

## Research Paper

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# Tired of retirement

An inventory of pensioners in journalism in an age of precarious employment and the covid-19 pandemic

**Abstract:** Pensioners working in journalism have so far been the subject of little research. Yet with studies suggesting that this group makes up a large proportion of freelance journalists in Germany, it is worth focusing an investigation on these pensioners. This paper is based on a survey of 102 journalists from all over Germany who draw a pension and are still journalists as their main or side job. For the first time, the data allows us to describe pensioners in journalism and provide information on their socio-demographics, working situation, and working conditions. The results show that many of the pensioners work in journalism out of passion. However, the data also suggests that some of the pensioners remain in work out of financial necessity, among other reasons. The findings on pensioners in journalism are compiled in ten assertions.

It is impossible to imagine the world of journalism today without freelance journalists (cf. e.g. Eber 2020; Steindl et al. 2018). They provide a large proportion of reporting, hold appointments, and support journalists on fixed contracts (Eber 2020: no page ref.; Wagner/Möhring 2020a: no page ref.). Now, a study on »Freie im Lokalen« [freelancers in local journalism] (Wagner/Möhring 2020b: no page ref.) has shown that a remarkably large number of freelance journalists are pensioners. These results are in line with the rising trend across Germany for people continuing to work past pensionable age (65+) (cf. Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2019: 4; Brenke 2013: 3), with more older people working in Germany than the EU average (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2019: 9). Detailed data on pensioners in journalism gives evidence of age discrimination (cf. Percival 2019: 19; Zion et al. 2016b: 132; Zion et al. 2018: 17) in the media sector, the problems of pension provision

among freelance journalists (cf. Meyen/Springer 2009: 23; Weichler 2003: 170), and early retirement being offered as a way to reduce staff levels (cf. Meyen/Springer 2009: 74; Usher 2010: 915; Zion et al. 2016). Weichler (2003: 170) even writes that it is clear »that a freelance journalist has to continue working until death unless he inherits, wins the lottery, or finds a wealthy partner.« The high number of pensioners in journalism could thus also be taken as an indication of a sector increasingly dominated by casual, precarious employment structures. Put another way, the precarious situation may be forcing pensioners to work even at an advanced age. In addition, some editorial offices may be forced to rely on the support of former, now-retired, journalists due to staff shortages.

All this shows that the topic of older employees in journalism is diverse and can be linked to a series of critical developments in the working world of journalists. Yet pensioners active in journalism have never been the subject of a specific study. Few figures or other information exist on these people in journalism – they can undoubtedly be considered an under-researched group. This paper is intended to fill this gap in research and to collect and present first empirical data on pensioners in journalism.

## 1. Pensioners in journalism: A systematization of existing literature

In their study on freelance journalists in local journalism, Wagner and Möhring (2020a,b) highlight what they call »senior career jumpers.« They find that this group has an average age of 64 and consists primarily of pensioners (cf. Wagner/Möhring 2020b: no page ref.). Most have not completed a traineeship in journalism (ibid.). The study goes on to find that the senior career jumpers, two-thirds of whom are male, work for one and a half days per week in the local news office, earning EUR 496 per month on average (ibid.).

The »side hustle journalists« in the same study are predominantly women and men who have already retired, and are 60 years old on average. Unlike the senior career jumpers, they have completed a traineeship in journalism (cf. Wagner/Möhring 2020b: no page ref.). The study finds that this group of journalists earns EUR 660 per month on average, slightly more than the senior career jumpers. Almost a quarter of the freelancers in local journalism are older than 65 years (cf. Wagner/Möhring 2020a: no page ref.). The study does not provide any indication of why these two groups of pensioners might be working in journalism.

In contrast, the study finds a further group of pensioners whose motives for their journalistic work are easier to find: the »precarious pensioners.« Most of this group are freelance journalists – resulting in problems when it comes to their pensions. A quote from Meyen and Springer (2009: 23) gets to the heart of the matter: »Those who earn little, pay little into the state pension fund.« We

can assume, therefore, that many pensioners continue working as freelance journalists because financial concerns give them no other choice. A study by the DJV (2009: 16-17) also indicates that many freelance journalists are unable to put money aside for an additional pension due to the combination of low income and high financial obligations, such as funding their children's studies. This is further evidence that the increasingly precarious nature of journalism is forcing pensioners to continue working. It is important to note, however, that the groups of pensioners in journalism described here cannot be entirely delineated, and may overlap. For example, the side hustle journalists could be working in journalism unwillingly for financial reasons, thus also putting them among the precarious pensioners.

