

# JOURNALISM EDUCATION IN ALBANIA

**KEY FINDINGS**

INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY, MEDIA & CULTURE

# Journalism Education in Albania

## **Publisher**



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# Executive Summary

In Albania, journalism for a long time is considered talent and experience, more than a specialized profession. After the fall of communism, the newsrooms were full with new journalists that did not have the proper education and they took the profession easy, like the newsgathering did not require a special skill, but only passion and energy<sup>1</sup>. Hence, the profession of journalism remained improvised by “artisans”, in particular in the first decade of 1990-2000.

Today journalistic education is treated by the researchers as essential in determining the journalism a profession. Also in the survey “The culture of journalism in Albania”<sup>2</sup>, the Albanian journalists assess the university education of journalists as very important, especially in terms of their training on ethics and practices of the profession<sup>3</sup>.

However, it is worth mentioning that concrete content of journalism varies from one historic period to another and from one country to another<sup>4</sup>, since journalism as an unstable and fluid occupation is responsive to social and technological change. Nowadays journalism in Albania still faces problems and leaves much space for further improvements.

This study aims to present the perceptions of the students of journalism in Albania before they work in the media newsrooms. The data used in this study is based on a survey compiled in the frame of the International Survey on Journalism Studies around the Globe (<http://www.jstudentsproject.org>).

This study highlights the main problems journalism faces, according to the students’ perceptions, in order to be demanded more research with regard to resolving these problems. The survey aimed to answer questions such as how do students of journalism assess the journalistic profession, their role in the society and working practices and how do they see the risks that threaten the journalistic profession? To answer these questions, the study is based on an extensive survey conducted with 465 Albanian students of journalism during 2015. Please find below some key findings of this study.

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<sup>1</sup> Fuga 2008

<sup>2</sup> This survey is conducted in 2012 as part of the international project “World of Journalism Studies” [www.wjs.org](http://www.wjs.org)

<sup>3</sup> Godole 2014

<sup>4</sup> Splichal & Sparks 1994

# 1.

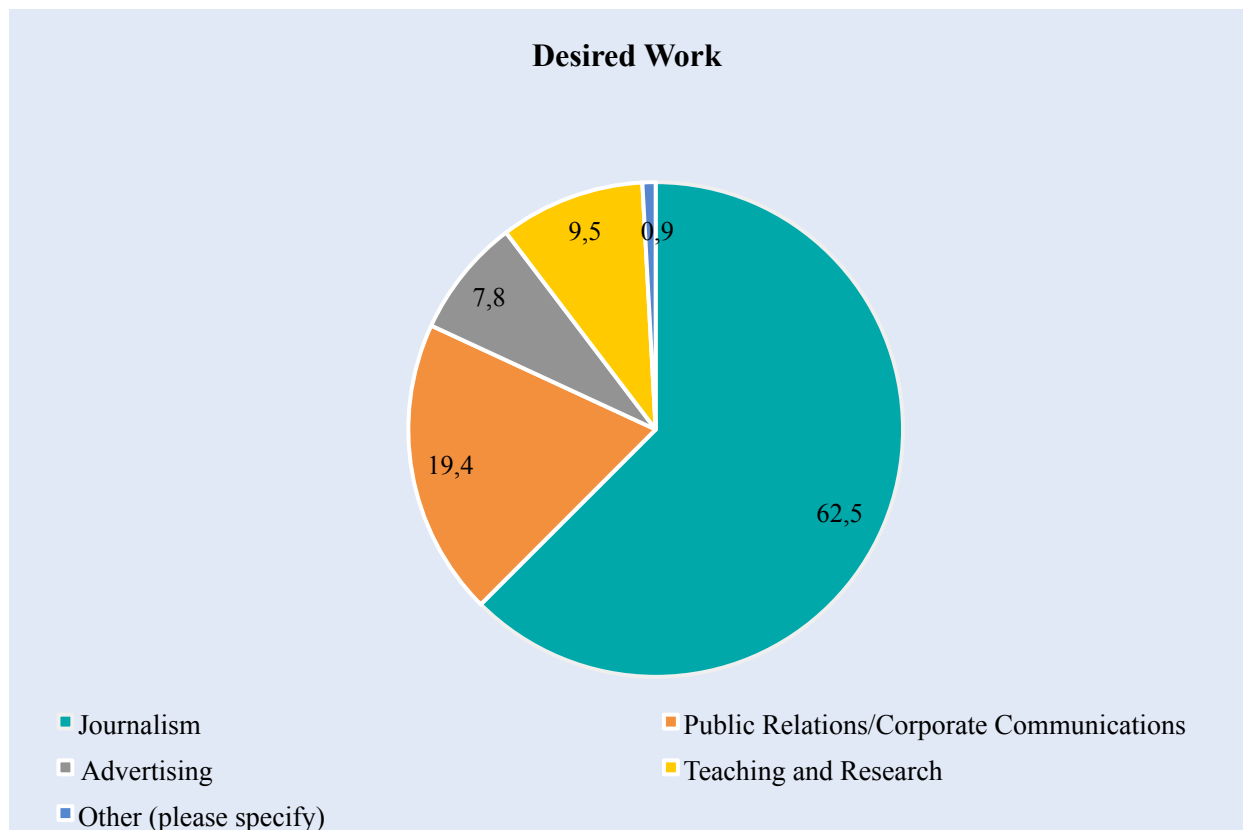
## Most Desired Work

The findings show that most of students (62.5%) participating in this poll would like to work in the field of journalism after they finish their studies.

Despite the field of journalism, 19.4% of the students would like to work in the field of public relations or corporate communications.

9.5% would like to see themselves in teaching and research. Advertising was seen as a desired job for 7.8% of the students.

Meanwhile 0.9% of the students would like to work in something else different than in journalism, PR, teaching and research and advertising.



## 2.

# Most Desired Television

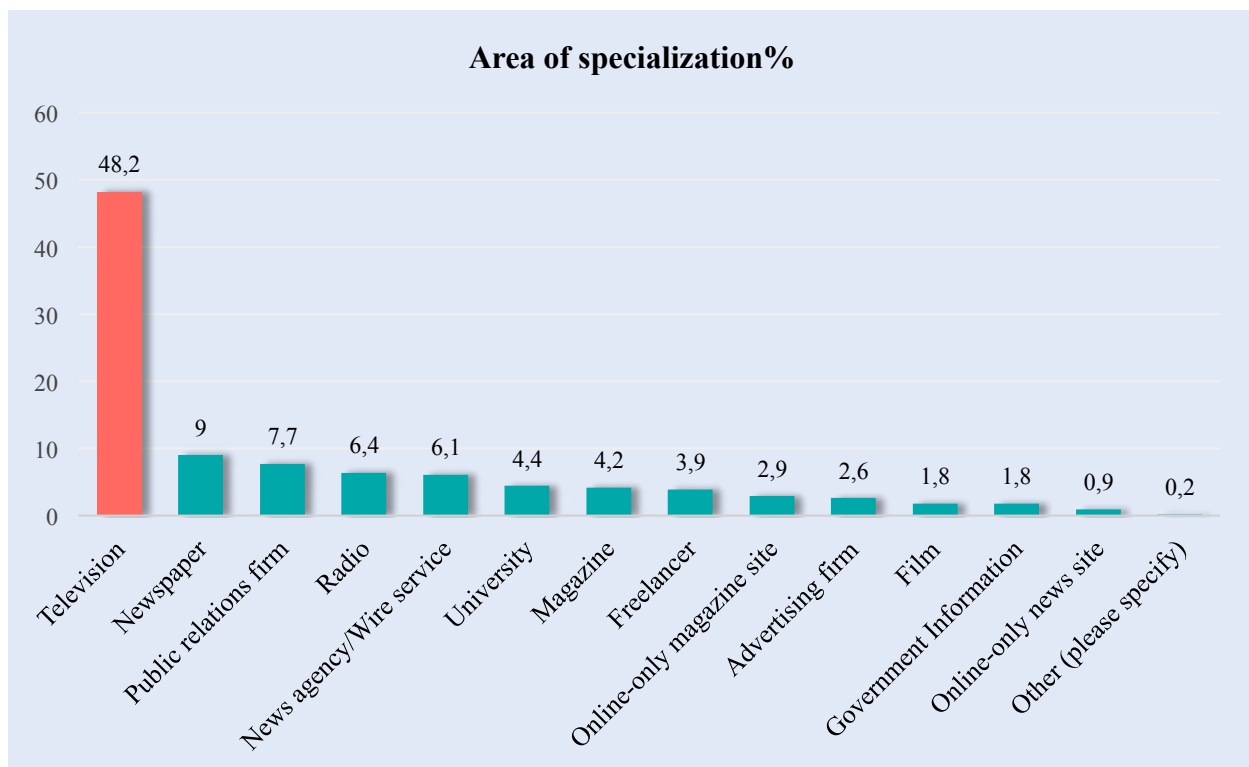
In addition, television is seen as the most favourite area of working. 48.2% out of total number of the students would like to work in television, compared to fourteen other working areas that the students had as an option to choose. Newspaper is chosen by 9% of the students. After television and newspaper are ranked public relations firms (7.7%) and radio (6.4%).

The University was seen as a place to work only for 4.4% of the students participating in the poll, being thus ranked in the sixth place among fourteen working areas specified in the questionnaire. Magazine was ranked in the seventh

place, as such being the favourite area of work only for 4.2% of the students participating in the poll. There were also 3.9% of the students that would like to work as freelancer.

