Norwegian Panel of Journalists

2021, First Wave

Methodology report

Øivind Skjervheim

Amund Eikrem

Olav Bjørnebekk

Joachim Wettergreen

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BACKGROUND

In this report we describe the procedures of data collection in the first wave of The Norwegian Panel of Journalists. Furthermore, we describe technical aspects of the data collection as well as the demographic features of the respondents.

The Norwegian Panel of Journalists is an internet-based survey of journalists and editors.

The Norwegian Panel of Journalists (NJP) is a collaboration between the University of Bergen (UiB), the University of Oslo (UiO), the University of Agder (UiA), the Norwegian University of Technology and Science (NTNU), the Institute for Social Research (ISF) and the Norwegian Research Centre (NORCE). UiB is the data controller on behalf of the other institutions. NJP is a part of the Digital Social Science Core Facility (DIGSSCORE) at UiB. The panel is affiliated with the Norwegian Citizen Panel (NCP), The Norwegian Panel of Elected Representatives (PER), and the Norwegian Panel of Public Administrators (NFP). ideas2evidence handles practical implementation of the survey, and is responsible for recruiting participants, as well as sending and receiving surveys to and from respondents.

The first wave was fielded in late 2020 and throughout the spring of 2021. The wave was part of the November 2020 first wave of KODEM (Coordinated Online Panels for research on Democracy and Governance in Norway). KODEM is an infrastructure for coordinating digital panel surveys directed at four sub populations using NJP and affiliated panels at DIGSSCORE. While NJP and NFP had their first wave of data collection in 2020/21, NCP and PER were established panels, with preexisting infrastructure and panel members. We provide separate methodology reports for each of the panels.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE SURVEY

SOFTWARE

The web-based research software Confirmit is used to administer the surveys and the panel. Confirmit is a "Software-as-a-Service" solution, where all software runs on Confirmit's continuously monitored servers, and where survey respondents and developers interact with the system through various web-based interfaces. The software provides very high data security and operational stability. The security measures are the most stringent in the industry, and Confirmit guarantees 99.7 percent uptime. ideas2evidence is responsible for the programming of the survey on behalf of The Norwegian Panel of Journalists.

PILOT AND OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The survey went through extensive small-N pilot testing before data collection. The pilot testing was done in collaboration between ideas2evidence and the involved researchers. Testing was regarded as success, and no major technical revisions were deemed necessary.

Due to low response rates the data collection went on for a longer time period than planned. A detailed account of the steps taken can be found in the section on panel recruitment and data collection.

RANDOMIZATION PROCEDURES

NJP has an extensive use of randomization procedures. The context of each randomization procedure may vary[1], but they all share some common characteristics that will be described in the following.

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[1] Some examples: randomly allocate treatment value in experiments, randomize order of an answer list/array, order a sequence of questions by random.

All randomization procedures are executed live in the questionnaire. This means that the randomization takes place while the respondent is filling in the questionnaire, as opposed to pre-defined randomizations. Randomizations are mutually independent, unless the documentation states otherwise.

The randomization procedures are written in JavaScript. Math.random()[2] is a key function, in combination with Math.floor()[3]. These functions are used to achieve the following:

- Randomly select one value from a vector of values
- Randomly shuffle the contents of an array

The first procedure is typically used to determine a random sub-sample of respondents to i.e. a control group. Say for example we wish to create two groups of respondents: group 1 and group 2. All respondents are randomly assigned the value 1 or 2, where each randomization is independent. When N is sufficiently large, the two groups will be of equal size (50/50).

Here is an example of the JavaScript code executed in Confirmit:

```
var form = f("x1");
if(!form.toBoolean()) // If no previous randomization on x1
{
  var precodes = x1.domainValues();// Copies the length of x1
  var randomNumber : float = Math.random()*precodes.length;
  var randomIndex : int = Math.floor(randomNumber);
  var code = precodes[randomIndex];
  form.set(code);
}
```

The second procedure is typically used when defining the order of an answer list as random. This can be useful for example when asking for the respondent's party preference or in a list experiment. However, since i.e. a party cannot be listed twice, the procedure must take into account that the array of parties is reduced by 1 for each randomization.

