

EDITION DW AKADEMIE

#2018

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Cash for coverage

The effects of the practice of *solì* on the
Ghanaian media system

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RESPONSIBLE
Carsten von Nahmen

AUTHORS
Pragma Solutions Limited

EDITORS
Beate Weides
Nana Sikaba King
Sarah Jung

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01

Executive summary

1.1 The practice of *solì* – a long tradition

Various studies have revealed that the phenomenon of incentives given to journalists by media interest organizations is widespread in not just Ghana, but in many other African countries as well. In 2007, Twange Kasoma analyzed the practice of such incentives in Ghana (where they are often called *solì*) and compared it to the situation in Zambia. At the time, 63 of 100 journalists interviewed in Ghana admitted to taking 'brown envelopes'. On the basis of subsequent qualitative interviews, Kasoma assessed this number as a "gross underrepresentation".

The present study sought to look at *solì* from the different viewpoints of:

- Journalists
- Media interest organizations (organizations that use the media to their own ends)
- The general public

Additionally, media managers/owners and a few independent media experts were interviewed in depth on certain aspects of the topic.

1.2 Dimensions of the practice of *solì* and types of incentives

Almost ten years after the Kasoma study results were published, the responses given by journalists to the key question of whether they accept *solì* have changed very little: almost two out of three Ghanaian journalists (61.1%, n = 285) admitted to having accepted *solì* while discharging their professional duties. Slightly more male journalists (62.4%) than female journalists (56.9%) answered positively. In over half of the incidents (55%), the journalists were given money, and a great number received money along with non-monetary incentives. Around 6% received only non-monetary incentives. Meals, refreshments, and hampers were the most common non-monetary incentives, though journalists also mentioned airtime, sponsorships, and free holiday trips. A few even reported receiving cars.

While completing formal journalism training or education did not seem to affect a journalist's willingness to accept *solì*, the overall level of education seemed to play a role. The study revealed that the higher a journalist's level of education was, the more inclined he or she was to accept *solì*. About 44.4% of journalists who completed high school admitted to accepting *solì*, compared to 65.4% of journalists who had graduated from college and 60% of journalists with a master's degree. Those who had not completed high school stated they did not accept *solì* at all. Assuming that not all the journalists were completely honest, it may be that journalists without a high school degree who claimed to refuse *solì* payments felt a stronger sense of wrongdoing and more shame about their behavior.

Whereas both the youngest (under 20 years of age) and the oldest (51 and over) journalists interviewed categorically denied accepting *solì*, middle-aged journalists (41–50) more often admitted to accepting *solì* than young journalists (20–30) at 75% and 57.8% respectively. The type of media channel seemed to play a role as well, as two out of three journalists from print media said they accepted *solì*, whereas the percentage was slightly lower for radio and television. Journalists who worked for magazines and news agencies admitted to accepting *solì* considerably less often (33.3% and 26.7% respectively). The study revealed only slight and statistically not relevant differences between the various media categories: the percentage of journalists accepting *solì* ranged between 60 and almost 67 (66.7% in community media, 63.3% in state-owned media and 60.4% in private media).

1.3 Perceptions of *solì*

1.3.1 Journalists' perceptions

Most of the journalists interviewed saw no overall problem with accepting *solì*. 65.7% viewed it as a token of appreciation for the work they do, while only 13.8% of the journalists understood the offer of money from a media interest organization as a form of bribery and an attempt to influence their reporting. The study revealed significant differences in the regions: one in three journalists in the Western Region considered *solì* bribery, and the lowest sensitivity for the ethical problem was found in the Northern Region (around 3%). Regarding the ethical implications of *solì*, the number of journalists who considered taking *solì* unethical (36.9%) was roughly equivalent to the number of journalists who saw no ethical problem with the practice (38%). A relatively high percentage of journalists, one in four (25.2%), was undecided. The qualitative survey revealed that the perception of *solì* seemed to depend on the amount or the value of the incentive. If the amount offered was small, it was usually perceived as acceptable and justifiable as repayment for the cost of transportation, for example, while large amounts and valuable items were seen as bribery. Many journalists made a moral distinction based on who initiated payment. If a media interest organization offered the *solì*, journalists felt they could not refuse it, but considered it unethical for a journalist to request *solì*.

1.3.2 Perceptions of the general public

While many media users might not be familiar with the term *solì*, as it is apparently primarily used in the context of media and corporate communication, the general public is aware of the *solì* system and perceives it much more critically than journalists. A majority (52%) of the media users interviewed (n=230) understood the practice as a form of bribery. 38% nevertheless accepted the *solì* system as a cultural norm, noting that it was difficult for journalists to refuse incentives of

ferred by event organizers because it went against Ghana's well known culture of hospitality, for example.

1.3.3 Perceptions of media interest organizations

On the side of the *sol*i givers, the majority of media interest organizations (61.4%) viewed *sol*i as a (presumed) positive token of appreciation, a kind of 'thank you' to the journalist. Interestingly, a higher percentage of the media interest organizations (n=262) than of the journalists interviewed considered *sol*i a form of bribery (22.8% and 13.8% respectively). The idea of expressing gratitude implicates the rendering of a service, though neither the journalists nor the media interest organizations seemed to realize that it is not the professional role of a journalist to render a service to anyone other than their audience. When asked whether their own behavior as *sol*i givers was ethical, most media interest organizations felt there was nothing wrong with giving *sol*i to journalists for covering events. But 37% of them saw an ethical problem.

1.4 Economic impact of *sol*i

1.4.1 Economic impact of *sol*i on journalists

About 84% of the journalists interviewed received regular, monthly payments. The majority were full-time employees earning monthly salaries, where most of the journalists interviewed reported salaries of less than GH¢1,000 a month. Most part-time employees were also paid regularly based on wages set by their employers. Stringers either received meagre payments upon filing a story, or were not paid at all (1.1%) by the organizations they worked for. Less than a third of the journalists declared earning GH¢500 or less (27.6%), while 28.7% of the journalists earned between GH¢500 and GH¢1,000. More than a third of the journalists interviewed were not satisfied with their incomes, and those in the Northern Region seemed to be the least satisfied.

Analysis of the data showed that journalists who accepted *sol*i earned an additional 45% of their monthly salaries on average. In the face-to-face interviews, most journalists claimed to have received between GH¢20 to 30 per event. Others said they received GH¢50 or sometimes GH¢100 per event.

There seemed to be no strong correlation between salary level and accepting *sol*i, as journalists with very high salaries admitted to accepting *sol*i slightly more often than journalists with very low salaries (47% compared to 45%). Journalists who reported earning a "medium income" responded quite different though: roughly 74% of journalists with an income between GH¢500 to GH¢999 claimed to accept *sol*i, as did 63% of those who earned between GH¢1,000 and GH¢2,000. Those journalists probably go out more often to cover events than journalists with higher salaries in senior positions. This

seems to indicate that *sol*i is generally perceived as an accepted part of journalistic work irrespective of journalists' actual earnings.

1.4.2 Economic impact of *sol*i on media interest organizations

The majority of media interest organizations interviewed, about 65%, felt that giving incentives to journalists was not a financial burden to their organizations. 35% reported that it was.

1.5 Effects of *sol*i

1.5.1 Effects of *sol*i on reporting

Slightly more than half of the journalists interviewed for the quantitative survey denied that *sol*i influenced their choice of news items to report on, insisting that they sought out stories that were newsworthy and complied with the policies and editorial styles of their media houses. But 32% agreed with the assertion that *sol*i influenced reporting. A relatively high number of journalists (16.5%) were undecided. The interviewers sensed a great deal of hesitation from interviewees in response to this question. Some journalists stated that while *sol*i did not influence their choice of stories to be published, they believed it did influence their colleagues' selection of stories. Again, the study revealed regional differences: The in-depth interviews revealed that the 'loyalty' of a journalist, meaning a journalist's willingness to share *sol*i with colleagues from the editorial desk, sometimes determined who was assigned an event. Journalists chose to attend events where the *sol*i was likely to be higher, and those who offered the largest *sol*i were more likely to get their stories published. On the other hand, media interest organizations said that *sol*i helped them cut back on advertising and publicity costs. So paying *sol*i to induce the media to spread their messages was cheaper than paying for classical advertising.

This assertion by journalists that *sol*i had little or no influence on their reporting is not in line with the view of the *sol*i givers: about 84% of media interest organizations affirmed that news reports about their organizations reflected the purpose for which they were intended. Clearly, media interest organizations generally get the publicity they want from the media. It therefore seems obvious that many journalists are influenced by *sol*i, though individual journalists were not prepared to admit or accept that they were personally influenced.

1.5.2 Effects of *sol*i on media credibility

Most media users (the general public) had a negative view of the Ghanaian media because of the incentives given to journalists. When asked how they felt about the media and its practice of *sol*i, 62.6% of media users confirmed a lack of trust

in media and 46.4% considered the media corrupt (multiple answers were allowed).

Media interest organizations were a bit less severe in their judgement of the media: 43.9% confirmed a lack of trust, 24.3% considered the media corrupt.

1.6 Institutional policies on *solì*

The Ghana Journalists Association's (GJA) Code of Ethics states that a journalist may not "accept a bribe or any form of inducement to influence the performance of his/her professional duties" (Modern Ghana, 2010), though it fails to mention *solì* specifically. In Article 4 of its Code of Conduct, the Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association (GIBA) states that all members must "undertake to declare, publish and commit to a policy of zero tolerance for bribery and corruption with clear sanctions applicable to both givers and takers" (GIBA, 2016, 7). Over 60% of journalists were not aware of any policies or guidelines established by national bodies or professional associations regarding the receipt of *solì* in the country. On the other side, about 95% of media interest organizations were not aware of any policy on offering incentives to journalists.

There was an appreciable level of awareness of policies on *solì* within individual media organizations, and over 40% of the journalists interviewed confirmed that the media houses they work with had some *solì* guidelines in place. Interviewees who were aware that policies existed were not entirely clear on what those policies entailed. A few mentioned that journalists were cautioned not to accept any form of inducement that might influence their work.

Generally, policies on *solì* in media houses and organizations that use media were verbal. Around 16% of journalists and 26% of media interest organizations had documented policies on *solì*. However, awareness and/or signing of policies on *solì* did not seem to deter journalists from accepting *solì*. Of those who were aware of national and institutional policies and guidelines on *solì*, over 66% admitted to accepting *solì*, while around 59% of those who claimed no awareness of these policies admitted to accepting *solì*. Around 60.3% of journalists who had agreed to or signed policy documents on *solì* admitted to accepting some form of incentive, while about 59.6% who had not signed such documents admitted to accepting *solì*. So overall, a higher percentage of journalists who agreed to or signed a policy document on *solì* admitted to accepting incentives compared to those who did not agree to or sign policies on *solì*.

1.7 Possible approaches to eliminating the practice of *solì* in the Ghanaian media system

Most respondents from all group categories interviewed felt it would be difficult or impossible to eliminate the practice of *solì* in the Ghanaian media, but they suggested the following measures could help minimize the offering and acceptance of *solì*:

- Improving working conditions for journalists, including attractive remuneration
- Formulating and enforcing strict rules and regulations by media organizations and regulatory agencies/bodies, such as the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), the National Media Commission (NMC), the Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association (GIBA), etc.
- Encouraging journalists to undergo formal journalism training
- Educating the public on the effects of *solì* and the need to eliminate the practice of paying *solì* to journalists

02 Background

DW Akademie, Germany's leading organization for international media development, is a branch of Deutsche Welle, the country's international broadcaster, and has supported free and independent media in Ghana for decades. In long term projects, DW Akademie focuses on advancing quality journalism in order to ensure Ghanaians are well informed and able to participate actively in democratic processes. DW Akademie supports selected partners, among them a network of community radios and a leading private radio station based in Accra which has established a network of correspondents in all parts of the country. DW Akademie offers capacity building for community radio network member stations, as well as consultation services for financial management. The network of correspondents is trained in multimedia news coverage and reporting on human rights issues. In four pilot districts, DW Akademie cooperates with non-governmental organizations to realize access to information from district authorities for local civil society groups and media. DW Akademie strengthens journalism education institutions, especially through capacity building for practical journalism training, but also by offering consultation services. Observers of the Ghanaian media denounce the low quality of journalistic output and a general lack of research and fact checking. A clear differentiation between journalism and communication is often missing in the media industry. Many media experts have identified the *solli* system as responsible for these shortcomings. The practice of incentives given to journalists, usually to facilitate placement of reports in the Ghanaian media system, is locally known as *solli*. Therefore, DW Akademie commissioned a research project to explore the dimensions and the effects of this practice.

Solli, a term coined from "solidarity", refers to cash hand-outs that individuals and organizations give to the journalists/pressmen and presswomen they invite to cover press conferences or events organized by the *solli* givers. This money is perceived as covering the cost of transport for journalists or as a facilitation fee. It sometimes takes the form of non-monetary incentives such as free meals, refreshments and other gifts, which are mostly not regarded as *solli*.

Former studies have revealed that journalists tended not to perceive *solli* as a form of bribery. It was instead regarded as something owed to them, and also as a token of appreciation or compensation for expenses incurred.

It is assumed that the practice could influence journalists regarding their news coverage and selection of topics for reporting. In other instances, *solli* may prevent journalists from objective reporting. Previous discussions on *solli* revealed that in extreme cases journalists have threatened to boycott news items if *solli* was not paid. With this study, we wanted to explore more deeply the extent to which the practice of *solli* influences journalists in their selection of topics and their way of reporting, and establish whether they research and report independently and critically or just copy and paste press releases and render publicity services to the *solli* givers. This study is the first of its kind to research not only the perspective of the *solli* takers, the journalists, but also the perspective of the *solli* givers - including private corporate companies, public institutions, non-governmental and international organizations and any other kind of event organizers who might make use of journalists to spread their messages.

As the potential challenge of this study, we identified the interviewee bias of participants, especially journalists, who might not be willing to answer questions as truthfully as required because of the very nature of *solli*, and its moral and ethical implications. To mitigate this factor, we assured all stakeholders of strict confidentiality and maintained it throughout.

03

Objectives

The broad objective of the proposed study was to provide insights into *solì* and its effects in Ghana.

Specifically, the survey sought to find out:

- how widespread the *solì* system is
- what the perceptions of the different stakeholders – *solì* takers, *solì* givers and the general public – are
- how much journalists are paid for their work by their employers and how regularly they get paid
- how much journalists earn in *solì*, and how dependent they are on these additional earnings
- whether the payment of *solì* influences the selection of topics for reports
- whether the payment of *solì* influences the reported content

04

Methodology

We began with a throughout review of existing literature on the subject. Given the objectives of the proposed study, we felt that a three-pronged methodology employing both qualitative and quantitative research methods would be best suited. The research areas comprised four regions: Greater Accra, the Ashanti Region, the Western Region and the Northern Region. In consultation with DW Akademie, the busy commercial cities in these regions where media (publicity) is significant in day-to-day activities were selected.

Qualitative

47 in-depth interviews about *solli* and its effects in Ghana were conducted among the following groups: journalists, media owners, media experts, commercial advertisers, Ghanaian NGOs, state institutions and international organizations.

Quantitative

The study was conducted based on the answers of 777 respondents out of a target of 800, spread across the regions and composed of 285 journalists, 262 media interest stakeholders, and 230 members of the general public.

Types and format of instruments

Pragma Solutions was commissioned to design the qualitative and quantitative instruments (quantitative questionnaires and in-depth interview guides), which can elicit answers that promote the objectives.

Field team

The field teams comprised a field manager, field executives and supervisors who were under the overall supervision of the project manager.

In-depth interviews were conducted by five Pragma Solutions research executives.

Training

We organized a full day's training of all field staff in each of the study areas before the commencement of fieldwork. Trainings started on 27 July and ended on 1 August 2016.

Data collection

Data collection commenced on 29 July and ended on 31 August 2016.

05

Literature review

5.1 Introduction

The review sought to analyze ideas and opinions from articles and survey the findings of previous work on *solli*. Internet publications were the primary source with data from a total of 33 countries broken down by continent:

Asia – 6
Africa – 21
America – 4
Europe – 2

To study perceptions about *solli* in the Ghanaian media, it is important to examine existing theories and work related to the subject to better understand the phenomenon. On this basis, we reviewed literature on the perception and practices of *solli*.

5.2 Origin of ‘brown envelope’ journalism

Though *solli* is perceived as being more prevalent in Africa than in Europe, Agbemenu and Tandoh’s 2015 survey in Ghana asserted that the concept of ‘brown envelopes’ supposedly originated in the UK. So-called brown envelopes were a key factor in the ‘cash-for-questions affair’ there in the 1990s. On behalf of influential businessman Mohamed Al-Fayed, lobbyists allegedly paid two members of the British parliament to post specific questions on the agenda for the House of Commons (Agbemenu & Tandoh, 2015). In October 1994, The Guardian newspaper exposed the affair, reporting that the cash was handed over in brown envelopes, thus creating the term ‘brown envelope’.

‘Brown envelope’ later came to be adopted as a term designating the handing over of cash or other items of value to journalists in exchange for their reporting.

5.3 ‘Brown envelope’ journalism around the world

Tsetsura & Kruckeberg (2011) believe that illicit payments in journalism take place worldwide, but research on the phenomenon has not been evenly distributed. They state that the main geographical areas researched appear to be South East Asia/China and Eastern Europe, in addition to a growing body of research concerning countries in Latin America and Africa.

In a 2003 study, Kruckeberg and Tsetsura attempted to map out the likelihood of ‘cash for news coverage’ in 66 countries across the world. Their findings showed that Western countries were the societies least likely to cater to journalistic corruption, while Southern countries were more prone to journalistic corruption. China led the pack as the society most likely to have newspapers that would publish news for cash, followed by Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Pakistan. According to Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2003), only five African countries (Mauritius, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, and Egypt)

were included in the study due to a lack of data. They ranked among the worst of the 66 countries surveyed.

A comparative survey of 215 random journalists from Ghana and Zambia conducted by Kasoma in 2007 revealed a significant difference between the two countries. In Ghana, 63% of the respondents admitted taking brown envelopes, compared to only 28% in Zambia. However, based on subsequent qualitative interviews, Kasoma (2007, p. 115) concludes that both figures are a “gross under-representation” of the phenomenon.

5.4 Ethics and professional journalism

Skjerdal (2010) stated that ‘brown envelopes’ are commonly condemned by individuals interested in media ethics and at least 17 national codes of ethics for journalists on the African continent warn against journalistic bribery. These include codes for Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somaliland, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia. However, enforcing these codes tends to be a major challenge.

Article 3 of Kenya’s Media Act stipulates that journalists must not “accept gifts, favors or compensation from those who might seek to influence coverage” or “engage in activities that may compromise their integrity or independence” (Skjerdal, 2010). Similarly, the guidelines set out in the Ghana Journalism Association’s (GJA) Code of Ethics state that “a journalist does not accept a bribe or any form of inducement to influence the performance of his/ her professional duties” (Modern Ghana, 2010).

5.5 Why do journalists accept *solli*?

Poor pay or salary – Overwhelmingly, the prevailing explanation given for ‘brown envelopes’ in African journalistic practice is poor remuneration for journalists (Dunn 2010 – Liberia and Frère, 2008 - France).

Little regulation of the Ghanaian media – According to Ndangam (2006 – Cameroon), the Ghanaian media industry is not well regulated, although there is the National Media Commission (NMC) whose responsibility is to ensure proper practices by the media.

Proliferation of media houses – The proliferation of media houses, especially radio and television stations, some of which do not have access to good financial or infrastructure resources, has exacerbated the situation (Diedong, 2008 – Ghana). Reporters and journalists are forced to find their own means of transport to locations to gather news or cover events (Ndangam, 2006 – Cameroon; Adesoji, 2009 – Nigeria).

5.6 Effects of *sol* on news reportage

Slants communication – Lodamo and Skjerdal (2010 – Ethiopia, p. 8) noted that when a reporter received *sol*, he or she felt pressured to report positively no matter what, thus *sol* served as “an unwritten contract between the event organizers and the reporters, whereby positive promotion is expected in return”. Moreover, depending on the amount given, a company or an institution can get a two-column quarter page, a half page or a full-page reportage (Agbemenu & Tandoh, 2015 - Ghana).

Kills objectivity in news reports – Furthermore, *sol* influences objectivity in news reports, because accepting *sol* creates a system of patronage between the journalist or reporter and the event organizer or PR officer (Ndangam, 2006 – Cameroon; Adesoji, 2009 – Nigeria). Hence, the reporter becomes subjective in his or her writing, unconsciously expressing his or her opinion in the reportage to some extent (Agbemenu and Tandoh 2015).

Kills creativity and critical journalism – A survey conducted in Ethiopia found most respondents agreed that bribery was a major threat to the development of professional values in Ethiopian journalism. The resultant effects are incompetence, and a lack of courage, creativity and critical and investigative journalism in Ethiopian media (African Communication Research 2010, 492).

Demeans journalists/reporters - In an article, William Y. Owusu (2011 - Ghana) wrote that, "Reporters, as a matter of necessity, wait around or buy time by occupying themselves by either feigning or actually conducting 'extra' interviews. Sometimes they seek the relative comfort of the company vehicle". The author also noted that cameramen for TV were normally instructed to 'chase the envelope', while in some situations event organizers had journalists line up for their *sol*. Some senior editors and journalists who rarely went out to report collected *sol* from organizers in advance and directed junior reporters to such assignments. This practice had a negative impact, Owusu found: "Because the organizers have already paid for the coverage, they treat the junior reporters with disregard or contempt" (Owusu, 2011 - Ghana).

Conclusion

Sol is a globally known and common practice in journalism and many media systems – and might be as old as the profession itself. Researchers trace the roots of brown envelope journalism back to the UK in Europe. ‘Brown envelopes’ (*sol*) are largely perceived as a ‘thank you’ or as a contribution to or reimbursement of the costs for “travel and transportation” (T & T) given to journalists for responding to invitations from event organizers.

‘Brown envelope’ journalism is generally seen as an unethical media practice and at least 17 national codes of ethics for journalists in Africa expressly censure it.

‘Brown envelope’ practices, which are tantamount to media bribery, have been attributed to the poor remuneration of journalists, little regulation of the Ghanaian media, and the proliferation of media houses.

Researchers have found that ‘brown envelopes’ (*sol*) result in slanted reporting and biases in news reports, and kill journalists’ creativity and critical approach.