Meanwhile, 2.9% of the students would like to work in online-only magazine sites and 2.6% in advertising firms. Equally favourite working areas were film and government information, thus chosen by only 1.8% of the students.

The less favourite working area is online-only news site. Hence, among all the students participating in the poll, only 0.9% would like to work in online- only news sites.



### 3. Why not “Culture”

Among all interested students to work in the field of journalism, most desired areas of specialization are culture, which is chosen by 69.9 % of the students and travel (62.4 %).

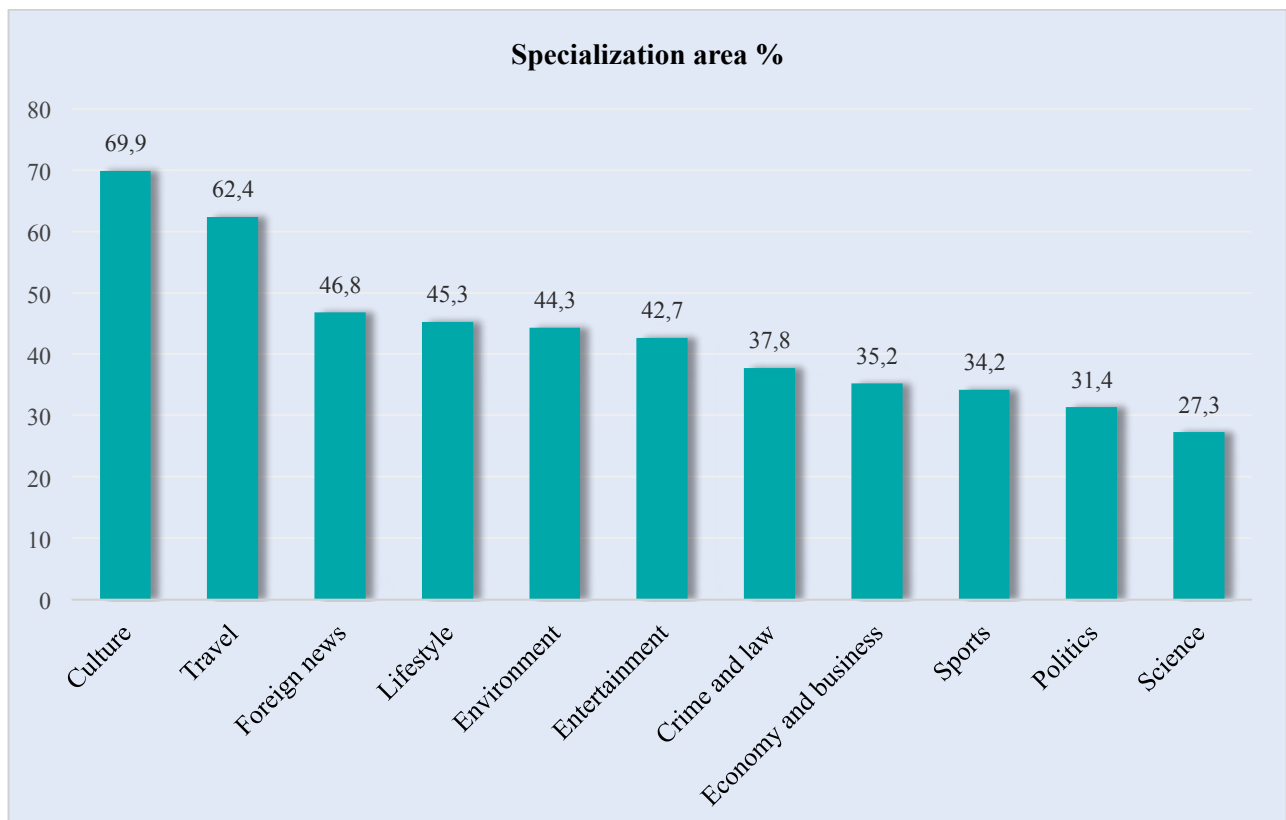
The third most favourite area of journalism to be specialized in for the students participating in the poll is foreign

news (46.8 %), followed by environment (42.7%) and entertainment (42.7 %).

Meanwhile, crime and law is chosen as a favourite area of specialization for 37.8 % of the students, followed by economy and business (35.2 %).

What is important to note is that politics is one of less favourite areas of specialization compared to the other areas. The specialization in politics (31.4 %) is ranked behind the specialization in sports (34.2 %).

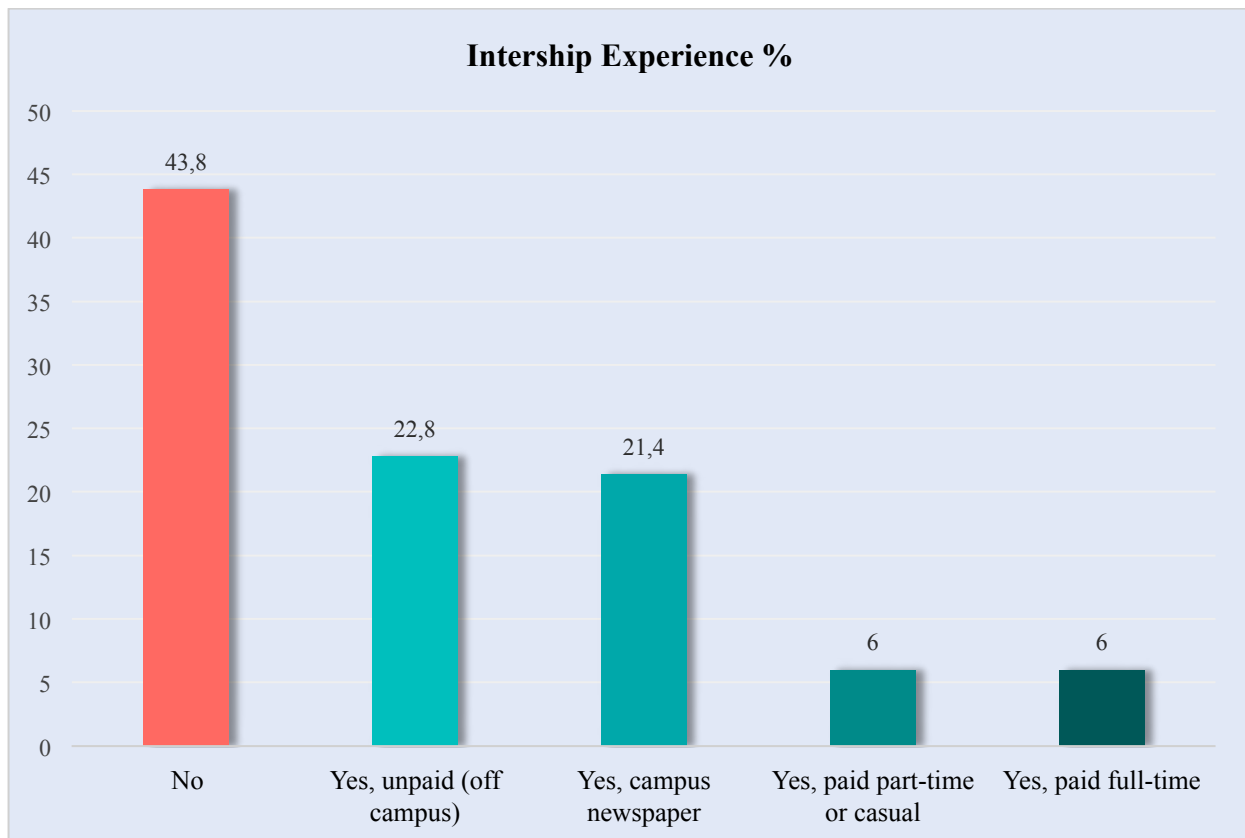
The less desired area to be specialized in is science, which is chosen by 27.3 % of the students participating in the poll.



## 4. Study & Practice

When students were asked about their work experiences or if they had conducted any internship in the field of journalism, the results reveal that 43.8% of the interviewees declared not to have completed any internship in the field of journalism. While almost 43% declared to have done internships off or in campus areas.

Specifically 22.8% of the students participating in the poll had the experience of unpaid internship outside the campus. 21.4% had the internship experience from the campus newspaper. In addition, 12% of the students participating in the poll had conducted paid internships. Respectively 6% of them paid part time or casual and 6% paid full-time.



## 5. Practice on Television

Regarding the type of place where students have worked, carrying out functions associated with journalism, the findings reveal that the majority of respondents declared to have worked in traditional media, television (24.7%). Television is followed by other traditional media such as newspaper (21%) and radio

(19.8%), while 17.7% of them declared to have worked in online news site.

Students have also carried out functions associated with journalism in magazines (4.9%). Advertising and public relations have also been a place where students have worked, carrying out functions related to journalism, respectively for 2.9% of the students.

Less space is provided by news agency/wire service and government information for students to carry out functions associated with journalism. As such, only 2.1% of the students have had the chance to do that in news agency/wire service and 1.6% in government information.





