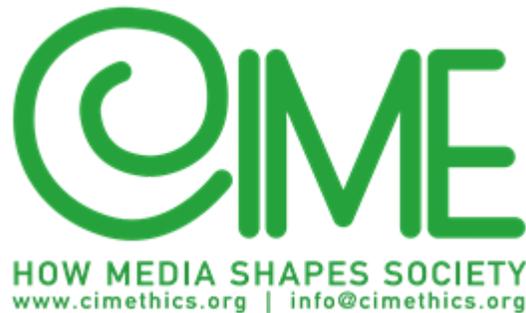


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Happy New Year!!!

We at CIME are pleased to share with you the results from the Media Ethics in the Post-Truth Era survey. The aim of the survey was to learn from our colleagues and associates about the state of media ethics in relation to the growing concerns and challenges that fake news presents in your respective countries.

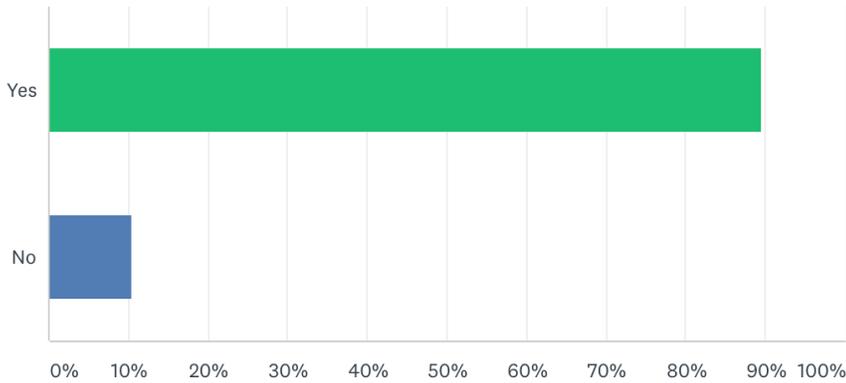
Overall, we hope that the results of the survey offer us all, as journalists and media practitioners, an opportunity to reflect on 2017, and think more collectively about the work that we do going forward into 2018.

Survey Results

Before we begin, we would like to point out that while we got responses from across Africa, the Americas, Central and South Asia, Europe and Oceania, we did not get any responses from South-East Asia (ASEAN) or China. At CIME we aim to reach as many respondents as possible, but given people's commitments this is not always possible.

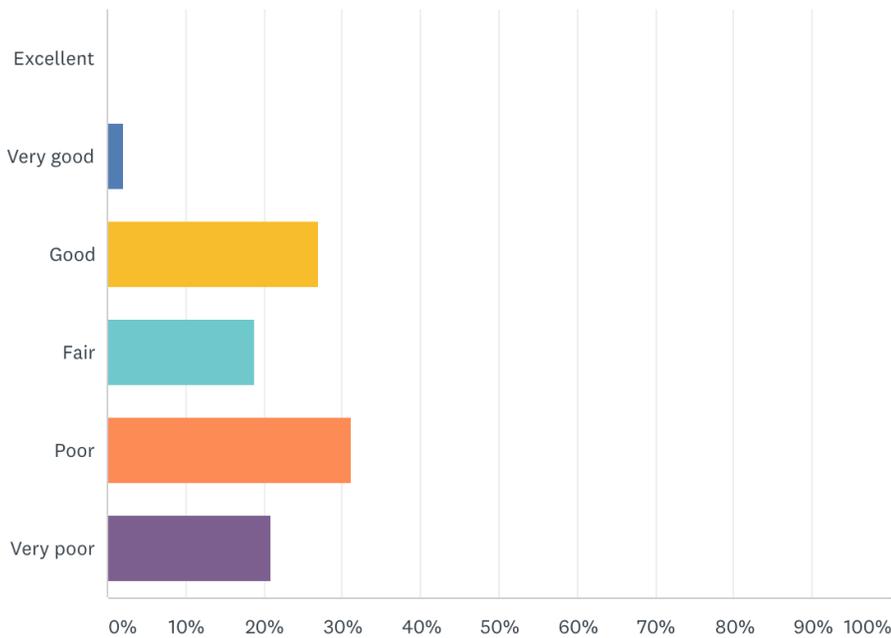
Nevertheless, globally it was clear that there has been a staggering increase in sensationalist and fake news. In fact, **90% of you** had witnessed this in your work, as seen in the first graph below. While we are aware that this is not new, nor unique to 2017 only, as seen by the continuous discussions and debates over Russia's efforts to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election, 'fake news' has a significant potential for manipulating and influencing public opinions.

