Generative AI and the Journalism Profession

Good or Bad News?

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fncc Fédération nationale des communications et de la culture CSN

ajiq Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec

Canadian Media Guild
La Guilde canadienne des médias
CWA Canada Local 30213 / Section locale 30213. SCA Canada

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Executive Summary

Since the emergence of ChatGPT in November 2022, generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) has been gradually transforming the journalism profession. The aim of this report is to identify early trends in the use of Gen AI and its effects on the profession. Based on a study of 400 Canadian and international journalists, it examines user profiles, changes in users' work, their perceptions of these tools, and the regulatory challenges they raise. Five key findings emerge:

→ An emerging adoption, driven more by individual (young) journalists than by their organizations

The use of Gen AI already appears to be widespread, with two-thirds of surveyed journalists reporting having used it in their work. However, the adoption process still seems to be in an emerging phase, driven more by individual and exploratory initiatives than by organizational policies. Gen AI is primarily used for data collection and analysis, as well as for text production and editing. However, it is less commonly used during the ideation and distribution phases. Younger journalists (aged under 30 and/or with less than five years of experience) and freelancers are especially likely to adopt Gen AI than their older or salaried counterparts.

→ A generally positive perception of Gen AI's impact on work quality and productivity

The pursuit of productivity gains and improved content quality are the main motivations for using Gen AI, with time savings being the most frequently mentioned benefit. Journalists who use these tools generally expressed satisfaction with the advantages they provide.

→ A significant sense of dependence on Gen AI, particularly among younger journalists

The benefits of Gen AI are such that nearly a quarter of its users in our survey already reported feeling dependent on it. This is particularly striking given that it mainly affects younger journalists, whose early careers may have developed alongside these tools.

→ Strong concerns about the future of the profession, but less pronounced among regular and dependent Gen AI users

Journalists expressed a high level of ethical concern, particularly regarding adherence to professional standards such as the quality and authenticity of information produced using Gen AI. However, these concerns were less pronounced among regular users – especially those who reported feeling dependent on the tools – raising questions about a potential decline in their ethical vigilance.

→ Regulation by employers and unions is tentative and uncertain

Only one-third of the journalists surveyed reported that their organization had implemented a policy governing the use of Gen AI. Reflecting the still-nascent state of regulation, an even greater proportion (36%) said they did not know whether such a policy existed within their organization. Where such frameworks were in place, they were already shaping practices by guiding, encouraging, or restricting certain uses.

Finally, union presence does not yet appear to have a significant impact on the adoption of Gen AI. This suggests that unions are also still coming to grips with the issues that Gen AI raises, and that their role in developing regulatory frameworks is still largely to be defined.

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Introduction

Collaborate. Augment. Replace. Alienate. Between fears and hopes, in this still-emerging phase of generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI), our report aims to shed light on the trends that are beginning to take shape.

This technological shift is not bypassing journalism. Gen AI is already being integrated into every stage of news production: finding an angle, summarizing a report, writing a news brief, illustrating an article. Some newsrooms are actively experimenting with incorporating it into their editorial workflows (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024[1]; Beckett & Yaseen, 2023[2]).

While some see these tools as powerful aids for saving time or boosting creativity, others raise concerns about their impact: threats to employment, loss of meaning, and the blurring of ethical boundaries (Møller et al., 2025[3]).

Based on a multi-channel survey conducted between September and December 2024 with 400 Canadian and international journalists, this study explores how Gen AI is concretely transforming journalistic work. Behind the apparent neutrality of these tools lies a much more complex reality – one shaped by usage patterns, professional identities, and organizational contexts.

The findings presented in this report are organized into four main sections, each explored through a central question:

1

Who Uses Gen AI?

This first section provides a profile of journalists based on whether or not they use these tools.

2

Why and How Are Gen AI Tools Used?

This section examines concrete uses, highlighting how and why journalists engage with these tools.

3

How Does the Use of Gen AI Change the Relationship with the Profession?

Here, the analysis focuses on how these tools influence journalists' perceptions of their work and their professional practices.

4

How Does the Context Shape the Use of Gen AI?

Lastly, this section explores the impact of organizational dynamics on how Gen AI tools are adopted and applied.

These four sections offer a dual perspective – both individual and organizational – on the impact of Gen AI on the journalism profession, and open up avenues for reflection on concrete actions to address these ongoing transformations.

What is Gen AI?

Gen AI is "an artificial intelligence system that generates text, images, audio, video or other media in response to user prompts. It uses machine learning techniques to create new data that has similar characteristics to the data it was trained on [...], resulting in outputs that are often indistinguishable from human-created media [...]."

Alan Turing Institute, 2025

1 Cools, H., & Diakopoulos, N. A. (2024). Uses of generative AI in the newsroom: Mapping journalists' perceptions of perils and possibilities. *Journalism Practice.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2024.2394558

2 Beckett, C., & Yaseen, M. (2023). *Generating Change: A global survey of what news organisations are doing with AI. JournalismAI.* Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science. https://www.journalismai.info/research/2023-generating-change

3 Møller, L. A., Cools, H., & Skovsgaard, M. (2025). One size fits some: How journalistic roles shape the adoption of generative AI. Journalism Practice. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2025.2484622

1

Who Uses Gen AI?

Key findings at a glance

This section addresses the first key question: "Who uses Gen AI?". It offers a profile of journalists who use these tools, revealing a gradual integration of Gen AI into professional practices: nearly two-thirds of respondents reported using it.

However, usage is uneven and varies according to generational and professional factors. Younger, less-experienced, and freelance journalists are among the main users, suggesting that Gen AI addresses specific needs or constraints within these groups. In contrast, gender does not appear to have a significant influence on its adoption.

Nearly two-thirds of the journalists surveyed use Gen AI either occasionally or frequently.

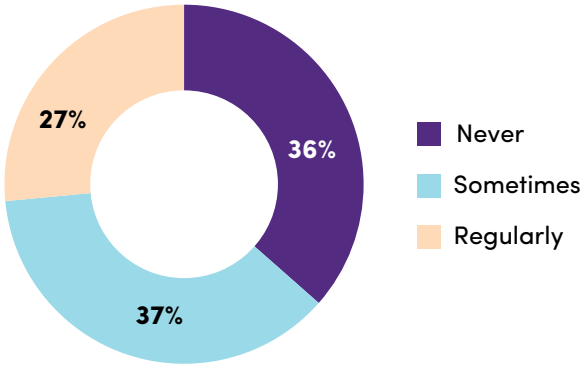
Usage is more common among younger, less-experienced, and freelance journalists.

Gender has little impact on the use of these tools.

1.1 A Use Already Well Established in Practice

Just over two years after the launch of ChatGPT, nearly two-thirds of the journalists surveyed (64%) reported having used Gen AI in their work (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Frequency of Gen AI Use
(N=400)



These findings seem to confirm – at the level of the profession – a trend already observed across society more broadly: the adoption of Gen AI tools is happening at an unprecedented pace, especially when compared to previous technological shifts (Accenture, 2024[4]).