## 6. Motivations to Study Journalism

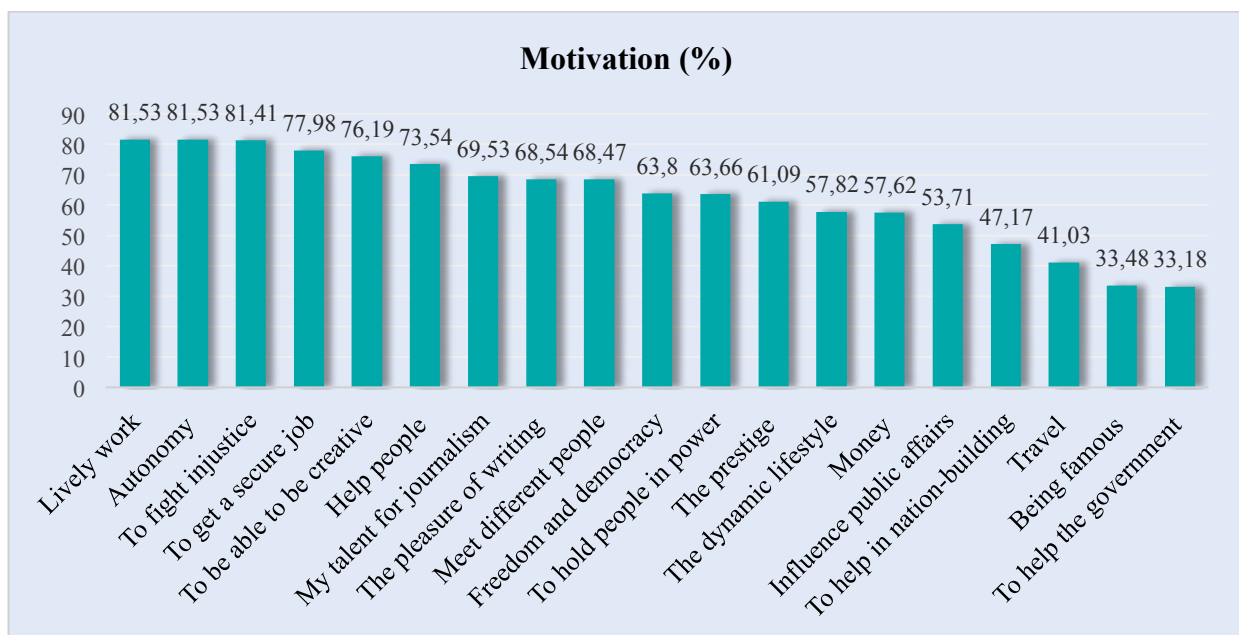
The findings show that the highest motivation of the students seems to be the diversity and vitality at work (81.53%), equally important to the autonomy of their profession (81.53%). These are followed by the possibility that the profession provides to fight the injustice (81.41%), to get a secure job (77.98%) and to be creative (76.19%). What else motivates students is the

possibility to help people in the everyday life (73.54%) and their talent in journalism field (69.53%).

In addition, almost equally motivating aspects are seen the pleasure of writing (68.47%) and the opportunity to meet different people (68.47%) on one hand, and almost equally motivating aspects are also seen the opportunity to work for freedom and democracy (63.8%) and the opportunity to put people in power accountable (63.66%).

As motivating reasons are also seen the prestige that the field of journalism gives (61.09%), the dynamic lifestyle offered (57.82%) and the money that they can earn working in the field of journalism (57.62%), followed by the influence in the public affairs (53.71%).

Less motivating aspects of journalism are seen the opportunity to help the government (31.18%) and to be famous (33.48%).



## 7. Threats to Journalism Quality

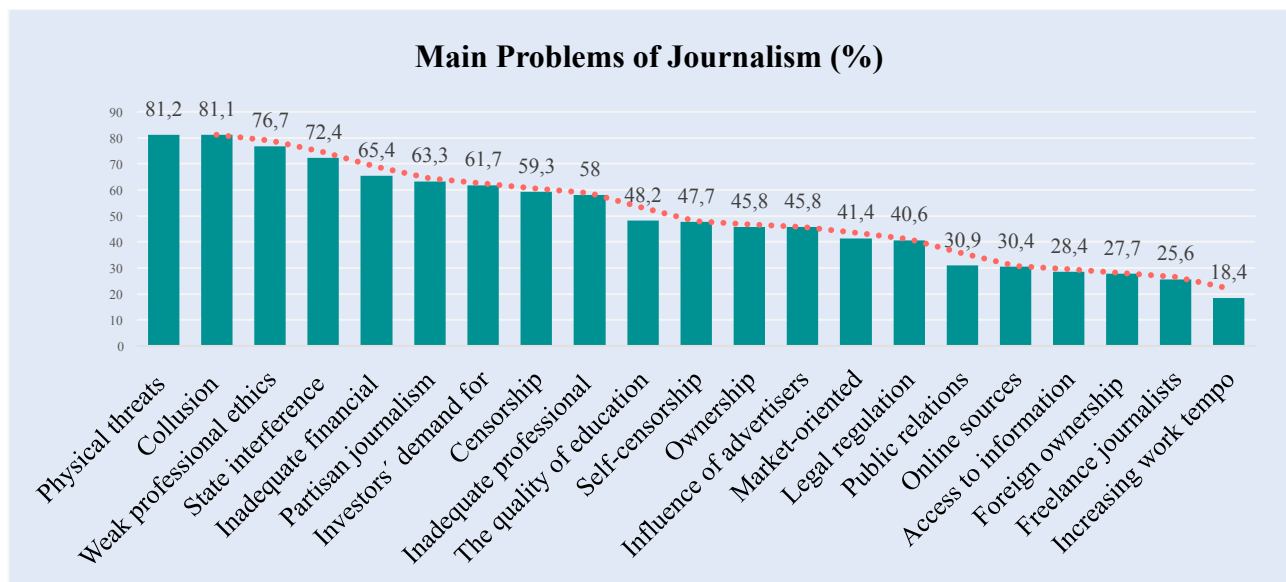
Among all the problems, students rank as the main problems the physical threats against individual journalists (81.2%) and the collusion between media and politics (81.1%) followed by weak professional ethics (76.7%) and the state interference in media (72.4%).

As dangerous threats to the quality of journalism are also considered partisan journalism (63.3%) and investors' demand for profits (61.7%) followed by the censorship for 59.3% of the students and inadequate professional training for 58% of the students.

To a lesser extent is considered the seriousness of threats such as the quality of journalism education (48.2%), self-censorship (47.7%) and the concentration of ownership (45.8%), which are followed by the influence of advertisers on the content (45.8%), market-oriented journalism (41.4%) and the legal regulation of media (40.6%).

Meanwhile public relations and lobbyists are considered as threats to journalism by 30.9% of the respondents.

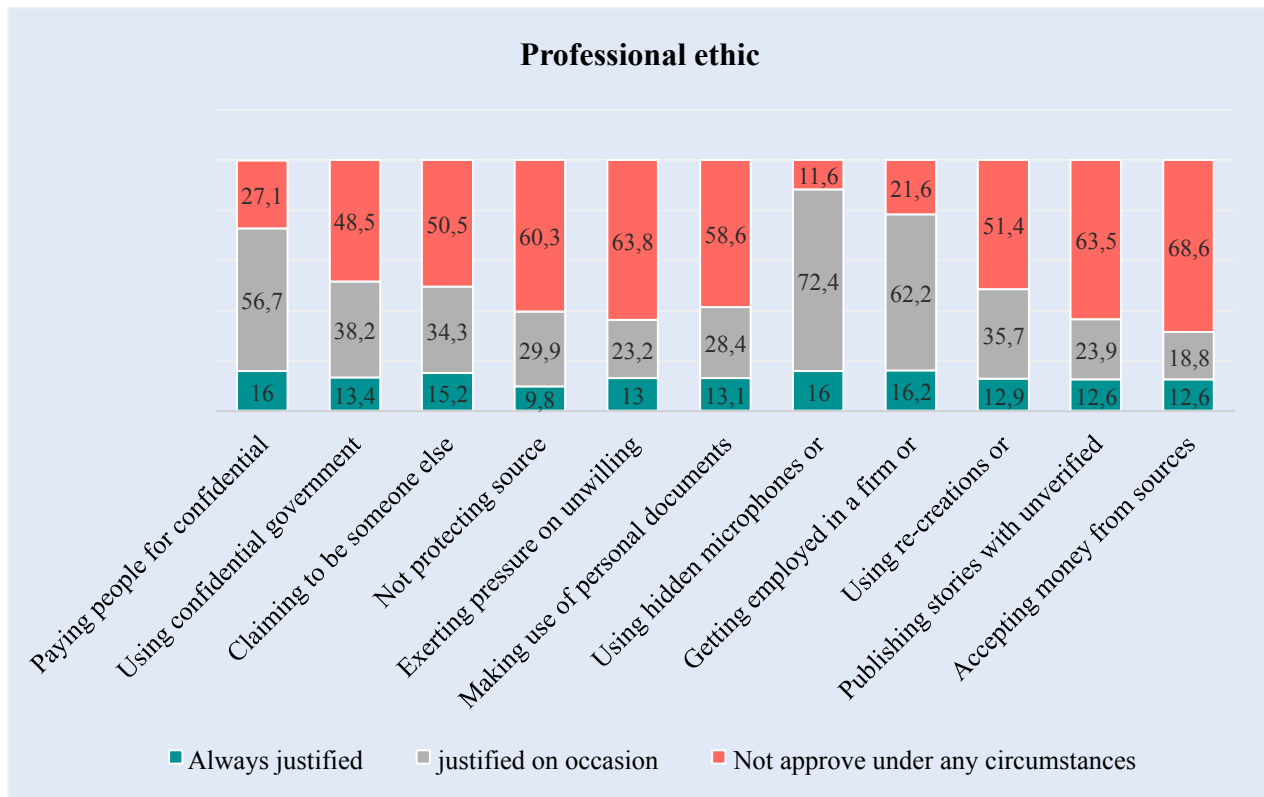
Almost equally dangerous to public relation is seen the competition from online sources, such as citizen journalism (30.4%), followed by the access to information for 28.4% of the students.