Q2. Have you witnessed an increase in sensationalist and fake news in local/national media in the country you live/work in?



When asked about whether your government is protecting media ethics against these emerging trends in fake news and media manipulation, not one said excellent, and a total of **51% said between poor and very poor.**

Q8. How would you rank the country in which you live/work in regards to the government protecting media ethics?

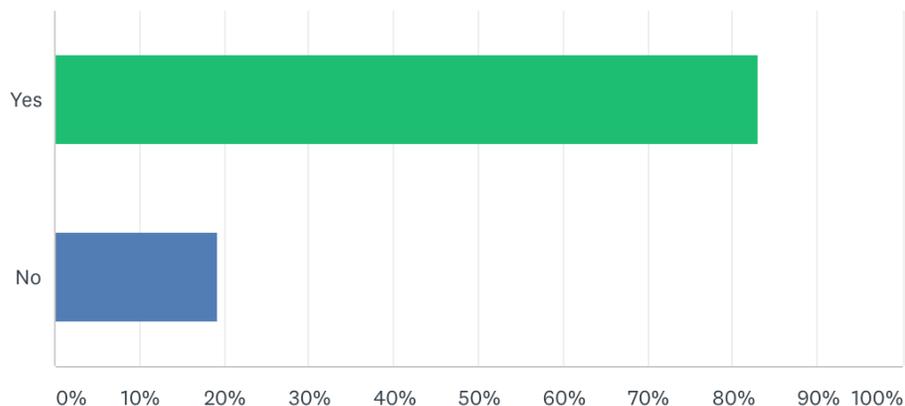


To emphasize these numbers, many of you shared some of the 'fake news' stories in your home countries, which ranged from the death of Robert Mugabe, matters pertaining to Catalan's Independence Process, the North Korean missile program to Muslims seemingly killing Hindus in India. All of which can flare unnecessary and unwanted conflicts as well as matters of fear mongering and invoking hatred. Such stories often create an image or argument that favours a particular interests without taking into consideration the basic principles of ethical journalism and news reporting which is endangering this profession.

Some of you also mentioned how these stories which are shared via new sources of information such as Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms, "purport to be news [without] sourcing, research and diligence done by traditional media." While there are many social media platforms, which publish information unprofessionally, many traditional media outlets and national broadcasters also operate unethically. As was mentioned in one comment, in countries like Brazil, the dissemination of misinformation through traditional media sources "has been always sensationalist". Therefore, this is not a matter of "new" verses "traditional", but complete media ecosystem matter.

A follow up concern to this, was whether or not there has been an increase in media outlets and/or journalists following the agenda of political and corporate elites.

Q3. Have you witnessed an increase in the media outlets and/or journalists following the agenda of political and corporate elites in the country you live/work in?

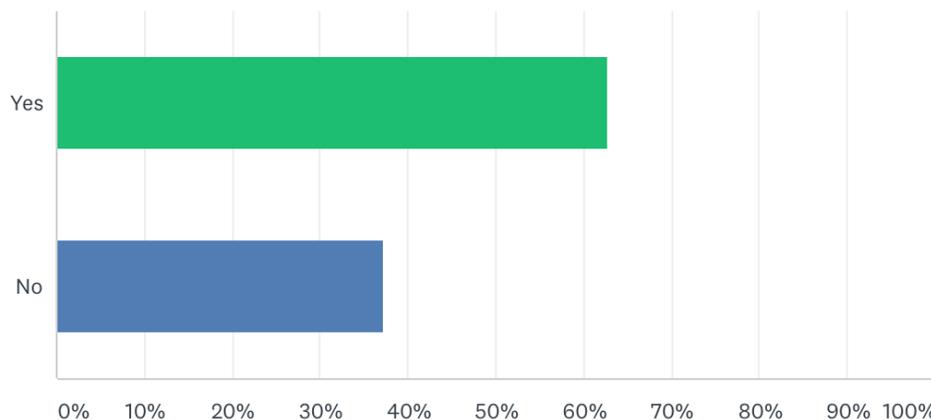


Again, a large majority (**82.9%**) **agreed** that there has been an increase. While many media outlets and broadcasters can openly criticize their presidents and corporate elites (those who have a large stake in a particular country), many of you continue to have a strong state media presence, which supports the state's agenda.

