

# THE WHO OF JOURNALISM

## Module 2

### WHY THIS TOPIC MATTERS

Public trust in journalism needs to be regained because journalism is an essential part of democracy.

Journalists are not evil or enemies of the people and should not be labeled as such. They are local community members who strive to inform the public.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

So, who exactly are journalists?

The American Press Institute (API) [defines a journalist](#) as one who “places the public good above all else and uses certain methods — the foundation of which is a discipline of verification — to gather and assess what he or she finds.”

Journalists gather and report on information to help the public make informed decisions. Journalists strive to be as transparent and as objective as possible in their work.

Journalists include reporters, correspondents, producers, anchors, writers, editors and more. The number of news reporters in the United States reached 19,430 in 2020, according to [Zippia Careers](#), with 52.9% being women and 41.7% being men.

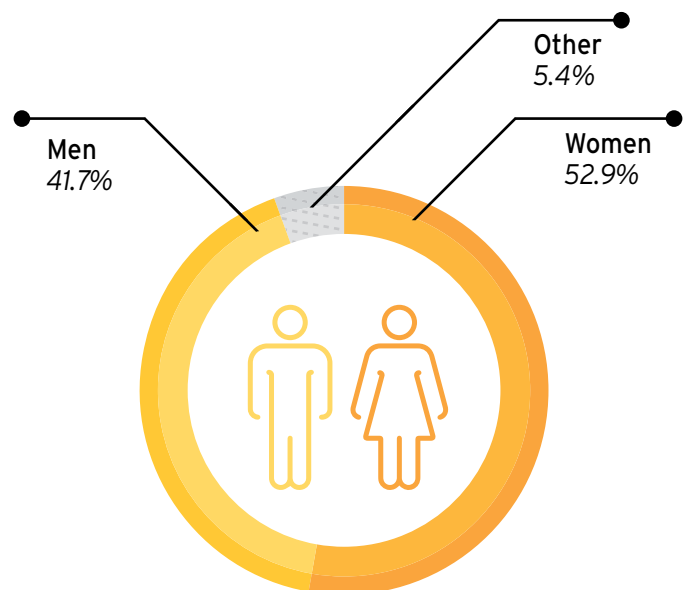


Fig 2.1 News Reporter Gender Ratio Source: Zippia.com

Journalists can work for a variety of media and communications outlets, such as newspapers, television, radio, magazines, web and social media. Some journalists work on their own, or freelance. Some journalists race to face daily deadlines on short-term



Fig 2.2 One third of Americans believe journalists are the “enemy of the people.” Source: 2019 Hill-Harris X poll survey

stories, while others spend years in extended research and investigation to create deep-dive articles, TV programs or documentaries. Many of these journalists do both at the same time!

Despite the importance of journalism in societies, some leaders and citizens have criticized journalists and falsely labeled them. A [2019 poll](#) revealed that one-third of Americans actually believe that journalists are the “enemy of the people.”

Sure, journalists make mistakes, as do people in all professions. But journalists are not evil; they are storytellers whose main purpose is to inform the public in an objective way. And not all journalists are just those you see broadcasting from big cities like New York City or Washington, D.C. Journalists are part of communities — they are your neighbors.

## Journalism Research and Innovation Project

A group of students and faculty are working to clarify and inform the public of the intrinsic value of journalism in society through a series of publications (including this article). The members include:



**Dr. Ed Carter**

BYU faculty member



**Dr. Kris Boyle**

BYU faculty member



**Scott Lunt**

Documentary  
Filmmaker



**JOURNALISM RESEARCH  
AND INNOVATION PROJECT**

Fig 2.3 Journalism Research and  
Innovation Project Logo



**Hannah Koford**

Student Researcher



**Emma Bensen**

Student Researcher



**Lauren Jensen**

Student Designer

## BYU's Journalists

Here at BYU, we have journalism professors and mentors with a wide range of experiences, including TV news, newspaper reporting, magazine writing, and sports journalism.



Dr. Quint Randle has started and run several journalism entrepreneurial ventures, like a hockey magazine.



Dr. Kris Boyle worked as a reporter at the Idaho Falls Post-Register.



Prof. Joel Campbell was a reporter and editor at the Deseret News.



Carrie Moore was also a reporter and editor at the Deseret News.



Dr. Dale Cressman was a TV news producer in several markets around the United States.



Dr. Miles Romney worked in TV news and for the Utah Jazz.



Prof. Bob Walz was a long-time reporter and anchor at several Salt Lake City TV news organizations.



Prof. Ed Carter was a reporter for the Deseret News and wrote for newspapers in Illinois and Mexico while in graduate journalism school at Northwestern.



Steve Fidel was a photographer and editor, and he worked for both the Deseret News and KSL.



Melissa Gibbs worked as a TV news producer in several newsrooms across Utah.



Alan Neves worked as a photojournalist for KSL and KUTV News.

## "ANYONE CAN BE A JOURNALIST"

With the advancement in social media and other forms of technology, it has become increasingly difficult to define who exactly is a journalist. Nowadays, anyone can technically produce journalism by simply snapping a photo and sharing it online.

However, [API](#) suggests that there are differences between working journalists and members of the public who participate in journalism, noting that “merely engaging in journalistic-like activity — snapping a cell-phone picture at the scene of a fire or creating a blog site for news and comment — does not by itself produce a journalistic product. Though it can and sometimes does, there is a distinction between the act of journalism and the end result.”

One of the reasons it matters to define and identify journalists is that the laws in many states and nations provide some protection for newsgathering by journalists. Because journalism is a public good, the process of gathering news for the public benefit may receive some protection from subpoenas and other invasive legal mechanisms. The purpose of these “shield laws” or “reporter’s privilege” protections is to facilitate the continued free flow of information from news sources to journalists to the public.



Fig 2.4 Public Interest Graphic

## CONCLUSION

Journalists can be described in many ways. They may be career professionals working in a traditional newsroom, or short-term participants in a news story — or anywhere in between. They come from many walks of life and share their thoughts through many different mediums. They create long in-depth articles, or one-off photos posted online. Their audiences can be a handful of friends and neighbors, or millions of simultaneous viewers. Yet all of these functions and outlets have in common a devotion to inform the public and increase the public good. This, in the end, is what defines a journalist.



**JOURNALISM  
RESEARCH AND  
INNOVATION  
PROJECT**