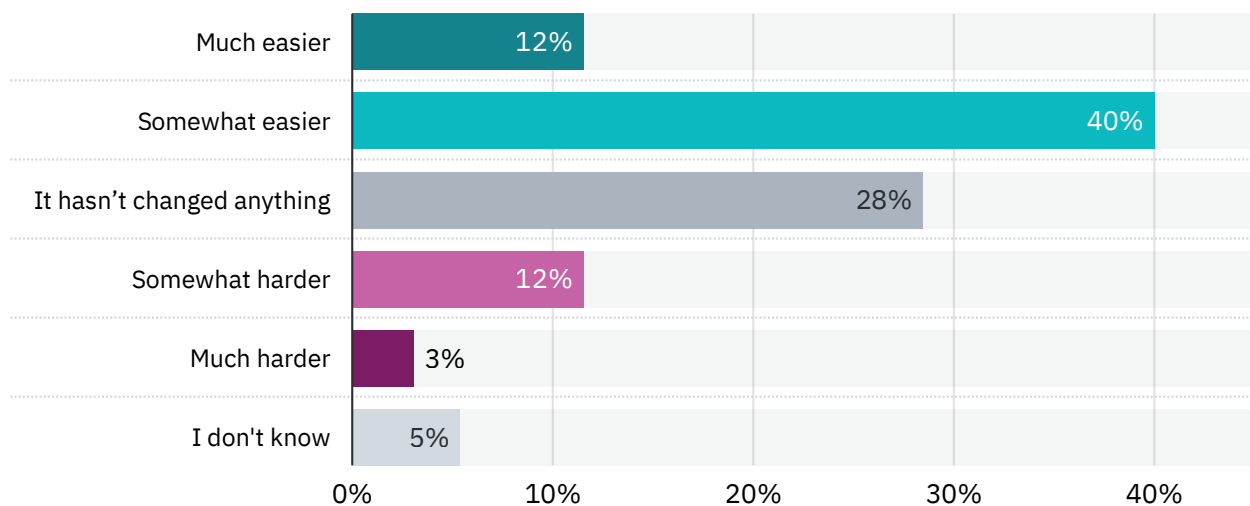
1.3 The impact of flexible working on talent

Last year’s report highlighted how hybrid and flexible working had a positive impact on hiring but made retention harder due to increased difficulties in establishing relationships with the new hires and developing a strong sense of belonging to the organisation. For this year’s survey we wanted to continue looking at what impact a more flexible way of working is having on the workforce, with a specific focus on recruitment and retention.

52% of newsroom leaders in the survey report that hybrid and flexible working has made recruitment much easier or somewhat easier, while 28% said that it hasn’t changed anything; 15% said that it has made recruitment harder.

Figure 6. The move to hybrid/flexible working is making recruitment easier for most organisations

Percentage of respondents who think that the experience of hybrid and flexible working has made recruitment easier or harder



Q12. To what extent has the experience of hybrid and flexible working made recruitment easier or harder to address? Base: 130.

We’ve recruited talents from several parts of the African continent and have staff travelling to work across the globe so they can meet other personal and professional commitments. This is a feat that would have been impossible without hybrid and flexible working.

Adesola Afolabi, Insights Associate Manager, Stears, Nigeria

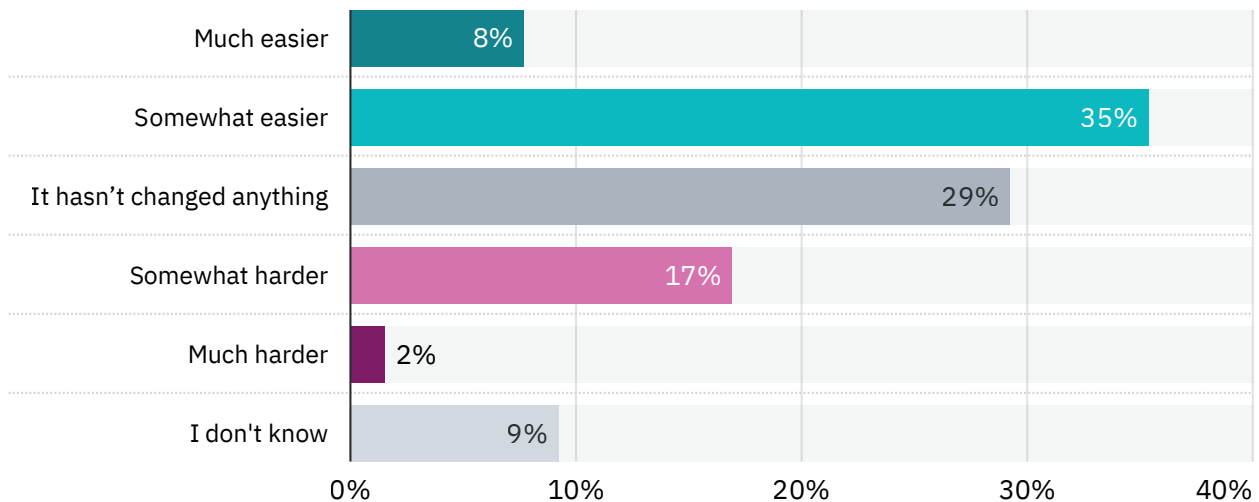
The advantages for recruitment appear in several of the comments we received. ‘Many applicants are looking for flexibility for commuting, child care and elder care. Knowing we are hybrid makes the company more attractive’, said a leader from a global organisation, headquartered in the US.

Another British editor echoed: ‘I was able to hire a top candidate who lives in Scotland, despite our office being in London. Without the flexible approach, we would have lost a really strong employee.’

Switching the focus to retaining talent, 43% of newsroom leaders in our survey said flexible and hybrid working has made retention much or somewhat easier, with 29% saying it hasn’t changed anything and 19% said it made it much or somewhat harder.

Figure 7. The move to hybrid/flexible working is making retention easier for many organisations

Percentage of respondents who think that the experience of hybrid and flexible working has made retention easier or harder



Q13. To what extent has the experience of hybrid and flexible working made retention easier or harder to address? Base: 130.

On retention, existing producers feel valued in that we trust them to work remotely and judge their performance based on quality and quantity of output not looking busy.

Video editor at a British organisation

Advantages and challenges can coexist, as exemplified by this comment from an Irish editor:

Now that we are more open as a newsroom to having employees who are not close to the office, that has widened the pool of candidates who we would previously not have considered (and has had a positive impact on our authentic coverage of more regional issues or breaking news); but once employed, we haven't found hybrid working to be a big factor in retention when we have faced that challenge, for two reasons. For one, many newsrooms here also offer this condition, so it's not necessarily a USP, and secondly, for some reporters, the largely remote-working situation in our office can work against their sense of being part of a team, and being motivated to stay with it.

As we mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, strict ‘return to office’ policies risk having a negative impact on the workforce. ‘Our company has implemented a strict 5-day in-person work policy and that has had a negative effect of retention. We had a spate of resignations shortly after the announcement’, commented an editor from a publication based in South Africa.

The same challenge was echoed by a newsroom leader from a broadcaster in Germany:

My organisation has spiralled back into a mostly in-office policy, which has had a negative impact on retention. A lot of people have left seeking more flexible work arrangements. Our schedules at the news desk aren't flexible at all time-wise, thus people seek out flexibility in terms of where to work, which we don't offer.

One of the issues that often gets raised when talking about the challenges posed by hybrid and flexible working models is the effectiveness in training younger and less experienced staff (Cherubini et al. 2021). 'For younger journalists, we have received some feedback that they feel they might receive more organic training in newsrooms where they can be physically beside more seasoned professionals and observe them at work.', commented an Irish editor in this year's survey.

However, a study by Charter and Qualtrics,¹⁵ based on a survey of 3,005 desk-based employees across industries, showed that where mentorship takes place is not a defining factor of success. Successful mentoring relationships, the study said, were similarly likely to occur if mentor and mentee met remotely, in person, or a mix of both.