## 8. Professional Ethic

Here students were asked with regard to what could be always justified, justified occasionally or not approved at all under any circumstances when covering a news story. Most of students do not tolerate getting money in order to cover a story (68.6%) or to publish stories with unverified content (63.5%), neither exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story (63.8%). Also not approved

under any circumstances are seen actions such as not protecting the source of confidentiality (60.3%), making use of personal documents such as letters and photographs without permission (58.6%), followed by using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors (51.4%) and claiming to be someone else (50.5%). Meanwhile, most of students justify occasionally using hidden microphones or cameras (72.4%) when covering a story. This is followed by getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information (62.2%) and paying people for confidential information (56.7%). These actions are also considered always justified, more than the other actions, constituting in total the approval from the highest number of students, which goes around 16%.



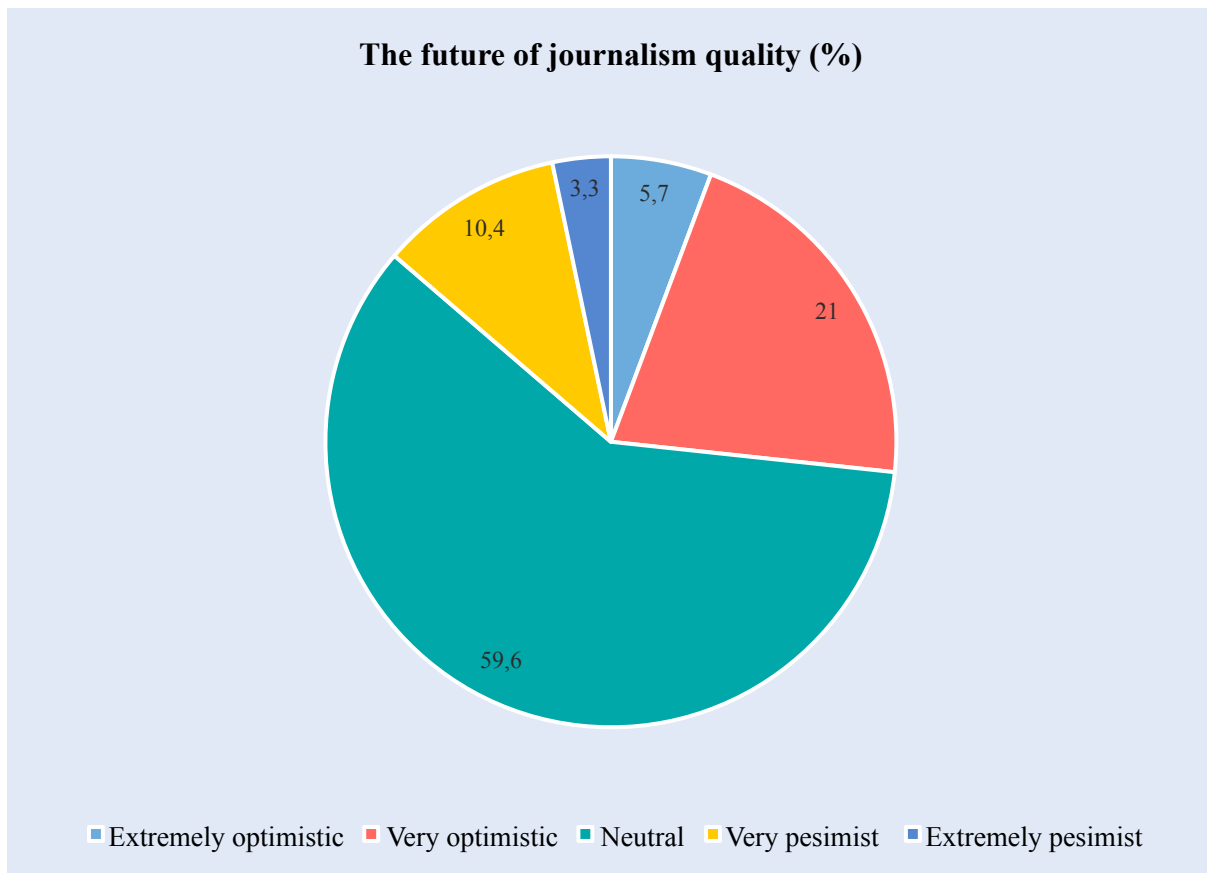
## 9. Journalism Quality in Albania

With regard to the future of journalism quality in Albania, it is shown a level of uncertainty by most of students participating in the survey. As such, the

results reveal that 59.6% students seem to be not very sure about the future of journalism quality expressing not to be very optimistic neither pessimistic about it.

Out of total number of the students, only 26.7% of them think that the quality of journalism will go in the right track, respectively 21% of the students expressed optimistic about the future of journalism in Albania and 5.7% extremely optimistic.

Meanwhile, 13.7% do not think that the quality of journalism is going in the right track. Hence, 10.4% of the students expressed pessimistic about it and 3.3% extremely pessimistic.



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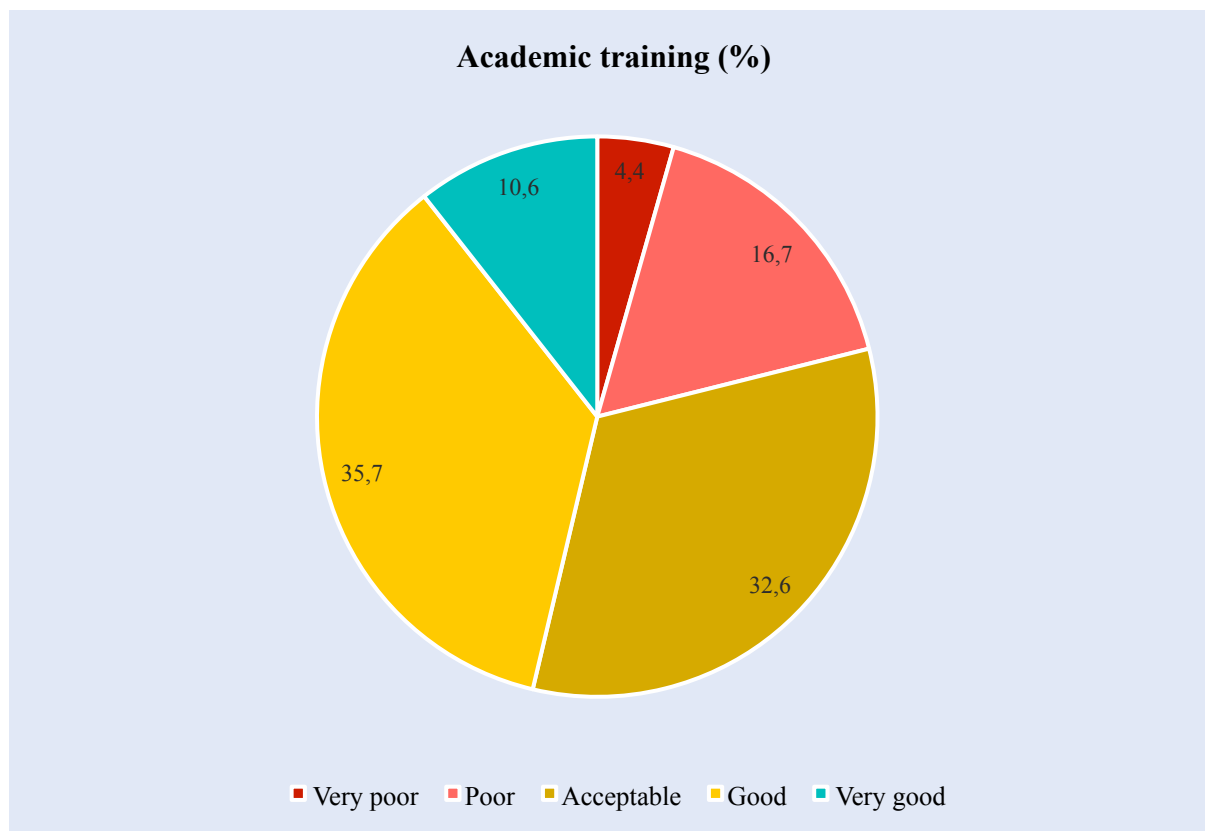
## 10. Study Journalism in Albania

Students were also asked about their perceptions with regard to the quality of the academic training transmitted to the future journalists. The results show that

the majority of students expressed positively about the quality of the academic training in Albania.

As such, 16.7% of the students think that the quality of the academic training is very good, 35.7% think that the quality of the academic training is good and 32.6% consider it as acceptable academic training.

Meanwhile around 21% of the students did not expressed positively at all about the quality of the academic training in Albania. Hence, 16.7% of the students consider the quality of the academic training poor and 4.4% consider it very poor.