Here is an example of the JavaScript code executed in Confirmit [4]:

```
Function shuffle(array) {
  var currentIndex = array.length, temporaryValue, randomIndex;
  // While there remain elements to shuffle...
  while (0 !== currentIndex) {
    // Pick a remaining element...
    randomIndex = Math.floor(Math.random() * currentIndex);
    currentIndex -= 1;

    // And swap it with the current element.
    temporaryValue = array[currentIndex];
    array[currentIndex] = array[randomIndex];
    array[randomIndex] = temporaryValue;
  }
  return array;
}
```

---

[2] Please see following resource (or other internet resources): https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/JavaScript/Reference/Global_Objects/Math/random
[3] Please see following resource (or other internet resources): https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/JavaScript/Reference/Global_Objects/Math/floor
[4] Code collected from Mike Bostocks visualization: https://bost.ocks.org/mike/shuffle/

The target population is journalists and editors employed at Norwegian media institutions, including self-employed freelance journalists. The target population excludes retirees, students, non-professional bloggers, hobbyists and writers not engaged in journalistic work. Typographers, graphic designers, administrative employees and similar are also not part of the target population.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Determining the exact size of the target population is difficult. One source of information is union membership. The Norwegian Union of Journalist counted 7,879 members in early 2021[5], while The Association of Norwegian Editors had about 760 members[6]. We do not have information about how many of these members are active, non-retired journalists and editors.

Another source of information is national registries. Statistics Norway (SSB) counted 7,417 wage-earning journalists in 4th quarter 2020, 4,056 male, 3,361 female[7]. It is unclear whether or not the count of 7,417 includes editors. Perhaps more importantly, this figure likely excludes a large proportion of freelance journalists, working as independent contractors. SSB also conducts a quarterly *Labour Force Survey* ("Arbeidskraftundersøkelsen") describing the occupational structure of the population. For 2020 the yearly average number of individuals employed as journalists is said to be 10,000, with equal gender distribution[8].

To the best of our knowledge, no other surveys studying journalist and editors (or media employees in general) has managed to precisely describe the size of this population. The annual *Media Survey* ("Medieundersøkelsen") studies issues in media though the perspective of both those employed in the media and the general population. The survey, which draws respondents on the basis of union membership, does not comment on the size of the population they are analyzing. Another survey from 2019, directed at freelance journalists, was sent out to 1,147 individuals, all union members of either *NJ Frilans*, *Pressefotografenes Klubb* or *Norsk Kritikerlag*. The authors note that their selection method is mainly practical: "There is no other listings or records of freelance journalists."[9]

In conclusion, at this point in time we cannot accurately state the size of our target population, or describe demographic features such as gender age, geographic location or the level of education.

PANEL RECRUITMENT AND DATA COLLECTION

Panel recruitment and data collection in the first wave of the NJP, can be divided into two different phases, a phase of "snowball recruitment", followed by a phase of more individually targeted recruitment. Ultimately, three separate online questionnaires were employed.

PHASE ONE – SNOWBALL RECRUITMENT

In the first phase, a list of email addresses for individual journalist and editors were not available. Instead, recruitment was done through The Norwegian Union of Journalists and The Association of Norwegian Editors. As per agreement with the respective unions, the invitation to participate was included in a general newsletter sent

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[5] Norsk Journalistlag (2021): "7879 medlemmer ved utgaven av 2020». https://www.nj.no/nyheter/7-879-medlemmer-ved-utgangen-av-2020/ [Accessed 04.10.2021]

[6] Norsk Redaktørforening (2021): «Om NR». https://www.nored.no/Om-NR [Accessed 04.10.2021]

[7] SSB table 12542

[8] SSB table 09792

[9] Knudsen, A. G., & Mathisen, B. R. (2020). «Sårbarhet og avmakt? Arbeidsvilkår for norske mediefrilansere i en endringsutsatt bransje.» *Søkelys på arbeidslivet, 37*(03), 150-167. (our translation)

out to union members. This initial newsletter also included other items, not related to the survey. Later, the unions distributed another newsletter, dedicated solely to information about the survey and encouraging participation.