1.4 The impact of flexible working on diversity, equity, and inclusion

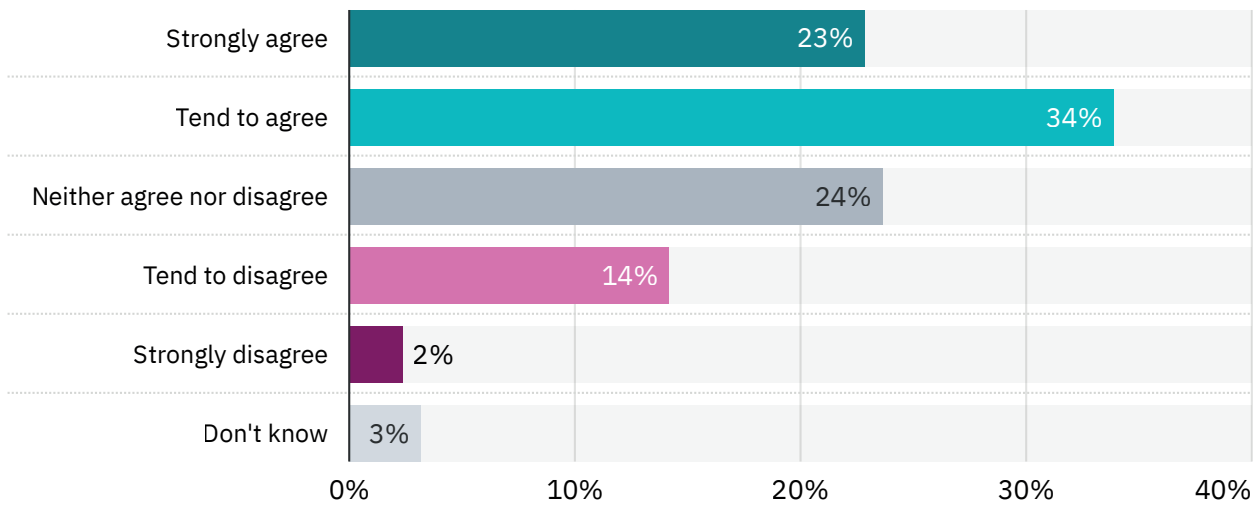
Last year's survey showed the promise of how increased geographical flexibility in relation to where to hire talent, for example, could have a positive impact on increasing organisations' diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) levels, but we weren't able to make any direct connection between the two aspects.

This year's results show similar hopes from news leaders: 57% said they agree with the statement that 'Hybrid and flexible working can increase our ability to hire diverse talent and have a positive impact on our diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies', with just 16% disagreeing.

¹⁵ <https://www.charterworks.com/charter-research-mentorship-remote-hybrid/>

Figure 8. Most media leaders think hybrid and flexible working can help with improving diversity in newsrooms

Percentage of respondents who say hybrid and flexible working can increase our ability to hire diverse talent and have a positive impact on our diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies



Q21. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Hybrid and flexible working can increase our ability to hire diverse talent and have a positive impact on our diversity, equity and inclusion strategies. *Base: 127.*

‘Flexible work favours women, caregivers and parents, and people from low-socio economic backgrounds who may not be able to afford to commute in, or live in, major cities’, said a leader working in an audience role at a British organisation.

‘Most of our staff are women of colour, some of them working moms with small children and difficulties to find or afford childcare. Having flexible work hours has allowed them to balance their family and work life,’ agreed Maye Primera, Editorial Director at El Timpano, in California, United States.

Others noted that, even if a higher degree of flexibility can be beneficial to improving DEI, news organisations of course can’t rely solely on that if they want to meaningfully improve the diversity and inclusivity of their staff, as well as their organisational culture overall, and benefits of sharing a workspace remain:

Flexible working can allow an organisation to hire more diverse talents, but this will have little impact on the organisational culture. When the team is breaking bread together everyday, having conflicts and resolving them tends to have a greater impact on the product and on the team.

Nora Younis, Editor-in-Chief, AlManassa, Egypt

The impact of hybrid and flexible working to leverage existing disparities is the focus of a report published in February 2023 by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The report looks at the gendered dimension of teleworking and its effect on gender disparities in labour market outcomes. Amongst other things, the study found that

The effect of teleworking on gendered work-life balance inequalities reflects prevailing gender norms and managerial culture. [...] Combining teleworking with other policies such as childcare, eldercare, flexible hours, and any other policies challenging traditional gendered roles might help to reduce gendered work-life balance inequalities. (Touzet 2023: 7)

For the news industry, similarly to last year, despite its potential and despite leaders being optimistic about the impact that flexible working can have on improving diversity in their organisations, we are still lacking a clear indication of this correlation.

2. The Potential Impact of AI on Roles and Workflows

Since the public release of ChatGPT¹⁶ in November 2022, the industry has been flooded with conversations about the impact that artificial intelligence, and more specifically generative AI, could have on the ways we produce and consume information.

There are several industry experts who have contributed their thinking to the issue, including people like David Caswell or projects like JournalismAI at LSE.¹⁷

In line with the general focus of the *Changing Newsrooms* report, we wanted to know what news leaders thought about the impact generative AI will have on roles and responsibilities in newsrooms.¹⁸

When we asked our survey respondents how they think generative AI and the automation of workflows will affect jobs in the newsroom over the next decade, 74% said that ‘generative AI will help us do some things more efficiently but the essence of what we do won’t change’, while 21% thought that ‘generative AI will transform workflows and processes, fundamentally changing every role in the newsroom’. Just 2% thought that generative AI will not change news work, reflecting the extent to which many newsroom leaders think AI will impact their industry.

Figure 9. How newsroom leaders think AI will affect roles and processes

Percentage of respondents think that generative AI will change workflows, processes, and roles and to what degree

Generative AI will transform workflows and processes, fundamentally changing every role in the newsroom

21%

Generative AI will help us do some things more efficiently but the essence of what we do won’t change

74%

Generative AI is overhyped, and will not change what we do or how we do it

2%

I don't know

3%

Q9. Which of the following options comes closest to how you think generative AI and the automation of workflows will affect jobs in the newsroom over the next decade? *Base: 129.*

¹⁶ <https://openai.com/blog/chatgpt>

¹⁷ See Caswell’s useful overview of potential strategies for using AI in news and how to concretely apply them in newsrooms, as well as JournalismAI ‘Generating Change’ report, a global survey of what news organisations are doing with AI, published in September 2023. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/news/ai-and-journalism-whats-next>

¹⁸ For more on applied uses of generative AI in journalism, see Nic Newman’s next *Trends and Predictions* report to be published in early 2024.

When we asked newsroom leaders how they see this potential impact playing out, the common sentiment across the 61 open comments we received was clear: at least for now, generative AI will help newsrooms increase productivity and improve workflows, freeing up time for journalists to do more actual journalism, but the essential, human-powered core of journalism won't change.

I hope it will make some things easier and more automatic, but the essence of our journalism will not change.

CEO of Danish media company

Generative AI will help us produce better articles, identify audience needs and wants, replace some redundancies, but in essence humans still need to do fact-checking, quality control and make sure all ethics are adhered to.

CEO of digital company in Indonesia

Gen AI can hardly help on the core missions to produce high value journalism: gather original information, often from the field and human sources; check and verify information; bring a point of view; write valuable pieces in an original way ... But it can help to do some tasks more efficiently, to scale up content distribution and to assist journalists in some parts of their tasks.

French senior editor

Many stressed the efficiency gains when automating basic or routine tasks. In the words of this senior newsroom leader working for a global news organisation: 'Some lower-level tasks will be done by AI but we still expect our staff to find, produce and edit stories by hand. AI cannot replace strong reporting.'