# 11.

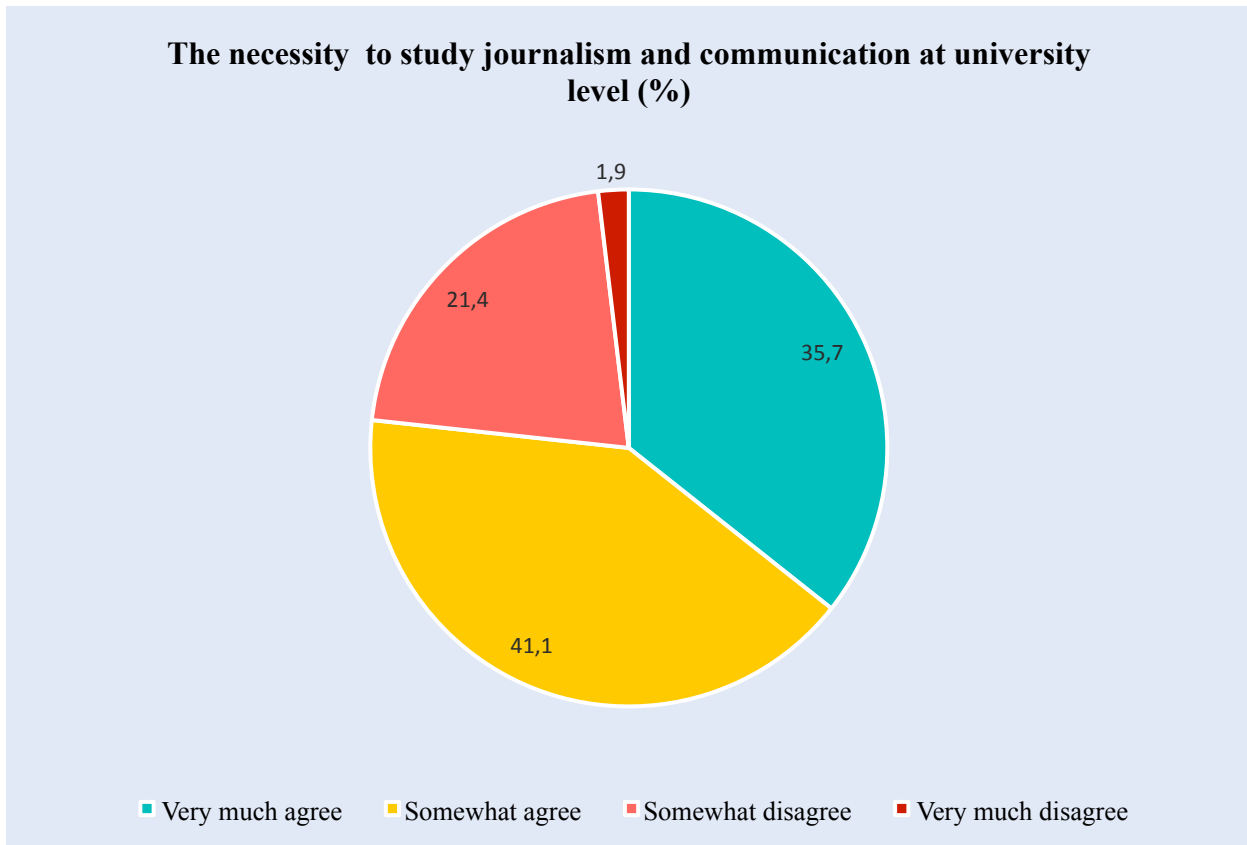
## Why Journalism?

In this poll students had the chance to express their opinion about the necessity to study journalism and communication at university level, in order to be a good journalist.

The results reveal that around 87% of the students agree that it is necessary to study journalism and communication in order to be a good journalist. As such, 35.7% of the students very much agree at this point, 41.1% somewhat agree.

Meanwhile, 23.3% of the students think differently. Hence, 21.4% somewhat disagree that in order to be a good journalist one must study journalism and communication at university level.

In addition, 2% of the students very much disagree at this point. They do not think that in order to be a good journalist, it is necessary to study journalism.



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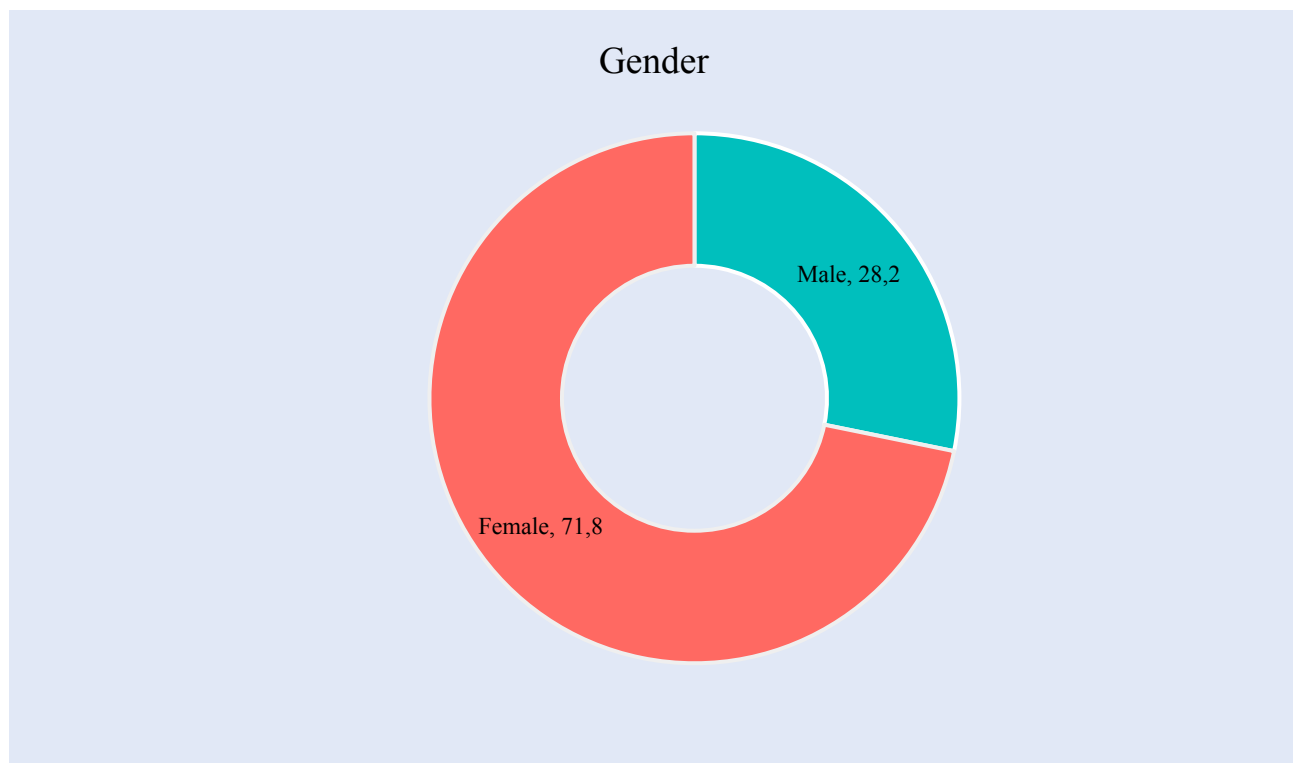
## 12. Demographic Data

The universities included in the survey are the University of Tirana (40.9%), “Aleksander Xhuvani” University in Elbasan (37.4%) and “Luigj Gurakuqi” University in Shkoder (21.4%).

In addition, all the students that filled in the questionnaire were chosen from the field of journalism with 84.5% of the students studying Bachelor and 15.5% studying in master programme. In total the survey includes 71.8% female students that completed the questionnaire and 28.2% male students.

Their age varies from 18 years old to 35 years old. The students’ level of studies consist of 1 year for 35.4% of the students, 2 years of studies for 32.5%, 3 years of studies for 24.2%, followed 4 years of studies for 5.7% of the students and 5 years for 2.2%

The majority of students (88.6%) did not study another degree in a different field before enrolling in journalism, while 8.4% had studied in another different field. There were also 3% of the students that did not have an answer for this question.



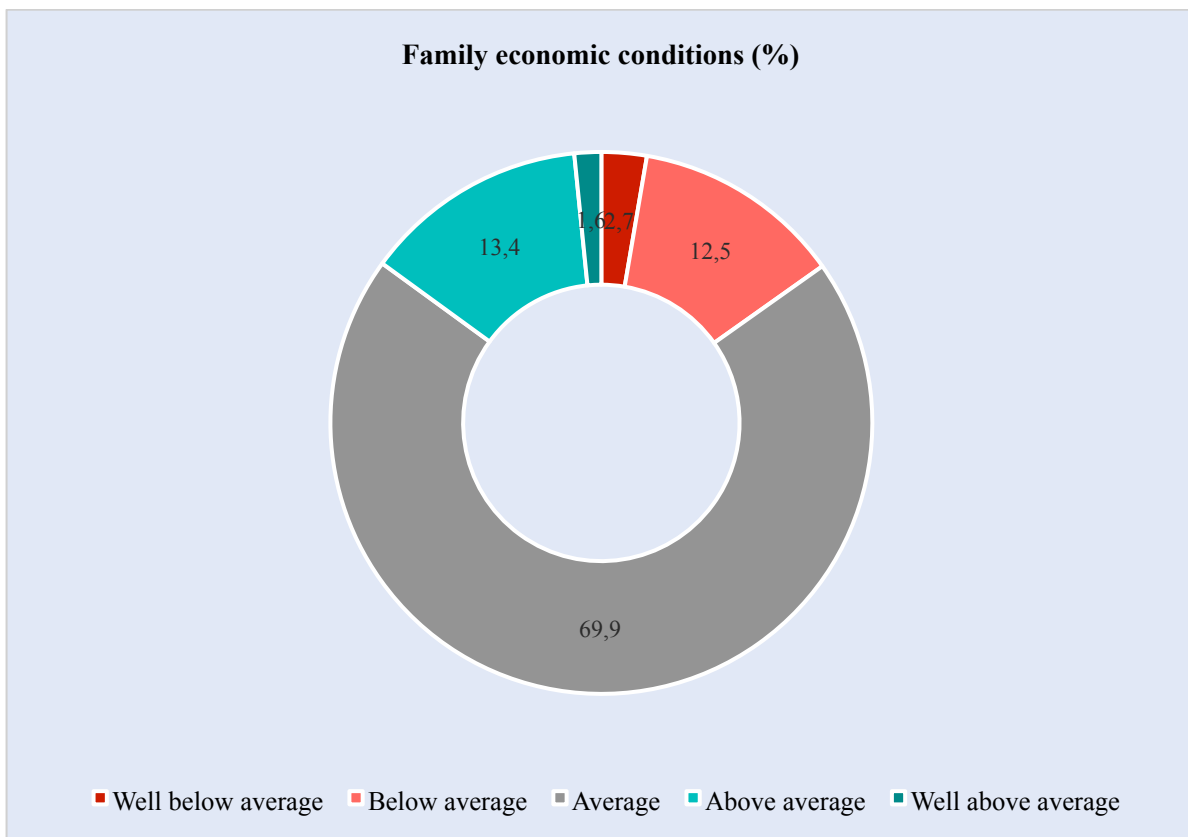
# 13.