This rapid spread does not appear to be a passing trend. On the contrary, several journalists emphasized that Gen AI represents a longer-term shift. As one of them put it: "*Generative AI is here to stay.*" [5]

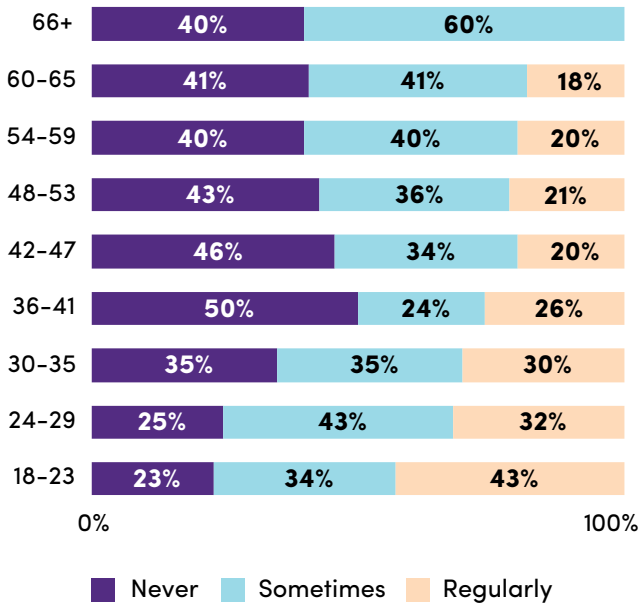
However, it is still premature to speak of widespread Gen AI use among journalists. While adoption may appear rapid given the novelty of these tools, 36% of journalists surveyed had never used them, and only 27% used them regularly (more than three times per week), while 37% used them only occasionally.

1.2 A More Frequent Use Among Younger Generations

The frequency of Gen AI use is undeniably shaped by a generational effect.

Younger journalists are significantly more inclined to use these tools (Figure 2): nearly 75% of journalists under the age of 30 in our survey use them, with a substantial proportion doing so regularly. Usage frequency decreases with age, levelling off around age 40. From that point onward, about 40% never use Gen AI tools, while roughly 20% use them regularly.

Figure 2: Frequency of Gen AI Use by Age
(N=338)



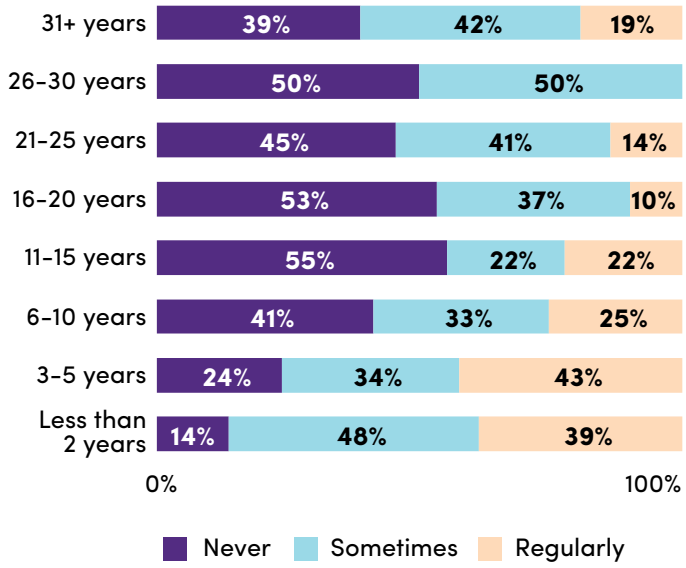
4 Accenture. (2024). Reinventing enterprise operations: How reinvention-ready companies are driving growth and relevance with gen AI. https://www.accenture.com/content/dam/accenture/final/accenture-com/document-3/Reinventing_Enterprise_Operations.pdf

5 The quotes included throughout this report come from responses to the survey's open-ended questions.

Analysis based on journalism experience (Figure 3) confirms this trend: respondents with less than five years of experience – those who entered the profession around the time Gen AI emerged – are by far the most regular users. Among those with more than ten years of experience, usage levels out, with 40% to 50% of journalists surveyed reporting that they never use these tools.

> *"I am barred from doing so for most of my work but, in any case, would not choose to do so – I'm an older generation journalist."*

Figure 3: Frequency of Gen AI Use by Experience in Journalism
(N=342)

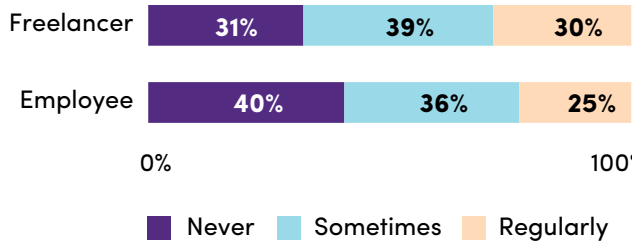


1.3 A Varying Frequency of Use Depending on Employment Status, Education Level, and Gender

Beyond age and professional experience, the frequency of Gen AI use also varies according to employment status and level of education. Both factors appear to influence the adoption of these tools.

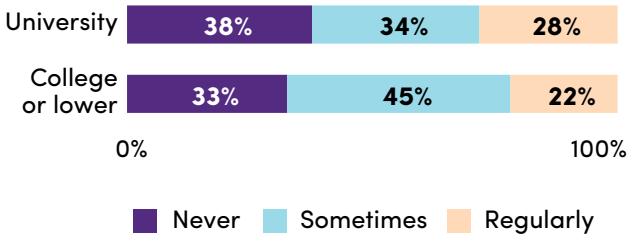
Freelance journalists are proportionally more likely to use Gen AI tools regularly than their employed counterparts (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Frequency of Gen AI Use by Employment Status
(N=376)



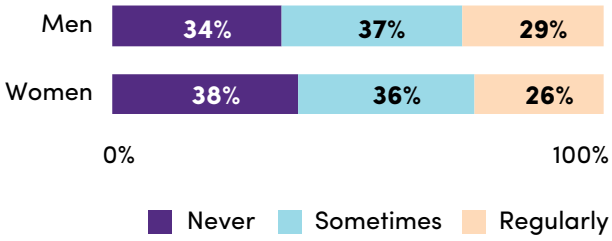
Journalists with lower levels of education also appear to use Gen AI more frequently (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Frequency of Gen AI Use by Education Level
(N=367)



In contrast, gender does not appear to be a determining factor in reported practices: the results for men and women (Figure 6) are largely similar.

Figure 6: Frequency of Gen AI Use by Gender
(N=359)



2

Why and How Are Gen AI Tools Used?

Key findings at a glance

This section addresses a second major question: "Why and how are Gen AI tools used?". It provides an overview of reported uses, examining their frequency, differences based on journalists' employment status, and the motivations behind the use of these tools.

The findings show that Gen AI is seen both as a tool for productivity and for improving the quality of the content produced, while also being used in exploratory and varied ways. Employment status emerges as a differentiating factor: freelancers and employed journalists differ in how often they use Gen AI and how they use it. Finally, while saving time is the most frequently cited motivation, the use of Gen AI also raises questions about its implications for the journalism profession.

Gen AI is used in exploratory and varied ways, primarily to boost productivity, but also to enhance the quality of the content produced.

Usage patterns vary by employment status, with notable differences between freelancers and employed journalists.

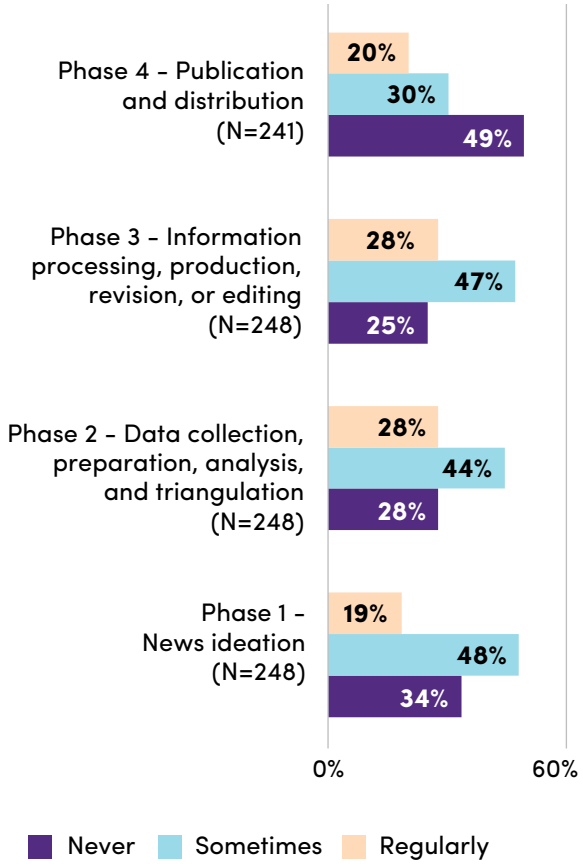
Saving time is the most commonly reported motivation.