Whether or not the pensioners are working of their own accord appears a relevant criterion when it comes to potentially forming categories or groups of pensioners. It seems a possible dimension by which to sort existing knowledge on pensioners in journalism. Pensioners who work in journalism of their own accord could be termed intrinsically journalistic pensioners, as they are not being forced in any way to work in the profession. They enjoy working as journalists, and their passion for journalism is the main reason for doing so at an advanced age. However, there is little empirical evidence on this group of pensioners that could disprove the idea that their passion for journalism is their motivation for working beyond pensionable age. On the other hand, there is evidence that »enjoyment of writing« is often the dominant motive for freelance journalists working in a side job in general (Rinsdorf/Theiss 2020: 62).

Early pensioners, on the other hand, have been forced into retirement in much the same way as precarious pensioners. Evidence for the existence of this specific group can be found in a series of studies that survey former journalists who have lost their jobs. Zion et al. (2016, 2018), for example, look at journalists in Australia who were dismissed and retired as a result. Other studies report that older journalists are pushed out of their positions as a way for media to save money – a process Usher (2010: 919) describes as »encouraged retirements.« In a study by Percival (2019: 12), an older former journalist describes his situation as follows: »I have not actually retired, but I have been retired... It's a real shame because I feel I actually have a lot left to give.« This form of early retirement under duress especially affects journalists towards the end of their career (cf. Cohen et al. 2019: 9). We know that this particular group of pensioners is mainly male and has an average age of 51 years (cf. Zion et al. 2016b: 129; 2018: 17, 29). This makes them significantly younger than the pensioners described in the study by Wagner and Möhring (2020b), probably because they were »sent« into retirement early or retired earlier than they may have planned as a result of losing their job. The

studies do not mention, however, whether the group of early retirees remains active in journalism, for example as freelancers.<sup>11</sup>

The studies quoted mention that pensioners usually work in journalism as a »side job« (Rinsdorf/Theiss 2020: 61; Wagner/Möhrling 2020b: no page ref.) – an attribution that may result from the fact that many work »relatively low amounts« (Wagner/Möhrling 2020b: no page ref.). In general, the literature refers to journalism being a main job when the person earns more than 50% of their income from or spends more than 50% of their working hours on journalistic activities (cf. Weischenberg et al. 2006: 36). As is explained in more detail below, however, this definition is in need of scrutiny when it comes to pensioners. For example, it begs the question of whether their pension should be seen as »income« under the definition, whether being retired counts as a profession, and whether the time as a pensioner can therefore be considered »working hours.« Is someone a journalist as a side job because their main job is pensioner? It can generally be assumed that a large number of the pensioners work in journalism as a side job, as the Wagner and Möhrling study (2020b: no page ref.) found. However, it is impossible to rule out the possibility that pensioners work in journalism for many hours a week and/or earn a high income from this work. In this study, the respondents were therefore able to classify themselves independently as working in a main or side job – whereby it is important to note that these responses are based on the pensioners' own subjective self-image. For this reason, during the data analysis phase, these self-definitions were compared with the respective working hours and income earned. It can be assumed that those who stated that they work in journalism as a side job earn more income through other paid work and/or only occasionally accept individual projects in journalism. Conversely, we can assume that a large proportion of the pensioners see journalism as their main job because it is the only paid work they do, or perhaps because their income from journalism is greater than their pension. Comparing the income and working hours of journalists in main and side jobs in this study, it is clear that the respondents generally assigned themselves a plausible and true professional status, despite any uncertainty in the definition (see Section 4.2.).

## 2. Research questions and objectives

Given the increasingly precarious nature of journalism as a profession (cf. e.g. Gollmitzer 2014; Hanitzsch/Rick 2021) and the rising number of pensioners in

11 Another noteworthy group – albeit not relevant to this study – is incapacitated pensioners, who worked in journalism as their main profession but who are no longer able to work, perhaps for health reasons. For example, they may have retired due to physical impairments. This group is not included in this investigation, however, as the study only surveyed pensioners who are still active in journalism.