A couple of weeks after the launch of the survey, the decision was made to broaden the scope to also include members belonging to The Association of Norwegian local newspapers. A separate but nearly identical survey was created and sent to the union, to be answered by their members [10].

In order to establish a point of contact for future data collection, respondents were asked to register their email address when filling out the questionnaire. Upon registration, a confirmation email was sent confirming their participation. The email addresses were also used for checking that the same person did not leave several survey responses.

During phase one, 539 journalists and editors entered the survey, although only 37 filled out the questionnaire to completion. An additional 5 partially completed, and were counted as respondents. The majority of responses, 497, contained no valuable information, and were discarded. As such, a total of 42 journalists and editors were recruited using the snowball method. Of the 42 recruited, 36 originated from the initial survey, while the remaining 6 were recruited through the secondary survey aimed at members of The Association of Norwegian local newspapers.

This recruitment strategy yielded far fewer responses than expected. The lack of response is mainly due to the recruitment strategy. The newsletter invitation did not get sufficient traction among journalist and editors. Since the distribution was dependent on the unions, the recruitment strategy were more or less left idle since we did not have any noteworthy measures to implement.

Following the unsatisfactory response rate of the snowball approach, recruitment and data collection was put on hold mid-January 2021.

PHASE TWO – INDIVIDUAL ADDRESSES

Following phase one, the project team collected personal email addresses for individual journalist and editors, utilizing publicly available information, enabling direct, individual contact with members of the media. A total of 5,583 email addresses were collected. The majority of these, 3,426, were gathered from article bylines and online employee registers. The remaining 2,157 email addresses were constructed by identifying the individuals name and place of employment, and then written using the syntax firstname.lastname@organisation.no. The final list of respondents contained entries for journalists and editors employed at over 200 different newspapers and media organizations.

Invitational e-mails were distributed on February 16th.

Due to invalid addresses and spam filter issues, 1,079 emails could not reach the recipient. An iterative approach was applied, where invalid addresses were substituted and dialogue with receiving organizations remedied some of these challenges. 80 percent of the personal emails were, however, successfully delivered. 46 respondents opted out from participation. In addition to the invitational email distributed on February 16th, one reminder email was distributed March 4th to all respondents who had not opened, or not completed the questionnaire. A final reminder was distributed March 23rd, to respondents who had opened the questionnaire but not completed.

Panel recruitment and the number of survey responses both increased substantially after sending personal emails. 624 respondents completed the questionnaire, and 1,614 opened it without finalizing the survey. In total, 828 journalist and editors were recruited to the panel through personal email invitation.

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[10] The only difference in survey content was on the question of union membership (j1k1kj101).

In surveys comparable to NJP, the number of complete responses is usually larger than the number of incomplete responses[11]. In the first round of the Norwegian Panel of Public Administrators (NFP), which ran concurrent to NJP, we observed a pattern where an unusually large proportion of survey links were seemingly "clicked" almost immediately upon the invitational emails being dispatched from our server. In our methodical report for NFP we attributed this pattern to automated security systems, in some ministries or directorates, scanning the links for malicious content. Furthermore, we found the pattern to be particularity prevalent within certain organizations. We observe a similar pattern in NJP, albeit to a smaller extent.