2.1 A Focus on Information Gathering and Writing/Editing

Gen AI can be used at every stage of the journalistic production cycle: from article ideation and data collection to writing, text revision, and even distribution strategy.

As Figure 7 shows, journalists use Gen AI unevenly across the different stages of the news production process.

Figure 7: Distribution of Gen AI Uses by Type and Frequency
(N=248)



Gen AI is primarily used during the data collection and analysis phase (Phase 2), as well as for text production and editing (Phase 3). In contrast, these tools are much less frequently used during the ideation phase (Phase 1), and even less so at the publication and distribution stage (Phase 4).

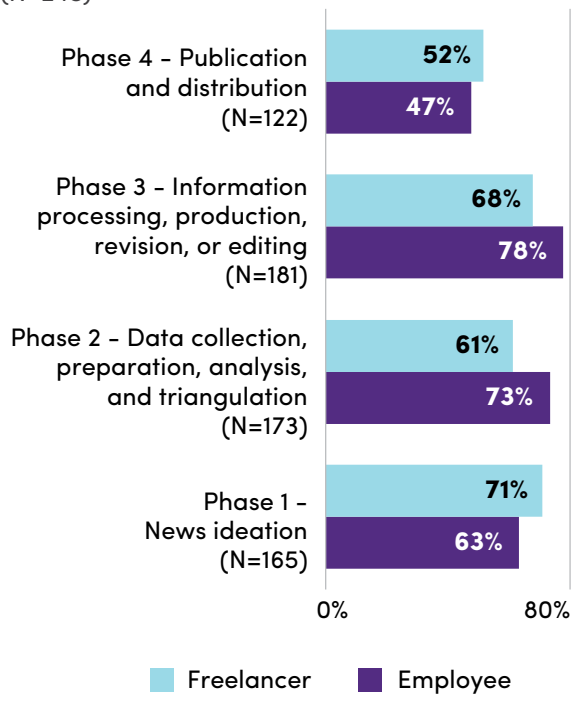
The observed frequency and variety of uses suggest that Gen AI is still being used in an exploratory manner. Whether during ideation (Phase 1), data collection and analysis (Phase 2), or writing and editing (Phase 3), Gen AI does not yet appear to be integrated into professional routines: at every stage of the workflow, the vast majority of journalist users reported using it only occasionally – or not at all.

This diversity of uses is illustrated by the following testimony: "*It* [Gen AI] *is good for generating ideas; I've used it to come up with catchy headlines when I've been stuck. It sometimes helps me write emails in English to people I need to interview. I don't use it as a translator, but as a sentence enhancer.*" [6]

2.2 Practices Vary According to Employment Status

Freelancers tend to use Gen AI more during the ideation phase (Phase 1) and at the publication and distribution stage (Phase 4), compared to their employed counterparts (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Distribution of Gen AI Use by Employment Status
(N=248)



Conversely, employed journalists are more likely to use Gen AI for core tasks in the news production process, particularly during data collection and analysis (Phase 2) as well as text production and editing (Phase 3).

6 Translated from French.

2.3 A Tool to Work Faster... and Sometimes Better

While usage patterns vary by employment status, the pursuit of time savings is a widely shared motivation.

> *"The use of AI has improved my efficiency and allowed me to do more in less time."* [7]

The main reason why journalists use Gen AI is productivity: 66% of users said they primarily turn to it to save time (Figure 9).

While productivity-related motivations dominate, a significant proportion of journalists use Gen AI because of the capabilities they attribute to it.

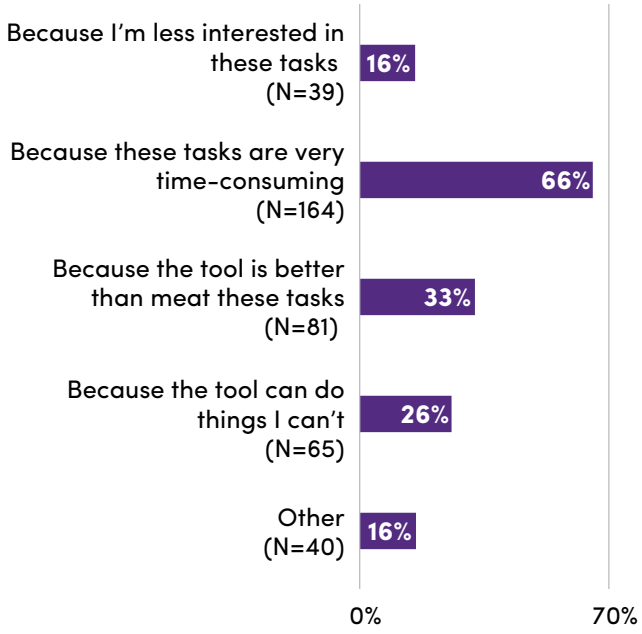
For 33% of users, Gen AI is simply seen as better, and 26% said it helps them to perform tasks they do not personally master.

Notably, only 16% reported using Gen AI due to a lack of interest in certain tasks. This qualifies, or even challenges, the assumption that Gen AI is mainly used to offload tedious or low-value work.

Finally, other motivations cited (16%) include using Gen AI to stimulate creativity (11 respondents) and to experiment with the tool's potential (6 respondents).

Figure 9: Motivations for Using Gen AI
(N=248)

In response to the question: *"Why do you use Gen AI in the tasks mentioned above?"*



7 Translated from French.

For the majority of respondents, expectations around productivity and improved work quality appear to be largely met.

> *"Gen AI is a powerful tool for boosting creativity and productivity."* [8]

As Figures 10 and 11 show, Gen AI tools are generally seen as supportive of journalistic work: 68% of respondents believe they enhance their productivity, and 58% consider that they contribute to better quality in their work. Gen AI is thus perceived both as a tool for productivity and for improving content quality.

However, the negative effects of Gen AI on journalistic work are not negligible: 13% of respondents believe that these tools do not help them work more quickly (Figure 10), and 19% of users feel that using them does not improve the quality of their work (Figure 11).

Figure 10: Work Productivity with Gen AI
(N=239)

In response to the statement*: "The use of generative AI improves my productivity."*

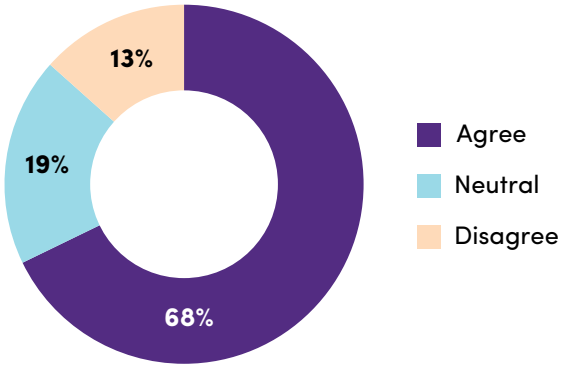
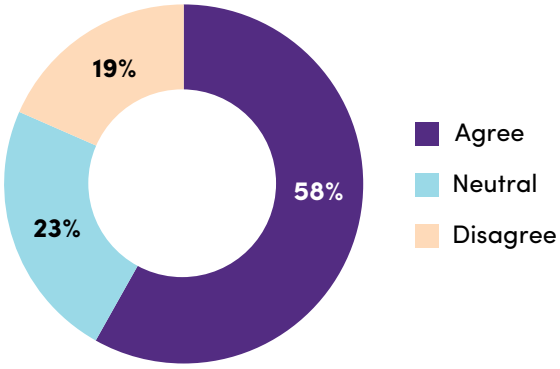


Figure 11: Work Quality with Gen AI
(N=239)

In response to the statement*: "The use of generative AI allows me to produce work of better quality."*



8 Translated from French.

3

How Does the Use of Gen AI Change the Relationship with the Profession?