Germany who remain in work (cf. e.g. Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2019; Brenke 2013), it is worth examining pensioners as actors in journalism. The aim of the study is thus to describe a group that has previously received little attention, with the findings answering the following research questions:

- RQ<sub>1</sub>: Who are the pensioners in journalism?
- RQ<sub>2</sub>: What is the pensioners' working situation like?
- RQ<sub>3</sub>: Under what conditions do the pensioners work?

This paper should be understood as a first attempt at producing statistics to document pensioners working in journalism and to discover initial characteristics of them and their work. The data is intended to provide an insight into the working world of pensioners still active in journalism and to answer questions relating to their characteristics, working situation, and working conditions. RQ<sub>1</sub> relates to the socio-demographics of the pensioners, while RQ<sub>2</sub> looks at the media and the employment relationship under which they are employed in journalism. After the systemization of existing literature indicated that precarious conditions in journalism can contribute to people continuing to work at an advanced age, the study will also investigate the working conditions to which the pensioners are subjected (RQ<sub>3</sub>). This research into the working conditions of pensioners working in journalism will look at the periods both before and after the covid-19 pandemic and include the pensioners' income, working hours, job satisfaction, and sense of security. The third research question is also the result of the study being embedded in an ongoing research project on precarious conditions in journalism. Further information on this is provided in Section 3. It is important to note here, however, that the study does not aim to examine every aspect mentioned in the previous paragraph in detail. Instead, it merely provides an initial insight into the issues, with its initial descriptive data on pensioners in journalism serving as a jumping-off point for further research.

### 3. Methodological approach

The data on which this investigation is based was gathered in a Germany-wide online survey of 1055 journalists working under a range of employment conditions, as their main or side job. Journalists from all over Germany were recruited between October and December 2020 as part of a DFG project on the casualization of journalism (cf. Hanitzsch/Rick 2021), with the help of professional associations such as the Deutscher Journalisten-Verband (DJV) and the Deutsche Journalistinnen- und Journalisten-Union (dju in ver.di). The questionnaire was distributed primarily using the associations' membership directories and newsletters, as well as via social media. More than 1000 journalists responded during

the two-month field phase – proof both of the efficiency of the professional associations as multipliers and of the high relevance of casualization as an issue. It is important to note, however, that the survey data is not representative.

The process of constructing the survey drew on literature from occupational sociology (e.g. Amable 2006; Fuchs 2006) regarding trends towards casualization in journalism. At the same time, many of the questions relate to working in precarious conditions in journalism (e.g. Schnedler 2019; Strassberger 2019). The survey was initially directed at journalists working in all kinds of employment structures, before filters were used to direct specific questions at, for example, the working conditions of freelance journalists. The questionnaire was supplemented with questions on the socio-demographics of the journalists and on how working conditions have changed during the pandemic. Data such as the age of the journalists, professional experience in journalism, working hours, and income were asked openly. The data on income was then consolidated in categories based on Hanitzsch et al. (2019: 90). Multiple responses were permitted for questions on social security benefits, reasons for working freelance, and conditions when working from home, while only single responses were permitted for the media type, employment relationship, and position within the editorial office. Subjective constructs such as job satisfaction, perceived burden of casualization, and security of livelihood were determined using a five-level Likert scale. Open responses regarding how working conditions have changed during the pandemic and a final comments section on the last page of the questionnaire also gave the journalists an opportunity to describe their current situation in their own words.

In order to investigate pensioners in journalism, all respondents who stated that they draw a pension were extracted from the adjusted data set.<sup>2</sup> The main criterion for inclusion in the random sample was thus the response »I draw a pension« in the question on social security benefits. This produced a sample of pensioners numbering 104. The data does not show how high the pension is or what type of pension it is. Older people who work in journalism but do not draw a pension are not included in the sample. Both this and the fact that the low sample size permits only an explorative approximation of the respondents in the research, can be seen as limitations of the study. Two cases were excluded during the process of data adjustment due to implausible responses, resulting in a sample of 102 pensioners active in journalism. The data was analyzed using SPSS, while open responses were saved separately to be accessed as illustration later.