AI is already impacting roles and workflows in the newsroom as we have used AI models trained by us to help us to make our fact-checking processes more efficient. As a result, journalists can dedicate more time to research than to tedious tasks such as monitoring social media.

Newsroom leader working for fact-checking organisation

For some, the proliferation of AI-generated content could be an opportunity for news publishers to capitalise on their added value and potentially increase revenue:

When a greater proportion of stories are written by AI, news, analysis and on-the-ground reporting from humans will become more of a premium product. High-quality publishers will be able to capitalise on this to differentiate themselves, whether through subscriptions or by offering the personal touch that does not come from an algorithm.

Editor working for British legacy news organisation

This digital manager working in the revenue department in a Spanish news organisation agrees:

I think Generative AI will help the newsroom to be more productive but the essence of our journalism won't change. On the contrary, I think media publishers could benefit from this disruption because people will have to look for truthful news sources.

Caution remains in terms of publishing AI-generated content:

At the moment, we envisage that generative AI will impact workflows and back office jobs (in a potentially big way), but we're not going to embrace it for generating content anytime soon.

Senior manager working in editorial innovation at a German publisher

Some included in the comments some ethical considerations: 'It is also necessary to relook into the question of to what extent we can accept AI-generated content to replace content created by reporters in the newsroom', commented a senior editor from Singapore.

Other news leaders who contributed their comments anticipated more significant changes:

The concept of 'subbing' roles is likely to change completely. What we commission will change according to what is easily locatable by AI and information that is much harder to surface. People will expect much more from our products so these will need to be changed significantly.

Senior editor at British news organisation

I think generative AI will deeply transform the news business the same way the internet did. It doesn't mean the fundamentals of journalism will change, but roles and workflows will.

Executive editor at French online publication

I think it will fundamentally change the way people consume information and also the way we gather information and maybe write breaking news.

Editor at Colombian news website

In the survey we also wanted to gauge the extent to which news publishers have started to introduce practical guidelines or training programmes to guide their staff through possibilities and risks posed by the implementation of AI.

We asked a further set of questions about implementation of various practices related to AI. When it comes to having high-level principles about how news organisations plan to use generative AI, just over one-third of respondents (39%) said their organisation is working on them, while 29% reports having some guidelines in place. One-fifth (21%) said they are considering them, but don't have them yet.

Although many have worked or are working on high-level principles, only 16% say they have in place more detailed guidelines on how to use generative AI in different circumstances; 35% are currently working on developing these, and 30% are considering them.¹⁹

We have a company-wide AI policy on what the rules are and if I were to summarise that, it's that humans must take responsibility for everything.

Jeremy Au Yong, Editor, Newsroom Strategy, *The Straits Times*, Singapore

¹⁹ If your organisation is amongst those who are thinking about writing detailed guidelines, Hannes Cools and Nick Diakopoulos have put together a guideline of guidelines to help newsrooms navigate the landscape. <https://generative-ai-newsroom.com/towards-guidelines-for-guidelines-on-the-use-of-generative-ai-in-newsrooms-55b0c2c1d960>

Having a formally designated person to lead all editorial aspects of generative AI is a reality for 16% of the survey respondents, but 29% said their organisations are not considering it.

Lastly, only 9% of survey participants said their organisation has a training programme to educate staff about opportunities and dangers of generative AI, while the majority (40%) is considering it and 29% is actively working on it.

It's also useful to note that a few people have commented that these are still early days and the answers to the same questions we asked in the survey will likely look very different in six months' time.

Figure 10. How newsrooms are implementing various practices around AI

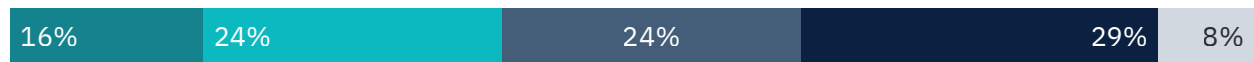
Percentage of respondents who say their newsrooms have put in place, or not, various practices around artificial intelligence

■ Already in place
 ■ We're working on it
 ■ We're considering it but we don't have it yet
 ■ We're not considering it
 ■ I don't know

High level principles about how our news organisation plans to use generative AI



A designated person to lead all editorial aspects of generative AI (e.g. formally written into their job description)



Detailed guidelines on how to use generative AI in different circumstances



Training programme in place to educate staff about opportunities and dangers of generative AI



Q11. To your knowledge, when it comes to generative AI, to what extent is your organisation implementing the following practices?
Base: 130.

How Swedish Radio approaches AI

Swedish Radio is one of the organisations that has a dedicated person in charge of AI and has approached the topic in a strategic way that involves all disciplines across the organisation. Olle Zachrison, former News Commissioner, was appointed Head of Artificial Intelligence²⁰ in October 2023.

SR's focus on exploring the role of AI in strengthening its offer to the audience and making its operations more efficient is not a recent development, as the organisation was already using automation for things like podcast recommendation or transcriptions. Zachrison was also already deeply involved with following AI development, being one of the founders of the industry network Nordic AI Journalism²¹ and having been part of several AI-related EBU projects in collaboration with other European public service broadcasters.

In his new role as Head of AI, Zachrison has company-wide responsibilities for AI strategies as well as news strategy, linking up editorial and technological advances in this area. He also heads up a company-wide AI council that comprises ten people from different departments across the company, including legal, product development, accessibility, social media and engineering.

The AI council has three main goals:

- Setting the strategic direction of AI, defining which applications are of the greatest strategic value for Swedish Radio and its audience;
- Being a hub for all ethical, transparency standards and legal discussions around AI developments;
- Running and participating in learning activities for staff across the organisation to identify and learn about opportunities as well as risks.

Staff learn about safe and responsible use of AI in their own work, but also how to do more journalism, more investigative journalism around AI, and how it is impacting society and people's lives. Zachrison said that the ambition is to have the entire 2,260 staff taking part in a basic course around AI, its terminology and general applications of generative AI in news.

Zachrison stressed that behind SR's strategic, company-wide approach of AI is the recognition that, alongside the need to be proactive in this space, this work needs to bring together technical, product and editorial expertise and needs to involve the highest level of management in the company (the executive committee the AI work is under reports to Director General and CEO Cilla Benkö).

²⁰ https://www.linkedin.com/posts/sveriges-radio_vi-tills%C3%A4tter-en-f%C3%B6retags%C3%B6vergripande-ai-ansvarig-activity-7103311275585077248-v-Dd?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

²¹ <https://www.nordicaijournalism.com/>

3. Investing in Culture, Diversity, Inclusion, and Representation

Since we started this annual report, we've been asking leaders at news organisations around the world how they felt their organisations were doing in terms of diversity. Forty countries are represented in our survey, ranging from Brazil to Indonesia, India, and the United States. 'Diversity' is reflected in different ways in different societies around the world and some issues are more relevant or pronounced in some places and cultures compared to others. We have tried to reflect these nuances in our questions and in the interviews we conducted but of course this report does not presume to perfectly represent the complexity of the topic. For example, we are conscious that the survey included questions about certain areas of diversity, like gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic background, but other very important aspects of it, like the LGBTQ+ rights, were not represented.

Beyond tracking perceptions of performances when it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), this year we also wanted to understand what challenges news leaders feel they are encountering when trying to increase DEI levels.

We wanted to explore how much DEI initiatives are baked into the organisations' strategic objectives and priorities, compared to being confined to single initiatives or ad hoc projects. Increasing diversity, whether in terms of employee representation or voices portrayed in the journalism, is of course a fundamental part of these efforts, but beyond this we also wanted to look at how different news organisations are embedding diversity into the editorial process, broadening agendas and promoting work cultures that are truly inclusive and representative. We look at all these aspects in this chapter through a combination of survey results and interviews with industry experts.

3.1 How news leaders think their organisations are doing in terms of diversity

When it comes to gender diversity, 90% of our survey participants feel their organisations are doing either a very good or quite good job. Numbers are considerably lower when it comes to doing a good job with political diversity (55%), supporting staff with disabilities (54%), or ethnic diversity (52%).