Key findings at a glance

This section addresses a third major question: "How does the use of Gen AI transform the relationship with the profession?". It examines the relationship that journalists have with their profession and their approach to work.

The results reveal a form of ambivalence: less-experienced journalists appear more dependent on Gen AI, while freelancers expressed greater concerns about the risk of technological replacement. These differences reflect an unequal transformation of the profession. Ethical issues, particularly those related to the quality and authenticity of information, are central concerns for journalists.

Moreover, these concerns seem to fade among the most regular and dependent users, while they are more pronounced among those who use Gen AI less frequently.

1

Dependency on Gen AI affects a quarter of the journalists surveyed, particularly the less-experienced ones.

2

Ethical concerns are varied and primarily focus on journalists' professional obligations; fears of technological replacement are more marginal.

3

Dependency on Gen AI is associated with lower ethical sensitivity – and vice versa.

4

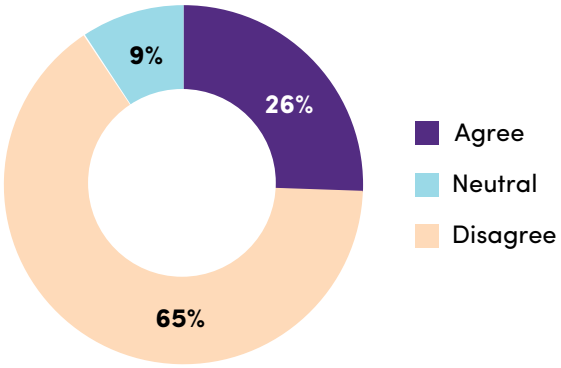
The use of Gen AI does not affect the relationship journalists have with their profession.

3.1 A More Pronounced Dependence among the Less-experienced

Just two years after it became available, about a quarter (26%) of respondents already reported being dependent on Gen AI to perform certain tasks related to their work (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Dependence on Gen AI
(N=378)

In response to the statement: "*I depend on generative AI to perform certain work-related activities.*"

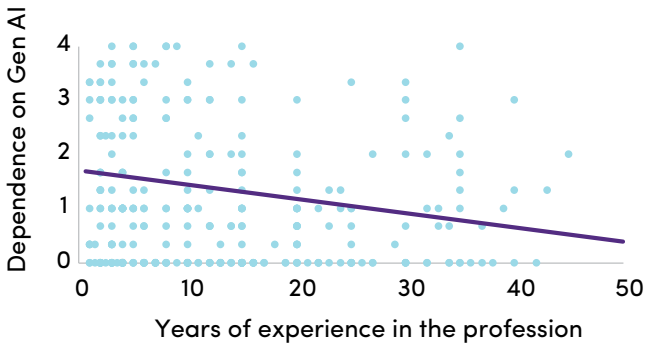


This dependence is particularly pronounced among less-experienced journalists (Figure 13). As tenure in the profession increases, the sense of dependence tends to decrease.

These results confirm the presence of a generational effect already observed in the frequency of use and the associated effects of these tools (see Section 1).

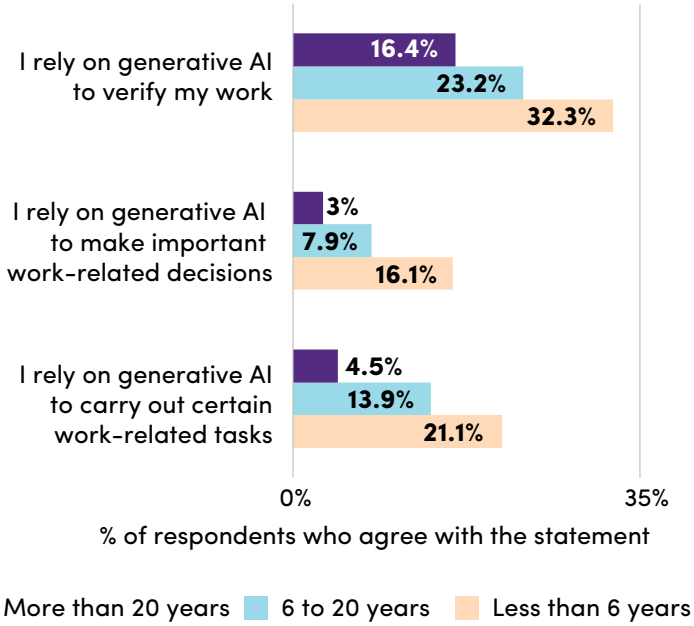
Figure 13: Dependence on Gen AI by Experience in Journalism
(N=378)

On a scale from 0 to 6, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."



A more detailed analysis of young journalists' dependence on Gen AI shows that these tools are primarily used to perform tasks related to the profession, rather than for decision-making or verifying work (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Dependence on Gen AI by Task Type and Experience in Journalism
(N=342)

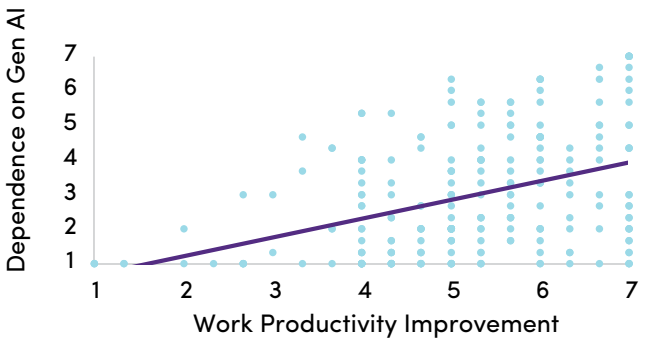


Furthermore, dependence on Gen AI is associated with the perception that these tools enable faster work while also improving the quality of the output (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Dependence on Gen AI Based on Perception of its Effects on Work (N=239)

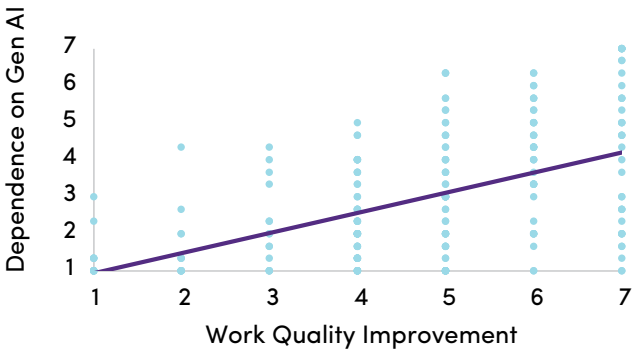
Regarding the Perceived Improvement in Work Productivity

On a scale from 1 to 7, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."



Regarding the Perceived Improvement in Work Quality

On a scale from 1 to 7, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."



3.2 Significant Ethical Concerns, but Less So Among Regular Users

While Gen AI is seen as a useful tool, its use in journalism raises various concerns.