2 The precise question was: »Please state whether you are entitled to pension insurance, unemployment insurance and security of tenure through your employer, artists' social insurance, or other entitlements.« The two alternative responses were »I draw a pension« and »I am still studying.«

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Socio-demographic data on the pensioners in journalism

The majority of the respondents are male (77.5%) and aged between 60 and 69 years (mean=69.5; SD=4.9). The youngest journalist drawing a pension is 56 years old, the oldest 83. The average age of the pensioners is 69.5 years.

Table 1  
Age distribution of respondents (n=100)

Age	n	Percent
50-59 years	2	2,0
60-69 years	55	55,0
70-79 years	38	38,0
80 years and older	5	5,0

The findings thus approximately match the characteristics of the »senior career jumpers« from the Wagner and Möhring study (2020b); in their study, too, this group of local journalists is majority male and 64 years old on average. More than half of the pensioners in this investigation live together with a partner, while none have children under 18. These findings could suggest that the pensioners no longer bear responsibility for a family, while many are able to top up their own income with that of a partner.

More than half of the journalists have a master's degree or similar qualification. As would be expected, the respondents have a great deal of journalistic experience: They have been working in journalism for 38.5 years on average, with the figure for the over-80-year-old pensioners 53.4 years on average (mean=38.5; SD=11.3; min=9; max=60). Just two respondents stated that they have less than 10 years' journalistic experience. It is therefore possible to rule out pensioners working in journalism as career jumpers. Quite the opposite in fact – they have many years of journalistic experience behind them, and most can be said to be professionals. With pensioners contributing vital expertise and plenty of experience, this can be seen as a great advantage for the editorial offices.

### 4.2. Employment relationship and working environment

While 22.5% of the respondents stated that they work as journalists as a side job, for 77.5% it is their main job. This high proportion of respondents with

journalism as their main job clearly shows that most are not working sporadically. Although the participants draw a pension, they are still fully involved in working life. Studies on labor force participation among over-65s in Germany (Brenke 2013: 3) have also shown that full-time employment at an advanced age is becoming ever more popular, especially among freelancers. However, the distribution also sheds light on how the respondents define »main job.«

The pensioners account for almost a third (31.9%) of all journalists in side jobs (n=72) in the study as a whole. <sup>13)</sup> Most pensioners work freelance in journalism (81.4%). A total of 15.7% said that they worked as freelancers but with regular contracts. Full or part-time regular employment were the exceptions (cf. Table 2). The journalist employed full time is 66 years old, the two in part-time employment 72 and 67.

Table 2

## Employment relationships of the pensioners (n=102)

Employment relationship	n	Percent
Freelance journalist	83	81.4
Regular freelancer	16	15.7
Regular employment, full time (indefinite)	1	1.0
Regular employment, part time (indefinite)	1	1.0
Regular employment, part time (temporary)	1	1.0

At 23.4%, the pensioners make up almost a quarter of all the freelance journalists (n=436) in the study as a whole. The largest group of freelance pensioners (44.9%) stated that they work for around three to four employers on average. Although their reasons for working freelance vary, the findings do allow some assumptions to be made about why the pensioners are still working in journalism. Provided with six reasons as possible responses, 27.7% stated that they had chosen to work freelance as they wanted greater freedom in content and design. The second most common reason stated was »I could not find regular employment« (24.4%). A significant proportion of the freelance pensioners would thus like to be in regular employment. Surprisingly few of the respondents (18.1%) stated »part-time in old age« as a reason for working freelance. The other three possible reasons – »family obligations,« »greater flexibility,« and »other« were also only chosen by less than one third of the respondents each.

3 Results of the overall study »Prekarisierung im Journalismus« [Precarity in journalism] can be found in Hanitzsch/Rick (2021).

The largest group of pensioners works for daily newspapers, mainly with a national reach (cf. Table 3), most as authors. However, the sample also includes a foreign correspondent, a photo journalist, a photographer, and two presenters. The journalist in regular, full-time employment is a chief editor. Three regular freelancers also hold managerial positions.

#### 4.3. Income and (perceived) working conditions

Pensioners working in journalism earn an average net income of EUR 1411 (before covid-19). The figure for those in side jobs is EUR 797; for those in main jobs it is EUR 1609. This puts the pensioners' earnings far above the average values for the senior career jumpers and side hustle journalists stated in the first section of this paper (Wagner/Möhring 2020b). The average income in this sample also differs based on gender: While female pensioners in journalism earn EUR 1237, their male counterparts have an average income of EUR 1456. One reason for this gap could be that more women than men stated that their work in journalism is a side job. The difference between the genders here is 11.5%. It is unclear why more female pensioners work as a side job and more male pensioners as a main job in journalism. One suggestion is that more women also have additional family obligations and thus less time to work in journalism. Almost 16% of women and just 3.2% of men chose this as a reason for working freelance.