## Journalistic Realities

The poll also examined the students' perceptions with regard to the economic environment where they grew up, compared to the national economic average of Albania. Almost 70% of the respondents consider the economic situation of their family average.

In addition, the results showed that the number of students that consider their economic situation lower than the Albania's economic average is almost equal to the number of students that consider their economic situation better than the average (15% each).

Respectively, 12.5% of the students consider their economic situation below the average, while 13.4% above the national economic average of Albania. However, the number of students that see their economic situation as significantly below average (2.7%) is higher than the number of students considering their economic situation significantly above the average (1.6%).





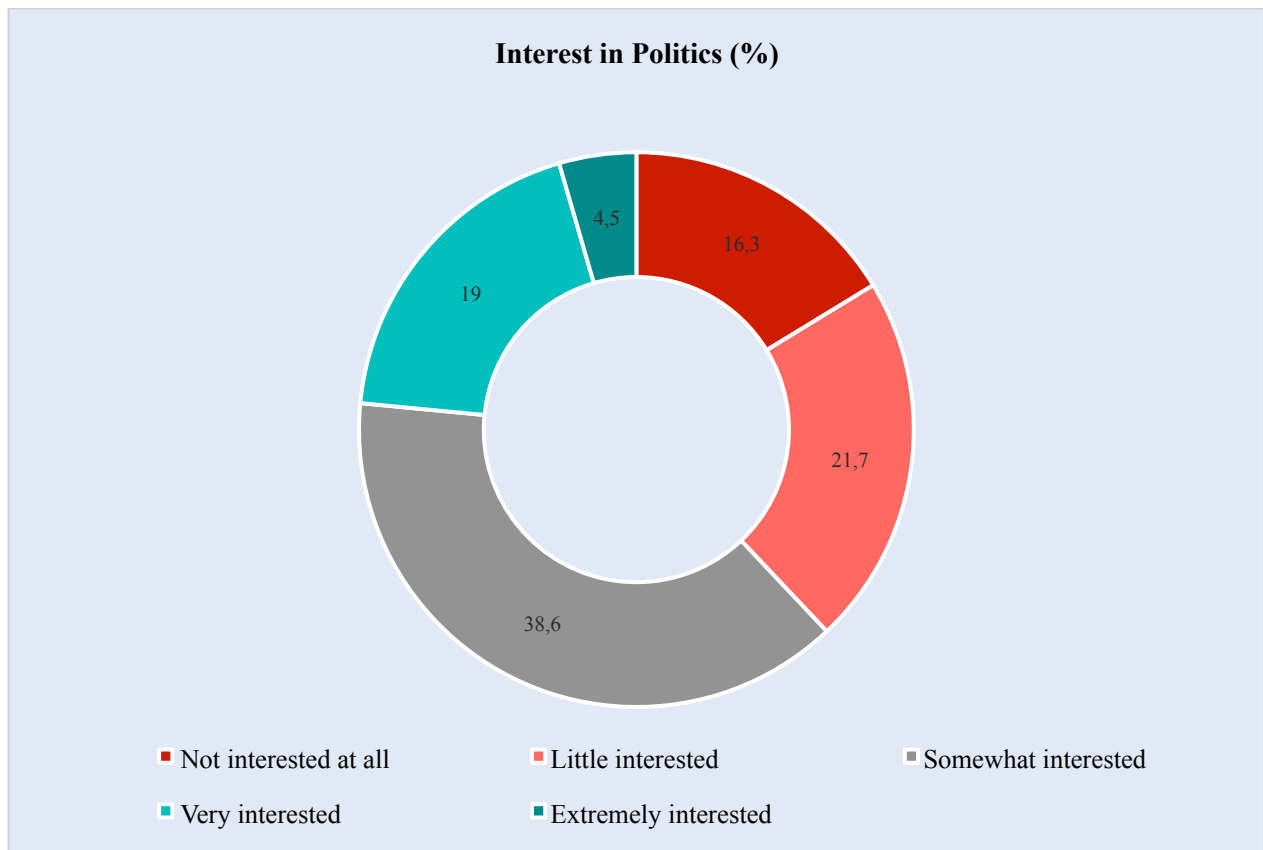
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# 14.

## Students' Interest in Politics

When students were asked about their preferences to politics, 38.6% of the students admitted to be somewhat interested in politics, followed by 19% very interested and 4.5% extremely interested in politics.

On the other side, 21.7% of the students expressed to have only a little interest in politics, while 16.3% admitted not to be interested at all in politics.



# 15.

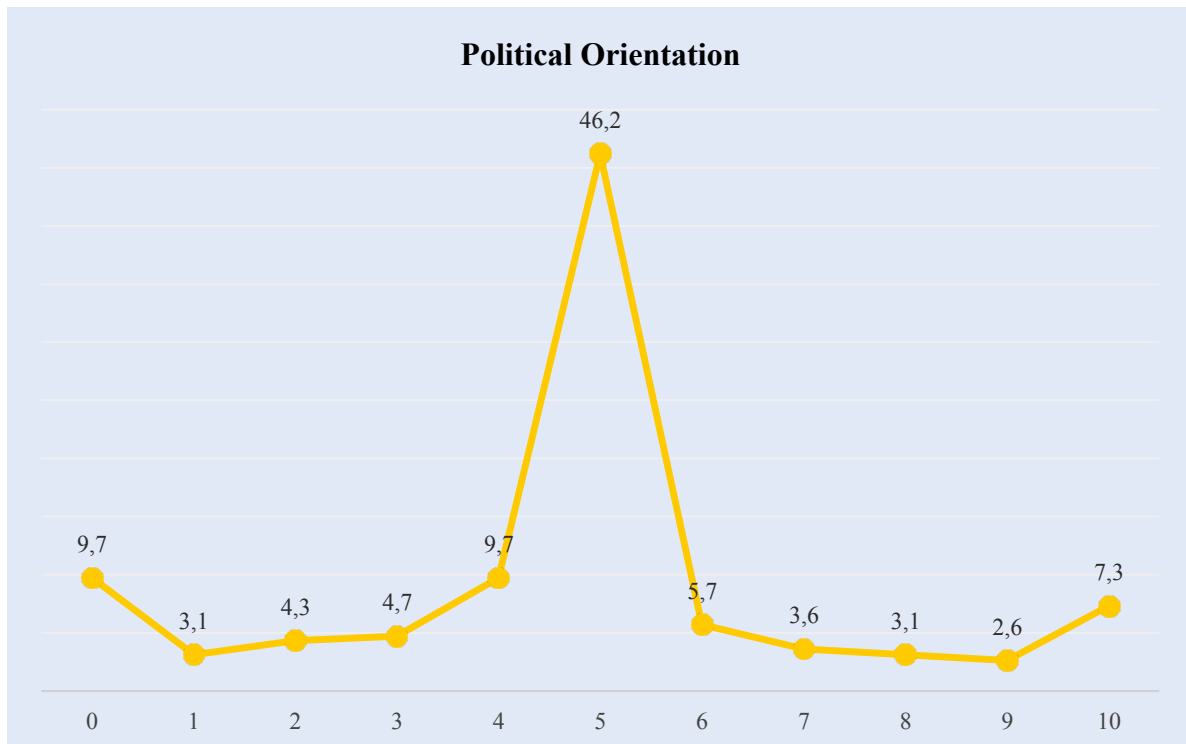
## Political Orientation

In a country like Albania, 46.2% of the students positioned themselves as being politically center oriented. Another 15.4% expressed being politically very close to center oriented, followed by 8.3% of the students being politically close to center oriented. In total, almost 70% of the students are politically close, very close or totally center oriented.

While 9.7% of the students support totally left political ideas versus 7.3% of the students who positioned themselves with totally right political ideas.

One on hand, 3.1% of the students positioned themselves very close to “the left” side, followed by 4.3% that positioned themselves in the number 2, which is close to the left side. On the other hand, 2.6% of the students positioned themselves very close to “the right” political ideas, followed by 3.1% of those close to “the right” political ideas.

In total, 17.1% of the students placed themselves close to left political ideas, very close or totally with left political ideas. Meanwhile, 13% of them placed themselves close to right political ideas, very close or totally close to right political ideas.