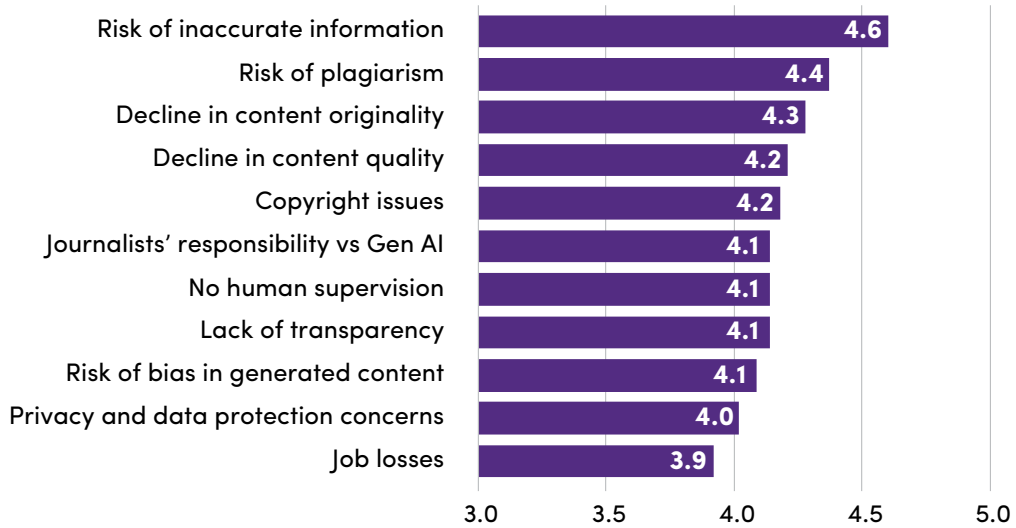
As Figure 16 shows, the concerns expressed by the journalists surveyed primarily relate to their professional obligations – particularly the risks associated with the dissemination of inaccurate information, the loss of originality, and the deterioration of content quality. They also focus on the business model of the media, which is under pressure from the emergence of new actors related to Gen AI, with concerns about plagiarism and copyright issues.

> *"Generative AIs seem to me like plagiarism machines. Their tendency to hallucinate responses makes them unreliable tools for journalism."* [9]

Figure 16: Ethical Concerns
(N=383)

In response to the following: *"For each statement, please indicate the extent to which the use of generative AI in journalism concerns you, using the scale provided."*

On a scale from 0 to 6, ranging from "not at all concerned" to "very concerned."



9 Translated from French.

Ethical concerns are closely related to the frequency of Gen AI use by journalists (Figure 17): the greater the ethical concerns, the less these tools are used. Conversely, the frequency of use is also associated with the level of concern.

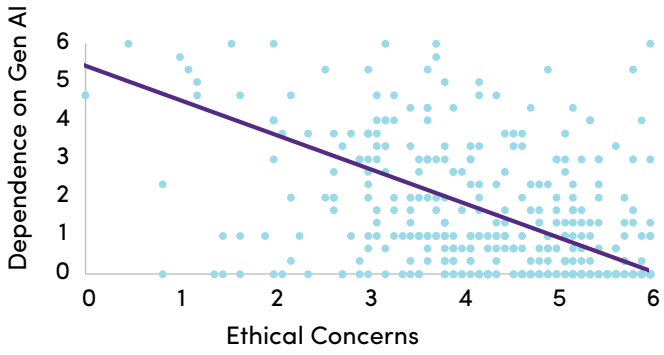
In other words, the more they are used, the less they are distrusted – and vice versa.

Figure 17: General Ethical Concerns by Frequency of Gen AI Use
(N=383)

On a scale from 0 to 6.

Even more pronounced, journalists who reported being dependent on Gen AI expressed fewer ethical concerns (Figure 18). This correlation suggests that dependence is associated with lower levels of concern.

Figure 18: Dependence on Gen AI Based on Ethical Concerns
(N=378)



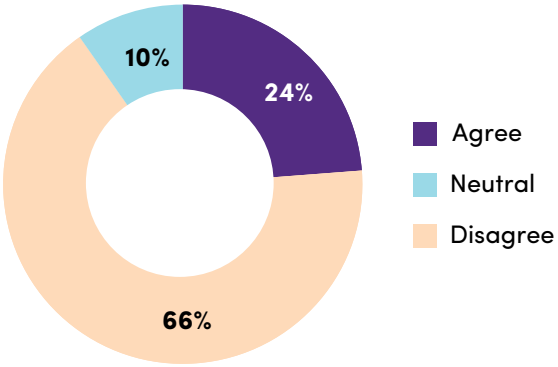
3.3 A Present but Marginal Fear of Replacement

Although the fear of being replaced by Gen AI is not one of the main ethical concerns of journalists, it is nevertheless a very real fear within the profession.

Survey results indicate that nearly a quarter of the journalists surveyed (24%) fear that these tools could replace their jobs (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Fear of Replacement by Gen AI
(N=370)

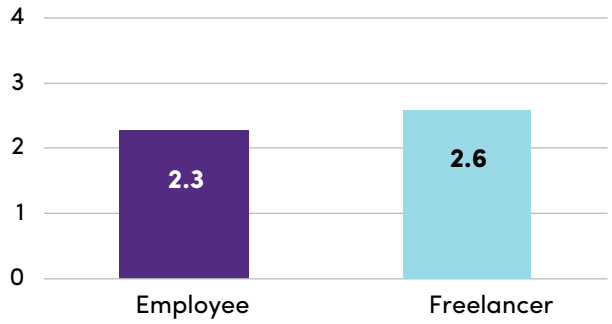
In response to the statement: *"I believe that AI could replace me in my work."*



This fear is slightly more pronounced among freelancers, who appear to be more exposed and vulnerable to this prospect (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Fear of Replacement by Gen AI by Employment Status
(N=370)

On a scale from 0 to 6, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."



For some, this insecurity leads to re-evaluation of their professional path and even to doubts about the possibility of building a stable career in the profession.

> *"I love my work, but currently as a young journalist I am struggling greatly with future work opportunities in the near future."*

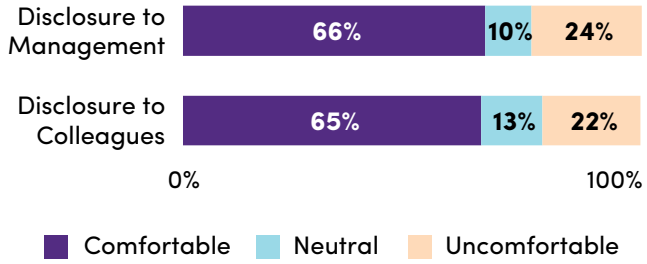
3.4 A Use Still Largely Undisclosed

The use of Gen AI is socially sensitive: it raises numerous ethical concerns and is subject to relatively unstructured regulation.

Thus, despite the productivity and quality gains it can offer, nearly a quarter of the journalists surveyed consider it a taboo subject or something difficult to admit to in their work environment (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Disclosure of Use
(N=246)

In response to the statement: "I am comfortable with my colleagues/management knowing that I use generative AI as part of my job."



The importance of reputation within the profession could hinder usage: a notable proportion of journalists are reluctant to disclose their use of Gen AI, either to their colleagues (22%) or to their management (24%).

This reluctance could reflect a fear of undermining their professional legitimacy, which is often strongly tied to their attachment to the profession. It could also contribute to underestimating the actual extent of Gen AI use in journalistic practices.

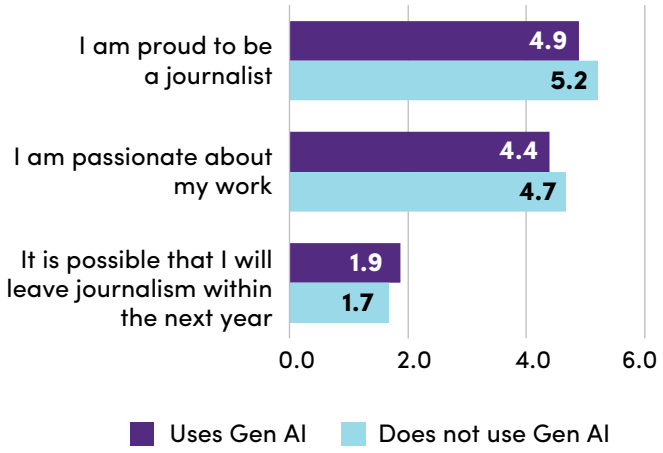
3.5 A Generally Unchanged Attachment to the Profession

Finally, Gen AI does not seem to harm the strong bonds that journalists generally have with their profession.