Pensioners work an average of 29.1 hours per week in journalism – longer working hours than an average part-time job in Germany, which has 19.5 hours (cf. Destatis 2021b: no page ref.). Pensioners who stated that they work in journalism as a side job work for 17.6 hours per week on average, while those in a main job stated 32.6 working hours on average. The longest working hours were among the 60 to 69-year-olds, who also have the highest income of any age group.

Not all the journalists for whom it is their main job always earn enough from journalism to live on. The option »rarely« was the most common on this question, with 35.1%, followed by »never« with 22.1% among those in main jobs (cf. Figure 1).

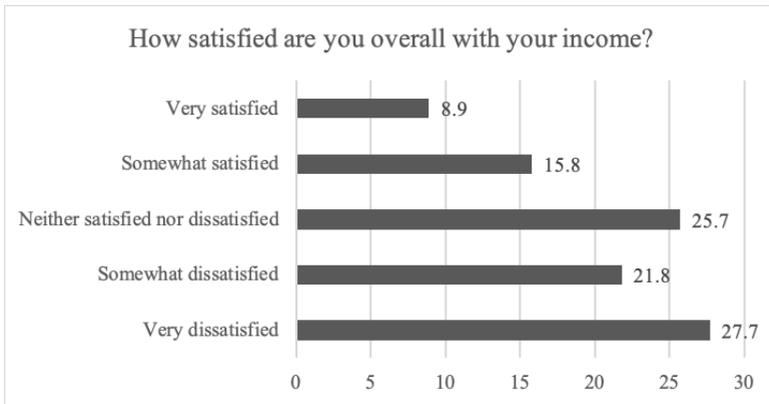
Table 3

Media for which the respondents »predominantly« work (n=102)

Media types	Percent
Daily newspaper	33.0
Magazine	23.4
News agency/service	11.7

Media types	Percent
Independent online medium	9.6
Radio	6.4
Free paper	5.3
Television	4.3
Online offshoot of an offline medium	4.3
Sunday or weekly paper	2.1
Distribution area	Percent
National	51.1
Local/regional	48.9

Figure 1  
Ability to cover living costs for journalists in main job (n=77)



Given that 38.7% are only »rarely« able to access savings for unforeseen large expenses, these findings can be considered alarming. As both questions focused only on income from journalism, it is unclear whether the pensioners are able to fill the financial gap with their pensions. However, the two descriptions from pensioners below clearly show that a small pension sometimes makes this difficult:<sup>4</sup>

»The amount stated is not enough to live on, of course. I also have a small pension. But it is still not much.«

4 These and the open responses below are comments entered by the respondents on the last page of the questionnaire. There, they had the opportunity to leave comments on the survey itself, or to aid understanding of their responses.

»I enjoy being a freelance journalist because I like the profession, but at the moment I would not be able to survive without my pension, and that is not much either.«

The fact is that some pensioners also do other paid jobs alongside their job in journalism. All in all, 17.7% of the pensioners who stated that journalism is their main job also have a side job – for example as a photographer, author, lecturer, or translator.

A total of 43.1% of the respondents see their own working situation as precarious – the figure among the freelancers is even higher, at 48.2%. Two in five see this as »burdensome,« and more than a quarter as »very burdensome« (cf. Table 4).

Table 4  
Burden of precarious employment (n=102)

	Percent
Extremely burdensome	11.4
Very burdensome	27.3
Burdensome	40.9
Somewhat burdensome	15.9
Not burdensome at all	4.5

The question of how secure the respondents feel is also dominated by insecurity. A little over half of those questioned feel »insecure« in relation to their current employment relationship. The study also asked about factors contributing to this sense of security or insecurity. When it comes to a sense of insecurity, the dominant factor with 63.5% is »low income,« followed by »insecure income« (59.6%). In third place is the age of the journalists, which 55.8% of respondents chose as a cause of their sense of insecurity in relation to their employment situation. Aspects such as pension provision and health probably play a crucial role in this response.