06

Detailed study results

6.1 Practice of *sol* in Ghana

6.1.1 Acceptance of *sol*

Out of the 285 journalists interviewed, all were willing to answer the key question:

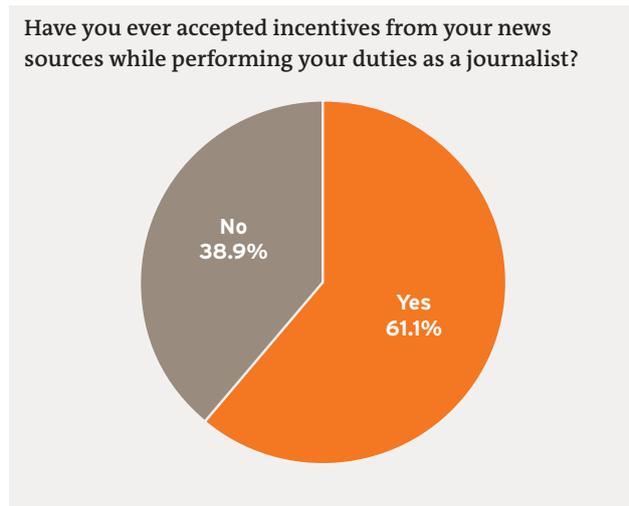


Fig. 1 Journalists, n=285

61.1% of journalists admitted to having accepted incentives from their news sources when performing their duties as journalists, while almost 39% of journalists claimed not to have accepted any incentives when carrying out their duties. Previous studies support this finding. A 2009 study survey conducted by Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe reported that 61% of journalists admitted to regularly receiving 'brown envelopes' (*sol*) when reporting on stories. This is in line with Kasoma's 2007 survey, where she found that 63% of Ghanaian journalists acknowledged taking *sol*.

6.1.2 Forms of incentives

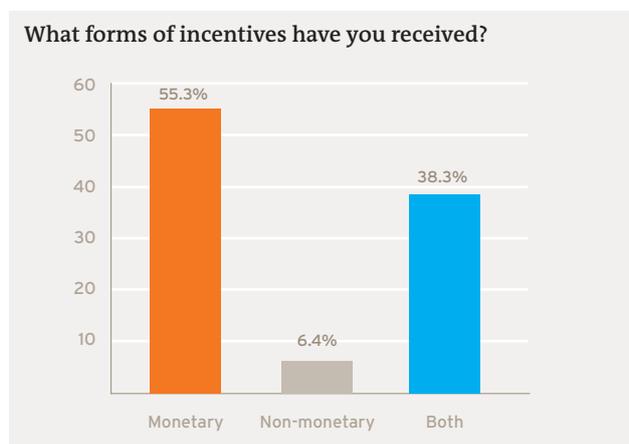


Fig. 2 Journalists, n=174

Most incentives offered to journalists take the form of money, as 55.3% of journalists confirmed. Just 6.4% reported non-monetary incentives and about 38% of journalists received incentives in both monetary and non-monetary forms.

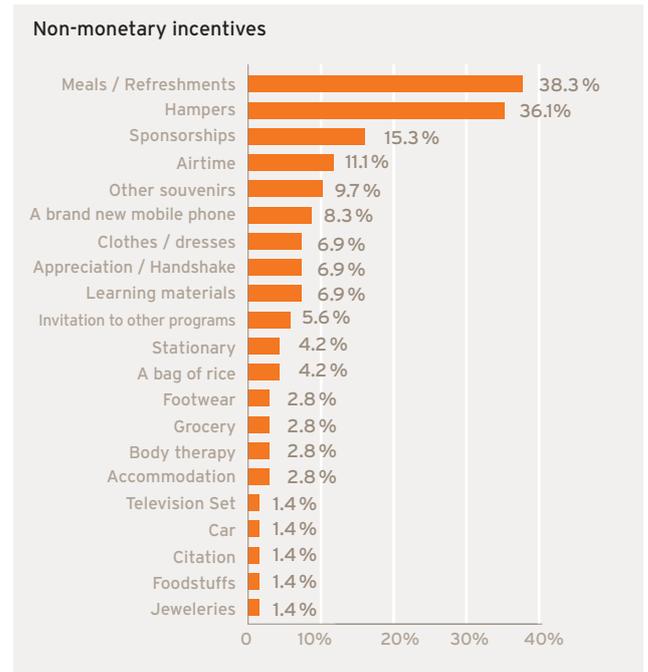


Fig. 3 Journalists, n=72

Refreshments and hampers were the main non-monetary incentives that journalists received. Other non-monetary incentives offered to journalists included sponsorships, free holiday trips, airtime, souvenirs and, in few cases, even more valuable items such as vehicles. In at least 1 out of 5 interviews, journalists reported receiving non-monetary incentives from event organizers.

"Yes, I have. Several times."
(Journalist, radio, private sector, Kumasi)

"Truthfully, yes, I do."
(Journalist, radio, private sector, Kumasi)

"Yeah I do. I gracefully accept them."
(Editor, radio, private sector, Kumasi)

6.1.3 Acceptance of *sol* – possible correlations

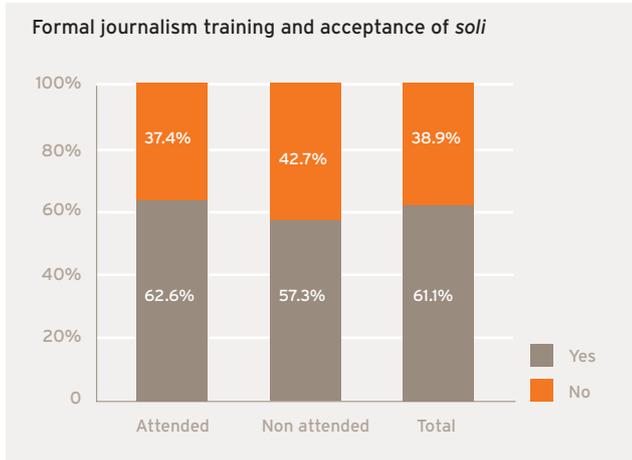


Fig. 4 Journalists, n=285

The majority of the journalists interviewed (71.2%) had some formal journalism education or professional training in journalism. The survey showed an increase of 5.3 percentage points among professional journalists regarding accepting *sol* over journalists without formal journalism training. Of this figure, 62.6% had accepted incentives during their duties as journalists. Of those who had no formal journalism training, 57.3% had accepted incentives at one time or another in the line of duty. Acceptance of *sol* did not seem to depend on the level of professionalism.

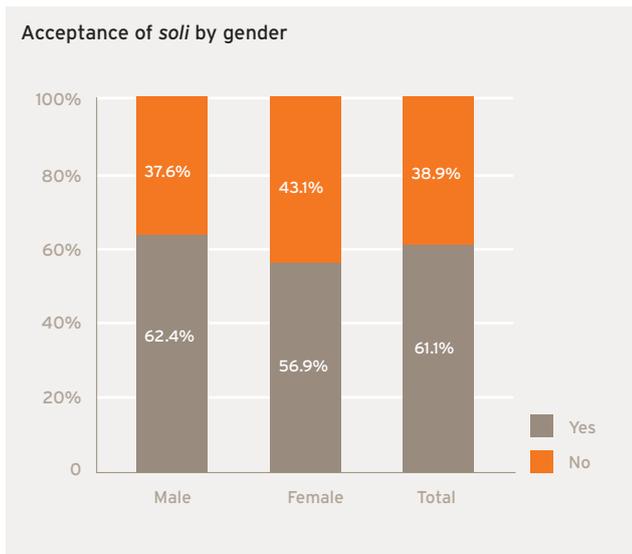


Fig. 5 Journalists, n=285

It would seem that male journalists are slightly more likely to accept *sol* than female journalists. From the findings, about 62.4% of the male journalists interviewed said that they had accepted *sol* compared to 56.9% of female journalists.

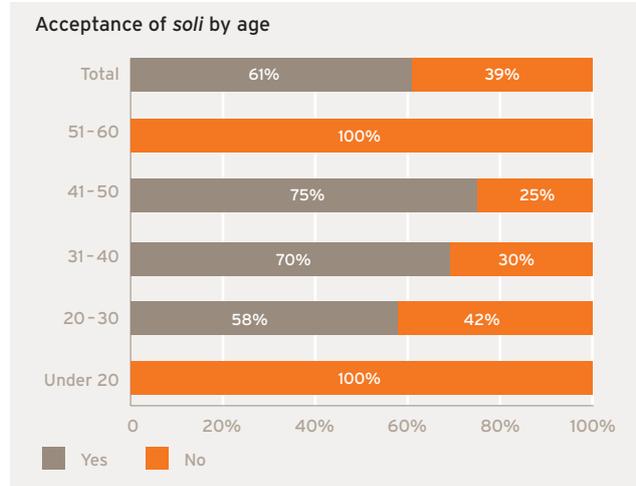


Fig. 6 Journalists, n=285

The survey revealed that *sol* was most commonly accepted by journalists between 41 – 50 years of age (75%), followed by the 31 – 40 (70%) and 20 – 30 (58%) age groups. In the study, millennials and older journalists (over 50) said that they did not accept *sol*. Since a considerable number of journalists accept that *sol* has a negative impact on their profession, it is possible that the older journalists see themselves as accomplished and therefore do not regard taking incentives as suitable for their positions. On the other end of the spectrum, many of the younger journalists may be avoiding taking *sol* because they do not wish to get involved in behavior that might ruin their reputations at the start of their careers.

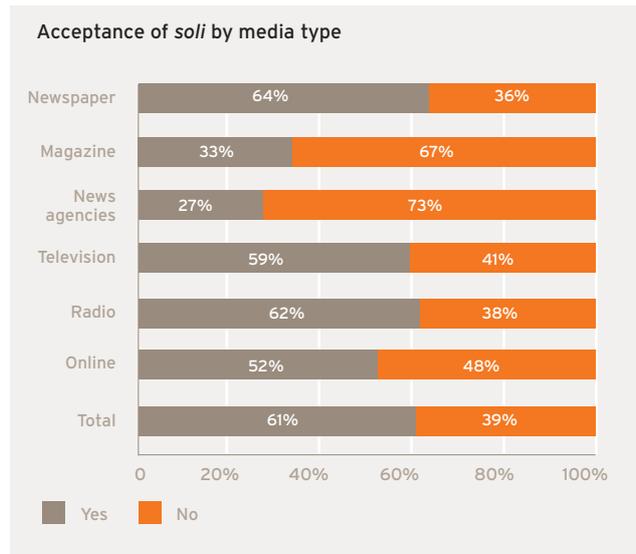


Fig. 7 Journalists, n=285

Findings from the survey revealed that of the 61.1% of journalists who had accepted *sol*, newspaper journalists (64%) accepted *sol* more often than journalists working in other media. This was followed closely by radio journalists (62%), television

journalists (59%) and online journalists (52%). Journalists from magazines (33%) and news agencies (27%) were the least likely to accept *solì*.

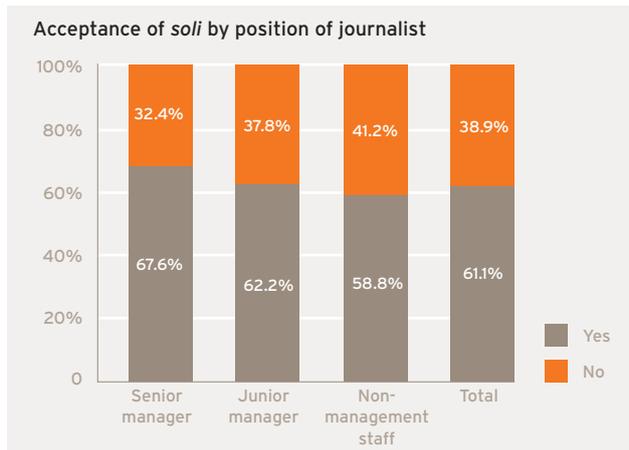


Fig. 8 Journalists, n=285

Journalists in top positions, such as senior and junior managers, reported accepting *solì* more than journalists in non-management positions. Over 67% of senior managers and 62.2% of junior managers admitted to have taken *solì*.

Interestingly, they were also among the majority of journalists who held the view that *solì* was media bribery. So they acknowledge the negative effects of *solì*, while still accepting it. It seems as if *solì* has become a 'necessary evil' to these journalists.

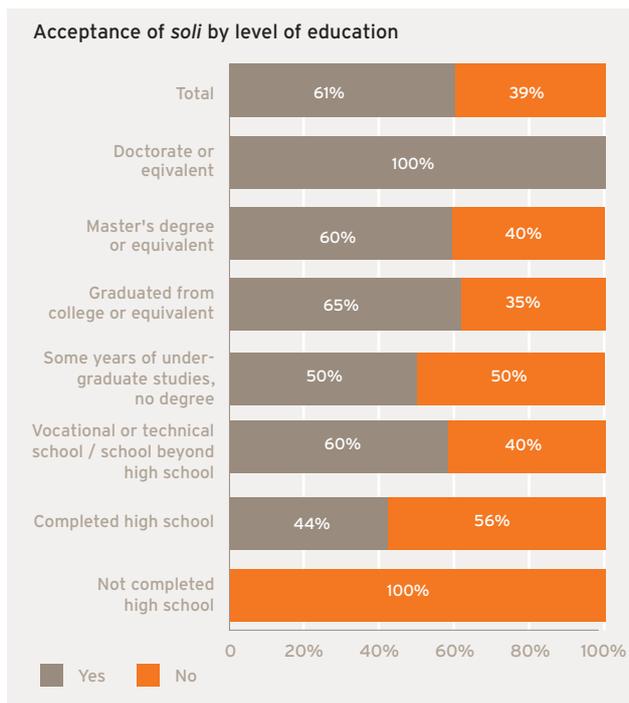


Fig. 9 Journalists, n=285

The findings indicate that the higher the level of education a journalist has, the more he/she is prone or inclined to accept *solì*. Comparatively, about 44.4% of journalists who had completed high school accepted *solì* compared to journalists who had graduated from college (65.4%) or held a master's degree (60%). Journalists with doctorate degrees accepted *solì* all the time, whereas those who had not completed a high school education reported not accepting *solì* at all. This indicates that journalists with a higher education tend to accept *solì* more frequently than those with a relatively low education, or perhaps simply feel less shame about admitting it.

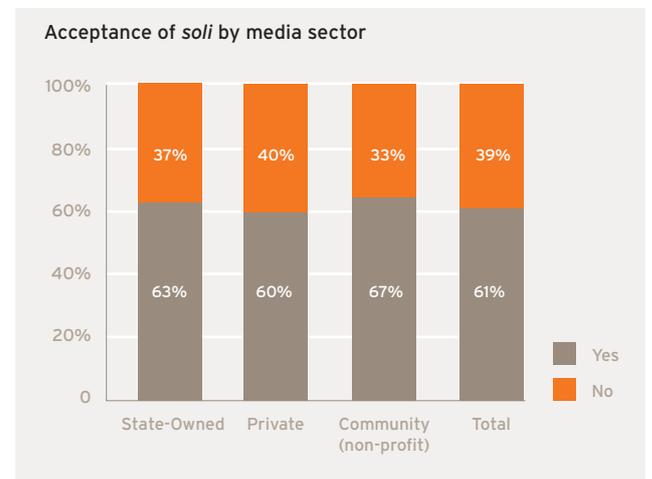


Fig. 10 Journalists, n=285

Journalists in community (non-profit) media (66.7%) accepted *solì* slightly more often than their counterparts in the state-owned media (63.3%) and the private media (60.4%). But the differences were not statistically relevant.

6.1.4 Giving soli

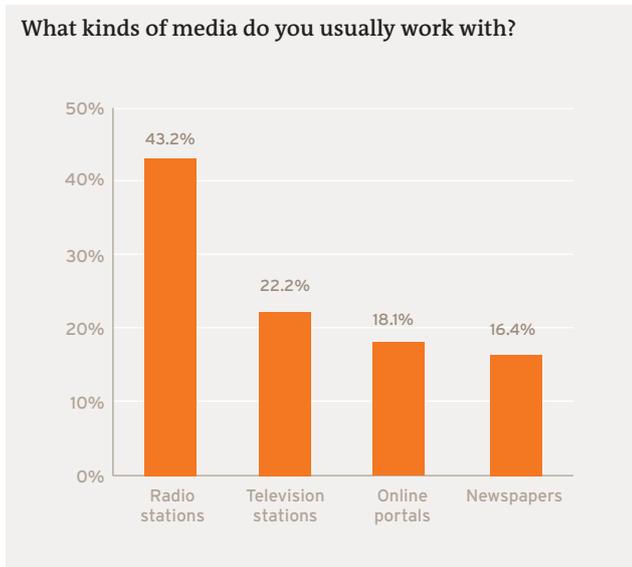


Fig. 11 Media interest organizations, n = 262

Radio stations (43.2%) were most frequently patronized by respondents from media interest organizations for publicity purposes, followed by television stations (22.2%), online portals (18.1%) and newspapers (16.4%). Some media users employed more than one media type in order to reach a wider audience.

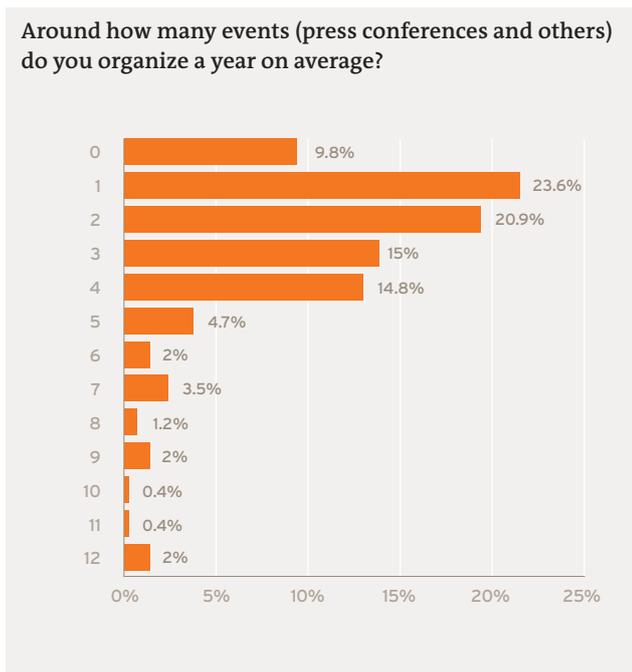


Fig. 12 Media interest organizations, n = 262

The largest percentage of media interest organizations, about 23.6%, organized one event a year on average. Most organizations organized between one and four events annually.

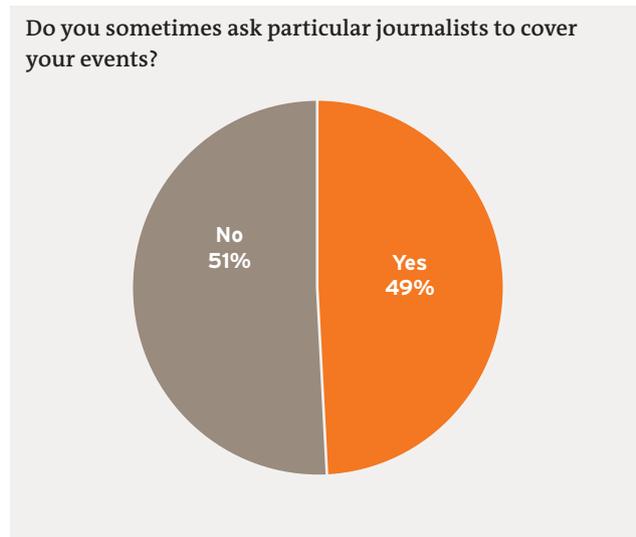


Fig. 13 Media interest organizations, n = 262

About 49% of the media interest organizations interviewed reported asking particular journalists to cover their events.

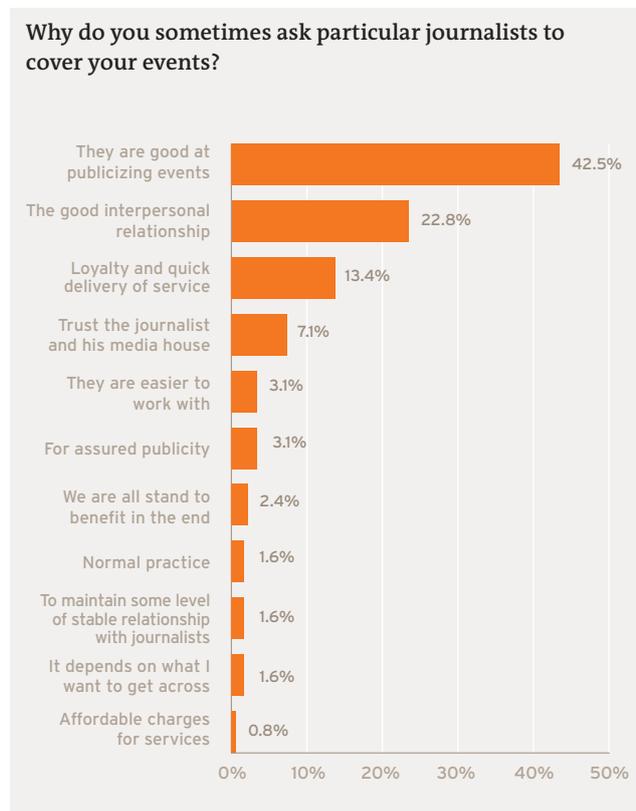


Fig. 14 Media interest organizations, n = 128

These organizations named competence, a good interpersonal relationship, loyalty and quick service delivery as their reason for requesting particular journalists for media coverage. Responses from the qualitative survey suggested that choosing a specific media house/journalist was also based on the reputation of the media house, the credibility of the journalist, the quality of reports, and the demography of a story's target audience.

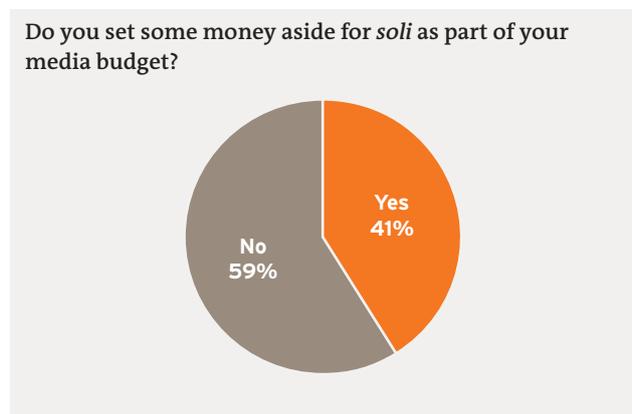


Fig. 15 Media interest organizations, n = 262

Approximately 41% of media interest organizations reported budgeting funds especially for *soli* payments, while a larger 59% claimed to have no specific funds for *soli*.

We asked media interest organizations from the four regions to express how likely or unlikely they were to give *soli* to journalists to cover their stories based on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 was 'extremely unlikely' and 10 was 'extremely likely'. The chart below depicts the distribution of their responses:

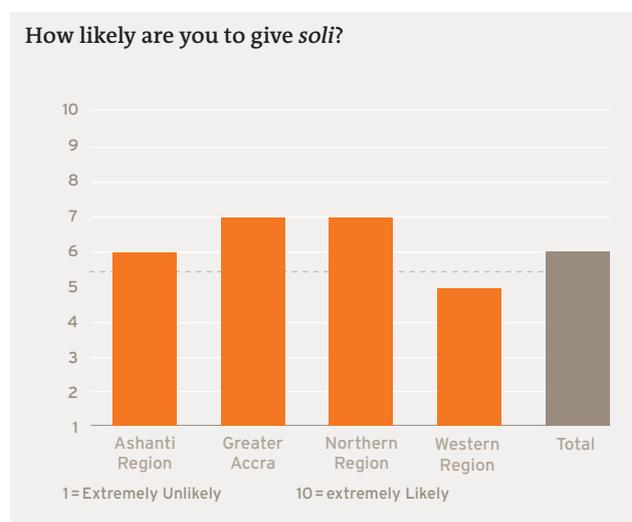


Fig. 16 Media interest organizations, n = 254

There was a slightly higher than average likelihood that media interest organizations seeking publicity would offer *soli* to journalists to get their events covered. The results seem to indicate that media interest organizations in the Greater Accra and Northern regions were more likely to offer *soli* to journalists than organizations in the other regions where the survey was conducted. These regions recorded 7.01 and 6.80 respectively, both above the mean average.