Whether they use Gen AI or not, journalists show a comparable and high level of attachment to their profession (Figure 22), as measured by their professional pride, passion for their work, or intention to leave the journalism profession.

Figure 22: Attachment to the Profession
(N=370)

On a scale from 0 to 6, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."



4

How Does the Context Shape the Use of Gen AI?

Key findings at a glance

This section addresses a fourth and final question: "How does the context shape the use of Gen AI?". The analysis highlights the structuring role of the work environment in the use of these tools by journalists.

Beyond individual practices, Gen AI – and AI more broadly – exists within organizational dynamics, both in terms of adoption and regulation. Although internal policies are often not very visible or well known, their orientation – whether encouraging or restrictive – appears to align with journalists' professional practices.

Our results indicate that adoption is more frequent in private organizations, while union membership seems to play a secondary role.

1

A significant proportion of journalists surveyed were unable to indicate whether their organization had invested in AI, adopted these tools, or implemented policies regulating their use.

2

Organizational changes related to the adoption of AI are accompanied by a greater fear of job loss.

3

Private organizations seem quicker to adopt Gen AI, either through investment or by adapting their processes to these tools.

4

Union membership plays a secondary role: unions do not appear to encourage or hinder the individual use of Gen AI.

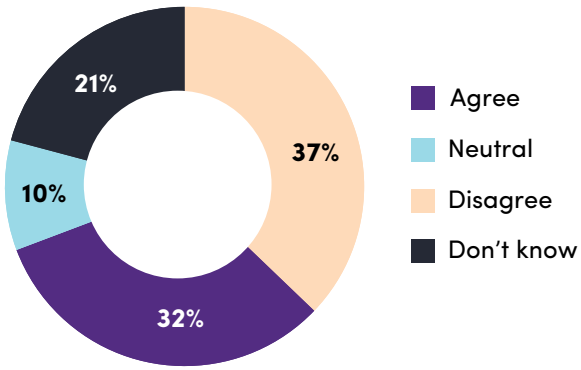
4.1 Limited Investments and Adoption but Effects are already Perceptible

A first indicator to measure the adoption of Gen AI by media organizations is the amount invested in these tools. Only a third of respondents reported that their organization had invested in Gen AI, compared to 37% who believed the opposite (Figure 23). However, 21% said they did not know, suggesting that for a significant proportion of journalists there is a lack of clarity about organizational adoption of Gen AI – either due to a lack of internal communication or because adoption is still marginal.

While organizational investments in Gen AI are perceived as limited, their effects seem to be real where they do occur.

Figure 23: Organizational Investments in Gen AI (N=374)

In response to the statement: "*The organization has invested funds in the deployment of Gen AI.*"



Moreover, the journalists surveyed believe that the growing adoption of Gen AI by their organization is leading to changes in their tasks and in the organization of work (Figure 24).

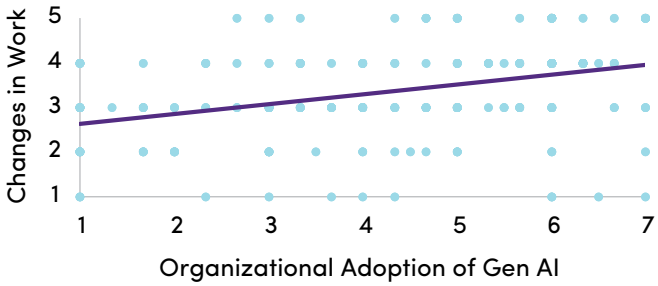
Figure 24: Changes in Work Based on Level of Organizational Adoption of Gen AI (N=218)

For changes in work:
In response to the question: "To what extent has the use of generative AI changed your tasks or the organization of your work?"

On a scale from 1 to 5, ranging from "no change" to "significant change."

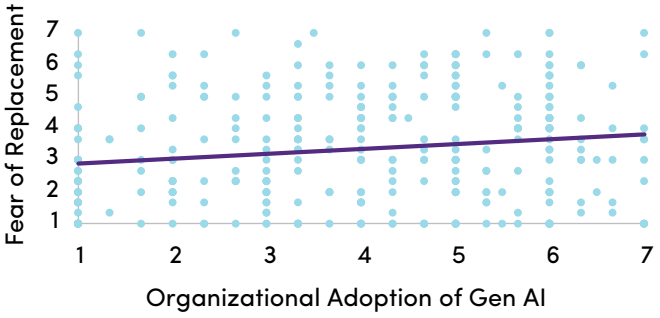
For the level of organizational adoption:
In response to the statement: "The organization has taken a close interest in the integration of AI."

On a scale from 1 to 7, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."



Organizational changes related to the adoption of Gen AI are also accompanied by rising concerns about job security. As Figure 25 shows, journalists working in organizations that had adopted Gen AI expressed more concerns about potential technological replacement.

Figure 25: Fear of Replacement Based on Level of Organizational Adoption of Gen AI (N=324)



4.2 From Oversight Policies with Varying Aims to Broadly Unknown Guidelines

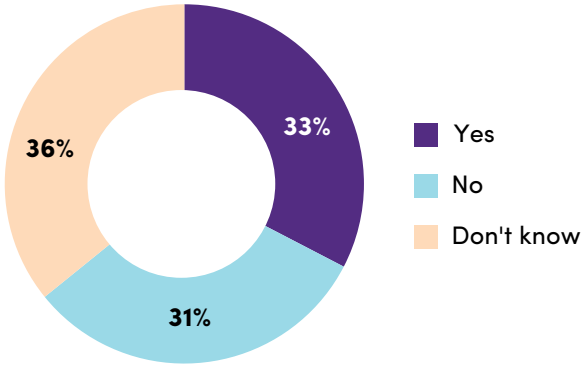
The policies that regulate Gen AI within media organizations appear to be very heterogeneous and, to a large extent, unclear.

> *"It is difficult for me to know how it [Gen AI] is being used, or what new tools can be explored. There is a policy, but it mainly serves to set limits and maintain what we are doing."* [10]

Journalists have little knowledge of these regulatory policies, with 36% of respondents stating that they did not know if such policies existed within their organization (Figure 26).

Figure 26: Existence of Organizational Policies Regulating Gen AI
(N=374)

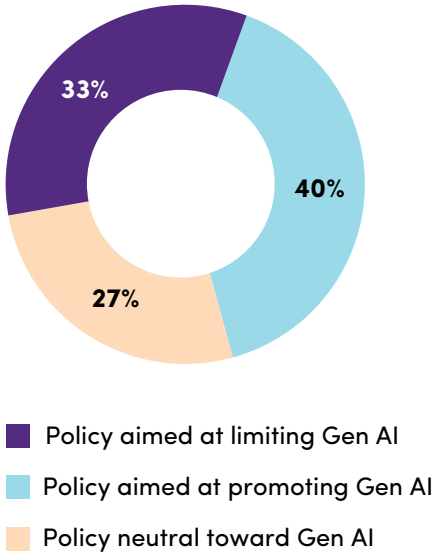
In response to the question: *"To your knowledge, is the use of Gen AI within the organization regulated by a policy or another mechanism?"*



According to the journalists surveyed, the policies that regulate Gen AI have very diverse aims, with 40% aiming to promote its use, 33% aiming to limit it, and 26% being neutral (Figure 27).