OVERALL RECRUITMENT AND RESPONSES

The overall recruitment attempts of public administrators resulted in 760 survey responses 881 and panel members. The data collection period ran from November 2020, to May 2021, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: Responses by date
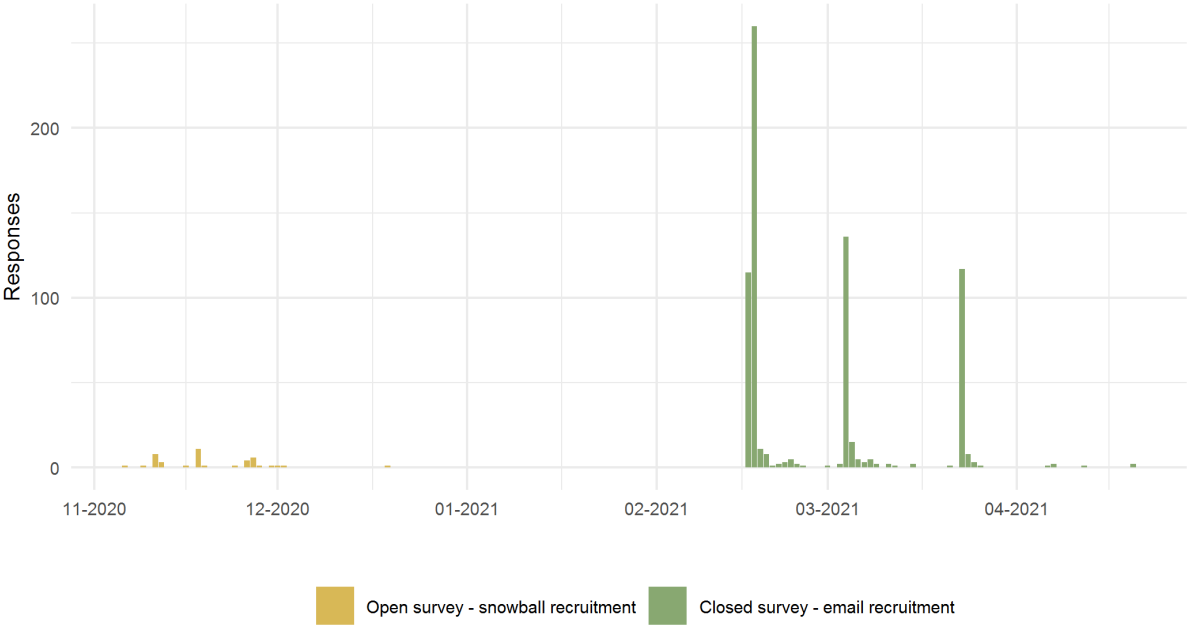
n = 760

Due to the combination of two different recruitment strategies, calculating an overall response rate is complicated. We attempted to recruit 5583 by individual email invitations, and 15 percent responded. However, our address list does not make up the whole population of journalist and editors. As previously stated, a definitve number with regards to the size our target population is hard to obtain. Thus, we are unable to say how many percent of the target population participated in the first wave of NJP.

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[11] See *Norwegian Citizen Panel Twentieth Wave Methodology Report* (Skjervheim, Høgestøl, Bjørnebekk, Eikrem and Wettergreen, 2021) or earlier NCP methodology reports for examples of this.

Table 1: Response rate by geographical coverage (closed survey only)

| | Gross sample | Response rate | |
		Relative	Absolute
Freelance	4,0 %	17,2 %	0,7 %
Local/regional	33,4 %	16,7 %	5,6 %
National	62,7 %	11,7 %	7,4 %

Table 1 shows the response rate of the various types of respondents, classified as belonging to media organizations having either a national, local or regional perspective. Freelance journalists are separated out as they may work for any news outlet. We emphasize that this summary excludes respondents recruited though the snowball approach (open survey).

In relative terms, recruitment was higher from the mostly smaller local and regional organizations, such as local newspapers, compared to the mostly larger national media organizations. The relative response rate was actually highest for freelancers, while a lower proportion of journalists and editors working in national organizations, chose to participate. Still, in absolute terms, the response rate was highest for the respondents working in a media organization with a national scope.

PLATFORMS

The questionnaire was prepared for data input via smart phones. 25 percent of survey respondents who entered the questionnaire, used a mobile phone. This is a noticeably lower number than is observed in the Norwegian Citizen Panel (45 percent in wave 21), but higher compared to central government employees (6.5 percent in wave 1 of NFP).