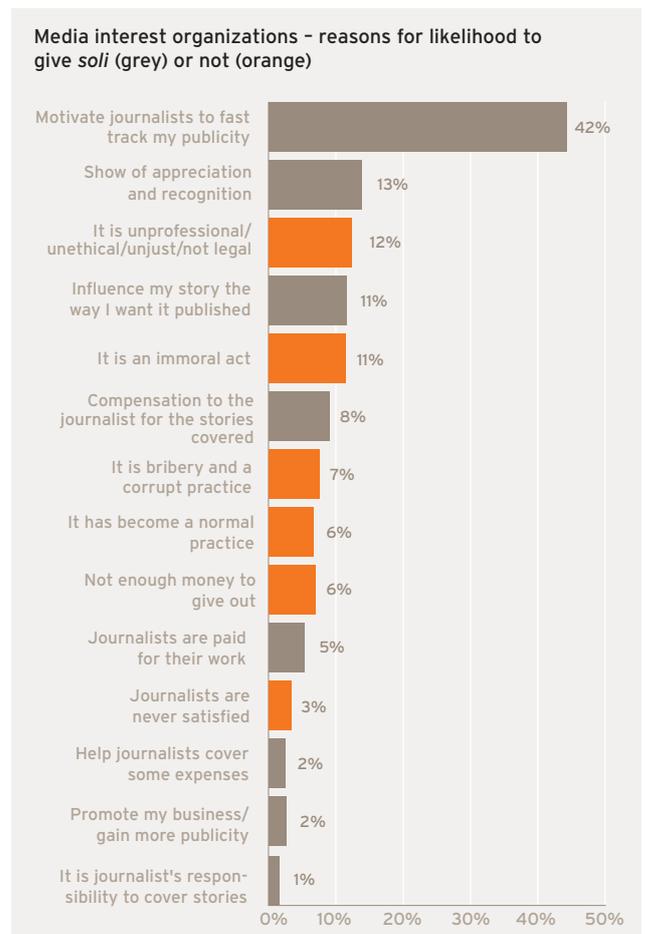


Fig. 17 Media interest organizations, n = 254

A high percentage of interviewees (42%) from businesses and organizations that use the media said they believed offering *soli* to journalists motivated them to promote their stories in the news. Nearly 13% offered payment as a form of appreciation to journalists for covering their events and about 11.6% offered *soli* to get their stories written and published in the manner they wanted.

Media interest organizations that were less likely to give *soli* to journalists felt it was unethical and illegal (11.6%). Others (7.4%) cited moral grounds, noting that paying *soli* to get a story covered was an immoral practice, while about 7% said the practice was bribery.

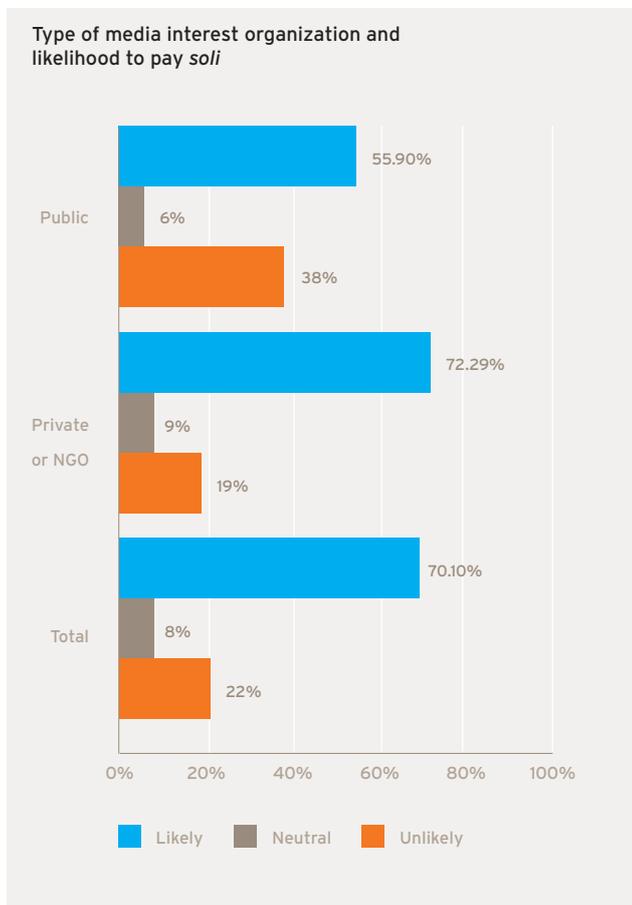


Fig. 18 Media interest organizations, n = 254

While 72.3% of the private media interest organizations (businesses and non-governmental organizations) reported they tended to pay *soli*, “only” 55.9% of the public media interest organizations said the same.

6.2 Perceptions of soli

All stakeholder groups interviewed for the survey shared their understanding and perceptions of *soli*. During the interviews, interviewers explained the concept of *soli* to interviewees who had not heard the word *soli*, or did not understand the concept of the practice. This allowed all interviewees to provide an opinion regardless of whether they had known about *soli* prior to the survey.

The questions about the interviewees’ perceptions of *soli* were designed as multiple response questions, since perceptions are not always simple, even on one issue. Given the multiplicity of responses for each question, the respective analysis was run using the percentage of respondents. It was important to capture the full range of perceptions on *soli* in this study.

6.2.1 Journalists’ perceptions of soli

When journalists were asked where they heard about *soli*, a large majority said that it was at work, among colleagues, or at a conference. Only 7.5% had heard about *soli* at journalism school. Asked about their general understanding of *soli*, just 13.8% of the journalists interviewed thought *soli* was bribery.

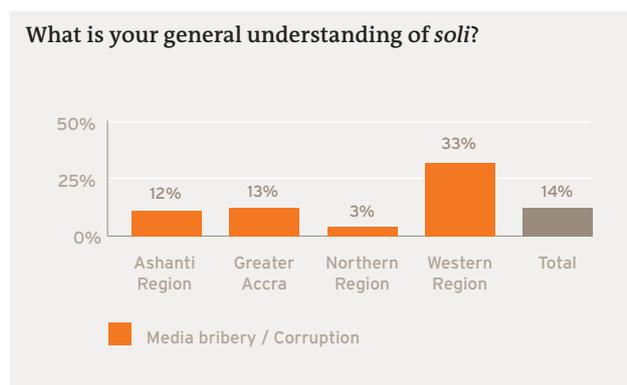


Fig. 19 Journalists, n = 285

A large majority (86.2%) of journalists thought *soli* was not a problem. Many journalists said *soli* was a show of appreciation or gratitude for journalists and and part of those felt *soli* was transportation re-imbusement or ‘T & T’ for press men and women to carry out their duties. This supports a finding from Skjerdal’s survey (2010) that the ‘brown envelope’ is usually confined to a small amount of money, and in some cases the contribution seems to be customary as a polite greeting or an expected subsidy towards transportation costs.

In your own words, can you tell me what your understanding of soli in the Ghanaian media is?

“Soli in my understanding, I know when you talk of soli it is just a form of appreciation.”

(Journalist, radio, private sector, Takoradi)

“Soli is solidarity from the giver to the taker and in return for an agenda, so it’s a bribe. It is a polished bribe.”

(Journalist, freelancer, Takoradi)

We found a few differences in the four regions analyzed: In the Northern Region, significantly fewer journalists (3.3%) than the overall average saw an ethical problem with *soli*. The highest sensitivity for the ethical problem was found in the Western Region where one in three journalists (33.3%) considered *soli* bribery. In the Northern Region, *soli* was significantly more often justified by the idea of reimbursement of transportation costs than in the other regions; two in three journalists supported this idea.

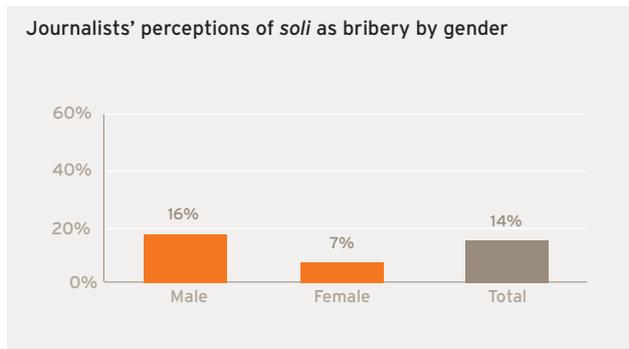


Fig. 20 Journalists, n=285

Significantly more female journalists regarded *soli* positively than their male counterparts. A total of 6.9% female journalists thought of *soli* as media bribery compared to 16.1% of men who thought the same.

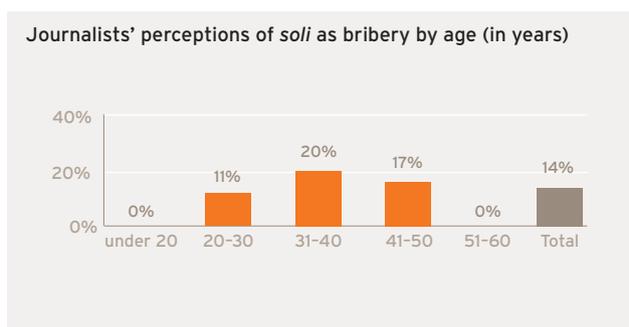


Fig. 21 Journalists, n=283

Generally, perceptions of *soli* were not necessarily influenced by age. However, journalists under 20 years of age and between the ages of 51 and 60 saw absolutely no problem with *soli*.

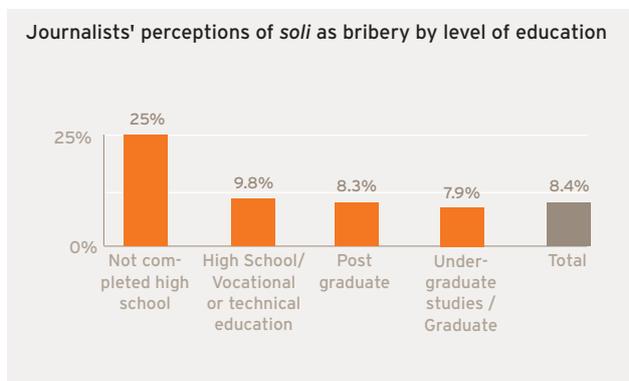


Fig. 22 Journalists, n=283

Journalists who had completed high school seemed to view *soli* slightly more often as bribery than higher educated journalists.

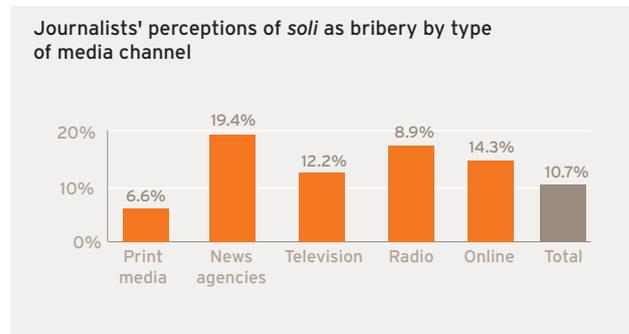


Fig. 23 Journalists, n=282

Generally, perceptions of *soli* were not significantly influenced by the type of media journalists worked with, though journalists in newspaper media were the least likely to see *soli* as bribery.

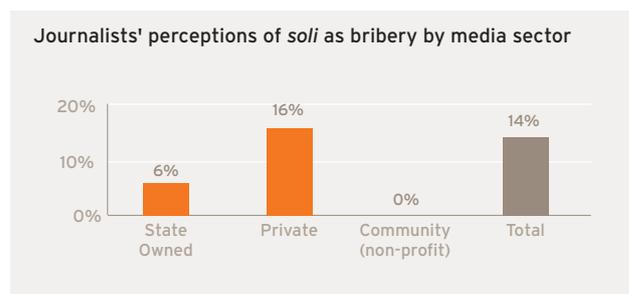


Fig. 24 Journalists, n=284

None of the journalists interviewed from community media thought *soli* was bribery. All associated the practice with positive attributes, such as a token of appreciation, transportation cost, motivation and bonuses for media men and women. The highest percentage of journalists who criticized *soli* as bribery was found in private media and not state-owned media. The survey showed that almost 10% more journalists working in private media houses viewed *soli* as bribery than journalists working in state-owned media.

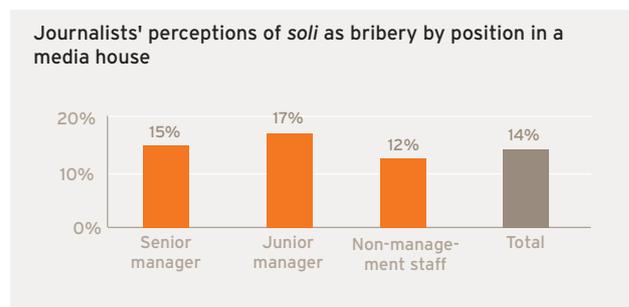


Fig. 25 Journalists, n=284

Journalists in higher positions (management) were a little more likely to call *soli* bribery than journalists in non-management positions.

6.2.1.1 Journalists and the ethical question

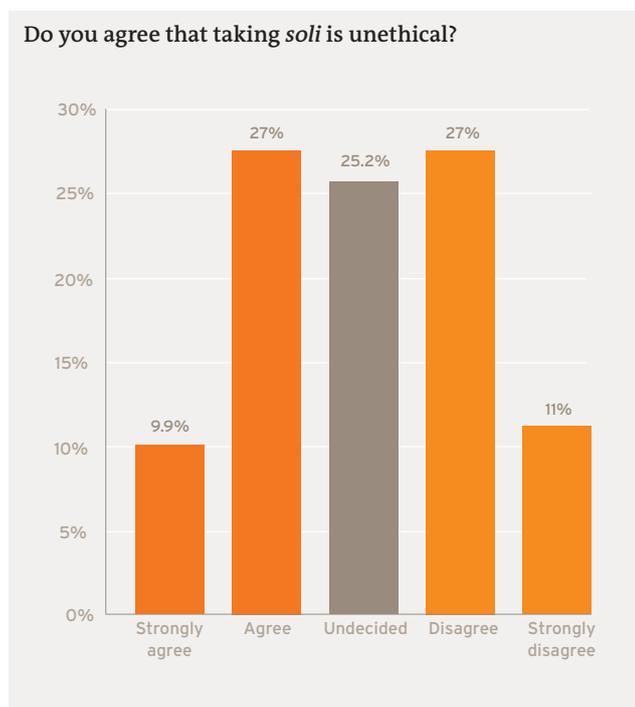


Fig. 26 Journalists, n = 282

About 38% of journalists didn't see taking *soli* as an ethical problem and roughly the same percentage (37%) saw it as an ethical problem. A considerable number of the journalists interviewed, about 1 in 4, were unsure of their position on this subject.

The qualitative study revealed that while there were set standards for ethical behavior, most journalists decided when *soli* was ethical or unethical on a case-by-case basis, and therefore had different approaches to the practice. For some journalists, the value of *soli* determined whether it was bribery and unethical. Usually a small/token amount was seen as appreciation or transportation cost, while larger amounts and valuable items were regarded as bribery, which was felt to be unethical. Other journalists argued that receiving monetary/non-monetary incentives was ethically correct if the news source was willing to offer them.

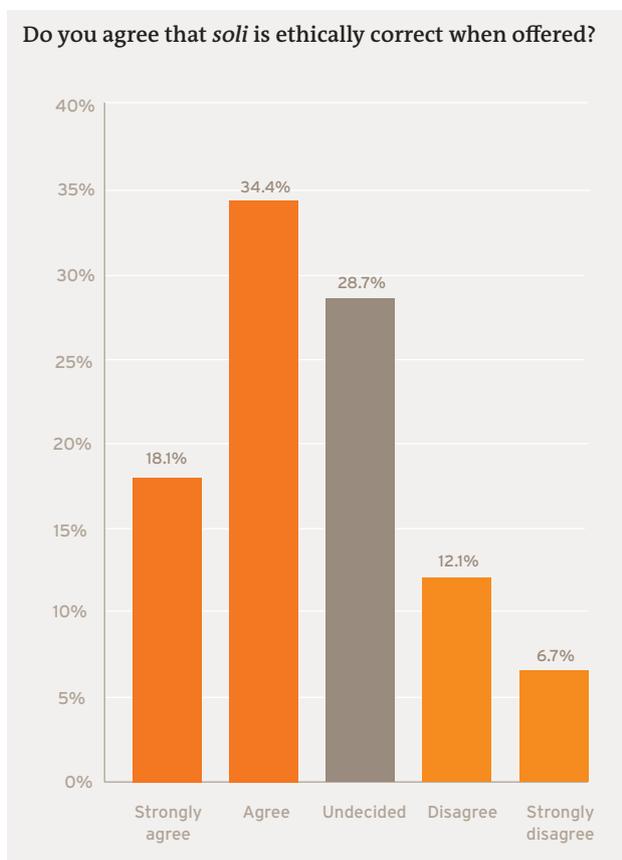


Fig. 27 Journalists, n = 282

A majority (52.5%) of journalists were of the view that accepting *soli* when a news source was willing to offer it was ethically proper. They felt that if a journalist did not demand *soli* and it was willingly offered by the media interest organization, then it could not be considered a bribe. However, about 19% of journalists felt that accepting *soli* offered willingly by event organizers was reproachable.

The in-depth interviews found that one of the major reasons journalists accept *soli* was a lack of resources (especially a means of transport) for covering events.

"It is a way of help so that I can do my job because of the economic situation."

(Journalist, radio, private sector, Kumasi)

"... because of economic difficulties, you have not been paid. That's why you go for soli."

(Journalist, radio, private sector, Kumasi)

Data in the literature hints at the poor conditions under which most African journalists work. Many studies (Dunn, 2010 – Liberia and Frère, 2008 – France) have noted that the prevailing

explanation given for 'brown envelopes' in African journalism practice is poor remuneration for journalists. Ndangam (2009 – Cameroon, p. 834) and Adeyanju & Okwori (2006 – Nigeria, p. 10) said that it was common for journalists in the countries analysed to go unpaid for months.

6.2.2 Media interest organizations' perceptions of *solì*

Media interest organizations – any institution, association, company, or business interested in communicating with citizens/consumers – 'use' media as multipliers for spreading their messages. Even if they pay *solì* to journalists, they are well aware that they would have to pay more for 'real' advertising. It is therefore not surprising that most of the media interest organizations interviewed perceived *solì* in a positive way.

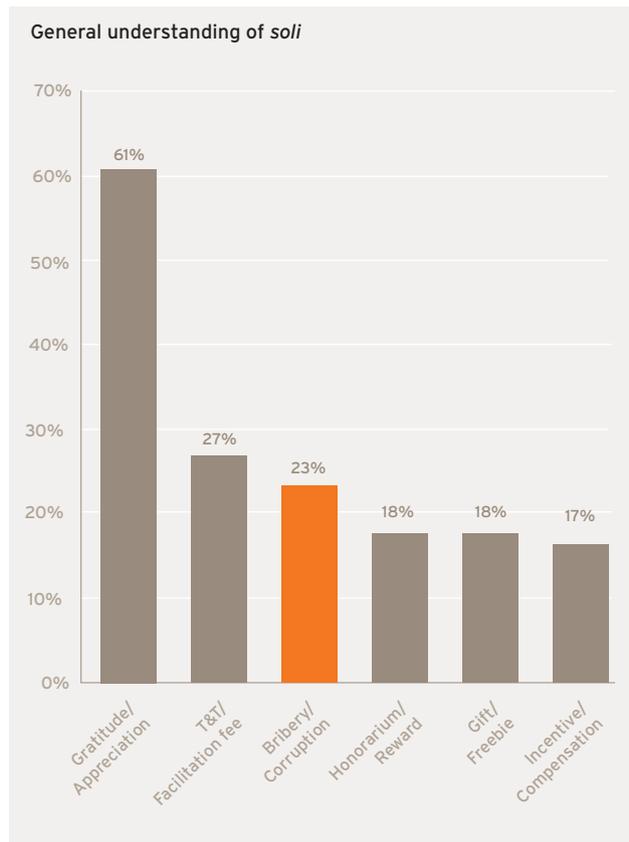


Fig. 28 Media interest organizations, n=262 (Multiple answers were possible.)

From the findings, a majority (61.4%) of the media interest organizations interviewed perceived *solì* as a sign of gratitude or token of appreciation. Nevertheless, almost 23% of media interest organizations pointed out that giving *solì* to journalists was an act of bribery and corruption. There seems to be a higher level of awareness on the part of the *solì* givers than on the part of the *solì* takers (13,8%).

6.2.2.1 Media interest organizations and the ethical question

Media interest organizations were asked whether they agreed with the assertion that giving *solì* to journalists for covering events was unethical.

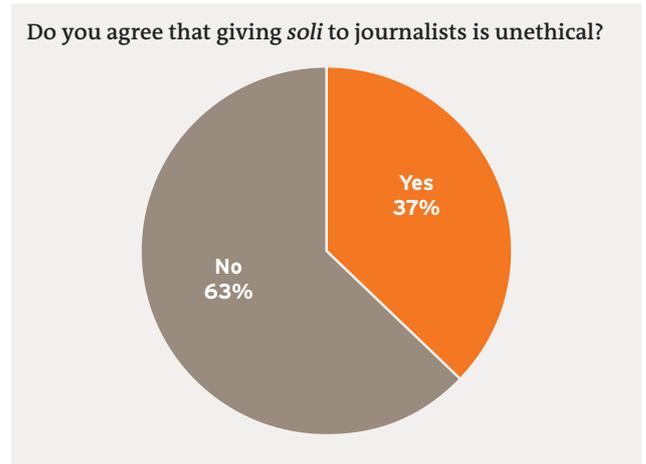


Fig. 29 Media interest organizations, n = 257

Most event organizers (63%) felt there was nothing wrong with giving *solì* to journalists for covering events, while 37% agreed that giving *solì* to journalists for covering events was unethical.