Interestingly, 67.3% of the pensioners who feel secure chose their age as a factor in this security. We can only guess at the reasons for this, but their advanced age and the pension this brings, as well as the fact that their working life is no longer everything, could certainly help them to feel reassured. The three open responses from participating pensioners below serve as examples of this perception:

»Due to my age and the pension I draw, my situation today is good.«

»Compared to colleagues, I am probably in a more tolerable position thanks to my advanced age.«

»I draw a pension and no longer rely on my income as a freelance journalist.«

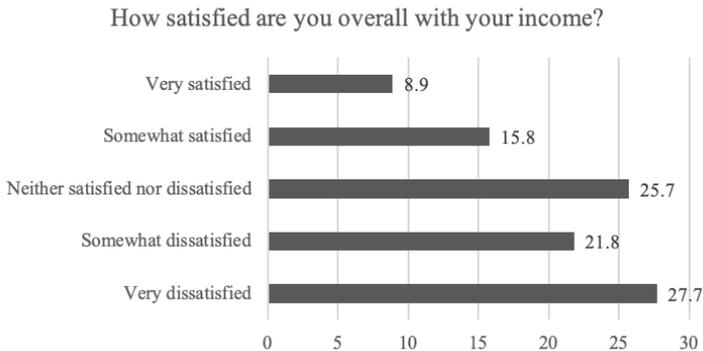
The pension they draw is a security factor for 65.3% of the respondents.

#### 4.4 Job satisfaction

Most of the journalists surveyed in the study are happy with their work in journalism. 71.6% agree with the statement that journalism is their passion, and just under half of them (47.5%) are »somewhat satisfied« with the profession in general. A total of 35.6% are very satisfied with it. In addition, 59.8% find their work fun, and 63.7% are proud of their work. This high level of job satisfaction is an argument in favor of the »intrinsically journalistic pensioners« group, as the respondents enjoy working in journalism and may even see it as their calling. Perhaps the work also gives them a sense of being able to contribute even at pensionable age.

More than a quarter of the pensioners, however, are very dissatisfied with their income from journalism (cf. Figure 2).

Figure 2  
Journalists' satisfaction with their income in percent (n=102)



#### 4.5 Impact of the covid-19 pandemic

The covid-19 pandemic and the changes it has brought also present challenges for the pensioners, as the results of the survey show. Of the participants, 61.7% stated that their working conditions worsened during the pandemic. More than two thirds of the freelance pensioners report loss of income due to the crisis, and half of them feared for their livelihood as a result. As once respondent writes: »Almost no orders since March 2020.« Another response: »NO orders, nothing: no budget for freelancers.« In the case of the journalists who stated that they feared for their livelihoods, we can assume that their pensions are not sufficient to cushion the blow of this loss of income from journalism. A quarter of the

freelance pensioners and 6.3% of the regular freelancers applied for financial support from the government's covid-19 fund.

In addition, 80% of the pensioners who do not usually work from home, did so. Of these, just over two thirds have a separate room to work in uninterrupted, but only 33.3% a desk. There also appear to be significant difficulties regarding a stable and good internet connection, with 58.3% of the pensioners stating that they have technical connection problems during video conferences or other online meetings. This may be one of the reasons behind the finding that only 16.7% of the respondents could imagine working from home in future.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to shine a spotlight on a group of journalists that has received little attention up to now, namely pensioners working in journalism. It is dedicated to a group that has been little researched, but that appears to play a role in shaping reporting in German media. The data shows the employment relationships and conditions under which pensioners in journalism work, how much income they generate through this work, and how satisfied they are with it. Based on this investigation, the following ten assertions can be made on the work of pensioners in journalism:

- Assertion 1: The typical pensioner in journalism is male and 69 years old.
- Assertion 2: The pensioners generally have a great deal of journalistic experience – 38.5 years on average.
- Assertion 3: The vast majority work in journalism as their main job, with an average working week of 32.6 hours.
- Assertion 4: The pensioners are mostly freelance and largely work as authors for daily newspapers and magazines with a national reach.
- Assertion 5: The pensioners earn EUR 1411 net per month on average.
- Assertion 6: The pensioners work out of passion and are largely satisfied with their work in journalism. However, a large proportion are dissatisfied with their income.
- Assertion 7: More than one third of the pensioners sees themselves as in a precarious employment situation; just over half feel at least somewhat insecure in relation to their employment relationship.
- Assertion 8: Many of those drawing a pension have trouble covering all of their living expenses with their income from journalism, and few have savings to fall back on.
- Assertion 9: The pensioners perceive their advanced age as a factor in both security and insecurity. The pension they draw gives many of the respondents security.