For the first time this year we added a question about how news leaders thought their organisations were doing in regards to supporting neurodivergent colleagues²². (In the survey we described neurodiversity as the concept that differences in brain functioning – e.g. dyslexia, autism – within the human population are normal and that brain functioning that is not neurotypical should not be stigmatised.²³)

²² Sometimes neurodivergence gets included under or coupled with questions more broadly around disability. We decided to add a specific standalone mention of neurodivergence because we received feedback by industry leaders that this was an interesting area to explore in the report.

²³ Mitra Kalita wrote about what workplaces misunderstand about neurodiversity and how employers and workers can understand how to better support their neurodivergent employees and colleagues. <https://time.com/charter/6309300/what-workplaces-misunderstand-about-neurodiversity/>

We felt this was an area of diversity that was less addressed in public conversations across the industry. This seems to be reflected in our survey responses as 37% of participants indicated ‘I don’t know’ as their answer. Just 40% of survey respondents also indicated that their organisations were doing a quite good or a very good job when it comes to socio-economic diversity (education/class).²⁴

Figure 11. How well newsroom leaders think their organisations are addressing issues of diversity

Percentage of respondents who say their organisations are doing a good/bad job around various aspects of diversity



Q15. Do you think your organisation is doing a good or bad job when it comes to the following. Base: 127. Note: Neurodiversity is the concept that differences in brain functioning - e.g. dyslexia, autism - within the human population are normal and that brain functioning that is not neurotypical should not be stigmatised.

Some feel progress has been made in some areas but not in others:

I think there has been a significant shift when it comes to gender diversity, yet when it comes to ethnic diversity, this is happening at a much slower pace. I believe this to be because there are more senior women championing other women, but there are a small number of people from ethnic minorities in senior positions. This means no one is doing that same campaigning that women now are. I believe it is hugely important for our organisation and also our journalism to address this.

Senior editor at British publication

²⁴ For more on the role of social class in journalism, listen to the podcast episode by the Reuters Institute on why class still matter in UK newsrooms: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/news/our-podcast-why-class-still-matters-uk-newsrooms>; watch the panel discussion recorded at the International Journalism Festival on working-class representation in UK journalism. <https://www.journalismfestival.com/programme/2023/where-are-the-working-class-journalists> Also in the UK, the John Schofield Trust focuses on improving social mobility in UK and Irish newsrooms through its mentoring schemes for early career and apprentice journalists. <https://johnschofieldtrust.org.uk/>

Similarly, a manager at a legacy British organisation commented:

I think on gender and race the organisation has done quite well but on class and economic deprivation they could do more. There is a lack of understanding that class should be considered in the same way as these other characteristics and so we can't solve a problem we don't see.

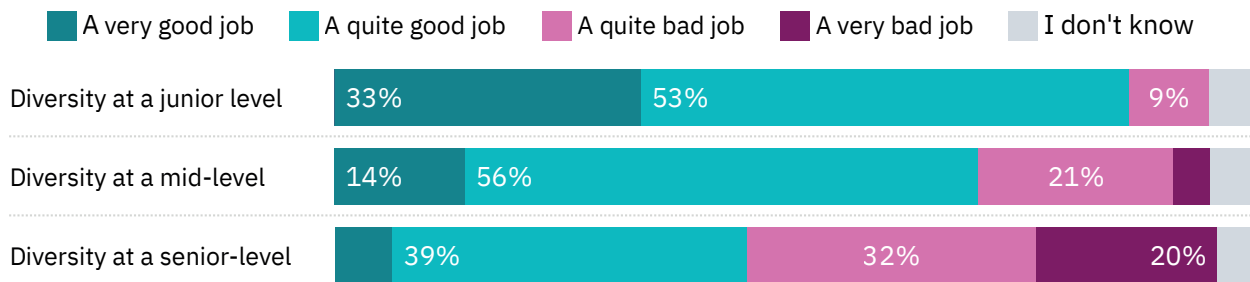
The TV Access Project

In the UK, the TV Access Project (TAP)²⁵ aims to ‘create a substantive and permanent structural shift in the TV industry to ensure access provision for Disabled talent’. TAP was launched in August 2022 and it brings together an alliance of nine of the UK’s biggest broadcasters and streamers. TAP has set up a number of workstreams and produced a set of simple guidelines to ensure the inclusion of Deaf, Disabled and/or Neurodivergent talent, both behind and in front of the camera, These are known as The 5 As²⁶: Anticipate, Ask, Assess, Adjust, Advocate.

News leaders who participated in our survey also think that their organisations are doing a good job with diversity at junior level (86%) and mid-level (70%), but around half (52%) think this is not the case at the senior level of their organisations.

Figure 12. How newsroom leaders rate their organisations’ commitment to diversity at various levels

Percentage of respondents who say their outlets are doing a good job in terms of diversity at different levels



Q16. Do you think your organisation is doing a good or bad job when it comes to the following. *Base: 127.*

Despite respondents in our survey seeming to have an optimistic view of how their organisations are doing in terms of diversity, in some areas, for example gender, it’s important to note that this optimism isn’t necessarily reflected in research.

A study by the Reuters Institute conducted in 2023 found no overall trend towards greater gender parity among top editors for example. Based on a strategic sample of 240 major online and offline news outlets in 12 different markets across five continents, Eddy et al. (2023a) found that only 22% of the 180 top editors across the 240 brands covered are women, despite the fact

²⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/mediacentre/2022/tv-access-project>

²⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/diversity-5as/>

that, on average, 40% of journalists in the 12 markets are women. In 2022, this figure was 21% across the same markets.

When looking at race, based on a strategic sample of 100 major online and offline news outlets in five different markets across four continents, Eddy et al. (2023b) found that overall 23% of the 81 top editors across the 100 brands covered were people of colour, despite the fact that, on average, 44% of the general population across all five countries are people of colour.

Some news leaders have shared the feeling that, while some progress has been made in some areas, there is still a lot of work to do, especially when it comes to the support that is provided to diverse leaders in the industry:

It's great to see more senior female leaders in the news business, but I think it's still quite poor in terms of ethnicity, disability, LGBTQ+ and so on ... it still feels like a privileged profession to come into [...] It's [also] a lonely business – leading. You can feel a bit othered just naturally by hierarchy, and so that can compound an already existing otherness. So that's quite challenging; so how do you support leaders who bring diversity, to stay in the industry and to stay leading those businesses? Because it's challenging on many different levels, and whether you're overcompensating, or building extra layers of resilience in order to drown out the otherness stuff then yes it is really difficult.