# 16.

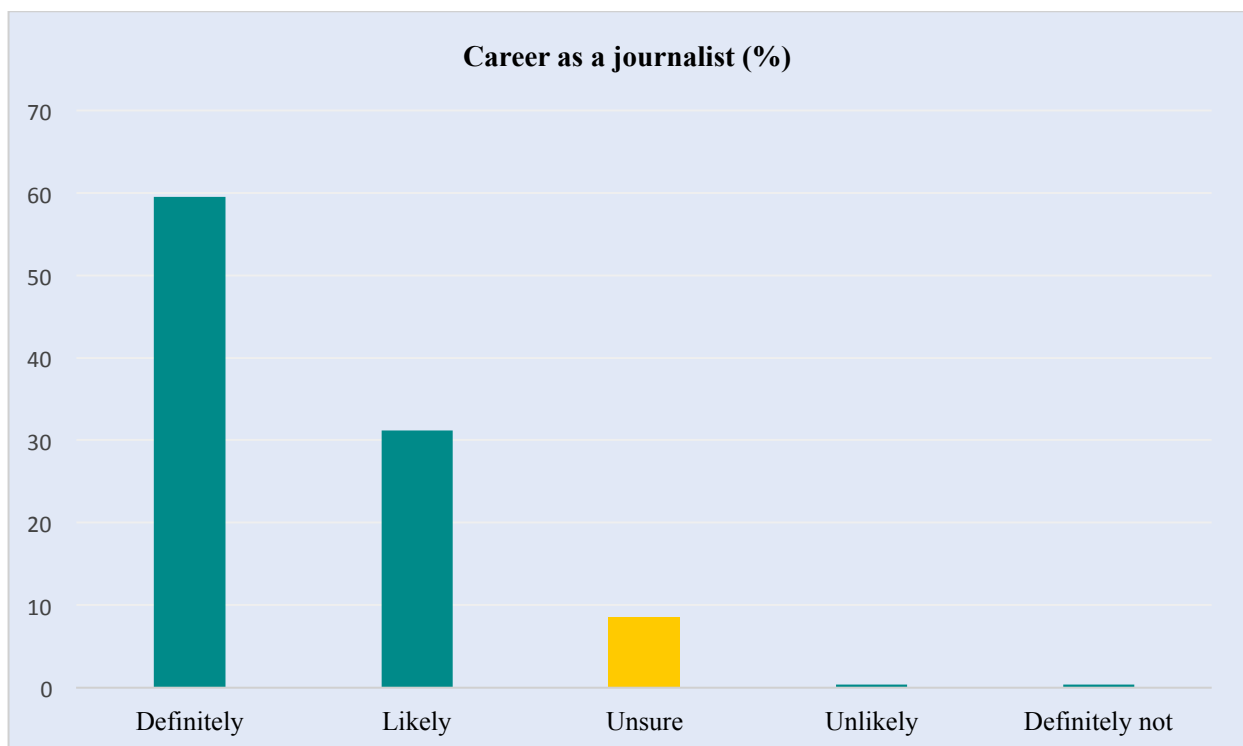
## Future of Journalism

The professional perspectives of the students are very important to understand in which direction their education is going and how students see their future.

If students in Albania want to continue working or not in the field of journalism, after they graduate, among other factors depends also in their satisfaction from the quality of journalistic education.

The findings show that despite the fact that all the students participating in the survey study journalism, not all of them would like to pursue a career as journalist. However, almost 60% of them would like to pursue a career as journalist. Around 30% of the students more likely would also pursue a career in journalism.

Less than 10% express a feeling of uncertainty with regard to their career. They are not sure if they would like to pursue a career in journalism.



# 17.

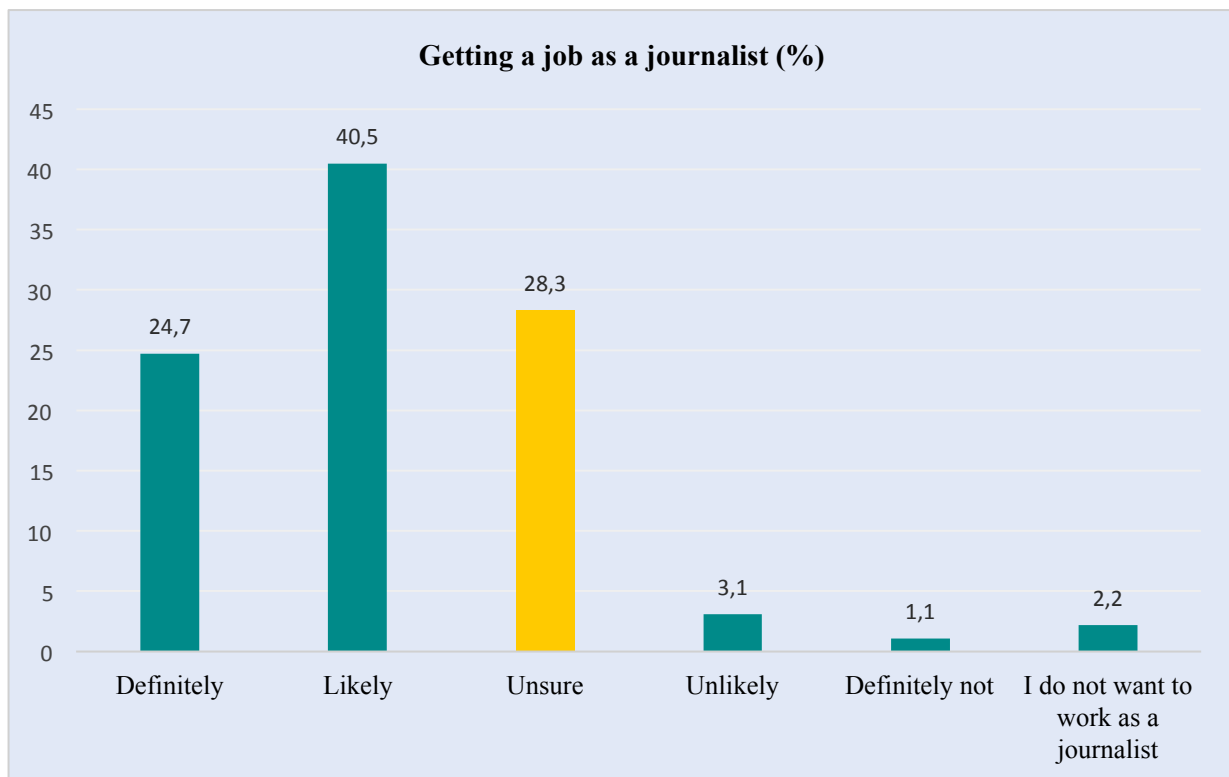
## Getting a Job as Journalist

In addition, with regard to the chances of getting a job as journalist after finishing the university education, there were different results. Less than 50% expressed optimistic to this point. In total, 45.5%

think that they would be able to get a job. Respectively 24.7% expressed very optimistic thinking that they would definitely get a job as journalist after finishing the university education. 40.5% expressed that they would likely get the job as journalist.

Meanwhile 38.3% of the students expressed unsure about their future. They are not sure whether they will get a job as journalist after their studies or not. The results revealed also that 3.1% think that it will be difficult to get a job as journalist upon finishing the studies.

Among all the students asked about the chances of getting a job after they finish their studies, 2.2% expressed that they do not want to work as journalist.

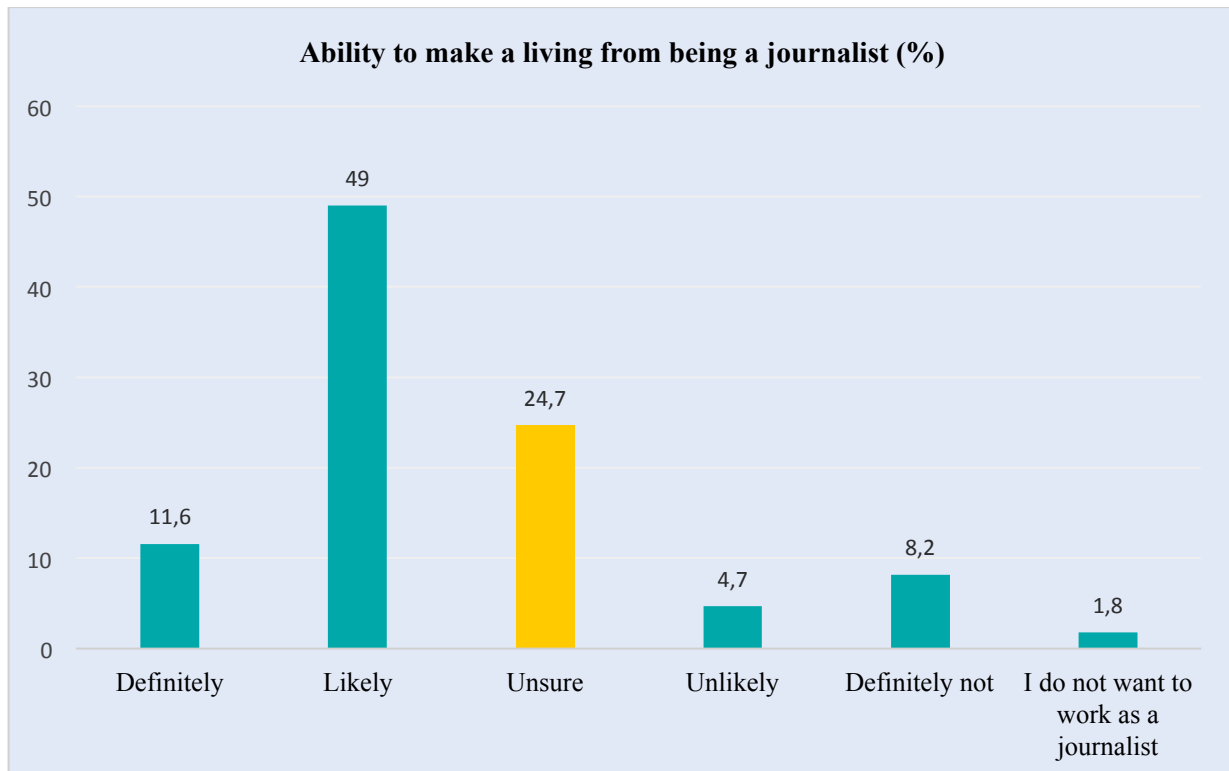


# 18.

## Make a Living as Journalist

The poll also examined the students' expectation about the living when being only a journalist. The results showed that almost 50% of the students hoped to make a living from being only a journalist. 11.6% were very sure about it.