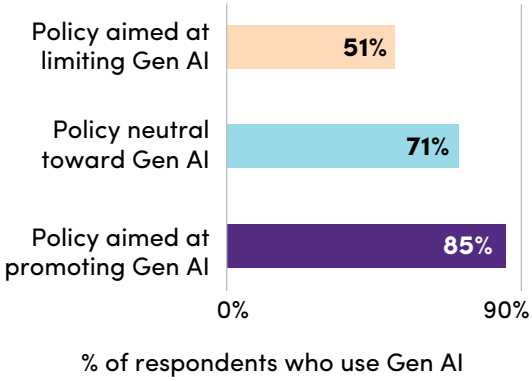
Figure 27: Perceived Orientation of Organizational Policies on Gen AI
(N=117)

In response to the question: *"In your opinion, does this policy tend to promote or limit the use of Gen AI?"*



Moreover, the orientation of these policies appears to have a relative influence on journalists' practices (Figure 28). In organizations which encourage the use of Gen AI, 85% of respondents reported using it. Conversely, in contexts with more restrictive oversight, more than half of the journalists surveyed said they still use these tools.

Figure 28: Use of Gen AI Based on Perceived Orientation of Organizational Policies
(N=117)



10 Translated from French.

4.3 A Professional and Union Framework That Lacks Structure

The organizational adoption and regulation of Gen AI take place within a broader professional and union context, which also influences individual usage. The type of governance in organizations and journalists' union membership appear to be two factors that influence their use of Gen AI.

The use of Gen AI varies according to the type of governance, with marked differences between organizations. As illustrated in Figures 29 and 30, private companies are where the highest number of respondents reported using Gen AI regularly (32%) and perceive strong adoption of AI by their organization (financial investments or a reconfiguration of work organization).

Figure 29: Frequency of Gen AI Use by Type of Governance
(N=400)

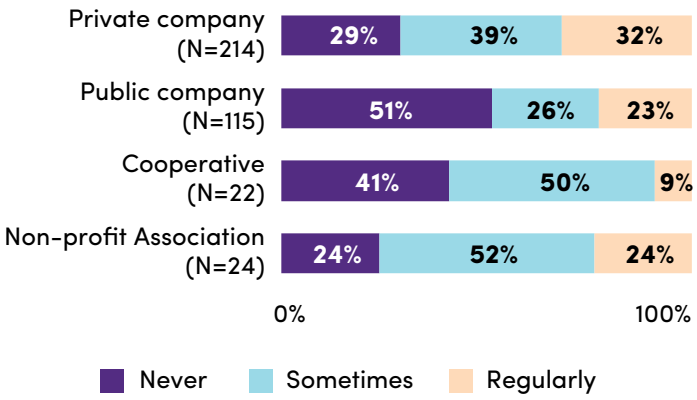
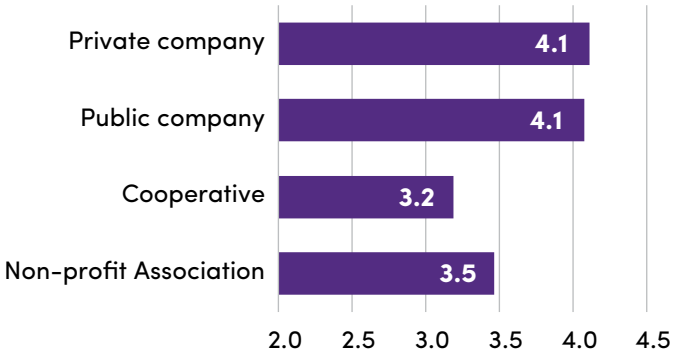
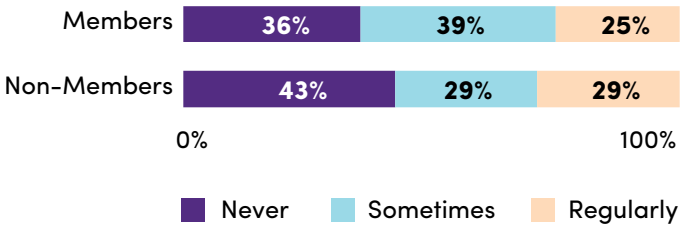


Figure 30: Organizational Adoption of AI by Type of Governance
(N=326)



Finally, while the use of Gen AI varies according to the type of governance, journalists' union membership seems to play a marginal role. Figure 31 shows minimal differences between unionized and non-unionized journalists, suggesting that being part of a union neither acts as a lever for nor a barrier to the adoption of Gen AI.

Figure 31: Frequency of Use by Union Membership
(N=357)



Perspectives

A little over two years after the emergence of Gen AI, our study provides a first assessment of its use by journalists and identifies trends regarding its potential effects on the future of the profession. Like other scientific works (Diakopoulos, 2019[11]; Marconi, 2020[12]), this study highlights certain benefits that journalists and media outlets might gain from Gen AI. While not minimizing these advantages, this final section primarily focuses on the emerging challenges that we believe it is essential to address in order to envision a desirable future for journalism. The five points discussed here should be understood as avenues for reflection based on emerging trends rather than definitive conclusions directly drawn from our research findings.

Reflection Point #1

Preventing the potential erosion of critical skills essential to the profession, particularly among young journalists.

Journalism relies on the progressive acquisition of essential skills (critical thinking, information structuring, reasoning, active learning, etc.). However, the results of this survey raise concerns that young, regular, and already dependent users of Gen AI may not be acquiring this critical skill set.

Recent studies conducted in learning contexts support these concerns: they show that, while Gen AI can lead to better short-term results, it can also hinder the acquisition of skills. Like a crutch, Gen AI allows users to function by reducing their cognitive efforts. However, the use of this crutch can slow down the acquisition of the metacognitive abilities necessary for skill development and continuous learning. Intensive or prolonged use could then lead to "metacognitive laziness" (Fan et al., 2024[13]), which could be detrimental to journalists' professional development. This risk is particularly concerning given that, according to our study, the most regular and dependent users of Gen AI are also those whose ethical vigilance appears to be the least sharp.

Reflection Point #2

Anticipating the risk of polarization within the profession.

Connected to the previous point, the widespread adoption of Gen AI also raises concerns about a potential division within the profession. This division could polarize the field between "augmented" (or preserved) journalists who retain their autonomy and expertise through Gen AI and professionals who are more exposed to automation, potentially becoming replaceable and in competition with the machine. In particular, freelance journalists seem to have multiple vulnerabilities in the face of this technological transition (unequal access to training, limited influence on editorial decisions, minimal union protection, unstable workflows, and strong economic pressures). Freelancers could be particularly exposed to a deterioration in their working conditions and pay.

11 Diakopoulos, N. (2019). *Automating the news: How algorithms are rewriting the media.* Harvard University Press.
12 Marconi, F. (2020). *Newsmakers: Artificial intelligence and the future of journalism.* Columbia University Press.
13 Fan, Y., Tang, L., Le, H., Shen, K., Tan, S., Zhao, Y., Shen, Y., Li, X., & Gašević, D. (2024). Beware of metacognitive laziness: Effects of generative artificial intelligence on learning motivation, processes, and performance. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 56(2), 489–530. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.13544

Reflection Point #3

Gen AI and "productivism": preventing risks related to employment and work intensification.

A productivist approach to the adoption of Gen AI exposes journalists to two types of risk: work intensification and job displacement.

Intensification can be seen in an increase in the expected volume of production but also in a qualitative transformation of tasks. The automation of simple activities – such as transcription or monitoring – pushes journalists to refocus on higher-value tasks, which are often more cognitively and emotionally demanding.

At the same time, the productivity gains associated with Gen AI can lead to workforce reductions, especially if these tools are deployed with a rationalization logic. While this risk is not widely expressed in current concerns, it could materialize as the use of Gen AI intensifies. Our data also show a significant correlation between organizational adoption of Gen AI and the fear of job loss.