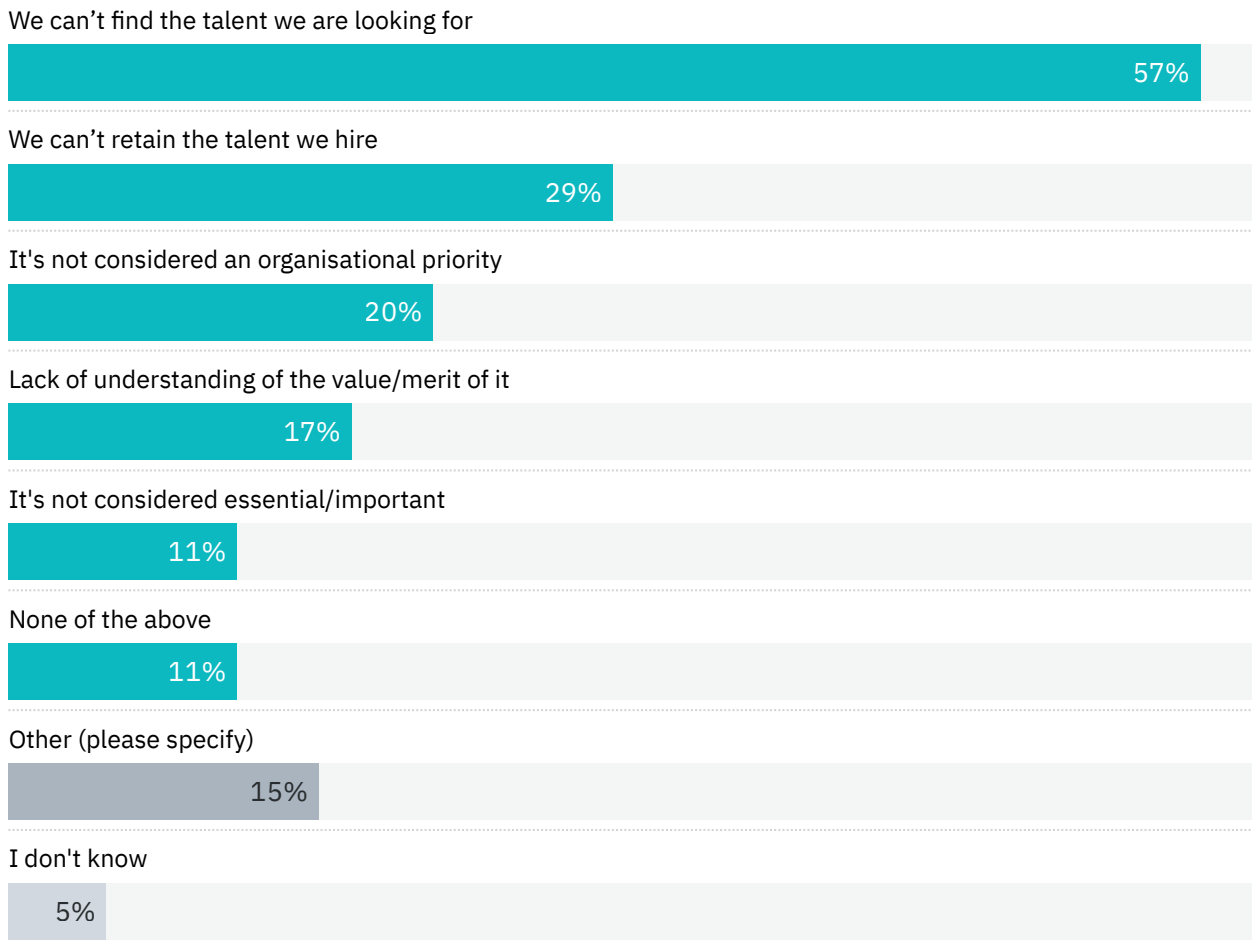
Rozina Breen, CEO, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, UK

3.2 The challenges news leaders say they are encountering when trying to increase diversity

As mentioned, we wanted to see what's perceived to be in the way of making significant progress towards increasing diversity. Finding and retaining diverse talent have been identified in our survey as the two top challenges leaders are encountering, respectively at 57% and 29%. In addition 20% said that the issue is not considered an organisational priority and 17% said there is a lack of understanding of the value/merit of it.

Figure 13. The challenges newsrooms are facing when it comes to improving diversity and representation

The percentage of respondents who say each challenge is restricting their efforts to improve diversity and representation



Q17. To the best of your knowledge, what challenges is your organisation encountering when it comes to improving diversity and representation? (Check all that apply). *Base: 127.*

Debbie Ramsay, Editor at Channel 5 News, didn't think finding talent was the issue.

Hire on potential and support them. I think people are entrenched with having the perfect person – the perfect candidate. It [requires] a different mindset ... they can do the job but they'll need help and support doing it. If you had a different mindset, you'd hire a different person.

For some of the leaders surveyed, hybrid and flexible working complicated the matter:

'It is a challenge to develop new talent through internship and placements when the team is in the office only 2 days a week and most of that time is spent in meetings.

Editor-in-chief of a UK-based newsroom

In some societies, journalism remains an unappealing profession:

The general view amongst younger Danes with diverse ethnic backgrounds is that working in the media business is less desirable than being a doctor or dentist. This is very much the view of their parents as well.

Leader at legacy media organisation in Denmark

The current economic climate is making recruiting more difficult for some newsrooms:

We have been supporting some individual internships and programmes to introduce in particular racial and socio-economic diversity into our newsroom and there is an understanding and commitment to the values, impact and organisational benefits to improving our diversity and capabilities of reflecting better the communities we purport to serve, but the truth is we need to invest in it, and in a pipeline, and without partnerships external to us, it is very difficult to resource in a news organisation already struggling to survive.

Senior editor at online publication in Ireland

Some news leaders and industry experts feel there are societal and political²⁷ pressures in some countries to move away from DEI strategies and initiatives. For example, in the United States, in June 2023 the Supreme Court overturned affirmative action²⁸ that allowed for race-based admissions into colleges.²⁹ Mitra Kalita, a veteran journalist, co-founder and CEO of URL Media in the United States and columnist for TIME and Charter, wrote extensively about what she called a waning workplace momentum around DEI and how diversity efforts of the last three years in the US ‘have been largely cosmetic, performative, and perfunctory’.³⁰

In the UK, Marcus Ryder, CEO of The Film & TV Charity and former Head of External Consultancies at the research institute Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity, stressed in an interview the impact of the political and societal context:

I think politics is everything. ... we can't divorce broadcasters' policies from the broader political milieu that they are operating in. So the fact that they announced these funds in the wake of George Floyd was because there was a mass global political movement about anti-Black racism ... So the fear is that the focus is completely moved away from diversity.

Other leaders also shared the feeling that the focus of improving some aspects of diversity has fallen off a common societal agenda, with the risk of leading to a general de-prioritisation of diversity.

My sense of where we are right now is that people are moving away from [race diversity], I think. Like, ... we've done that for a few years now, let's focus on diversity through the lens of

²⁷ https://www.wsj.com/articles/diversity-equity-dei-companies-blum-2040b173?mod=hp_lead_pos1

²⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-65886212>

²⁹ This article by Kevin Delaney on Charter provides some legal and cultural recommendations for private workplaces in the wake of the Supreme Court ruling on affirmative actions at universities. <https://www.charterworks.com/diversity-supreme-court/>

³⁰ See: <https://www.charterworks.com/undoing-workplace-diversity-gains/>; <https://www.charterworks.com/workplace-diversity-backlash/>

social mobility or disability. ... If you can, kind of, back away from [racial diversity], then you can back away from disability. You can talk your way out of all this for a few months and then people will forget about it.

Debbie Ramsay, Editor, Channel 5 News

Back in 2020, in the US, the Online News Association (ONA), the Maynard Institute, and OpenNews launched, in response to the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, the Vision25: Building Racial Equity in Newsrooms³¹ campaign. The project aims to galvanise the industry into building anti-racist institutions where journalists of colour feel like they truly belong. Vision25 aims to achieve 25% buy-in from journalists in the sector, the percentage they hypothesise would be the ‘social tipping point’ required for systemic long-lasting change. Most recently, Vision25 hosted the event ‘DEI under attack’ at the conference ONA23³² to discuss how the community meets the moment when DEI seems to have fallen off the agenda. Amongst the issues that Vision25 actively supported was the notion of ‘belonging’; Martin Reynolds, Co-Executive Director of the Maynard Institute said in an interview: ‘It was really [about] elevating these concepts and pushing out into the journalism ecosystem this important message about belonging [and] also pay equity.’

Indian news network Khabar Lahariya’s focus on marginalised communities

Khabar Lahariya is an award-winning Indian news operation run by women.³³ It uniquely focuses its reporting on the stories of rural and marginalised communities neglected by mainstream media. KL actively recruits women from marginalised backgrounds, Dalits, non-Dalit and Adivasi – all of them so-called lower castes, who traditionally have no opportunities to work in the field of journalism. During the recruitment and outreach phases, KL staff also meet families of prospective journalists to explain and reassure them of the company and the role if required.