Meanwhile, as it was also shown in other graphs, students expressed a level of uncertainty also to this point. Almost 25% of the students were not sure if one can make a living only from being a journalist. 4.7% were pessimistic in making a living by only working as journalist, 8.2 % were sure that they would not be able to make a living only by being a journalist.

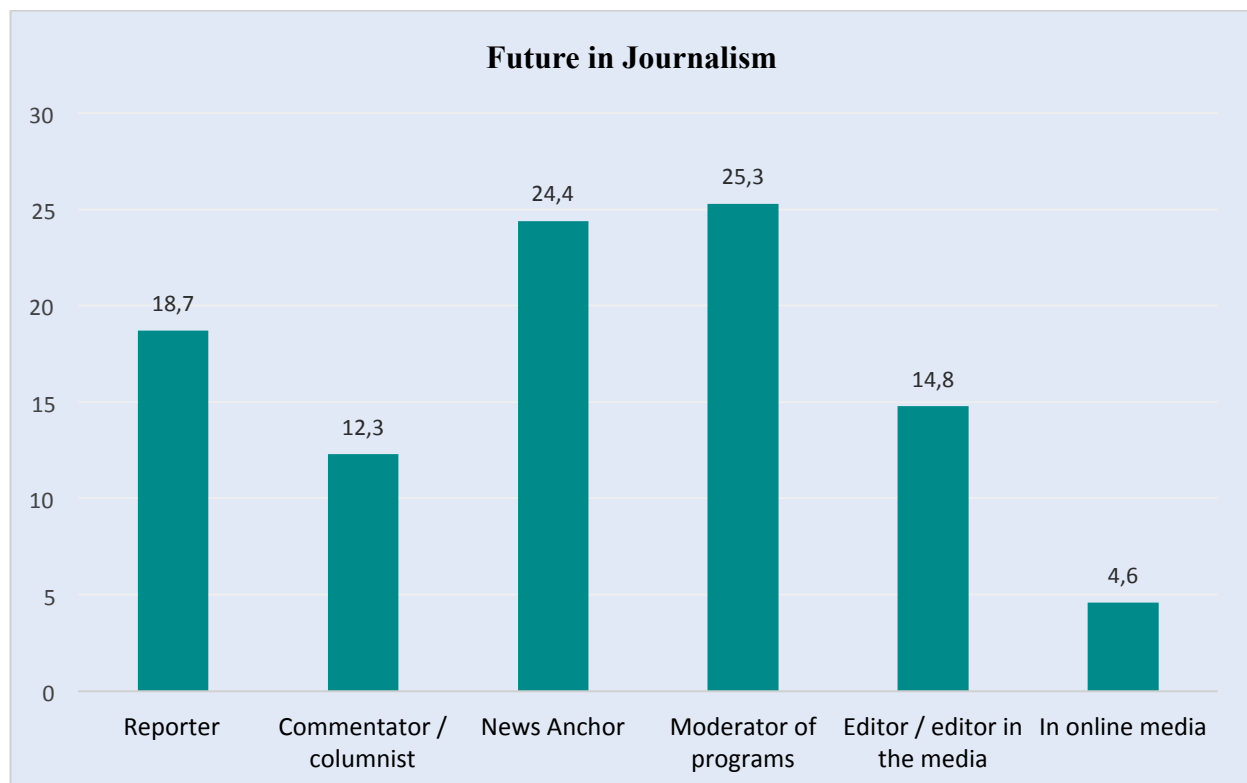


# 19.

## Most Favourites

With regard to the students' favourite place of working in the field of journalism 25.35% of the students would like be moderator of programs, followed by 24.4% who want to be news anchor and 18.7% reporter. 14.8% would like to see themselves as editor/editor in media and 12.3% as commentator/columnist.

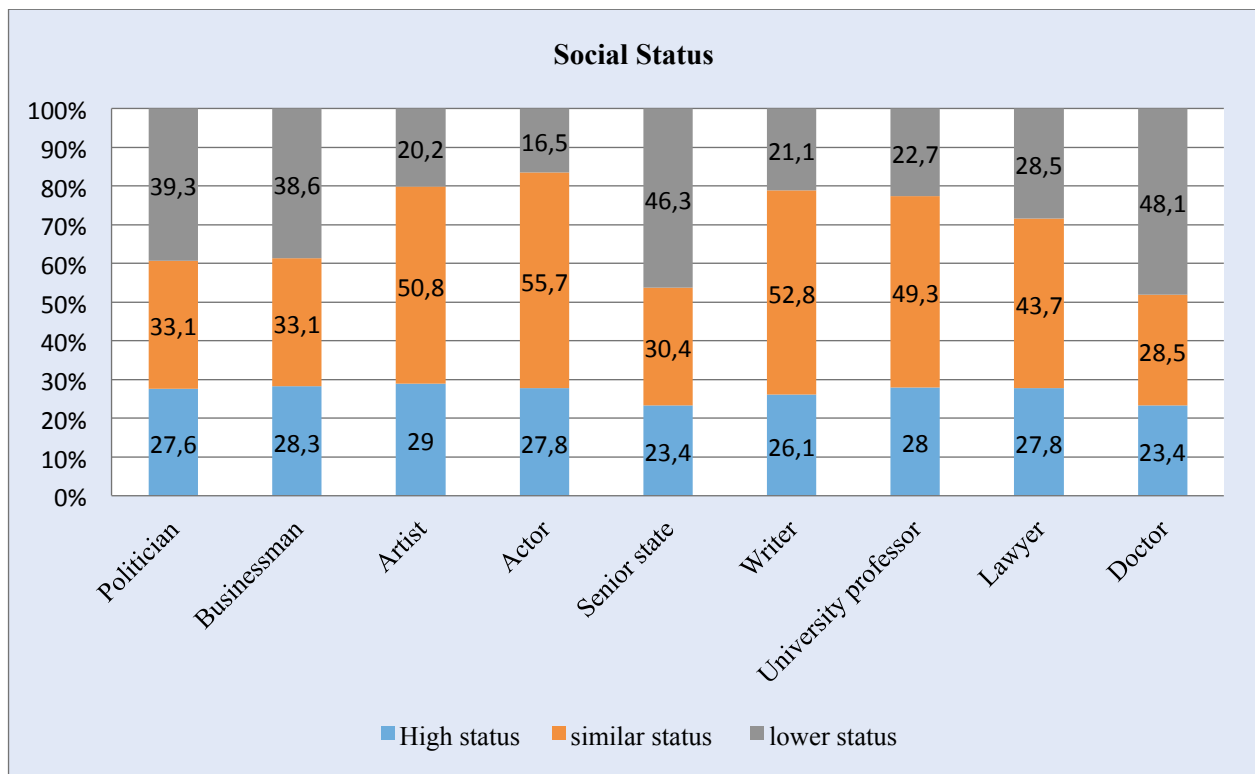
The less favourite job in the field of journalism would be in online media, which is chosen by only 4.6% of the students.



# 20. Compared To Other Professions

Most of students see the social status of journalist similar to the social status of an actor (55.7%), a writer (52.8%) and an artist (50.8%), followed by the similarity with university professors (49.3%) and the lawyers (43.7%). The similarity in social status to other professions such as politicians (33.1%), businessmen (33.1%) and senior state (30.4%) is seen in a smaller number of students.

On the contrary, students consider the social status of journalist lower than the status of the doctor (48.1%) senior state (46.3%), politician (39.3%), and businessman (38.6%). To a lesser extent students think that the social status of journalist is lower than the social status of the writer (21.1%), artist (20.2%) and actor (16.5%).



## Methodology

The findings we report here come from a survey conducted with 495 students of journalism in Albania (public universities). These interviews were conducted 2015 in Tirana, Elbasan and Shkodra. The students were chosen from all education levels offered by these schools. The private schools of journalism have not been taken into consideration due to the small number of the students studying there. The survey is distributed in classrooms and completed by students in the presence of the administrative staff of the survey.

The study aimed to present perceptions of the students of journalism in Albania before they work in the media newsrooms. The data used in this study is based on a survey compiled in the frame of the study “Journalistic students around the globe”. One third of the questions were prepared based on the Albanian situation of Journalism. As students from different journalism schools in Tirana, Elbasan and Shkodra were asked, the survey included also a comparative approach among the universities, providing thus the differences in terms of cross analyses.

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