What was more interesting, were comments made about how some governments who want to be seen as having a free and fair media are using alternative methods to indirectly propagate their messages and information through trolls. For example, it was raised in one of the comments that a number of private and/or online media outlets “who write under false names” are paid by politicians, ruling parties and corporate elites to write stories to champion their character and public reputation.

This question also flared another issue, the relationship between political parties and corporate elites. Two great examples of this that were shared were the on-going controversy over the Gupta family and Jacob Zuma in South Africa which has been labelled as ‘Guptagate’ and the power held by Globo Media in Brazil. Noam Chomsky's observations about propaganda and corporate media are useful reminders about what Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2004) defined as ‘political parallelism’ in both these cases.

Q4. Have any efforts been made by media outlets in the country you currently live/work in to invest in quality information and to combat hatred, racism and intolerance?

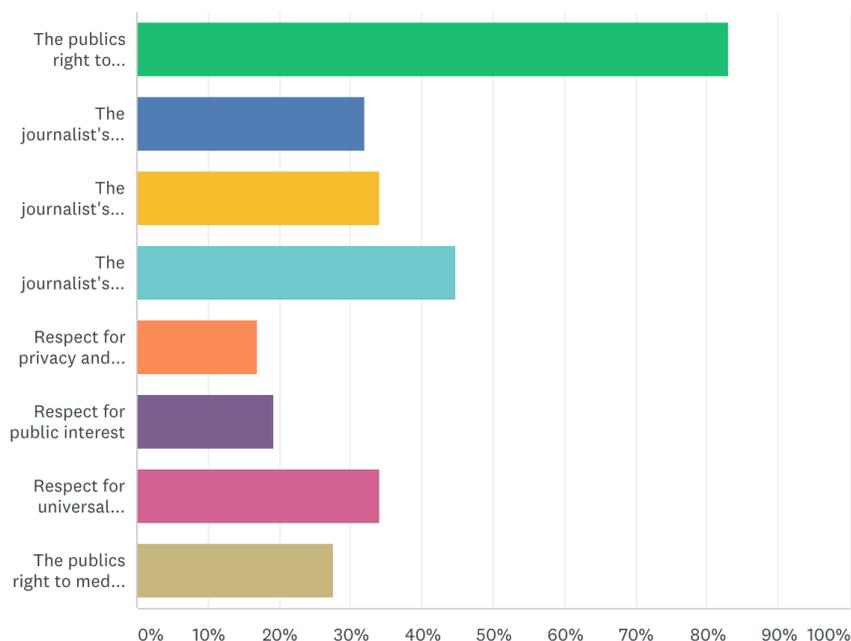


Nevertheless, **62.7%** of you stated that efforts have been made by media outlets to invest in quality

information to combat hatred, racism and intolerance; either through “firing particular journalists” who are not maintaining their professionalism, establishing “alternative quality news sources”, “editorial-opinion pieces [that] demand responses from government and political leaders”, state broadcasters working “in collaboration with organisations such as the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ)” and national newspapers “investing in fact checking teams whose role is to debunk fake news”. Such examples should not go unnoticed and should be recognized for upholding media ethics and combating matters of unprofessionalism, unethical reporting and matters relating to political parallelism.

Following on from these responses, the three principles which you suggested require the most attention in your country were - **The publics right to accurate and fair information (82.9%)**, **The journalist's professional integrity (44.6%)** and joint third **The journalist's social responsibility and Respect for universal values and diversity of cultures (34%)**. Nevertheless, it was clear from the results that all areas require attention, which emphasises that more work needs to be done.

Q5. In your opinion, which three principles from the list below require the most attention in the country you currently live/work in?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ The publics right to accurate and fair information	82.98%
▼ The journalist's dedication to objective reality	31.91%
▼ The journalist's social responsibility	34.04%
▼ The journalist's professional integrity	44.68%
▼ Respect for privacy and human dignity	17.02%
▼ Respect for public interest	19.15%
▼ Respect for universal values and diversity of cultures	34.04%
▼ The publics right to media and information literacy	27.66%

As for what were some of the main issues or current violations of ethical reporting that you as a journalist or media practitioner face in order to carry out your work; **Fake news (58.3%)**, **low pay (50%)**, **Pressure to provide news that attracts the largest audience** and **Political or corporate spin (47.9%)** were the top three.