Training is a core part of the strategy at KL. This includes structured training and embedded support on the job. The training process is long and thorough and whilst it may not have a 100% success rate it has been the way the organisation has grown and flourished. KL has won several awards in recent years. The culture of the organisation is also considered a key part of its success. It has to feel safe and be supportive, says co-CEO Pooja Pande. She describes it as a ‘feminist sisterhood’.

Since the pandemic, Chambal Academy, a new online training provision has been launched to make training more accessible and to further train and support a new pipeline of talent into Khabar Lahariya.

³¹ <https://journalists.org/2020/10/01/vision25-building-racial-equity-in-newsrooms/>

³² <https://mije.org/events/2023/08/02/vision25-ona23-dei-future.html>

³³ This article by Laura Oliver for the Reuters Institute has further details about Khabar Lahariya’s training activities. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/news/news-site-training-hundreds-young-women-digital-journalism-reach-remote-audiences-news-deserts>

3.3 Ad hoc projects or full comprehensive strategies?

As mentioned above, this year we wanted to get a better understanding of whether news leaders think that the diversity, inclusion and representation efforts their organisations are undertaking are part of a systematic and articulated strategy, are the results of specific initiatives and projects, or if they think that the topic is not addressed at an organisational level.

Of the survey participants, 43% said their organisation has a systematic and articulated strategy for diversifying talent acquisition.

In other areas, systematic strategies were relatively rare. Specific initiatives or ad hoc projects are more common (45%) when it comes to reflecting diversity in the stories they produce, in diversifying their editorial process – in stages like planning and commissioning and in the variety of sources interviewed (44%) – and when it comes to investing in creating an inclusive organisational culture (43%).³⁴

Only 22% said their organisations have a systematic and articulated strategy for retaining diverse talent, while 30% said their organisation is not addressing the topic. 21% mentioned a strategic approach to diversifying top leadership, and 28% said the topic is not being addressed.

Figure 14. The extent of diversity efforts across various aspects of news organisations

Percentage of our respondents who describe the extent of diversity efforts in their news organisations, according to various criteria



Q18. To the best of your knowledge, to what extent is diversity part of your organisation’s overall focus, according to the criteria below? *Base: 126.*

³⁴ For more on how to grow underrepresented audiences, see this FT Strategies report and their Audience Diversity Framework. <https://www.ftstrategies.com/en-gb/insights/introducing-the-audience-diversity-framework-a-way-to-grow-underrepresented-audiences/>

Despite not being articulated in a comprehensive strategy, diversity efforts can nevertheless be embraced by staff:

We have a solid commitment to diversity and that reflects in our staffing, but I wouldn't say there's anything resembling a strategy. Our diversity is a result of all of us believing it's the right thing to do and ensuring our candidate pools and interview panels aren't all white, middle-class men.

Editor-in-chief of UK-based newsroom

David Walmsley, Editor-in-Chief at the *Globe and Mail* in Canada, says he takes diversity and inclusion very seriously. For him it's a commercial decision:

If you want to be hard-headed, you know on the commercial side ... you better be trying to grow your audience and where is your audience going to come from? It's going to come from people who haven't read you before. Why would they read you if they don't see themselves or their issues reflected?

David is also aware of his blindspots and limitations:

My advice to any leader in a newsroom is don't try and do it all yourselves – because you're probably a middle-aged white guy, based on our industry. So you've got a Masters education or you're from an upper-middle-class environment, so you haven't got a clue – you haven't been exposed much. So get out in the communities, speak to people, take the phone calls from people who you previously thought were trouble makers and a waste of time and listen to what they have to say. Be challenged ... If they criticise it's because they care and that's the first step towards understanding.

How Canada's *Globe and Mail* invests in diversity

The *Globe and Mail* has:

- Dedicated six-week sprints called 'Break the habit' – where journalists have to find sources they haven't spoken to before
- Recruited newsroom advocates and a newsroom development leader
- Added regional pages to improve geographical coverage
- A standards editor who audits coverage looking at stories and photographs (this is also done with the help of AI)
- An annual pop-up bureau reporting from an under-represented area
- Committed 30% of the freelance budget to voices who haven't written for the *Globe and Mail* before
- An ongoing training, including lunch-time sessions
- Hired an empathy coach
- Revised its code of conduct and ways of working post George Floyd

In the UK, Rozina Breen, CEO of the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (TBIJ), is also keen to ensure DEI is at the core of their strategy. These are some of the initiatives TBIJ is pursuing to promote diversity, equity and inclusion:

- Establishing DEI-related KPIs
- Hiring on potential
- Adding DEI objectives to appraisals
- Running fellowships for underrepresented groups
- Piloting journalism initiatives with communities
- Encouraging creative risk taking
- Carrying out source audits
- Running trans-awareness training and other DEI-related development initiatives regularly

3.4 Investing in internal culture

In her report *From Outrage to Opportunity*, published in November 2022, author and researcher Luba Kassova dedicated a full chapter to exploring why diversity does not automatically translate into inclusion and what role culture plays in affecting these dynamics.

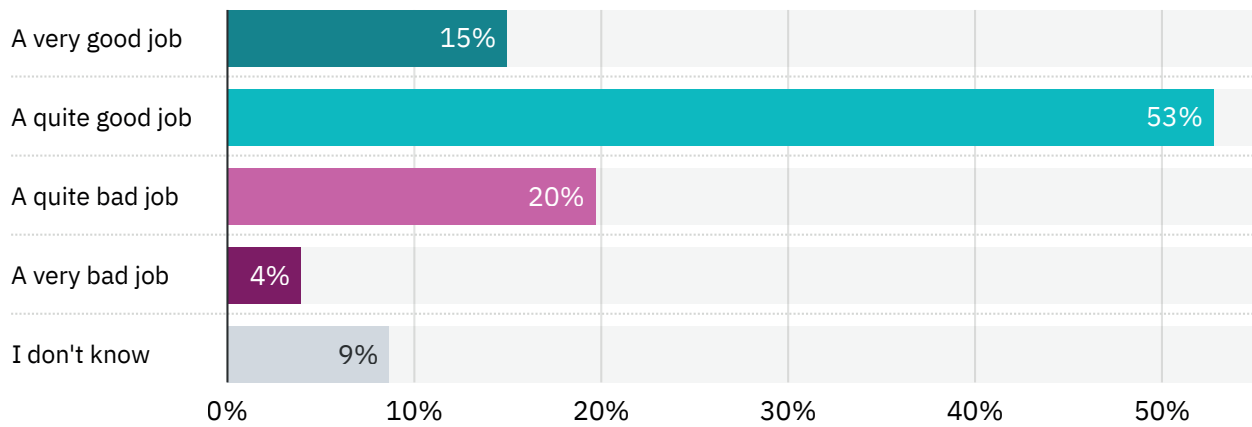
Improved diversity does not automatically lead to inclusion in the culture and decision-making of the organization. Why? Because there is a power imbalance between those who are already integrated within the culture, privy to its unwritten rules, and those who have just joined and are on the periphery. (Kassova 2022).

To better understand this issue, in this year's survey we wanted to explore what organisations were doing in terms of fostering a culture of inclusiveness and belonging.

First we asked survey participants if they thought their organisations were doing a good or a bad job when it comes to actively investing in their internal culture. The majority (68%) of respondents said their organisation is doing a good or a very good job. In comparison, just 24% thought their organisation is doing a bad job.

Figure 15. Most news leaders say their organisations are doing a good job in investing in their internal culture

The percentage of respondents who say their organisations are doing a good/bad job of investing in their internal culture



Q19. Do you think your organisation is doing a good or a bad job when it comes to actively investing in its internal culture?
Base: 127.

We also wanted to see if news leaders thought that talent from diverse backgrounds can thrive in their organisations. And if so, what actions or initiatives were organisations pursuing to ensure that staff felt included. We asked this using a voluntary, open-ended question.