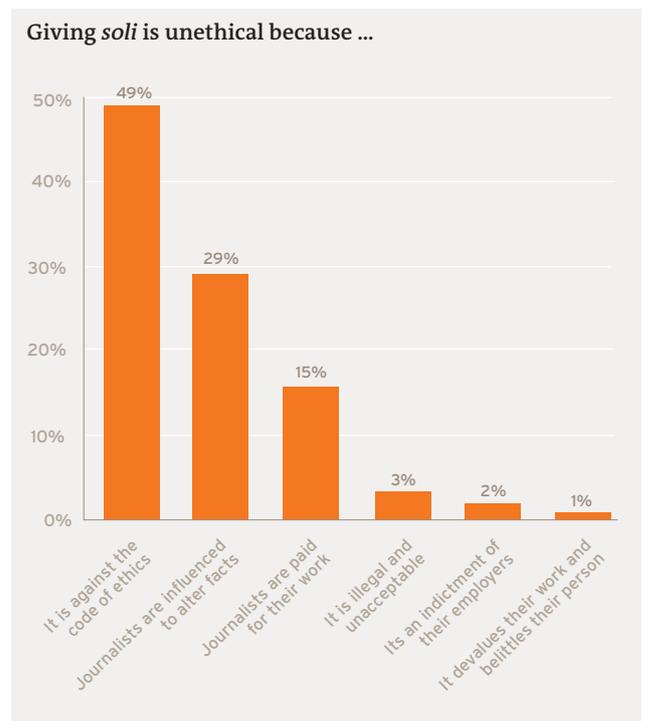


Fig. 30 Media interest organizations, n=92

Of the 37% of media interest organizations who agreed that incentives offered to journalists to write a report or for covering events was unethical, nearly 49% said it went against the code of ethics for journalists. This is interesting given that below, we will see that only 5% of media interest organizations (ref: Fig. 79) claimed to have knowledge of policies concerning *solì*, yet almost half of them said *solì* went against journalists' code of ethics. Perhaps most were not truthful in answering the question about their awareness of the code of ethics regarding incentives for journalists. It is interesting to note that many media interest organizations automatically assigned the ethical problem to the journalists, even when they were asked to judge the 'giving' of *solì*, and so reflect on their own behavior.

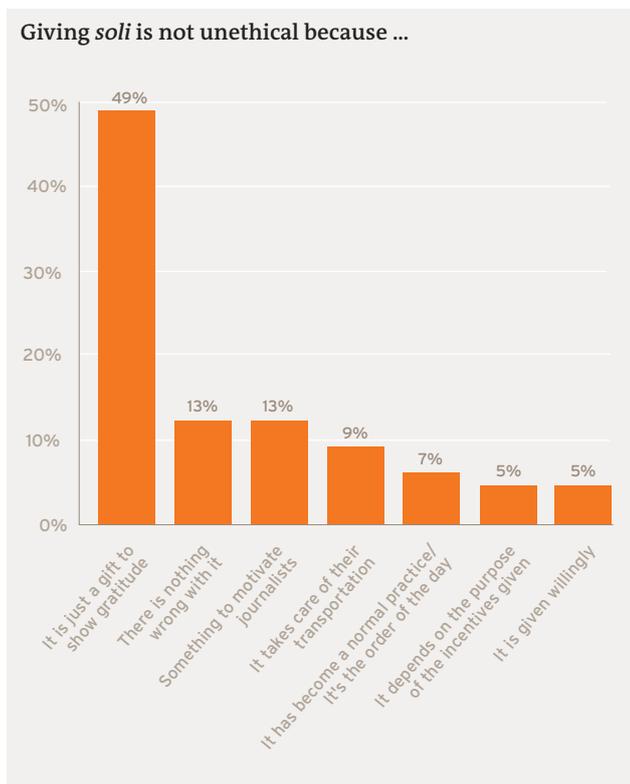


Fig. 31 Media interest organizations, n=152

Media seekers who felt incentives given to journalists presented no ethical issues pointed out that *solì* was a gift to show appreciation for journalists (49.3%).

The majority of media interest organizations felt that journalists accepted *solì* because of their bad financial situation in Ghana. Poor journalistic training, moral and ethical backgrounds, and political influences were other factors named by media interest organizations as contributing to the acceptance of *solì* by Ghanaian journalists.

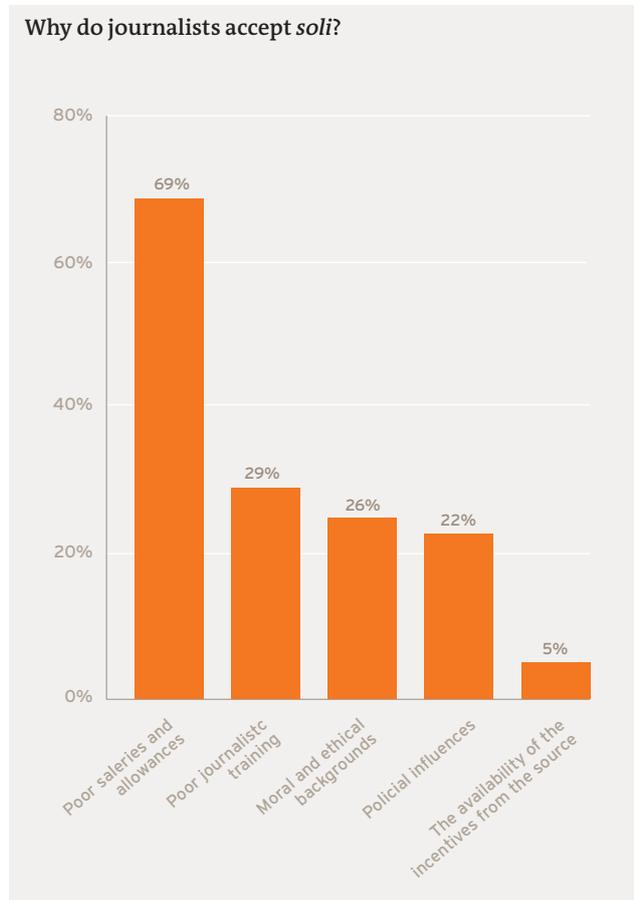


Fig. 32 Media interest organizations, n=247
(Multiple answers were possible.)

The qualitative survey showed that some event organizers feared they might not get the needed publicity if they didn't pay *solì*, so *solì* served as a tool for achieving the publicity they wanted.

"We have a policy where we don't entertain giving money to journalists because we work globally and it is a global policy. The organization doesn't really entertain it, but we go our own way and give them something small, because we realize that the level of them reporting on our issues is quite minimal, meaning we don't really get the wider coverage from their end if we don't give them something."

(CSO, Kumasi)

6.2.3 General public's perceptions of *solì*

The general public had a far more negative outlook towards *solì* than the stakeholders involved: More than half of the media consumers interviewed felt it was a problem.

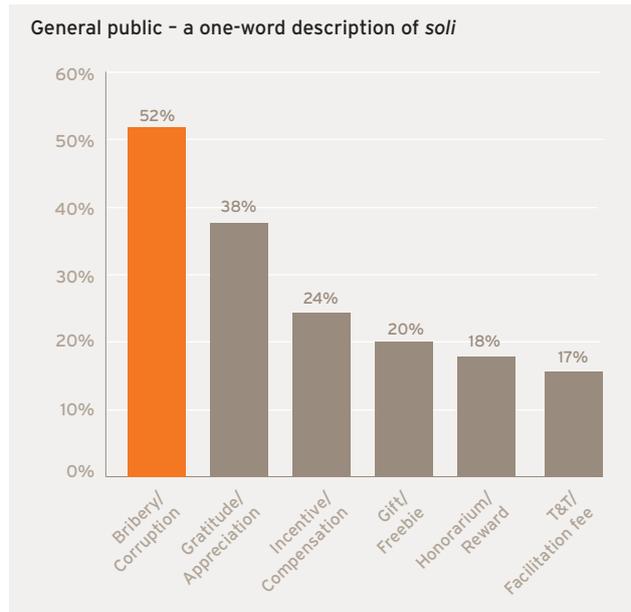


Fig. 33 General public, n = 230 (Multiple answers were possible.)

The reasons given for why *solì* was a problem were mainly because *solì* was perceived as corruption/bribery, a shameful act, and unethical and unprofessional. Others felt the practice of *solì* was awful and that it demeaned the integrity of journalists. The comment “journalists are poorly paid and so they accept *solì*” indicates that *solì* was viewed as a negative practice and theoretically unacceptable, but that the behavior of the journalists was understandable because they didn’t earn enough. (Fig. 34)

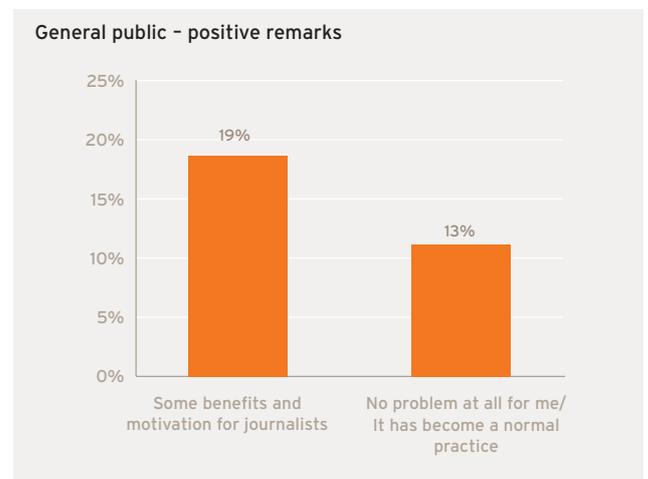


Fig. 35 General public, n = 110

When media consumers were asked to describe their perception of *solì* with one word, a majority (52%) described *solì* as media bribery and/or corruption. 38% of the general public considered *solì* appreciation or gratitude shown to journalists.

Nonetheless, about 32% of the general public believed that *solì* was not a problem. These media consumers felt that *solì* served as motivation for journalists for the work they do and that the practice was normal for journalism in Ghana.

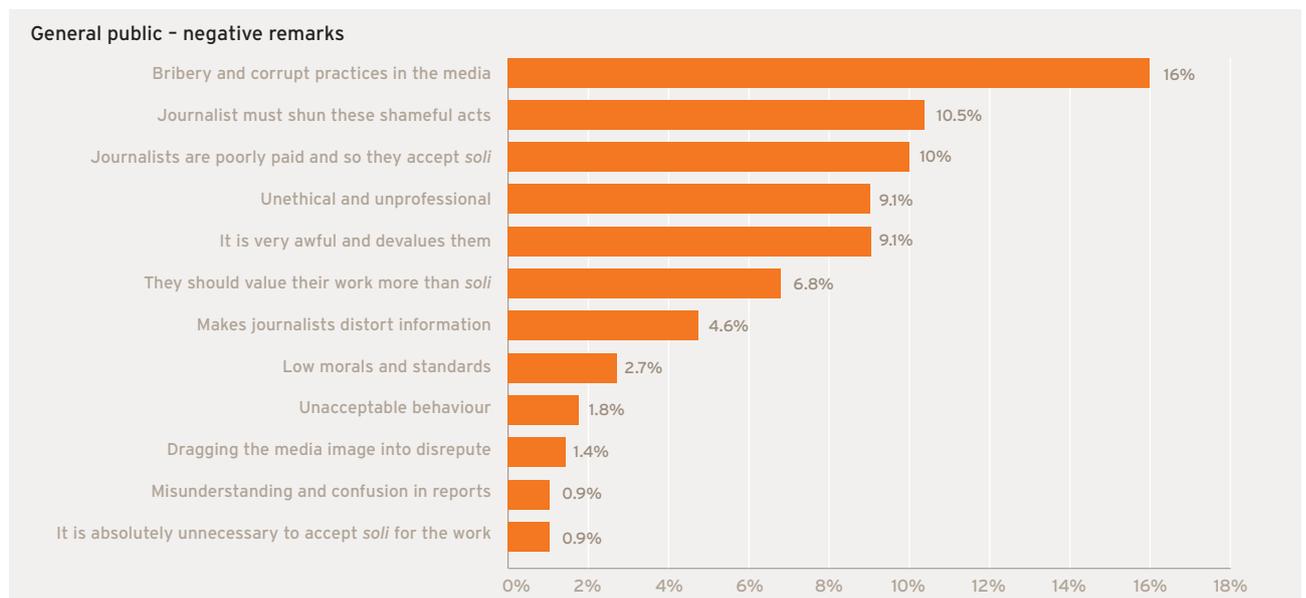


Fig. 34 General public, n = 120

Why do journalists accept *sol*?

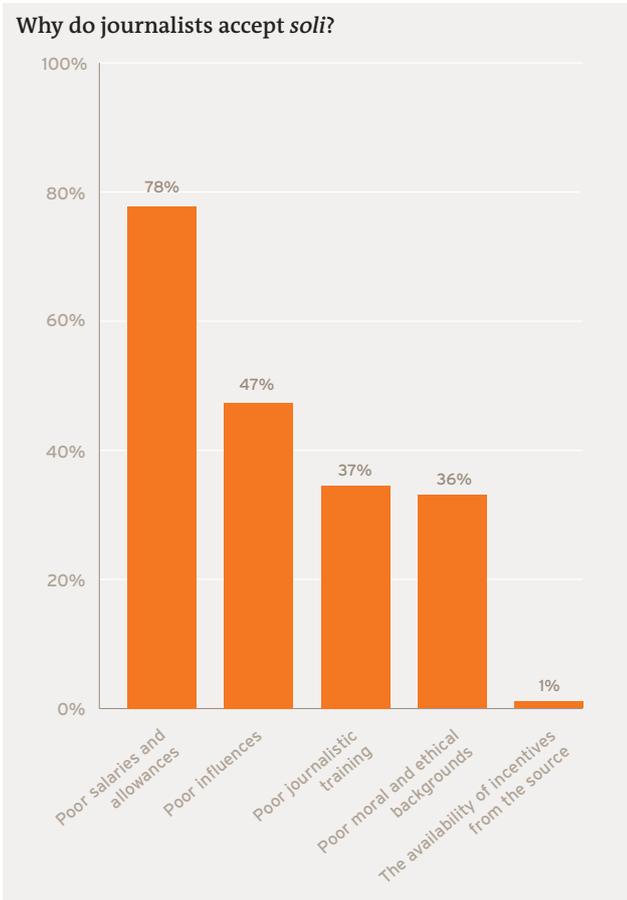


Fig. 36 General public, n = 229 (Multiple answers were possible.)

From the perspective of the public, poor remuneration of journalists was a major reason why journalists took or accepted *sol*. Over 77% of those polled alluded to this. Nearly half of the media consumers interviewed feared that *sol* might politically influence journalists.

6.2.4 Media experts' perceptions of *sol*

Most experts expressed the view that it was just not right for journalists to accept *sol* whether they requested it or were offered it by event organizers.

6.2.5 Media managers' perceptions of *sol*

The media managers interviewed agreed with the experts that the practice of *sol* was unacceptable in any sphere no matter who initiated it. According to some media managers, *sol* was believed to encourage journalists to do more work on stories and influence them to skew reports in favor of *sol* givers.

"It is obvious they believe that if you give me something, I do extra work. If you give me nothing, I don't."
(Media manager, TV and radio, state owned, Tamale)

"Sometimes it is to skew stories to their favor, but it all depends on the journalist."

(Media manager, radio, private sector, Kumasi)

6.3 Economic impact of *sol*

All the groups surveyed put forth a central argument to justify the acceptance of *sol* by journalists, namely how poorly paid journalists tend to be. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the economic impact on both the *sol* givers and the *sol* takers.

6.3.1 Economic impact of *sol* on journalists

6.3.1.1 Employment situation of journalists

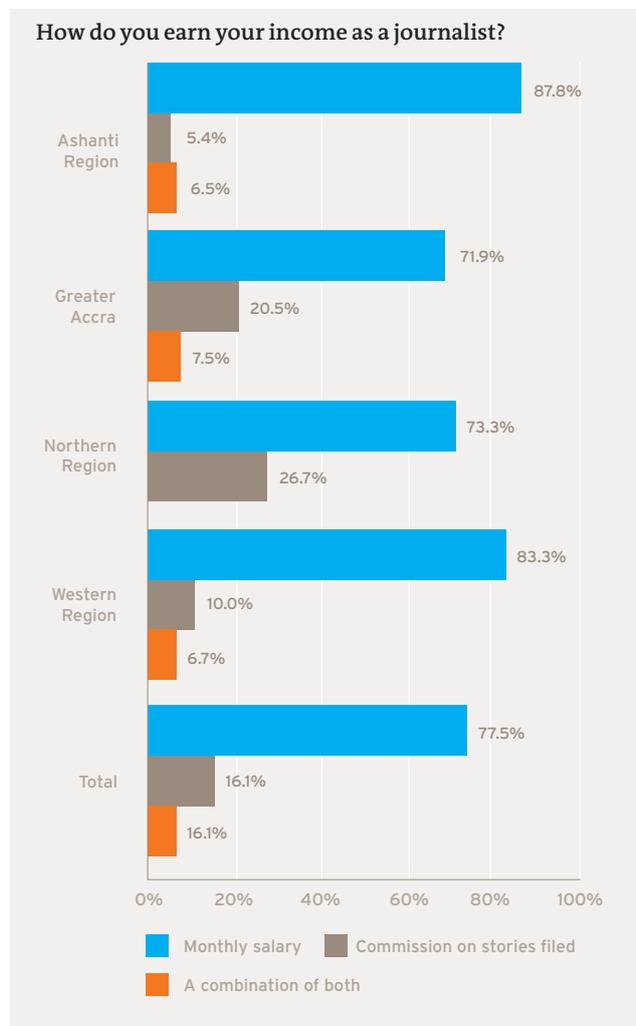


Fig. 37 Journalists, n=280

The majority (77.5%) of journalists earned monthly salaries from the various media organizations they worked with. Slightly over 16% received commission on stories filed, while a few (6.4%) received both a monthly salary and commission.

6.3.1.2 Remuneration of journalists

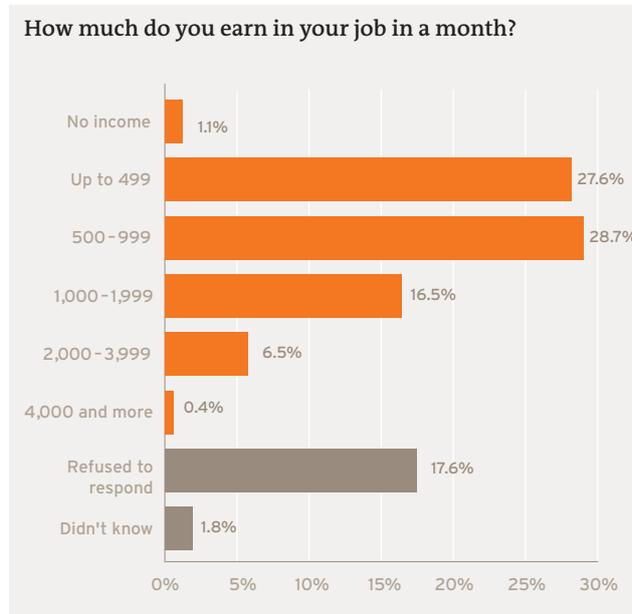


Fig. 38 Journalists n = 279

At the time of the study, 45% of the journalists interviewed reported earnings of between GH¢500 and GH¢2,000 as monthly income from their employers. Analysis of the data showed that middle-income earners received between about GH¢700 and GH¢800 monthly and that the average monthly income of all journalists interviewed amounted to GH¢ 700. These results must be considered only approximations because a high number of journalists were not willing to respond (17.56%). One out of 100 journalists was not paid at all.

Journalists often criticize that their transportation costs are not reimbursed by their employers.

6.3.1.3 Additional income via *solì*

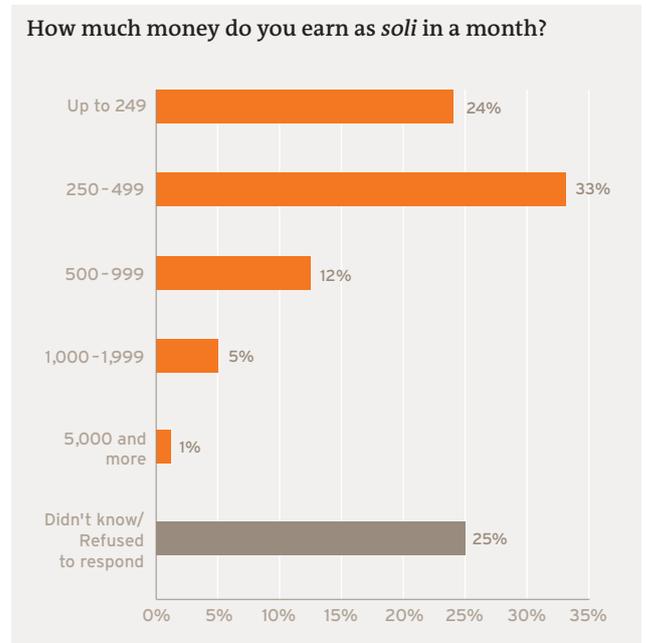


Fig. 39 Journalists n = 173

The majority of journalists (57%) claimed to earn less than GH¢500 per month in *solì* payments. About half of these journalists reported receiving even less than GH¢250 as *solì* a month. In rare cases, a few journalists said they earned about GH¢5,000 in *solì* monthly. One in four journalists claimed not to recall or refused to answer the question.

Almost half of the journalists (45%) claimed earnings between GH¢500 and GH¢2,000 as monthly income from their employers. Analysis of the data based on these earnings suggests that monthly earnings from *solì* by Ghanaian journalists amount to about 45% of their monthly emoluments from their employers. This makes *solì* attractive and tempting for journalists working in this part of the world.

6.3.1.4 Satisfaction with remuneration



Fig. 40 Journalists n=281

Almost 36% of journalists felt their monthly salaries were unfair. A smaller number (32.4%) seemed to accept them as fair for their employers. Another 32% were neutral with their responses.

Journalists in the Northern Region seemed to be the least satisfied with their incomes, as indicated by a negative rating of over 60%. This can probably be attributed to the fact that the Northern Region is not as commercially developed as the other regions surveyed. As such, their media organizations do not make enough profit to properly remunerate their staff.

Opinions from the in-depth interviews supported the assertion by some journalists that their salaries were not commensurate with the work they did for their organizations. One journalist was agitated about the situation, and would clearly have preferred not to talk to the interviewer about it.

Contract journalists, usually hired for a 6-month contract that is often renewable based on the employee’s performance, were also interviewed. They reported receiving regular pay and remuneration ranging from GH¢500 to about GH¢800 per month.

During our search, we found a few stringers who either received meager payment upon filing a story or were not paid at

all by the organizations they worked for.

But when you take the industry standard and look at the work you do, is it fair compared with the amount you receive?

‘Not at all. We work more than eight hours a day while our colleagues in the banks work from 7 to 5 o’clock and get paid around 4,000, 5,000. Journalists, as I am going home now, I work from 12 a.m. to about 4 a.m. before I sleep. We start work about 8 in the morning and end at 9 or 10 p.m. So I spend more than 12 hours working every day. Multiply 12 hours by 5 days in the week. 60 hours, usually that’s not what everybody does. Some people work less than that, so of course we deserve more pay for the work we do.’