- Assertion 10: The working conditions of the pensioners have worsened during the covid-19 pandemic. Many of the freelancers have lost income, leading half to fear for their livelihoods.

The findings support Wagner and Möhring's (2020b) assumption that older journalists make up an underestimated proportion of freelance journalists and that their work is far from being a negligible phenomenon. In reality, they account for a considerable proportion of reporting and should be given more consideration in future studies, especially in relation to freelance working. It will also be important not to lose sight of the consequences of the rising proportion of side hustle journalists. The investigation by Moenikes (2001: 111), for example, showed that the reporting of ›hobby journalists‹ has various deficiencies and can thus be seen as a threat to the quality of journalistic products.

For many of the pensioners in this investigation, however, journalism appears to be more than just a hobby. They remain very active in their profession, with a few even holding managerial positions in editorial offices. Given the large proportion of pensioners in the sample for whom journalism is their main job, however, it is worth considering adjusting the definition of main profession regarding pensioners working in journalism. In doing so, it would be important to clarify what proportion of their income they earn from journalism compared to their pension, and what proportion should be the minimum for describing journalism as their main profession.

The results shown clearly demonstrate precarious structures in journalism, both in the nature of freelance journalism as a profession and in the sector as a whole. The findings corroborate insecure employment relationships in freelance journalism, as pensioners themselves describe their working relationship as precarious and a sense of insecurity dominates among them. At the same time, the proven gender pay gap among the pensioners, the high drop in income as a result of the pandemic, and the fact that many pensioners with journalism as their main job can only rarely cover their living costs with their income from journalism, all serve as objective indicators for the precarious structures in journalism as a profession (cf. e.g. Dörre et al. 2006). We can thus state that pensioners are a group of actors in journalism that allow the crisis in journalism to be investigated from a new perspective. We can assume that existing literature and research looking at critical developments in journalism overlooks the journalistic activity of pensioners as a potential side effect or consequence. Alongside this, however, the classic phenomenon of high job satisfaction among journalists (Buckow 2011: 114; Weischenberg et al. 2006: 89ff) was also found among pensioners.

The key limitations of the study are the small sample size in the survey and the purely quantitative approach to the topic. The specific group of journalists needs to be researched further in order to resolve the many unanswered questions.

The data suggests that the first priority would be to investigate the motivation behind remaining active in journalism at pensionable age. The findings provide initial indications that financial reasons are the most important, alongside sheer enjoyment of journalistic work. In such a study, qualitative interviews should also be used to record the motivation behind working in journalism despite drawing a pension – including the question of which proportion of the pensioners' total income comes from journalism. Some of the results indicate that, for some pensioners, their pension alone is not enough to live on, confirming the hypothesis that some pensioners work in journalism in order to avoid poverty in old age (Destatis 2021a: no page ref.). The results thus provide clear evidence of the precarious pensioners presented in the conceptual section and indicate potential poverty in old age, especially now during the covid-19 pandemic that has seen such a drop in work for many freelance journalists. It is a problem that is not unique to journalism. Across the spectrum of professions, various studies indicate rising poverty in old age, which is expected to rise even further by 2039 (cf. Haan et al. 2017; Seils 2020).

The field is also crying out for studies that examine the role of pensioners in editorial offices. Wagner and Möhring (2020b: no page ref.) note that, in local journalism, the senior career jumpers primarily maintain contacts and deliver text and photos on events. Future investigations should look at which tasks the pensioners undertake in media with various degrees of coverage and the extent to which the work of freelance pensioners and regular freelancers, for example, differs. It would also be interesting to examine the regular employment side of the coin: Why do media employ pensioners? What are the advantages, aside from the high level of experience among this group of journalists? Are retired former journalists used due to staff shortages or in order to save on social security contributions? Answering these questions would permit conclusions to be drawn on the labor market situation in journalism.

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*Translation: Sophie Costella*

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