Some feel some progress has been made, but more work still needs to be done.

Yes, we can thrive but we are still scrutinised in different ways than [the] majority of people. We have a programme for inclusion in coverage that helps staff feel included.

Senior editor at a global organisation, headquartered in the US

In some contexts, the situation is more complex and nuanced.

Depends who you speak to. Some young black staff members say it is hard to thrive. But some it's easy to thrive because there are opportunities – especially in terms of bursaries and training and coaching. This question is hard to answer in a block as it is multi-layered, especially in South Africa.

Manager working for a South African organisation

At *De Standaard*, a Flemish news organisation in Belgium, Editor-in-Chief Karel Verhoeven has been thinking about how to overcome the difficulties of shifting something as intangible as culture. Amongst the initiatives *De Standaard* has introduced to create a culture of openness and collaboration is a ten-week internal digital fellowship where staff (at every level of seniority) join the digital teams and get masterclasses in fields like data, digital publishing, newsletters, video journalism. The main purpose of this programme, Verhoeven said in an interview, was to shift the culture from print to digital, but it has also had the effect of fostering a culture of openness by bringing together people who not only work in different teams, but sometimes also have completely different attitudes towards journalism and how that gets reflected in day-to-day work.

All-staff away-days are another initiative aimed at strengthening newsroom culture, Verhoeven mentioned. In November 2023, the entire newsroom met for a day away from the office with a programme of activities that ‘veered towards the cohesion of thought and discussion, not of opinion’, he said. He described it as an occasion for the team to work on recrafting a common narrative together, by encouraging all-encompassing discussions about the world, journalistic integrity, and the values that underpin the organisation that might get reflected differently across different cohorts in the newsroom, for example across a generational divide of young and more experienced staff. He now plans to continue some of the conversations on topics that were raised during the away-day, through a series of follow-up, in-depth newsroom discussions.

While progress has been made in some areas in terms of increasing diversity of thought (for example, with a higher influx of young talent), Verhoeven said more work needs to be done in terms of adding additional layers of diversity of background and experiences. Amongst the things he mentioned, the organisation aims to increase the mix of staff having different socio-economic or urban and non-urban backgrounds.

3.5 Measuring diversity

Another challenge identified by leaders in the survey and in interviews is how diversity gets measured in newsrooms. Several leaders mentioned how this is still largely simplistic and focused on headcount. For example, intersectionality, when two or more identity-related characteristics overlap, is often not considered or measured at all.

We need to look at the different ways of using metrics [for] what we are trying to achieve. So I think the simplistic idea that you just measure it in terms of headcount is wrong, and we do that far too often. ... I think what we need to start doing is looking at the percentage of salary spent [on diverse staff] because salary is a proxy for power.

Marcus Ryder, CEO, The Film and TV Charity

Conclusions

In the course of the past three and half years many newsrooms have significantly changed their working practices, adopting some form of remote working at first and hybrid working later. Whether we call it ‘hybrid newsroom’ or something else, what is clear is that news organisations have now embraced a higher degree of flexibility in how they organise their work and where their staff work from.

In the report we highlight how the majority of news organisations in our sample have settled on allowing some degree of flexibility, centred around some fixed days per week of work from the office. Some check the rule is respected and staff are actually in the office, some don’t.

Looking at talent, this increased flexibility is perceived as beneficial to recruitment and, to a lesser degree, to staff retention. However almost one in four news leaders in our survey says they are worried about how flexible and hybrid working is weakening the staff’s sense of belonging to the organisation. As in previous years, news leaders are optimistic about the positive impact increased flexibility can have on diversity, inclusion, and equity strategies, but it’s still hard to establish a definitive correlation.

Across industries, many worry about the effects of flexible working in hindering productivity. News leaders don’t think it is having much of an effect (although a bit more than a quarter of survey respondents think hybrid working has increased productivity). But when asked about what effort their organisations make to actually measure productivity, nearly half reported a small effort or no effort at all.

In the past year generative AI has strongly entered the media conversation, pushed by fast developments in the public’s access and use of this technology. It seems however that news leaders are more focused on what will stay the same in the profession, despite these advancements. In the view of the majority of leaders in our survey, generative AI will help us do our jobs more efficiently, but the essential, human-powered core of journalism won’t change. Only 20% think that generative AI will transform workflows and processes, fundamentally changing every role in the newsroom.

While many leaders report that their organisations have either already implemented or are working on high-level principles to guide their plans to use generative AI, a smaller percentage already has in place or is working on more detailed guidelines on how to use generative AI in different circumstances. According to their leaders, although many organisations are considering it, only a small percentage of them are already running training programmes to educate staff about opportunities and dangers of generative AI.

In the report we highlight the approach of the public broadcaster Swedish Radio. We chose it because of its company-wide strategic approach, where different areas of the organisation, like legal, product, engineering, and editorial, collaborate to explore what applications are of the greatest strategic value for Swedish Radio and its audience.

Alongside changes in working practices, what news organisations are doing in relation to improving the diversity, inclusion, and representation of their workforce is the other core focus of this annual report.

Diversity can, of course, be seen through many different lenses that also vary country by country, culture by culture. It's a complex and nuanced subject and these varieties are reflected in the words of many news leaders who participated in the report. While many leaders report progress in some areas, like gender representation, improvements on other kinds of diversity, including ethnic, social-economic background, disability, and neurodiversity still lag behind, sometimes because they are less visible or have been less at the centre of the public discourse. Improving how we measure progress, to go beyond headcount and to reflect complexities like intersectionality, was amongst the areas to work on that were mentioned by some news leaders.

This year we also wanted to see whether news leaders thought their organisations are dealing with diversity issues in an articulated strategic way or just through specific initiatives – or not at all. The only area where the majority of news leaders reported an articulated and systematic diversity strategy is talent acquisition. In other areas, like reflecting diversity in the stories they produce, retaining diverse talent, or diversifying top leadership, systematic strategies were relatively rare.

We recognise these are intricate problems to solve and news organisations often face competing priorities and external complexities. In many areas, whether it's generative AI or diversity, the journalism industry seems to be more reactive than proactive, tending to adopt isolated initiatives instead of embracing a holistic approach to its future.

As RISJ Director Rasmus Kleis Nielsen wrote in 2021,³⁵ we believe it's through the investment in its talent (alongside tools and technology) that journalism can, and will be, so much more.

³⁵ <https://www.niemanlab.org/2021/12/invest-in-tools-and-talent-and-newsrooms-can-finish-the-job/>

List of Interviewees

Positions held at the time of the interviews

Jeremy Au Yong, Editor, Newsroom Strategy, *The Straits Times*, Singapore

Rozina Breen, Editor-in-Chief, The Bureau for Investigative Journalism, UK

Meera Devi, Bureau Chief, Khabar Lahariya, India

Pooja Pande, Co-CEO, Chambal Media, India

Debbie Ramsay, Editor, Channel 5 News, UK

Martin G. Reynolds, Co-Executive Director, External Affairs and Funding,
Maynard Institute, US

Marcus Ryder, CEO, The Film and TV Charity, UK

Karel Verhoeven, Editor-in-Chief, *De Standaard*, Belgium

David Walmsley, Editor-in-Chief, *Globe and Mail*, Canada

Olle Zachrisson, Head of Artificial Intelligence, Swedish Radio, Sweden

Survey Methodology

This report is based on a survey of a strategic sample of newsroom leaders from around the world. The questionnaire was sent directly by one of the authors to individual potential respondents. It included both a set of closed questions and open-ended fields for respondents to share their experiences.

Target participants were selected because they hold senior positions in a wide range of different traditional or digital-born publishing companies operating in different countries. The results reflect this strategic sample of select news industry leaders, not a representative sample. Because of the size and nature of the sample we report only top-line findings here, and no breakdowns or comparisons.