(Editor, newspaper, private sector, Accra)

What are the terms of employment for your journalists? Do you have part-time and full-time journalists?

‘I mean a majority of our staff are full-time employees. We also have stringers. Stringers are not employed by us, but they come and they work. They gather news for us and as we speak, we don’t pay them. There is no policy, so we are working on a policy for that so that we can give them something, because again these are the things that make soli attractive.’

(Media manager, newspaper, state owned, Accra)

6.3.1.5 Other sources of income

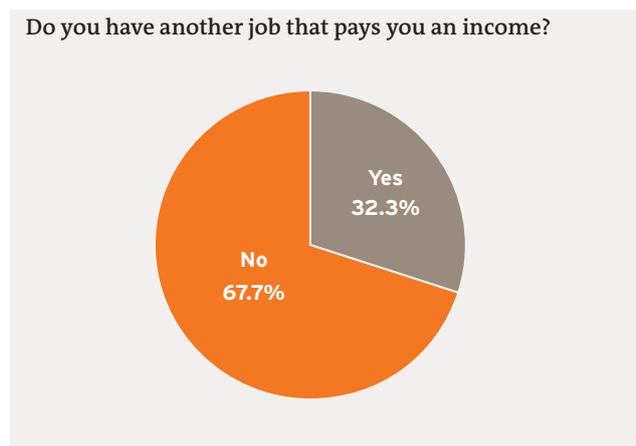


Fig. 41 Journalists, n = 282

Most (67.7%) of the journalists interviewed did not have other jobs that earned them some additional income aside from their earnings from the media organizations they worked with.

This differs from a finding from a similar survey in Nigeria where Adeyanju & Okwori (2006, p. 10) suggested that most journalists moonlight to secure a reasonable income.

Mabweazara (2010) from Zimbabwe found that having a second job (often off the books) has become common among journalists.

6.3.1.6 Importance of *solì* for standard of living

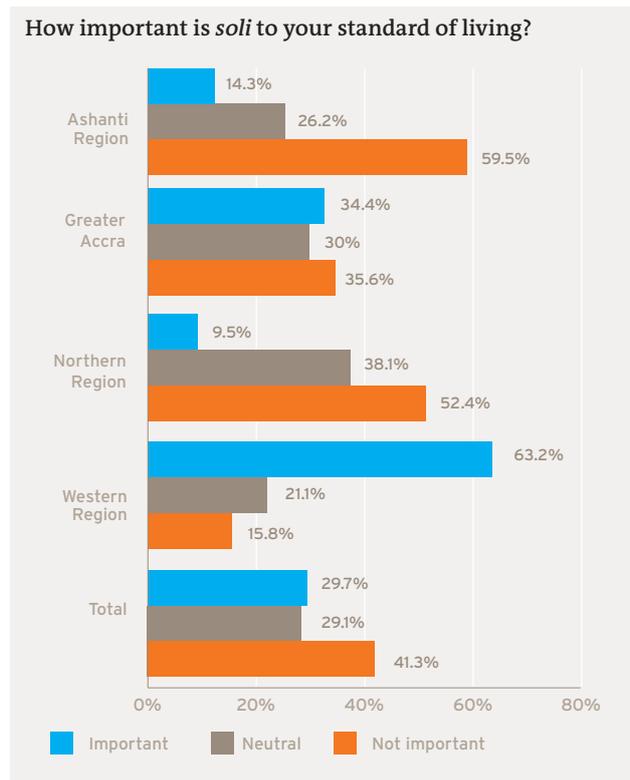


Fig. 42 Journalists, n = 172

The majority (63.2%) of journalists across the regions affirmed that *solì* was important to their standard of living. However, most journalists in the Ashanti and Northern regions seemed to feel *solì* did not contribute substantially to their standard of living. In the two regions, only 14.3% and 9.5% respectively claimed *solì* was a significant part of their earnings. Western Region was the only place surveyed where a majority of journalists said that *solì* had some importance for their standard of living.

Nonetheless, during the in-depth interviews some journalists did mention the positive effect of *solì* on their lives. They said the incentives provided resources for travelling to cover events, supplemented their meager salaries, and helped them achieve business and career goals and meet responsibilities in the family.

How helpful is *solì* to your standard of living?

“As far as I’m concerned, a young enterprising visionary leader or visionary person will want to aspire to be more than a journalist and achieve something in society. Once I get this money

or solì, with the right kind of approach or planning, I would be able to use of the money from solì to achieve something.”
(Journalist, Radio Kumasi, Private Sector)

“Solì helps also to motivate my newsroom guys; some of them do not receive anything much, some of them are on an attachment. Now when I send them and they bring the solì, I also use it to motivate them, sometimes I pay some of their expenses like T&T. Some other people come, they are from poor homes, so I should buy food for them.”
(Editor, radio, private sector, Kumasi)

“How helpful? I would say it augments my salary. It supplements the salaries that we receive and sometimes it helps.”
(Journalist, radio, private sector, Kumasi)

“Solì is helpful to me as I told you before. It supports me very much. I wouldn’t call it solì. I would call it incentives for doing a good job. It supports me. I am able to send my children to a good school; it helps me support my home. Yeah it’s been good to me in that way.”
(Stringer, TV and radio, private sector)

6.3.1.7 Hypothetical effect of eliminating *solì* on journalists’ practice

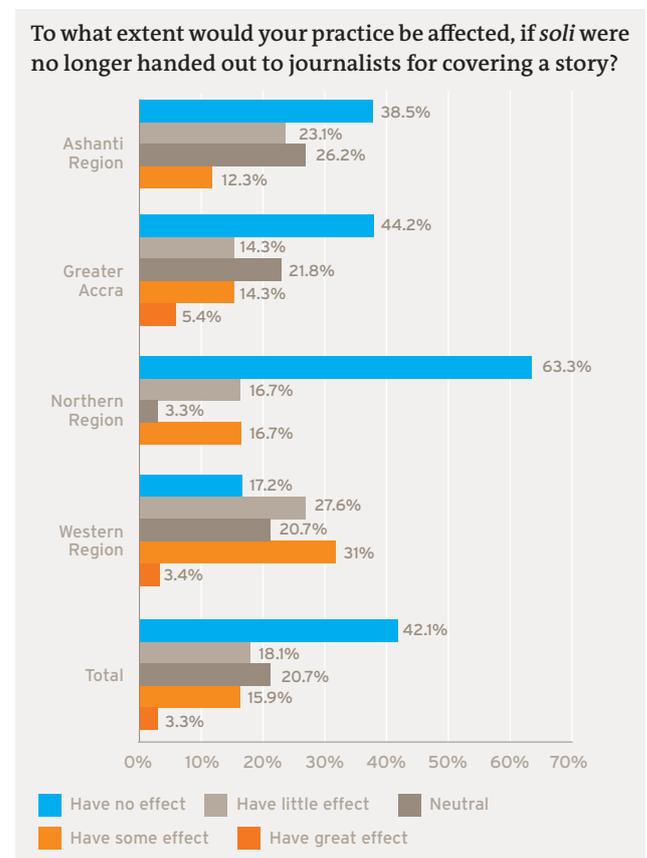


Fig. 43 Journalists, n = 172

Overall, over 40% of journalists said that their work would not be affected if *sol*i were no longer handed out to journalists. This perhaps explains why a considerable number of journalists remained neutral about the level at which *sol*i was important to their standard of living. The North recorded the highest percentage (63.3%) of journalists saying there would be no effect on their work, followed by Accra (44.2%), Ashanti (38.5%) and just 17.2% for the Western Region.

Only 3.3% of journalists across the regions felt eliminating *sol*i would have a great effect on their work. The largest percentages of journalists who answered positively (5.4%) were from Accra and from the Western Region (3.4%).

6.3.1.8 Correlation between salary level and acceptance of *sol*i

The study also sought to identify the relationship between low salary levels and the acceptance of *sol*i among journalists.

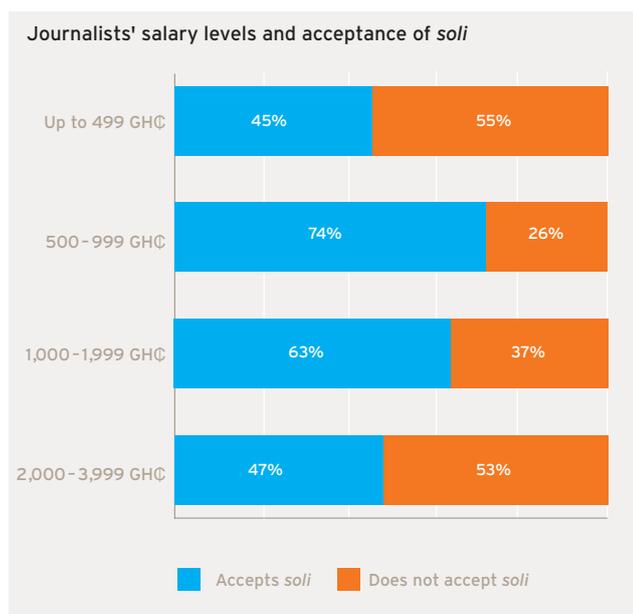


Fig. 44 Journalists, n = 279

Analysis of the data revealed that journalists whose salaries fell within the second income range (GH¢500 – 1,000) were more susceptible to accepting *sol*i than those within the lowest income range and higher income ranges. Further analysis indicated that within the higher income segments, the acceptance rate declined as salary level rose. Meanwhile, 54.7% of journalists whose incomes fell in the lowest salary range reported not accepting *sol*i. These journalists claimed to earn less than GH¢500 in a month.

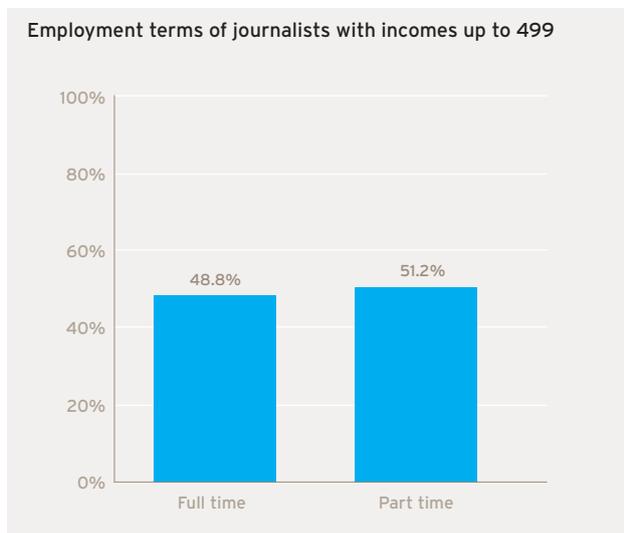


Fig. 45 Journalists, n = 86

The analysis showed that the majority (51.2%) of journalists whose incomes were in the lowest salary range (up to GH¢499.99) were part-time employees in their organizations. This makes sense, since logically journalists who work fewer hours are unlikely to earn as much as their colleagues working full time.

6.3.2 Economic impact of *sol*i for media interest organizations

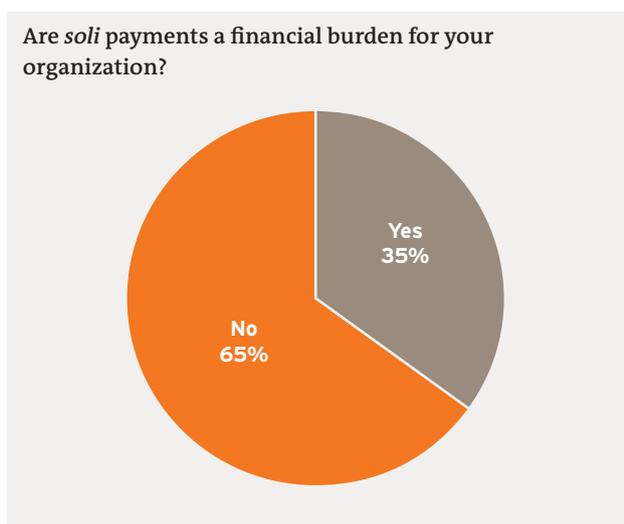


Fig. 46 Media interest organizations, n = 262

Most media interest organizations, 65% of those interviewed, felt that giving incentives to journalists was not a financial burden on their organizations.

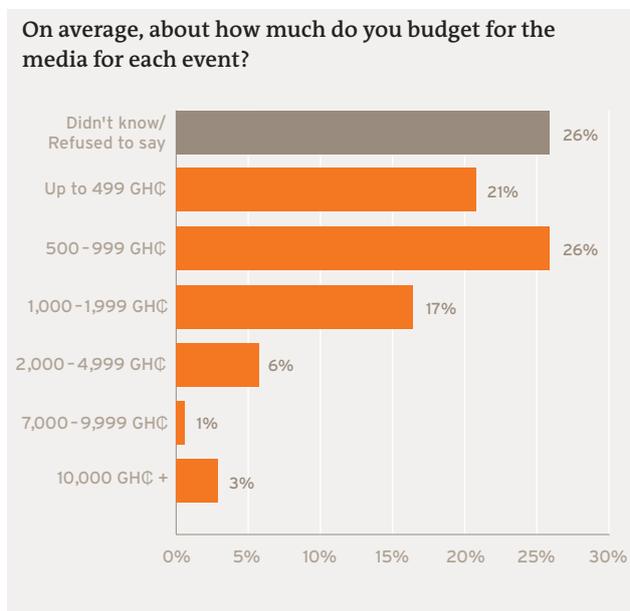


Fig. 47 Media interest organizations, n = 106

Over a quarter of the organizations did not disclose their per-event budget. A similar number (26.4%) had budgets of between GH¢500 and about GH¢1,000 for *sol*i for each event they organized. About 23% budgeted between GH¢1,000 and almost GH¢2,000. According to our findings, the per-event budget could go as high as GH¢7,000 and even over GH¢10,000 according to a few interviewees.

In-depth discussions with journalists revealed that the PR personnel of some organizations personally benefited from *sol*i. They reported that PR executives and event facilitators would not pay out the full amount of *sol*i allocated in their budgets, keeping the remainder to line their own pockets. It is not surprising that a majority of journalists and event organizers spoke positively about *sol*i – there seemed to be some collusion between the two professionals, a shared benefit of a sort.

'... even sometimes the organizations, the PROs [press officers] themselves, they also benefit from it, so it is a whole lot of issues; it is just that we don't see, but we know it. There is evidence. That is what is going on, the PROs, event organizers, marketing organizations, all of them, it is like a cartel. We all get it.'
(journalist, newspaper, state owned, Accra)

6.4 Influence of *sol*i on reporting

6.4.1 Journalists' view: Influence of *sol*i on reporting

Across the four regions sampled, a majority of the journalists polled (73.9%) indicated that they usually received write-ups or press releases from event organizers/media interest organizations for publication. During the qualitative interviews of indi-

vidual journalists, most claimed that the stories they received incentives for were only published if they were newsworthy and fit the editorial policy of the media house. So *sol*i payment, they asserted, did not automatically determine whether or not something was published.

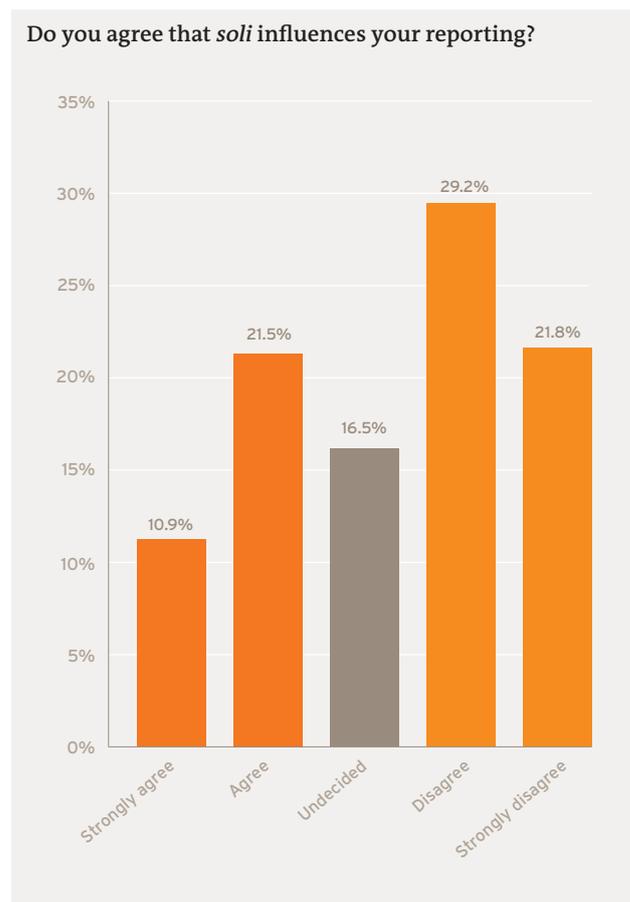


Fig. 48 Journalists, n = 284

Slightly more than half (51%) of the journalists interviewed for the quantitative survey disagreed that *sol*i influenced the news items journalists selected to report on. About 32% admitted it had an influence on reporting. A relatively high number of journalists were undecided or declined to answer the question (16.5%).

Interestingly, the qualitative survey revealed that some journalists who claimed not to be influenced by *sol*i in their reporting said that *sol*i influenced their colleagues' story selection. The assertion by most journalists that *sol*i had no influence on their choice of news items for reporting may not represent the whole truth, as we observed that journalists seemed rather hesitant in responding to the question of how *sol*i influenced news item selection. Some journalists argued that offering *sol*i

meant asking for a favor in return and even more agreed that acceptance amounted to a guarantee that a story would be published.

'I will say 70 percent correct. Or even 80 percent correct. It does guarantee the publishing of stories. The point is that you've been cajoled. Some part of your needs have been met. Once somebody offers you that, it is an eighty percent way of assuring that you were going to publish the story.'
(Journalist, radio, private sector, Kumasi)

Some of the interviewees acknowledged that the senior editor had the final say when it came to the stories to be reported or published.

Does soli guarantee reporting or publishing of stories/events and why or why not?

'Let's say no. Come on, when you go out and you cover chaff, it is still chaff. You get it? So honestly, if it is a good story, you know sometimes you don't have to destroy the credibility of your firm too, so if it is good stuff, that makes it boost your morale to publish it or report it. But if it is not all that good, I will still take my soli, my incentives if they give me and wouldn't report it anyway.'
(Stringer, TV and radio, private sector, Kumasi)

Responses painted a similar picture when journalists were asked whether a higher amount or value of soli guaranteed a story's publication:

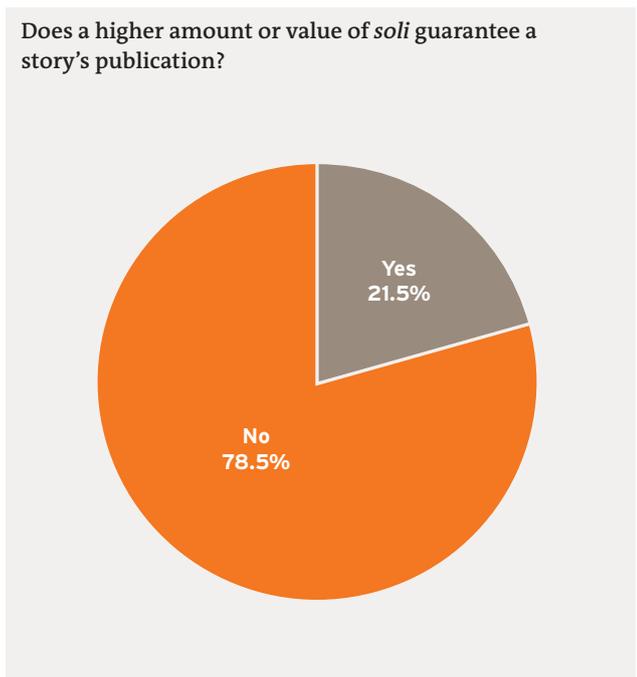


Fig. 49 Journalists, n = 275

A high majority of journalists (78.5%) claimed that a higher amount or value of soli offered by an event organizer did not guarantee a story's publication. Only 21.5% of respondents disagreed and thought a higher amount of soli guaranteed a story's publication. We asked both groups to justify their positions.

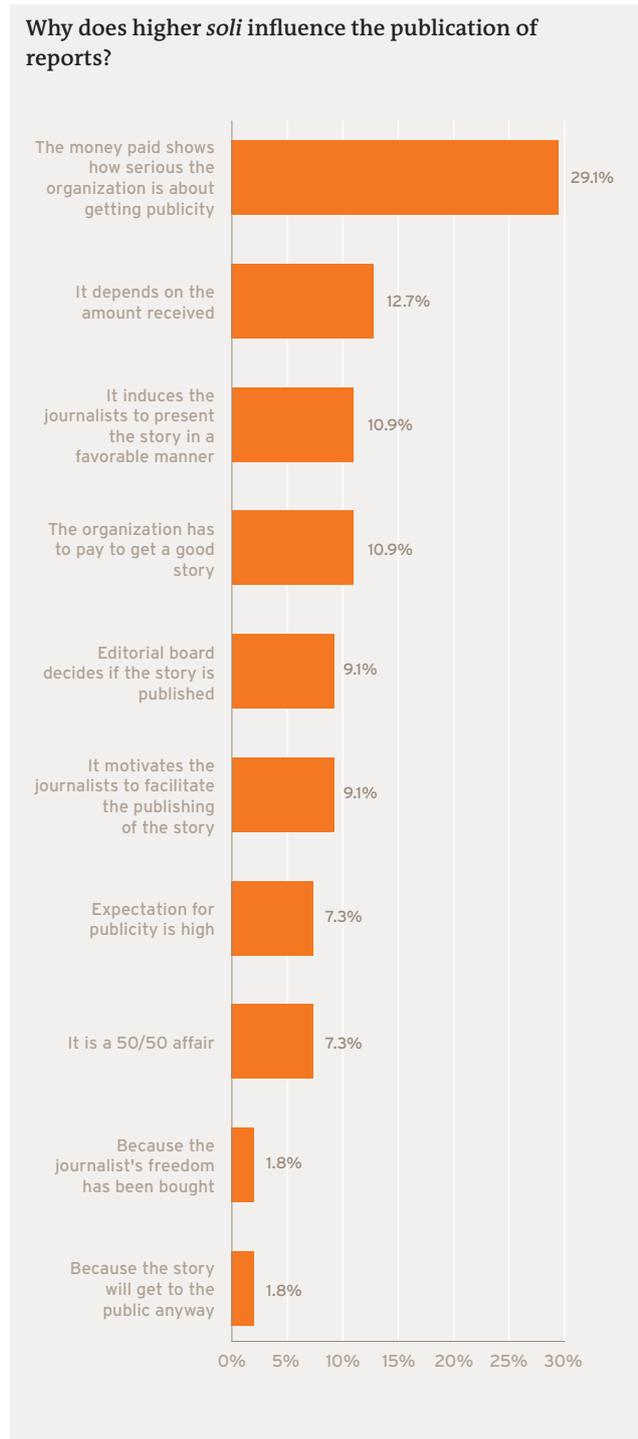


Fig. 50 Journalists, n = 55

Those journalists who were convinced that higher *solì* guaranteed a story's publication were asked to cite their reasoning. Overall feeling was strong that the media interest organizations expected publicity in return, and some even called it a "50/50 affair".