TIME USAGE

In the survey invitation, the respondents were given an estimate of 10 to 15 minutes for filling out the questionnaire. When calculating average time actually spent, we account for respondents leaving the questionnaire open to complete the survey later. This idle time causes an artificially high average for completing the survey. To reduce noise in the data, respondents using more than 60 minutes are excluded from the calculation. Doing so results in an average response time of 16 minutes (table 2).

The survey respondents were randomly assigned to one of two groups, each consisting primarily of survey questions that were also given to all four KODEM populations. Distributed response times are shown in figure 2.

Figure 2: Time usage of survey respondents in wave 1

n = 412
Excluded: minutes > 60
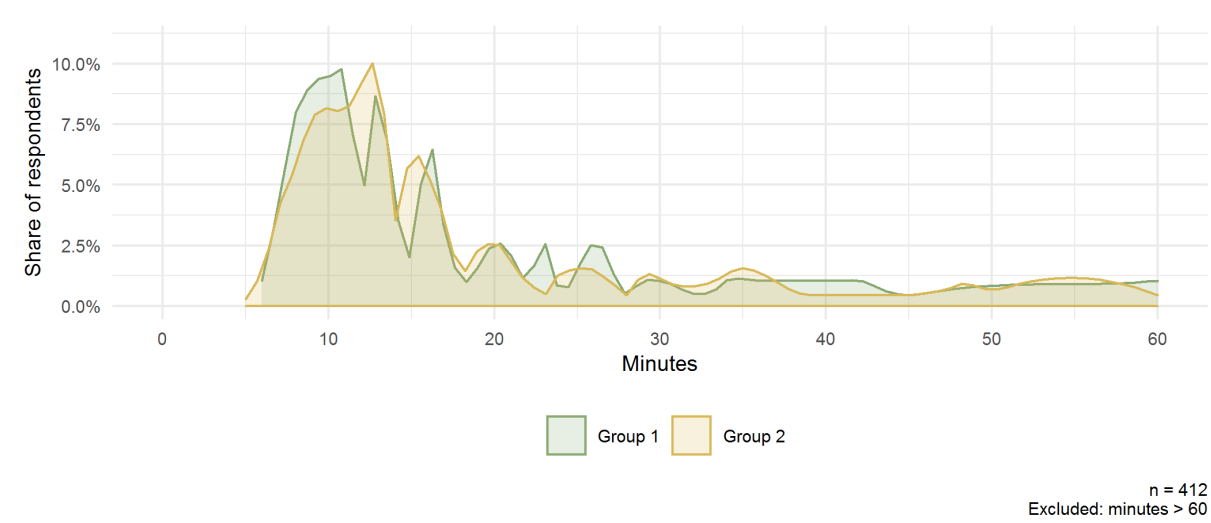
On average, mobile respondents spent slightly more time than respondents using non-mobile devices, although the difference is negligible. We note that mobile users belonging to group 1 used more time, compared to group 2, while the reverse is true for non-mobile users. Overall, on any device, the respondents in group 1 and 2 used the same amount of time on average to fill out the questionnaire.

Table 2: Average time spent on questionnaire (minutes)

	All	Group 1	Group 2
All users	16,0	16,0	16,0
Non-mobile users	15,9	16,2	15,7
Mobile users	16,2	15,1	17,0

DEMOGRAPIC FEATURES OF THE RESPONDENTS

In this section, we examine demographic features of the respondents, such as gender, age and level of education. As previously discussed, we are unable to compare respondent characteristics with our target population, due to a lack of precise information about the latter. Hence, representativity will not be discussed.
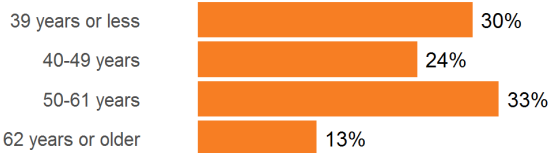
GENDER AND AGE