The survey was completed by 135 individuals from 40 countries between 6 September and 18 October 2023. Participants hold senior positions in editorial, commercial, and product. Typical job titles included Editor-in-Chief/Executive Editor, CEO/General Director, Managing Editor, Audience Editors/Head of Audience Engagement, and Senior Editor.

Of these participants, 49 were from organisations with a traditional print background (36%), 49 came from digital-born media (36%), 22 came from commercial or public service broadcasters (16%), and a further eight from news agencies, six from media conglomerates with print/TV/radio arms, and one from a podcast company.

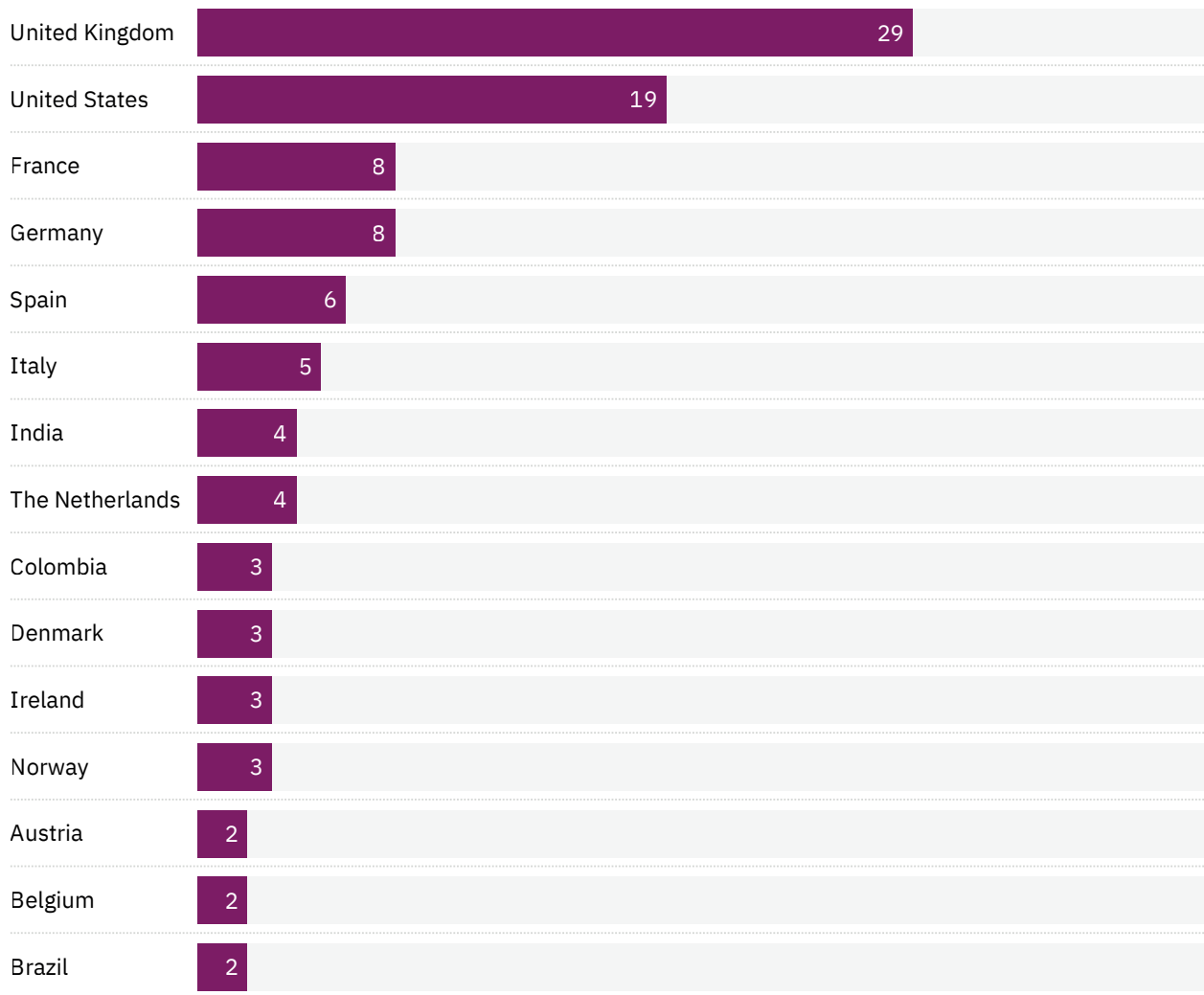
While the survey was sent to news industry leaders in many different countries (including Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, and more), the majority of the respondents are from the Global North, and most of them work in mid-size and large organisations. Our results thus do not fully capture the often very different situation faced by small organisations and those operating in poor and/or authoritarian countries.

Women accounted for 53% of respondents, men 47%. Participants filled out an online survey with specific questions around flexible and hybrid working, the potential impact of AI on roles and workflows, and diversity, inclusion, and representation.

The number of respondents for each question differs slightly because not every respondent has filled out every question of the survey. However, the majority answered all questions. Respondents have been considered as such if they have completed at least one section of the survey. Around half of participants contributed comments and ideas in open questions and some of these are quoted with permission in this report.

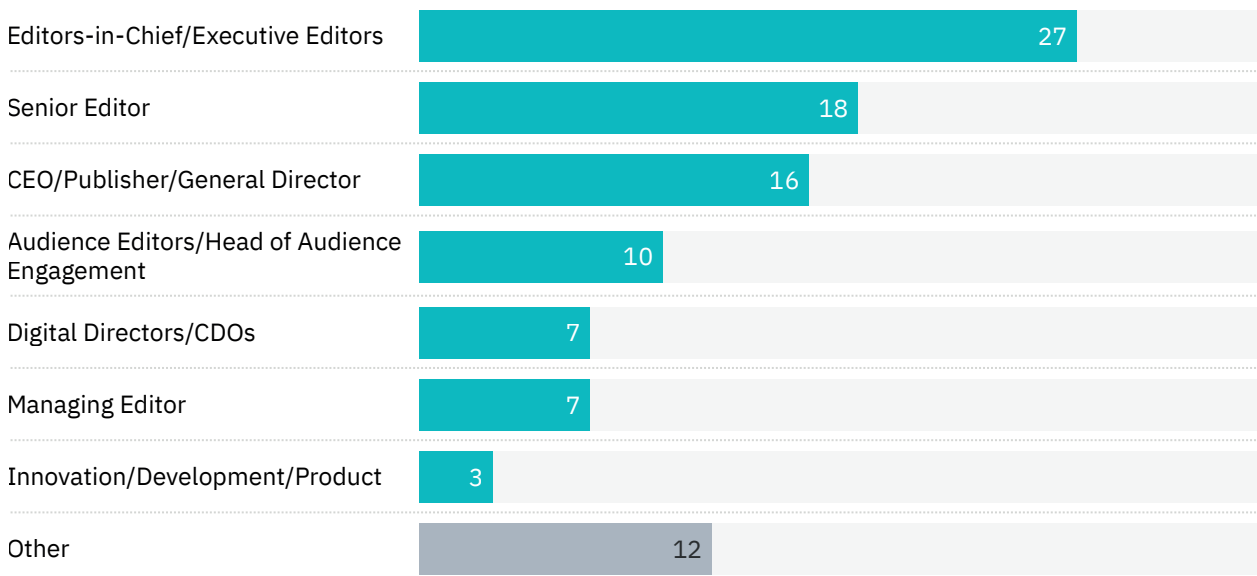
Figure 16. Participants and countries surveyed

Survey country mix



Base: 135 individuals from 40 countries.

Survey job titles



Base: 135 individuals from 40 countries.

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Lucy Kueng

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Matthew Powers (published with Columbia University Press)

Global Teamwork: The Rise of Collaboration in Investigative Journalism
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Cover photo: Shiv Devi, Khabar Lahariya's senior reporter, in Amara village to report on an illicit sand mining incident, November 2020.

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