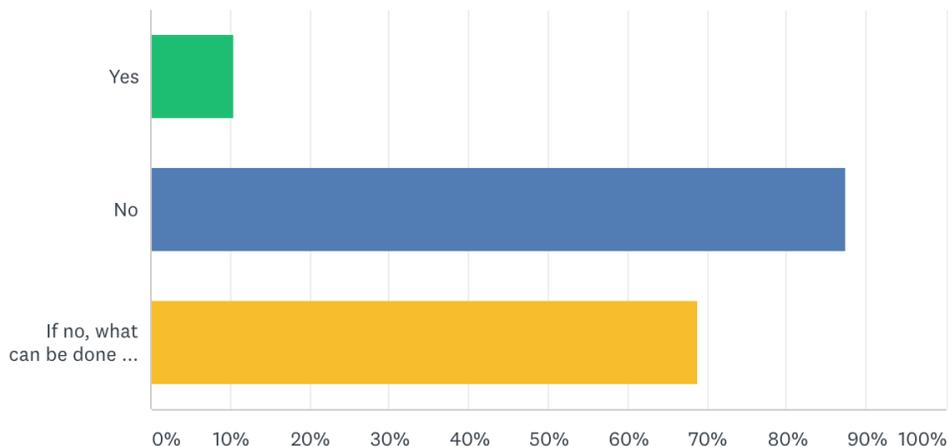
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Editorial freedom	37.50%
▼ Low pay	50.00%
▼ Political or corporate spin	47.92%
▼ Chequebook Journalism	22.92%
▼ Availability of bribes	16.67%
▼ Working online (Digital disruption)	14.58%
▼ Competition with social media and big data	41.67%
▼ Hate speech	25.00%
▼ Fake news	58.33%
▼ Censorship	33.33%
▼ Verifying sources	35.42%
▼ Time available for researching stories	33.33%
▼ Pressure to provide news that attracts the largest audience	47.92%
▼ Pressure from government official to tow a certain line	25.00%
▼ No government support on media ethics polices	29.17%
▼ Confidence in exposing unethical conduct in journalism	18.75%
▼ Newspaper power to swing elections (political parallelism)	12.50%

Clearly fake news threw the media into overdrive amidst continued financial challenges last year. Thus, who is responsibility for ensuring that fake or misleading information is not available to the public delivered a mixed response. However, the three answers that came up the most were, the **Government**, **Journalists/Editors** and **Facebook**. Nevertheless, some of you stated that it was everyone's responsibility.

"Everybody. Consumers need to learn to be more informed, social media platforms need to point out misleading claims, journalists need to be even more careful when covering news to be aware of pitfalls from those trying to make them look bad"

This last quote tallies with question 9 which asked whether there are many media literacy resources available to help people identify fake news, and whether the general public fact-check news sources? And the answer was **87.5% no**.

Q9. There are many media literacy resources available to help people identify fake news, but do you think the general public in the country you live/work in fact-check news sources?



Many of you suggested that "citizen engagement and media literacy [should] be carried out by civil society organizations" and/or "in schools" to educate young people and the general public more broadly. Other ideas included "awareness raising campaigns" as well as having "accountable regulatory bodies". And as

fake news continues to expand, and professional journalism is threatened, the need for people to be able to question, analyse, evaluate and ethically create media messages will become a necessary basic need.

Lastly, and very importantly, we asked you, how many of you are affiliated with other media ethics organisations. Your responses revealed that **36.3%** are affiliated with your **National Union of Journalists** as well as international bodies such as **International Federation of Journalists (33.3%)** and the **International Center for Journalists (24.2%)**. The reason for asking this question, was based on the success of these networks in recent times to help protect media ethics and journalistic professionalism in the Post-Truth Era. For example, take the network of nearly 400 journalists who worked together to expose the financial practices of the global elite, which we all now know as the Paradise Papers. Speaking truth to power, confronting and challenging information amidst political and economic intimidation, fake news, and changing public opinions, makes the role of professional and ethical journalism all the more important. And while there maybe a long road ahead for us as journalists and media professionals to continue upholding media ethics and the role we play in society, it is evident from the Watergate and Guptagate' that we must continue to work both independently and collectively to build a strong and robust media ecosystem.

Therefore, we would like to again thank all of you who kindly participated in the survey. We cannot stress how important it is to learn from each other about the current status of media ethics in your respective countries. So please continue to carry out the good work that you do, and we from the CIME Team wish you a very happy and ethical 2018!!

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