In the qualitative interviews, journalists confirmed the influence of *solì* on reporting:

'It is the case my brother. As we speak, economically everyone is suffering. Therefore, people's decision or decisions are normally influenced by economic hardship, economic drive, or their situations. So the biggest bidder will always have the chance to be heard by the media. It's as simple as that.'
(Journalist, radio, private sector, Kumasi)

'It is not always, but sometimes with some of the event organizers if you don't do their stories for them, they will come asking, especially when they have given you something fat. That is why it is not an ideal thing to do. But to eliminate it from the system, employers must pay their employees.'
(Journalist, radio, private sector, Accra)

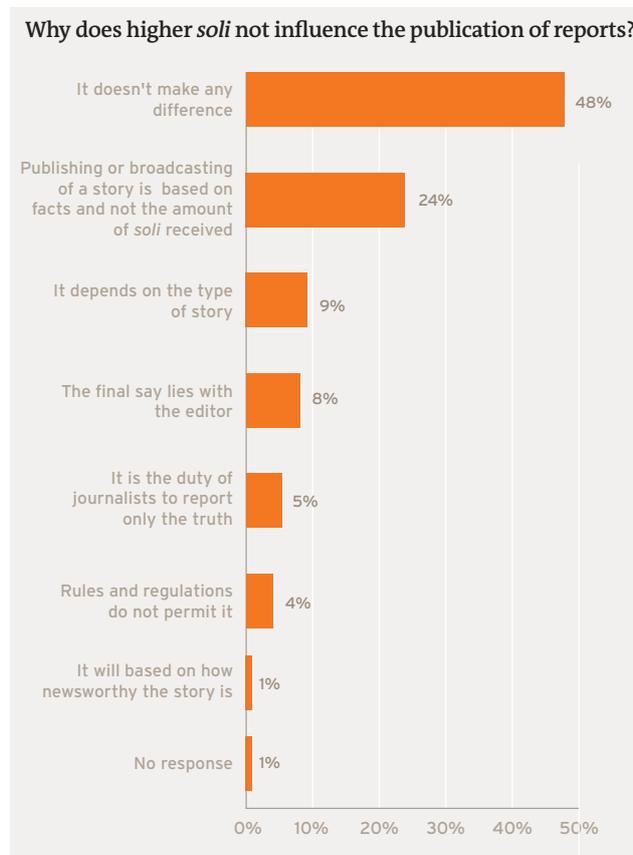


Fig. 51 Journalists, n = 193

The answers show that the journalists who claimed the amount of *solì* had no influence on their reporting stated that their work relied solely on the truth, a story's newsworthiness, and the rules and regulations of their organizations.

Most of the journalists polled also declared *solì* did not influence the content or tone of a report, such as by inducing a journalist to include information that placed the media interest outlet in a positive light but was not relevant for the public or even not true.

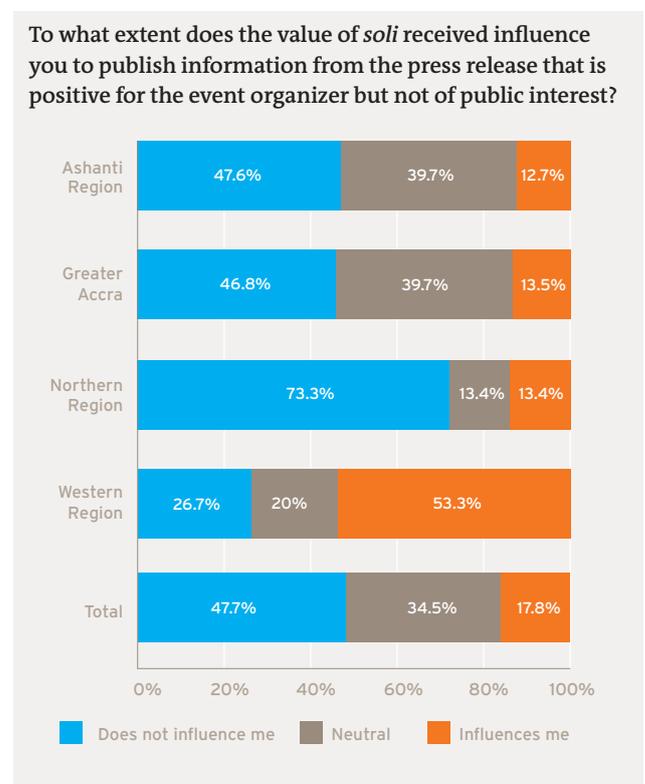


Fig. 52 Journalists, n = 264

Almost half of the journalists claimed that they were not influenced to give positive reportage for events they received incentives for. Under 18% of journalists across the regions admitted that incentives influenced them to leave in information that is of interest to the event organizer and not to the public. Well over 34% were indifferent as to whether they were influenced or not.

These numbers may represent an under-declaration on the part of journalists. On the following pages (38 to 40), we will see that a majority of the media interest organizations and the public polled believed that *solì* influenced report content and delivery. It is possible that individual journalists were not prepared to accept that *solì* determined how they edited and wrote reports because of the shame and dishonor associated with *solì*.

Regional analysis showed that most journalists (53.3%) in the Western Region affirmed that they were influenced to retain positive information about organizations that offered *solì*. About 26.7% in the same region said that they were not influenced. The Northern Region saw most journalists (73.3%) and the highest number recorded throughout the regions claiming receipt of *solì* from event organizers had no influence on their reporting.

Results from the in-depth interviews showed similar responses: the majority of journalists felt that incentives given to journalists did not influence the way the reports were written and edited. They explained that their media organizations had editorial policies in place and that reports had to comply with those standards. Stories that did not fit the editorial style were usually not processed for publication. This included slanted reporting and advertorial content that could have been in-

fluenced by *solì*. They explained that the parts of stories not considered newsworthy (e.g. advertorial) were taken out of the stories before publication, in accordance with their editorial policy. This was true for journalists from all media types.

6.4.2 Media interest organizations' view: Influence of *solì* on reporting

Every second media interest organization polled reported preparing press releases for the journalists they invited to events. Most event organizers did not believe that *solì* guaranteed the reporting or publishing of stories. Some of these interviewees recalled cases in which they gave *solì* to journalists, but their stories were never published, or the reverse where *solì* was not offered, but the stories went into the news. On the other hand, smaller media interest organizations or individuals reported that a lack of funds for paying *solì* meant low media publicity,

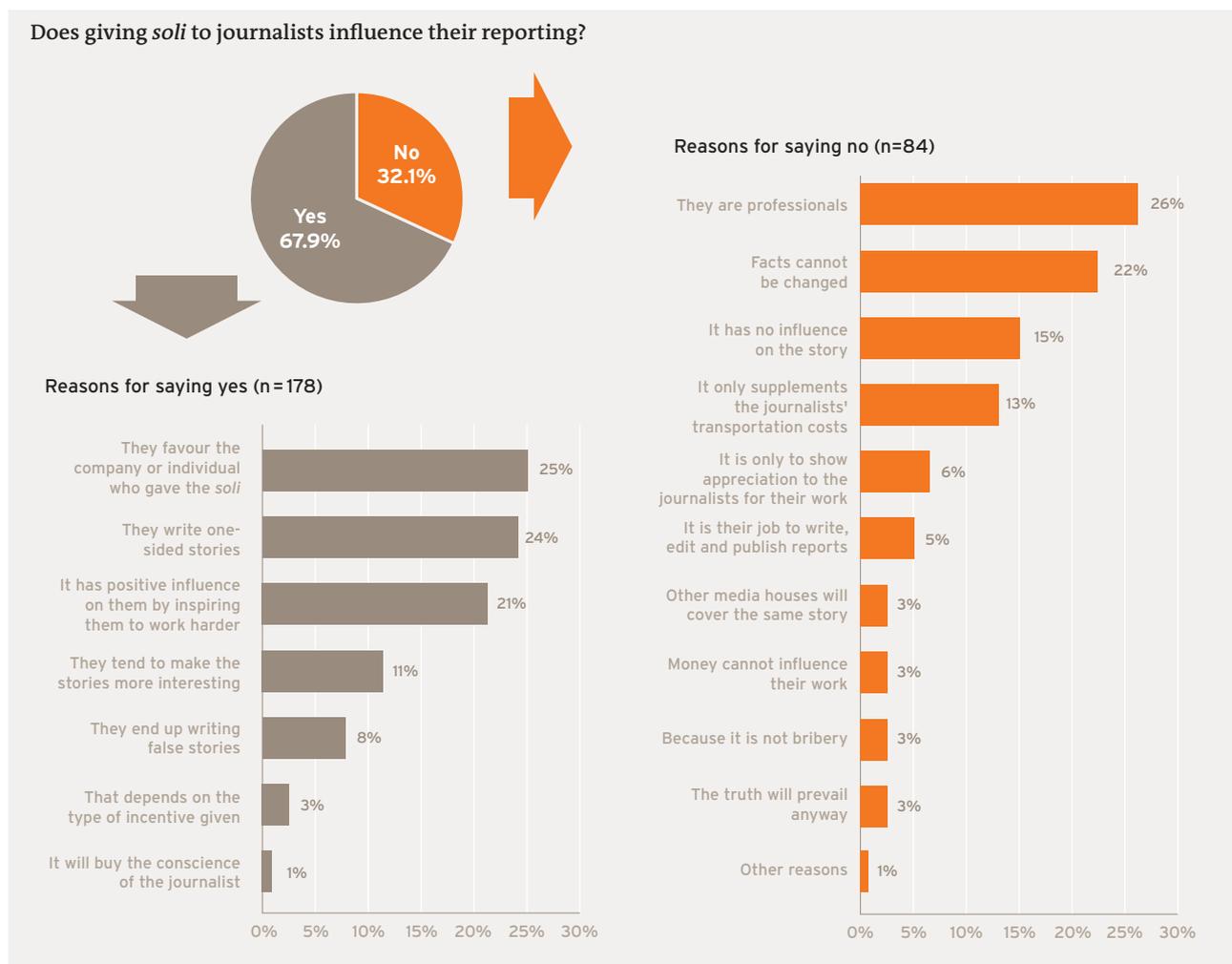


Fig. 53 Media interest organizations, n = 262

no coverage at all, or a negative slant to their information. So some smaller media interest organizations that had no budget allocated for *solì* felt they were at risk of getting low publicity for their events because they didn't pay *solì*.

Some staff from businesses that use the media mentioned that because *solì* just covered transportation costs, they provided alternative means of transport for journalists to cover their events when they lacked the funds to pay *solì*. Other organizations were hopeful that when they needed media coverage but did not have monetary/non-monetary incentives to give journalists, they could still expect some journalists to be loyal to them and provide coverage of their events. This expectation of loyalty was based on *solì* the organization had previously paid to the said journalists.

Two out of three media interest organizations were convinced that *solì* influenced the way reports were written and edited by journalists.

About 67.9% of organizations with an interest in the media were of the view that *solì* influenced the way reports were written and edited. The major justification given was that reports were biased, as journalists wrote and edited reports to please the organization that paid them.

Many media interest organizations did not seem to care if journalists did not uphold journalistic ethics in their work. These interviewees might have been greatly motivated by their interest in having journalists report their stories the way they wanted them rather than objectively. The "positive influence" mentioned by these participants may refer to positive reportage for *solì* givers. In the literature, Agbemenu and Tandoh (2015, 13) reported a similar finding: "*Solì*, when given to a reporter, forces him or her to give positive reportage no matter what happens". Some media interest organizations viewed the effect of *solì* in a positive light when they claimed that incentives motivated journalists to work harder on stories. But from the perspective of the *solì* giver, "working harder" could also mean to the giver's advantage.

On the other hand, a significant number (32.1%) of media interest organizations were of the view that *solì* did not affect journalists' editing and reporting of news items. The key reasons given were that journalists were professionals who would not be influenced by *solì*, and that facts in the news could not be altered for any reason. Some representatives of the organizations interviewed recalled times when their organizations were poorly represented in the news even though they had paid *solì* to the journalists involved. These interviewees therefore assumed that the quality of journalists determined the outcome of stories.

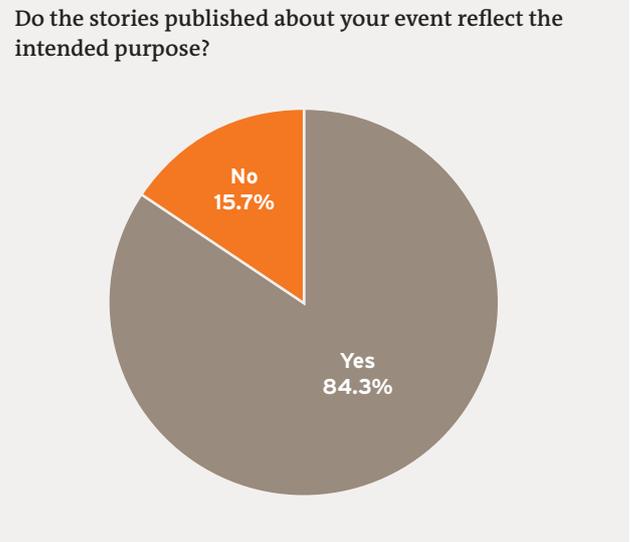


Fig. 54 Media interest organizations, n = 262

Over 80% of the media interest organizations confirmed that most media reports or publications reflected the purpose for which they were intended. Clearly, event organizers feel they are getting the coverage they want, which could mean journalists are doing the bidding of event organizers.

In the qualitative survey, some media interest organization representatives interviewed complained that stories published did not reflect the intended purpose. They recounted some bad experiences with some press houses or journalists involving incorrect information, misspelled names, and the misrepresentation of some facts about their organizations. This might be because the journalists wrote the stories objectively and did not edit them to suit the event organizers, or perhaps the quality of the journalists and reporting fell short of professional standards.

6.4.3 General public's view: Influence of *sol* on reporting

A greater proportion (77%) of the general public indicated that it was likely *sol* influenced how stories were written and edited prior to publication. They expressed the conviction that journalists who took *sol* owed some obligation to the organizations or people who offered incentives and would therefore write and edit stories to benefit the *sol* giver.

However, media consumers who claimed that *sol* did not influence the writing and editing of stories cited their belief that the facts in the news could not simply be changed (57.7%) and that *sol* was just a gift to motivate journalism rather than influence it (26.9%) as reasons. Slightly over 17% thought that the codes of conduct and regulations for the media did not leave any room for journalists to be influenced in how they edited and wrote news reports.

6.4.4 Media managers' view: Influence of *sol* on reporting

In the opinion of most media managers, journalists who accepted *sol* from event organizers were likely to return some favor to the *sol* giver.

On the other hand, most media managers agreed with most journalists in claiming that *sol* did not necessarily affect the choice of news items for reporting. They mentioned that journalists could be influenced by *sol* to cover particular stories, but could not guarantee that such stories would be published because a media organization's editorial policy ultimately determined the stories that made it into the news.

"I know that it could influence the journalists' choice to cover a particular story, but depending on the editorial policy of the particular media house, they will decide which stories to run and so it might not necessarily guarantee your story will be aired."
(Media manager, radio, private sector, Takoradi)

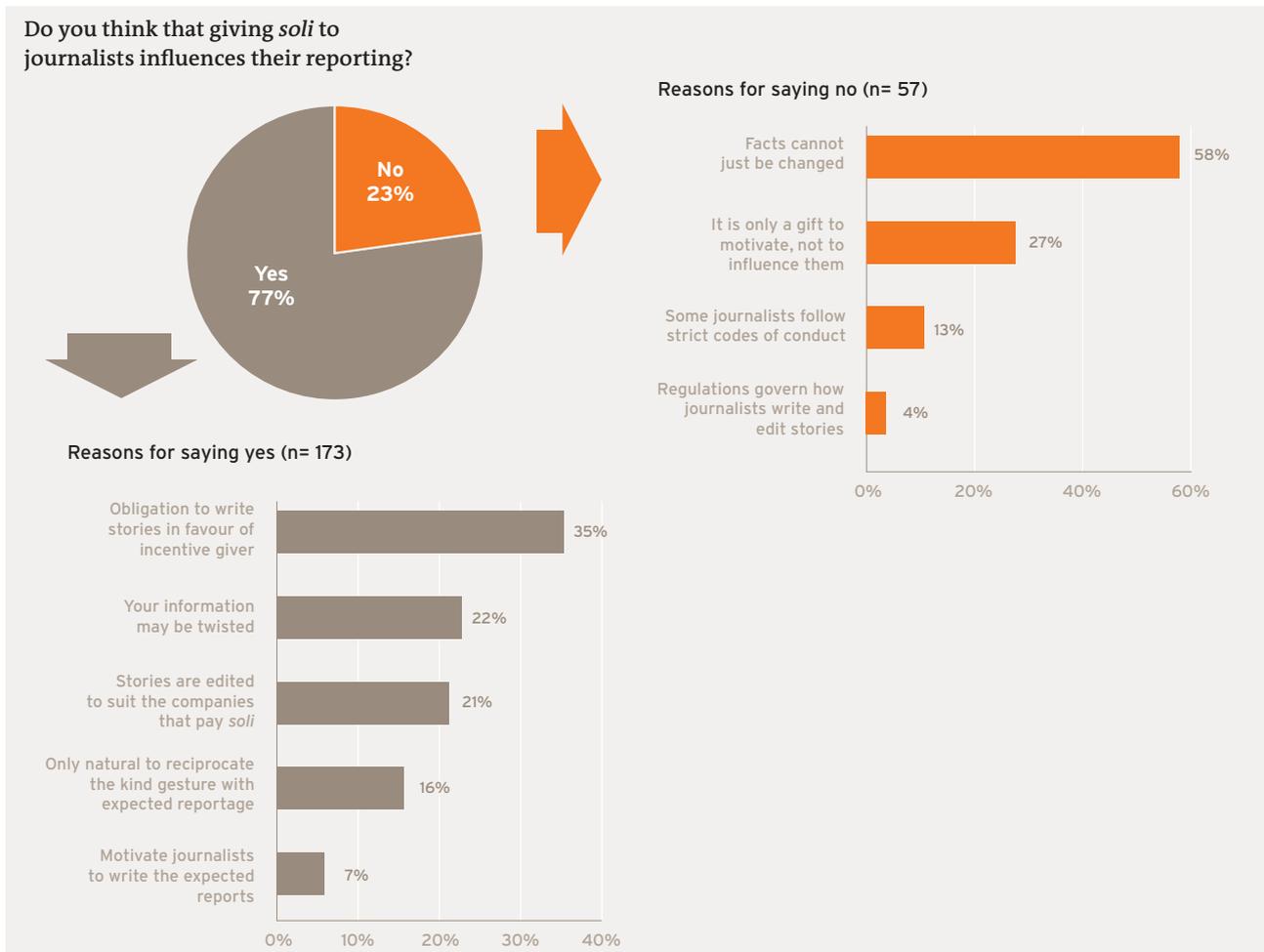


Fig. 55 General public, n = 230

6.4.5 Media experts' view: Influence of *solì* on reporting

Media experts were forthright in saying that *solì* had great potential for influencing news editing and reporting. They expressed the view that taking *solì* was synonymous with promising the *solì* giver a positive story. They further explained that if journalists accepted *solì* from event organizers, then noticed something negative about the organization, it was more difficult for them to report the negative things they observed.

“If you take solì from someone, you have promised that person that ‘I will give you positive story’ and in journalism, we are supposed to uphold the truth. That is the reason why it is against the ethics of the profession to take solì because whoever you are, it will influence the kind of journalism that you will do. I know that journalists continually deny that if they take solì it does affect their coverage, which is not true.”

(Media expert, education sector)

Opinions of media experts on the issue of whether *solì* influenced journalists' choice of news items for reporting were not completely different from those expressed by journalists and media managers. However, they added that influence on the choice of story could also happen when an editor was involved in taking *solì*. In most of these situations, the editor assigns specific journalists to cover particular events and expects the journalist to report *solì* received to the editor. This increases the likelihood that such stories go in the news. Skjerdal (2010 – Africa) described a similar situation, noting that just because the payment taken was personal and individual did not mean that it was not ultimately shared with others. Skjerdal continued that this may be attributed to more or less organized brown-envelope activities within media organizations where reporters were expected to share their *solì* with other persons in the news room.

“I worked with the newspaper, so I know that those who write are not necessarily those who push. Are we then suggesting that if the news source has given the reporter something, he also will also pass some to his senior man? It does happen, there are some news editors I know; they look at the day’s assignments and they seem to know which one might yield, so he will give it to a particular reporter who will come back and pass something on.”

(Media expert, education sector)

6.5 Awareness of *solì*

The phenomenon of 'brown envelopes' under the name of *solì* was widely known in all the areas where the survey was conducted.

6.5.1 Journalists' awareness of *solì*

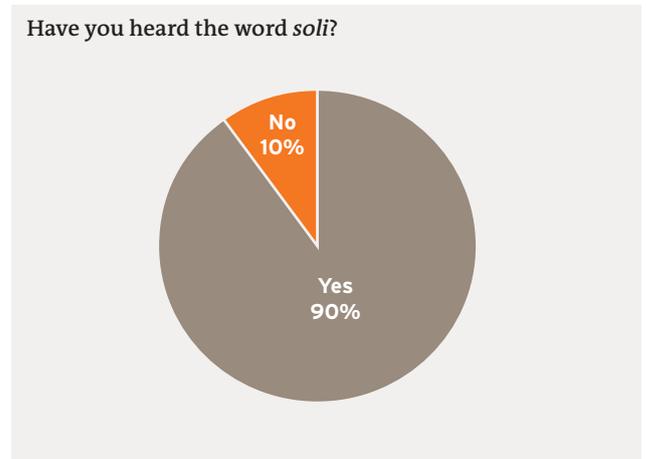


Fig. 56 Journalists, n = 283

About 90% of the journalists interviewed had heard the word *solì* in connection with media and journalism in Ghana.