Figure 3: Gender

NJP survey data. N = 669
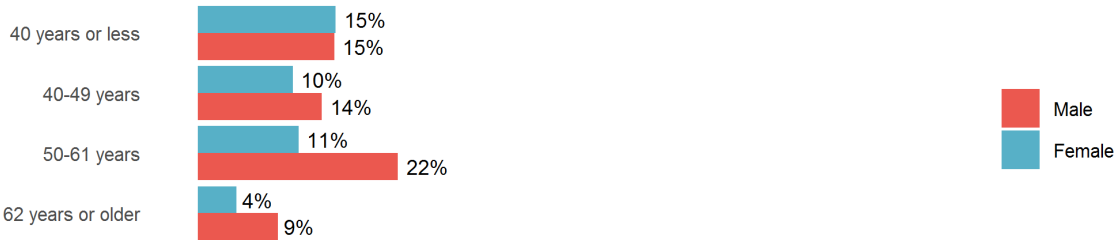
The majority of survey respondents are male.

Figure 4: Age

NJP survey data. N = 662

Over half of the respondents are below the age of 50. Older respondents, above 62 years of age, make up the smallest age category.
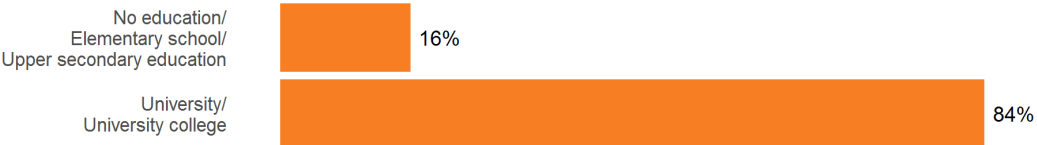
Figure 5: Age and gender

NJP survey data. N = 662

Among younger respondents, both genders are fairly equally represented. The largest group of respondents are males aged 50-61, while the smallest group are females above the age of 62.

LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Figure 6: Level of education

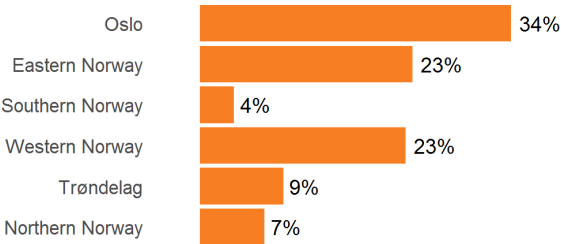| Category	Percentage
No education/ Elementary school/ Upper secondary education	16%
University/ University college	84%

NJP survey data. N = 660

The vast majority of respondents are highly educated.

LOCATION AND GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

**Figure 7: Place of residence, by region**

Region	Percentage
Oslo	34%
Eastern Norway	23%
Southern Norway	4%
Western Norway	23%
Trøndelag	9%
Northern Norway	7%

NJP survey data. N = 536

A third of respondents, 34 percent, reside in the capital. Another 23 percent reside in the remaining eastern part of Norway. This means that a majority of respondents are based in the east. 23 percent of respondents reside in the west. Only 4 percent of respondents reside in the southern part of the country.

Figure 8: "The primary geographical orientation of the medium you are currently working for" (newspaper/radio/TV or other media)

Orientation	Percentage
Local	24%
Regional	21%
National	55%
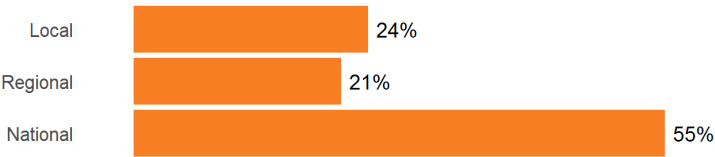
NJP survey data. N = 755

The respondents were asked if the coverage of the media organization they work for is primarily local, regional or national in scope. A narrow majority, 55 percent, work for an organization with national coverage, while the remaining 45 percent have a local or regional perspective.