Reflection Point #4

Ensuring a fair distribution of the productivity gains enabled by Gen AI.

Our study shows that for journalists who use Gen AI, their main motivation lies in the pursuit of productivity gains, particularly in the form of time savings. Other studies (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024[14], Newman & Cherubini, 2025[15]) indicate that this same motivation drives employers to integrate these tools into editorial teams.

In this context, how this "freed" time will be reinvested raises key questions: Will it be used to produce more, or to produce better? And, more importantly, who will actually benefit from these productivity gains: the journalists themselves, or primarily the organizations that employ them?

These questions become even more important when journalists have actively contributed to the development or training of these tools. To ensure a fair distribution of the benefits, it is essential that the development and integration projects of Gen AI – and AI more broadly – are presented with full transparency and discussed in advance with journalists and their representatives.

Reflection Point #5

Building collective and proactive regulation of Gen AI.

As the use of Gen AI becomes widespread in newsrooms, its regulation is still largely in its infancy. The majority of journalists surveyed indicated that their employer had not implemented any clear policy, or that they were unaware of whether such rules existed. Union presence, in turn, seems to have a limited impact in the face of these changes. In this context of uncertainty, one conclusion is clear: in the absence of a collective framework, the risks of negative outcomes – regarding employment, autonomy, remuneration, or working conditions – are very real.

At the industry level, the establishment of norms requires a process involving all stakeholders, starting with professional associations, to account for the diversity of roles and the variety of working conditions in the profession.

At the organizational level, Gen AI experimentation and deployment projects must involve journalists and their representatives from the earliest stages. Freelancers, in particular, should also be included in these processes to avoid perpetuating – or even amplifying –the structural inequalities linked to their status.

14 Cools, H., & Diakopoulos, N. A. (2024). Uses of generative AI in the newsroom: Mapping journalists' perceptions of perils and possibilities. *Journalism Practice.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2024.2394558

15 Newman, N., & Cherubini, F. (2025). *Journalism, media, and technology trends and predictions 2025.* Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. https://doi.org/10.60625/risj-vte1-x706

Annex

Methodology

The study is based on multi-channel data collection conducted using electronic questionnaires between September and December 2024 which yielded a total of 400 responses from Canadian and international journalists.

The sample includes journalists of all nationalities, with a strong representation of Canadian professionals, particularly from Québec, as well as international journalists working in various media contexts around the world.

Participants were recruited through four distribution channels:

1. Via partner trade and professional organizations, including the Fédération Nationale des Communications et de la Culture (FNCC-CSN), the Canadian Media Guild (GCM), the Association des Journalistes Indépendants du Québec (AJIQ), and the Fédération Professionnelle des Journalistes du Québec (FPJQ), which shared the call for participation through the following channels: websites, social media accounts, newsletters, and/or solicitation emails.
2. The distribution of the questionnaire on LinkedIn, within targeted professional communities.
3. Promotion directly with participants during the annual conference of the Fédération Professionnelle des Journalistes du Québec (FPJQ).
4. The use of the Prolific platform to recruit participants on a global scale[16].

16 The survey was distributed on the Prolific platform to members who identified themselves as journalists.

Sample and respondent profiles

The two subgroups of journalists – Canadian and international – show notable diversity in terms of geographic origin, gender, employment status, and union membership. Table 1 presents the specific characteristics of respondents from each of these subgroups.

Table 1: Respondent Profiles

Respondent	Canadian Journalists (145 respondents)	International Journalists (225 respondents)
Geographic Origin	Québec: 63% Ontario: 20% Rest of Canada: 17%	United States: 31% United Kingdom: 24% South Africa: 10% Germany: 5% Other countries: 25% Not specified: 5%
Gender	Women: 54% Men: 43% Not specified: 3%	Women: 51% Men: 46% Not specified: 3%
Employment Status	Employee: 65% • 83% full-time permanent • 9% part-time permanent • 8% contractual or other Freelancer: 27% Other: 7% Not specified: 1%	Employee: 47% • 71% full-time permanent • 12% part-time permanent • 17% contractual or other Freelancer: 41% Other: 10% Not specified: 2%
Union Membership	Employees: 67%	Employees: 38%

Representativeness of the sample

Due to the non-probabilistic nature of our sample, it is not possible to determine the extent to which it reflects the overall journalistic population. Its composition generally follows the main trends in the sector. However, as Table 2 shows, some discrepancies are observable: in Québec and Canada, our sample includes more women, slightly more older individuals, and a slight overrepresentation of employed journalists. Internationally, respondents are younger, more often women, and more frequently freelancers compared to the reference data.

Table 2: Representativeness of the Sample

	Québec and Canada		International		
	Our Sample	Comparison	Comparison	Comparison	
				USA	UK
Age	15-24: 5% 25-34: 24% 35-44: 24% 45-54: 19% 55-64: 20% 65 and more: 7%	15-24: 4% 25-34: 31% 35-44: 25% 45-54: 20% 55-64: 17% 65 and over: 3%[17]	Under 50: 85% 50 and over: 15%	Under 50: 72% 50 and over: 28%[18]	Under 50: 65% 50 and over: 35%[19]
Gender	Women: 54% Men: 43%	Women: 45% Men: 55%[20]	Women: 51% Men: 46%	Women: 41% Men: 58%[21]	Women: 40% Men: 59%[22]
Employment Status	Employee: 65% Freelancer: 27%	Employee: 58% Freelancer: 36%[23]	Employee: 47% Freelancer: 41%	Employee: 65% Freelancer: 34%[24]	Employee: 61% Freelancer: 39%[25]

Remarks on interpretation of the analyses presented in the report

Most of the results presented in this report are expressed as percentages of respondents. Due to rounding to the nearest whole number, the totals may not add up to exactly 100%.

There may also be disparities between the Canadian, Québécois, and international populations, although they are not specifically analyzed in this report.

Finally, all the indicators presented are self-reported. Some – such as dependency on Gen AI or ethical concerns – may be subject to social desirability bias, meaning there was a tendency to provide answers that are perceived as socially valued or acceptable.

17 Statistique Canada. (2021). *Population active occupée ayant travaillé toute l'année, à temps plein et ayant déclaré un revenu d'emploi en 2020, Recensement de 2021.* https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/dv-vd/occ-pro/index-fr.cfm

18 Willnat, L., & Weaver, D. H. (2022). *The 2022 American Journalist: A national survey of U.S. journalists.* https://www.theamericanjournalist.org/_files/ugd/46a507_4fe1c4d6ec6d4c229895282965258a7a.pdf

19 Statista. (2023). *Distribution of journalists employed in the UK in 2022, by age.* https://www.statista.com/statistics/1299240/distribution-of-journalists-employed-in-the-uk-by-age/

20 Statista. (2023). *Distribution of journalists employed in the UK in* 2022, by gender. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1299270/distribution-of-journalists-employed-in-the-uk-by-gender/

21 Willnat, L., & Weaver, D. H. (2022). *The 2022 American Journalist: A national survey of* U.S. journalists. https://www.theamericanjournalist.org/_files/ugd/46a507_4fe1c4d6ec6d4c229895282965258a7a.pdf

22 Statista. (2023). *Distribution of journalists employed in the* UK in 2022, by gender. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1299270/distribution-of-journalists-employed-in-the-uk-by-gender/

23 Wikipédia. (n.d.). *Fédération professionn*elle des journalistes du Québec. https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/F%C3%A9d%C3%A9ration_professionnelle_des_journalistes_du_Qu%C3%A9bec

24 Pew Research Center. (2023, April 4). *U.S. journalists' beats vary widely* by gender and other factors. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/04/04/us-journalists-beats-vary-widely-by-gender-and-other-factors/

25 National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ). (2024). *Journalists at Work 2024.* https://www.nctj.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Journalists-at-Work-2024.pdf

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