It is interesting to look at the contexts in which journalists reported hearing about *solì*:

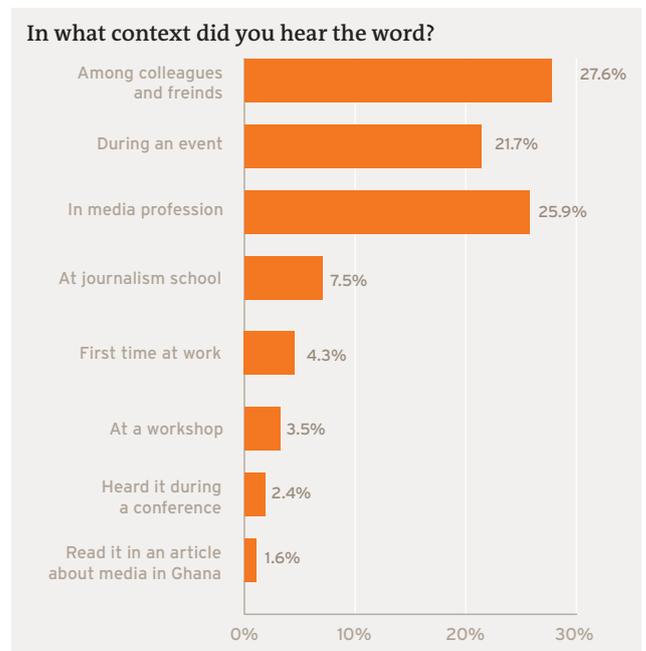


Fig. 57 Journalists, n = 254

The largest number of journalists (27.6%) reported hearing about *solli* from their friends and colleagues, followed by 21.7% who heard the word at events (perhaps events covered by the media). Just 7.5% of journalists learnt about *solli* during training in journalism institutions. This suggests that *solli* was not a major issue covered by journalism education.

6.5.2 Media interest organizations' awareness of *solli*

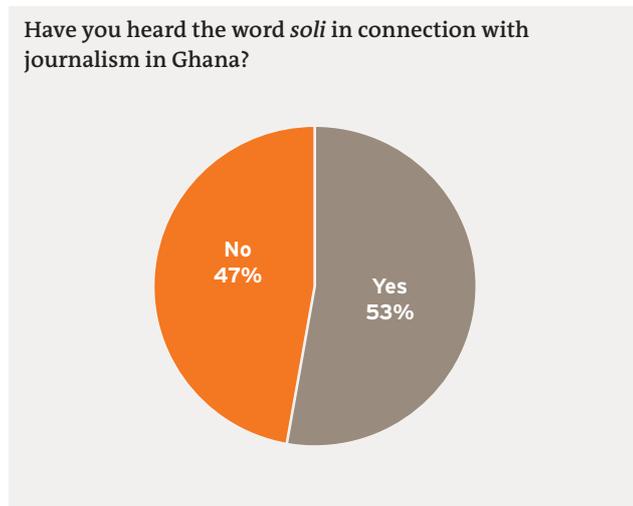


Fig. 58 Media interest organizations, n = 262

At the time of the survey, about 53% of media interest organizations interviewed had heard the word *solli*.

Of the 47% of businesses that used the media and reported not having heard the word *solli*, the clear majority (97%) were aware of the concept of *solli* as a media practice where journalists took incentives or rewards for covering events.

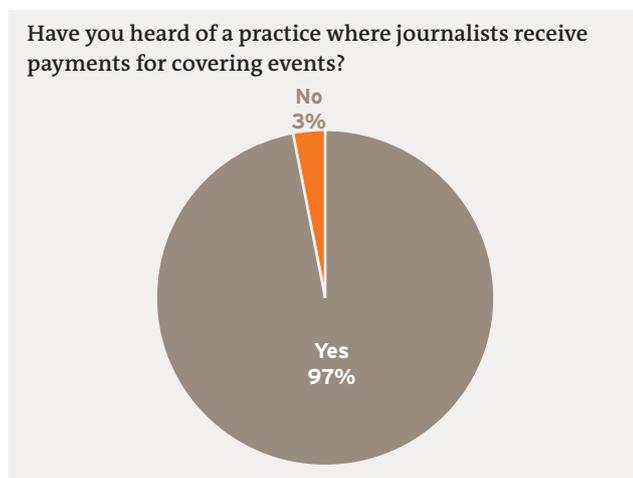


Fig. 59 Media interest organizations, n = 123

6.5.3 General public's awareness of *solli*

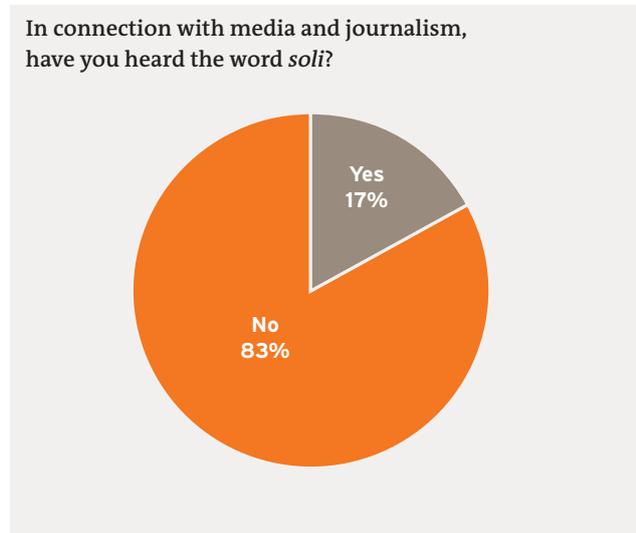


Fig. 60 General public, n = 230

Approximately 83% of the public had not heard the word *solli*, a clear indication that the term is much more familiar among media practitioners and media interest organizations than with the general public.

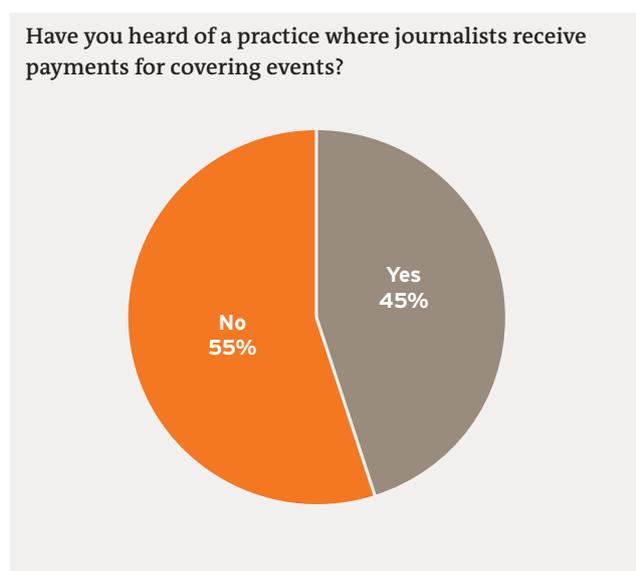


Fig. 61 General public, n = 230

Though the majority of participants had not heard the term *solli*, about 45% of members of the general public were aware of the concept of *solli*.

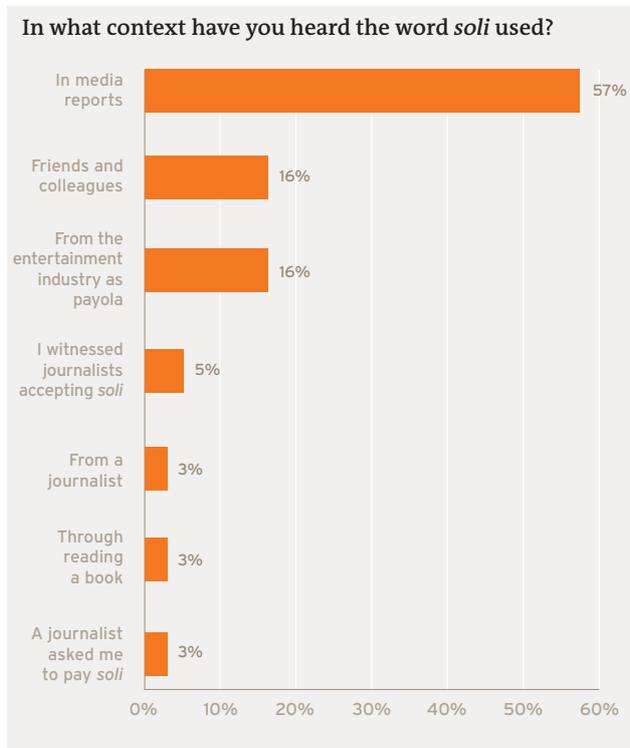


Fig. 62 General public, n = 39

The majority of the public (57%) reported that their main sources of knowledge about *soli* came from media reports. It seems that the practice of *soli* is an issue of reporting. It would be interesting to analyze how the media portray the topic and in what contexts. Two other sources of knowledge on the phenomenon of *soli* were discussions among friends and colleagues (16%) and a similar payment system in the music industry (16%). Please note that this chart is based on responses from the 17% of the general public who claimed to have heard the word *soli* (fig. 60, p. 42).

6.5.4 Media managers' awareness of *soli*

Media managers were aware of the word *soli* with respect to the Ghanaian media. This is a clear indication that familiarity with the term *soli* was higher among media practitioners and media interest businesses/organizations than in the general public.

A media manager in the survey revealed another dimension of *soli* by explaining how it was practiced in the music industry. As cited below, apparently musicians pay presenters/managers a token known as *payola* to have their music played on radio.

In connection with media and journalism in Ghana would you say you have heard the word *soli*?

“Very much so because I used to play hip hop music and a little bit of hip life when it started - like Reggie and the Lord Kenya [names of two Ghanaian musicians]; we started with them so I know about soli.”

(Media manager, TV, private sector, Kumasi)

6.6 Background of media practitioners

6.6.1 Journalists' educational background

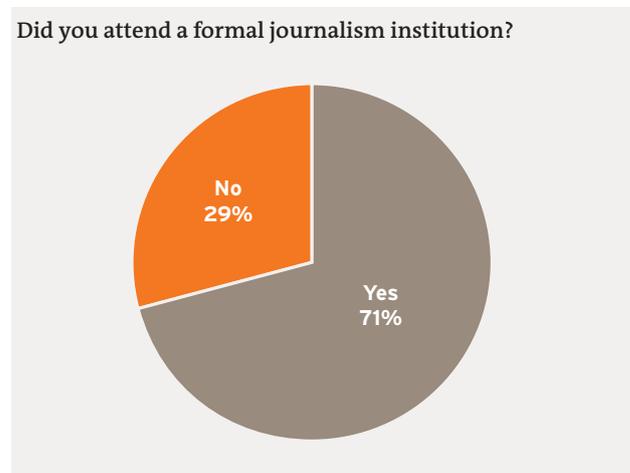


Fig. 63 Journalists, n = 285

Over 70% of journalists interviewed reported having formal training in journalism, while about 28.8% of practicing journalists reported no formal training in journalism.

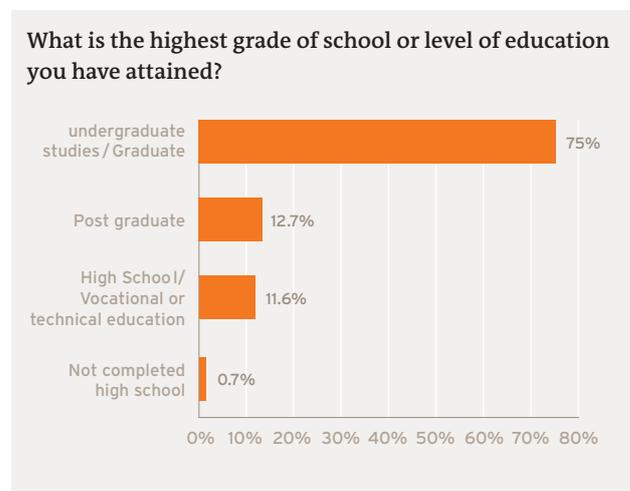


Fig. 64 Journalists, n = 284

Most journalists (65.1%) had some form of college-level education, and about 12% had attained a master's degree or higher. About 0.7% of the journalists across all regions had less than a high school education (right column in the chart below).

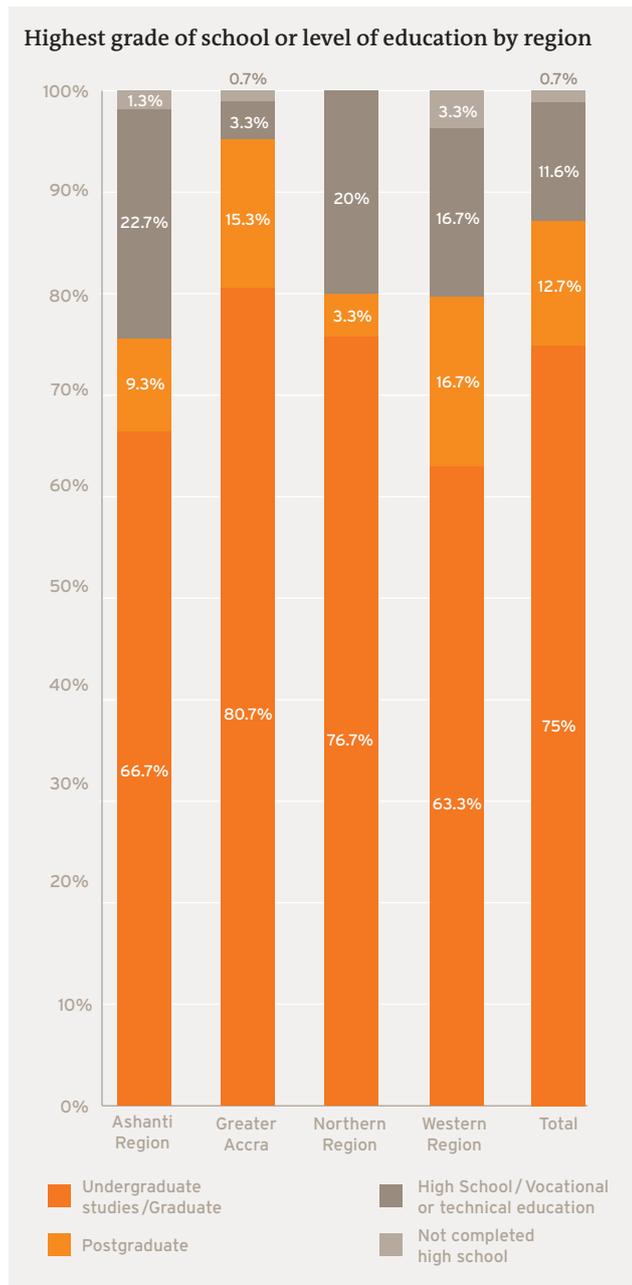


Fig. 65 Journalists, n=284

Though the data showed that a majority of journalists had some form of college-level education, regional analysis indicated that about one in two journalists in the Ashanti and Western regions did not attend an institution of higher learning.

At the time of the survey, there were more journalists in Greater Accra and the North who had attained a college education or were taking graduate courses than in the other regions.

The in-depth interviews found that the majority of high-school graduates aspired to obtain a higher certificate like a bachelor's degree. It should also be noted that 6.3% of respondents affirmed not having completed high school. These journalists worked mostly in the Western and Ashanti regions.

Did you have any formal training at a journalism institution?

"Not really. Just that I have done a few courses. I have done a number of courses with RABODEF (Radio Broadcast Development Foundation) at Cantonments. I have undertaken a couple of courses there and apart from that, other professional courses, but certificate-wise, no, I don't hold any journalism certificate." (Journalist, radio, private sector, Accra) [Cantonments is an area in Accra, Ghana]

"No, I don't have any formal education in journalism; mine is interest and passion. I developed the interest and went into the industry (radio section) while on national service. I was playing music and doing sports, then I got admission to the University of Cape Coast. While in school, I continued with them [radio industry]. After UCC, I did my national service on campus and I was seconded to the station as the program coordinator." (Journalist, TV, private sector, Accra)

6.6.2 Media type (channel)

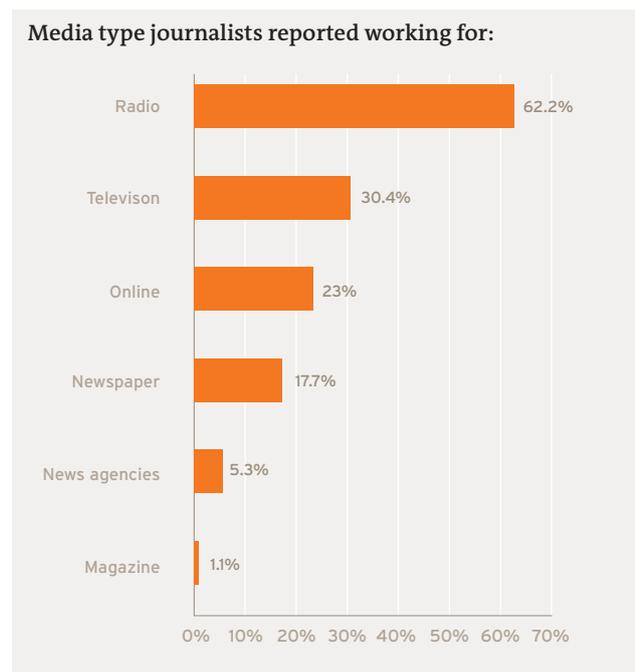


Fig. 66 Journalists, n = 283 (Multiple answers were possible.)

A majority (62.2%) of journalists interviewed worked with radio stations, followed by television (30.4%) and about 23% on-line journalists. This reflects the proliferation of radio stations in Ghana, especially in Accra and Kumasi.

6.6.3 Media type (channel) by region

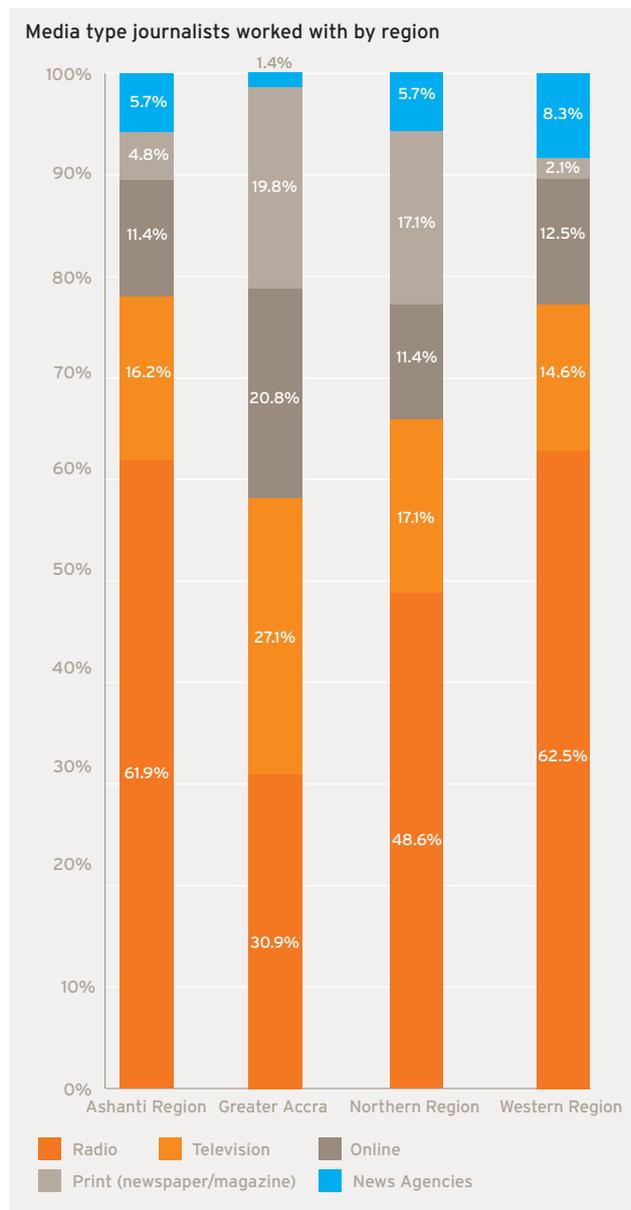


Fig. 67 Journalists, n=283 (Multiple answers were possible.)

More journalists reported working in radio in the Western and Ashanti regions, 62.5% and 61.9% respectively, than in the other regions. Accra recorded the highest percentages of television, online and newspaper journalists. This reflects the fact that most TV stations are located in Accra, in part because this allows them to focus on issues of the national government taking place in the capital.

6.6.4 Media sector by region

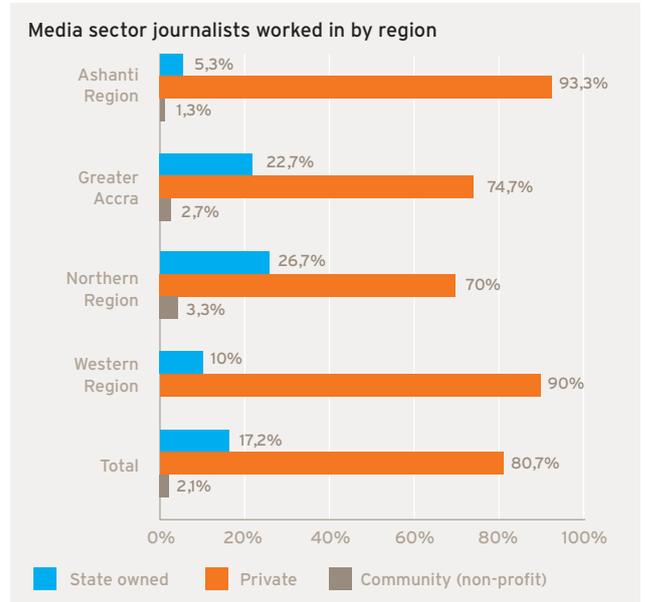


Fig. 68 Journalists, n=285

Over 80% of the journalists in the sample worked with private media organizations, 17.2% were with state-owned and 2.1% worked with community or non-commercial media stations.

6.6.5 Age of journalists by region

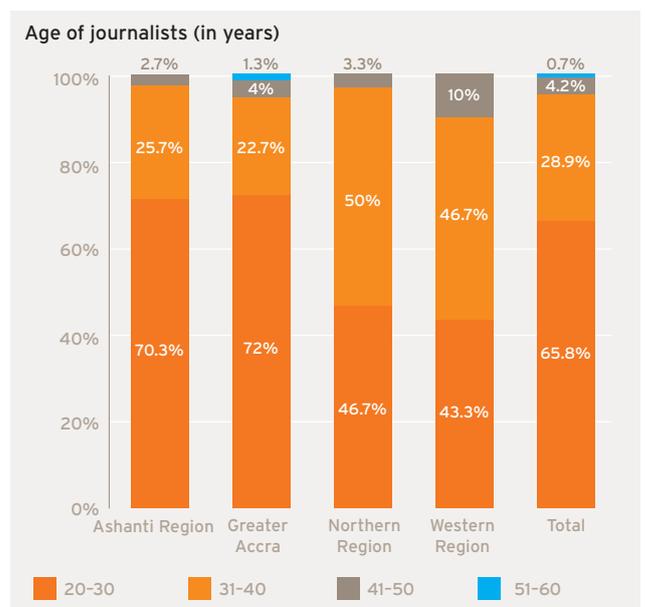


Fig. 69 Journalists, n=284

Most journalists interviewed were relatively young. The findings showed that a majority (65.8%) of the respondents were between the ages of 20 and 30 and about 29% between 31 and 40 years of age. A few (about 2%) were above 50.

6.6.6 Function of journalists

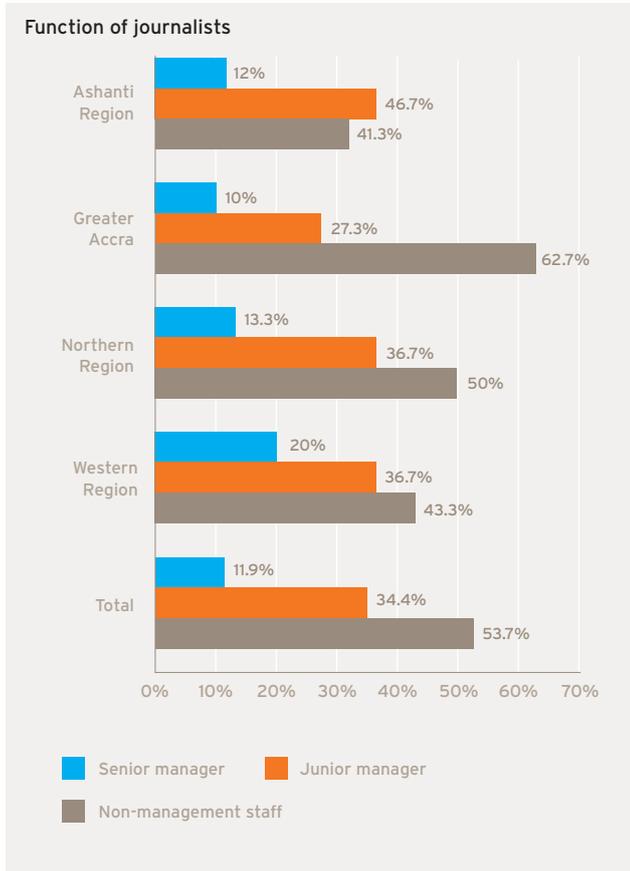


Fig. 70 Journalists, n=283

Most journalists interviewed (53.7%) were non-management staff and 34.4% were junior managers. Almost 12% were senior managers.

6.7 Policies regarding *sol*

6.7.1 Institutional policies

The Code of Ethics of the Ghana Journalism Association (GJA) states that a journalist may not “accept a bribe or any form of inducement to influence the performance of his/her professional duties”, though it fails to mention *sol* specifically. The Code of Conduct of Ghana Independent Broadcast Association (GIBA) states in Article 4 that all members must “undertake to declare, publish and commit to a policy of zero tolerance for bribery and corruption with clear sanctions applicable to both givers and takers”.

6.7.1.1 Journalists and institutional policies

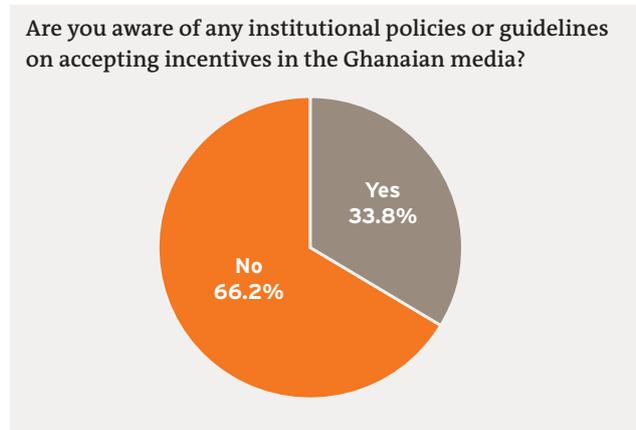


Fig. 71 Journalists, n = 285

The majority of media practitioners (journalists and media managers) reported not being aware of any institutional policies regulating the offering and acceptance of *sol* in the Ghanaian media. About 66.2% of journalists claimed not to be aware of any guidelines, while 33.8% said that they were aware of some institutional policies on *sol*.

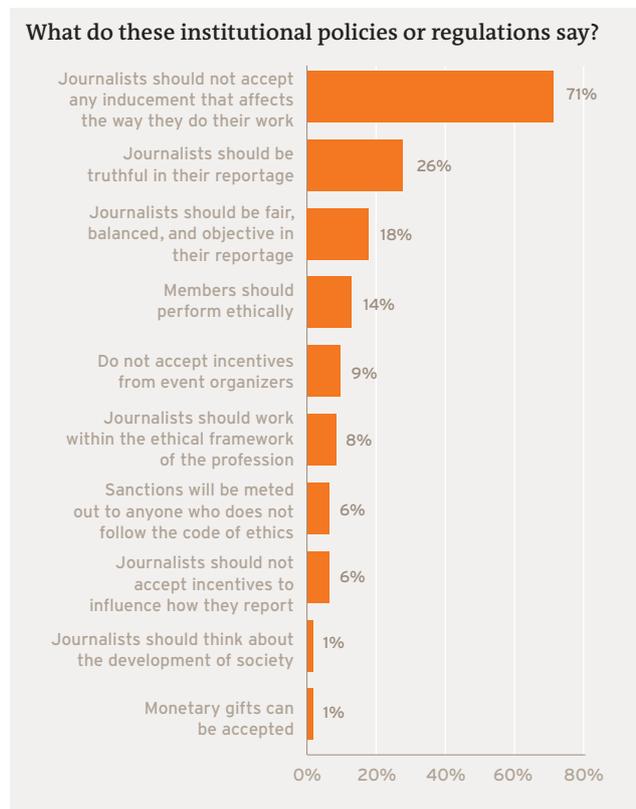


Fig. 72 Journalists, n = 80

Of the journalists who said they were aware of policies and regulations on *solli*, a majority (71.3%) explained that these policies cautioned journalists not to accept any form of inducement that could affect the way they perform their duties.

Does awareness of institutional policies guard against journalists accepting *solli*?

To find out if awareness and knowledge of institutional policies would deter journalists from accepting *solli*, we cross-tabulated two questions:

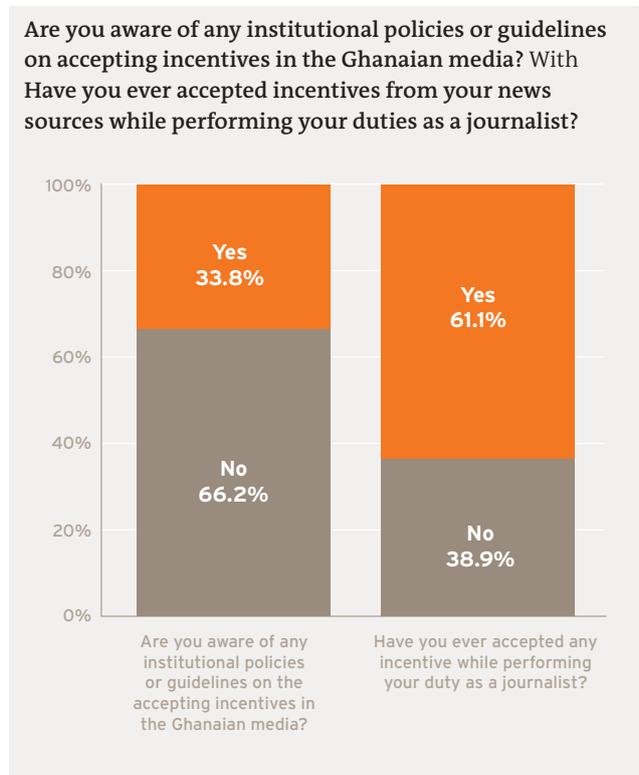


Fig. 73 Journalists, n = 275

Obviously, awareness of institutional policies on the collection of *solli* does not deter journalists from accepting *solli* during their duties.

6.7.1.2 Media interest organizations and institutional policies

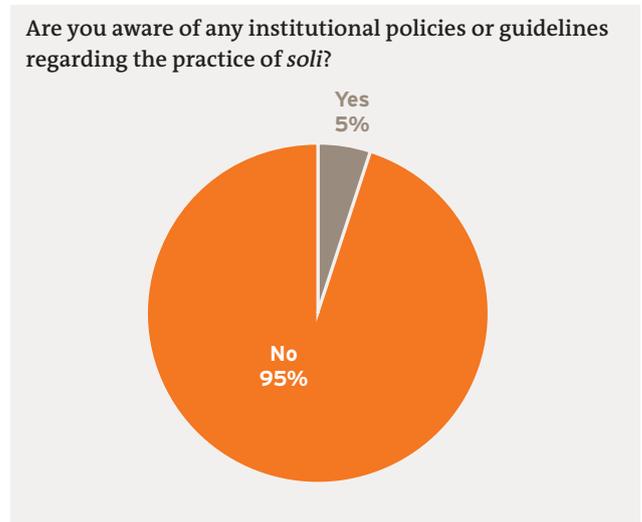


Fig. 74 Media interest organizations, n = 262

An overwhelming number (95%) of businesses that use the media reported no awareness of institutional policies or guidelines regarding the offering and acceptance of *solli* in the Ghanaian media. Around 5% of the organizations claimed knowledge of such policies and guidelines.

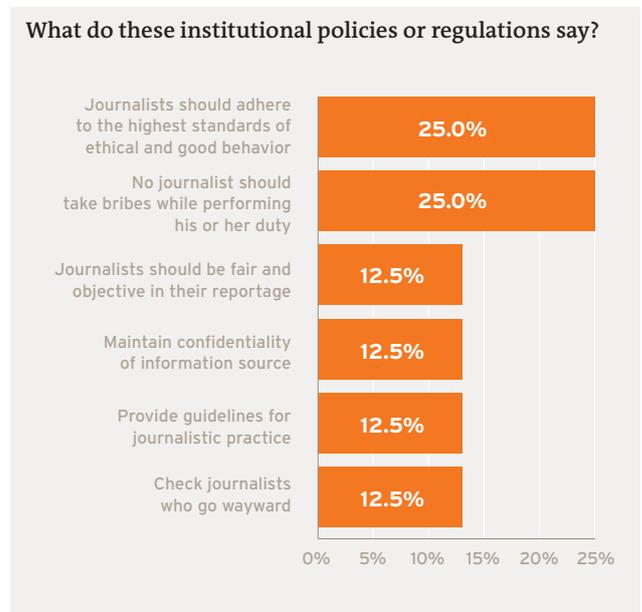


Fig. 75 Media interest organizations, n = 14

About 25% of the media interest organizations that admitted to knowing of policies against *solli* mentioned that regulations on *solli* required journalists to adhere to the ethical standards of their profession, while another 25% said they forbid journalists to accept bribes in the performance of their duties.

6.7.2 Policies in media houses

6.7.2.1 Journalists and policies in media houses

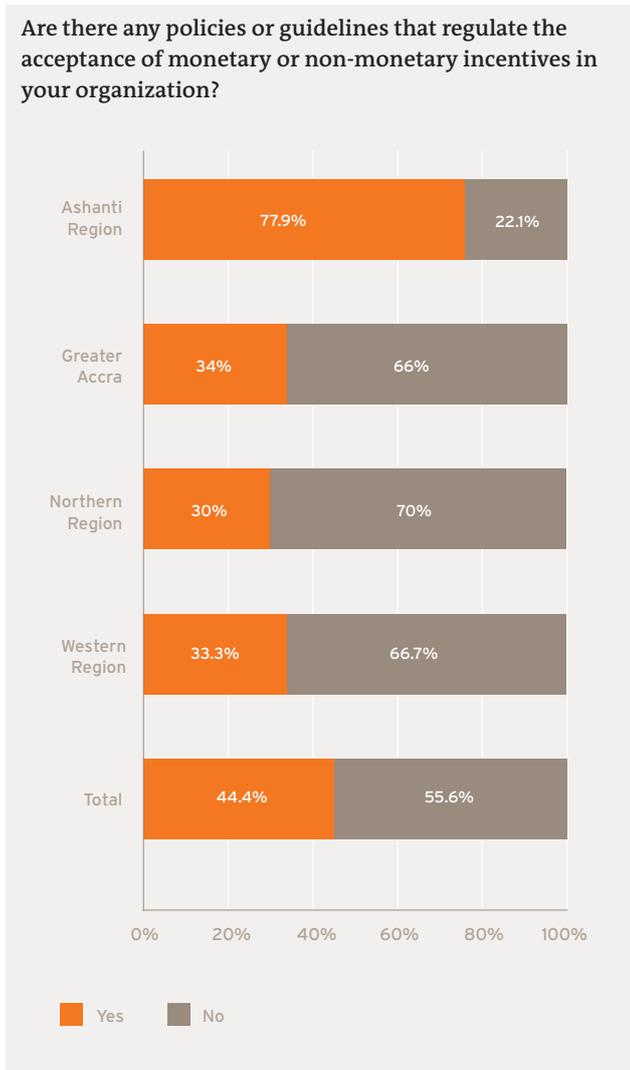


Fig. 76 Journalists, n=275

Overall, 55.6% of journalists interviewed said that there were no policies or guidelines in place to govern the acceptance of monetary or non-monetary incentives in the media organizations they worked with, while around 44.4% confirmed that such policies or guidelines existed. Based on responses, the number of journalists aware of a policy in their respective media houses was significantly higher in the Ashanti Region (almost 80%) than in the other regions. When journalists denied knowledge of a policy, it does not necessarily follow that there is no policy in place. But even if a policy exists in some of these media houses, it is apparently not being taken very seriously, given that staff members claim no knowledge of it.

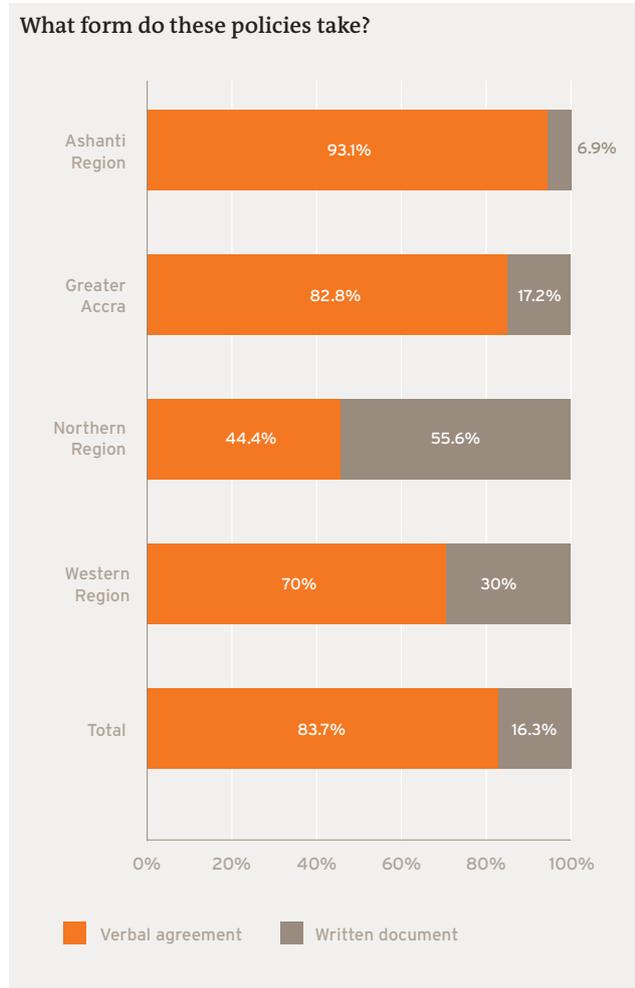


Fig. 77 Journalists, n=135

Of the 44.4% of journalists who said their media organizations had policies on *solli*, only about 16.3% said these were written policies. In the Ashanti Region, where the largest number of journalists reported that policies were in place, it appeared that these policies were somewhat less likely to be documented than in the other regions.

“If I say I have chanced on any document, then I would be lying to you, I haven’t chanced on a singular document, but just that our leaders have been telling us not to take solli.”
(Journalist, newspaper, state owned, Accra)

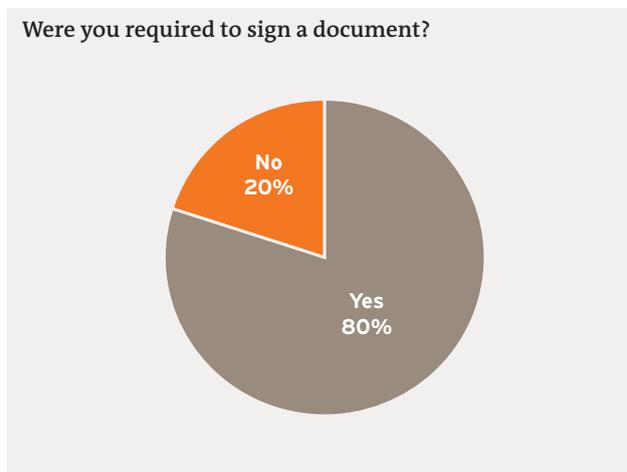


Fig. 78 Journalists, n = 22

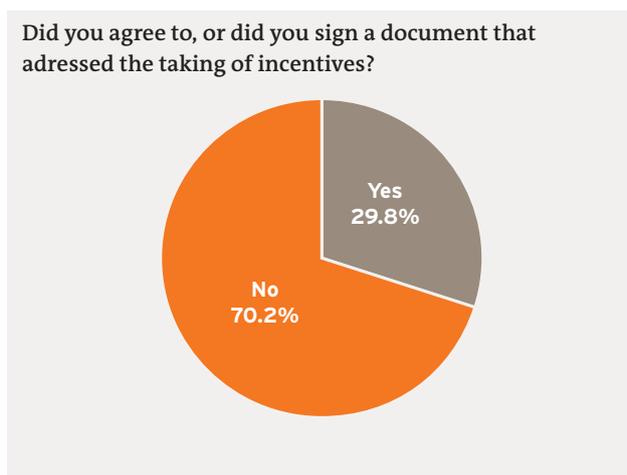


Fig. 79 Journalists, n = 22

About 80% of those journalists whose organizations had written guidelines were required to sign the policy document concerning *solì*, however most (about 70%) reported refusing to sign and still continuing to work with their employers. This suggests that most authorities in the media houses take *solì* lightly, except when the journalists involved engage in misconduct in an attempt to get *solì*. Below is an enlightening extract from one interview:

“It clearly states that solì shouldn’t be a motivating factor. They acknowledge the fact that event organizers would give you solì but in principle, they are saying that they don’t take it and in practice it doesn’t happen that way. But if you are reported to the company that it was solì you went to fight over or you were exchanging words with an event organizer because of solì, then you will be in trouble.”

(Journalist, newspaper, private sector, Accra)

Does agreeing to or signing a policy document guard against journalists accepting *solì*?

To find out if agreeing to sign an institutional policy would deter journalists from accepting *solì*, we cross-tabulated two questions:

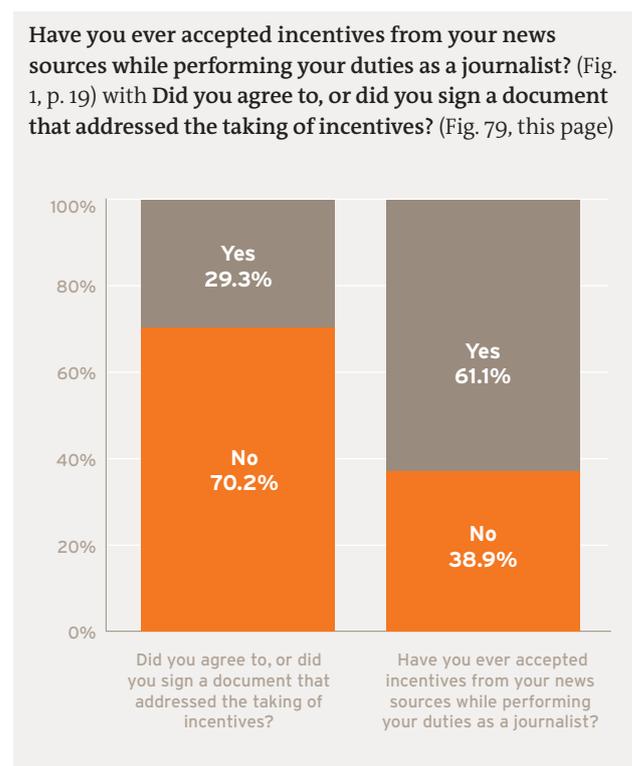


Fig. 80 Journalists, n = 115

Again, we find that agreeing to or signing an institutional policy on the collection of *solì* does not deter journalists from accepting *solì* while performing their duties.

These findings indicate that it may be difficult to enforce regulations on *solì* in the African media. Skjerdal (2010) stated that ‘brown envelopes’ are commonly condemned by individuals with an interest in media ethics and at least 17 national codes of ethics for journalists on the continent warn against journalistic bribery. These include codes of Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somaliland, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia. However, reinforcement of the codes tends to be a major challenge.

Do you know of any sanctions in your organization that pertain to accepting incentives during official duties?

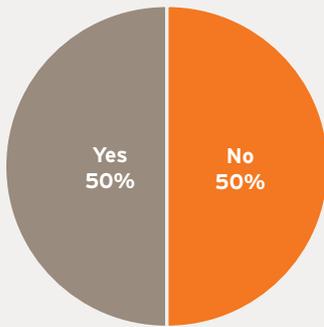


Fig. 81 Journalists, n = 115

About half the journalists interviewed who claimed prior knowledge of *solli* policies were aware of sanctions that could be imposed on journalists who defied these policies.

What are these sanctions?



Fig. 82 Journalists, n = 82

Generally, the suspension of employees from work was the most common sanction imposed on journalists who infringed on policies concerning *solli*. This was more common in Ashanti Region (73.3%) than in the other regions. Out-right dismissal of journalists from work was dominant in the Northern Region (38.5%), followed by Greater Accra (28.3%), Western Region (26.3%) and just 13.3% for the Ashanti Region. Other sanctions enforced across regions included demotion (11.5%) and fines (9.8%).

6.7.2.2 Media interest organizations and their policies on *solli*

Does your organization have a policy that informs your decision as a company to give out incentives to journalists?

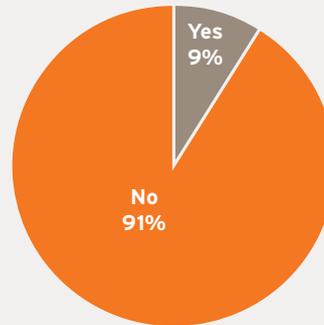


Fig. 83 Media interest organizations, n = 260

It was shown that most publicity seekers (businesses) did not have policies regulating the offering of incentives to journalists for covering events. Only 9% (n=23) of those interviewed said there was a policy in place to inform their decision, as a company, to give out incentives to journalists.

What is the nature of this policy?

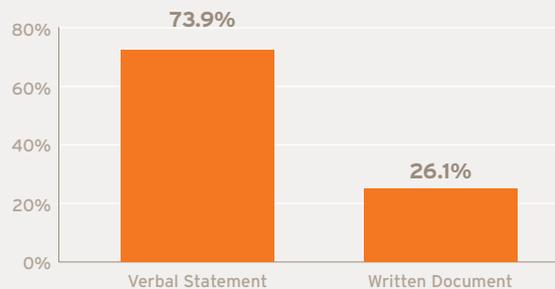


Fig. 84 Media interest organizations, n = 23

Of the 9% of the media interest organizations that had policies, the majority of these policies (73.9%) were not documented in writing.

About 26.1% affirmed that they had a binding, written policy for their organization and its operations regarding offering incentives to journalists.

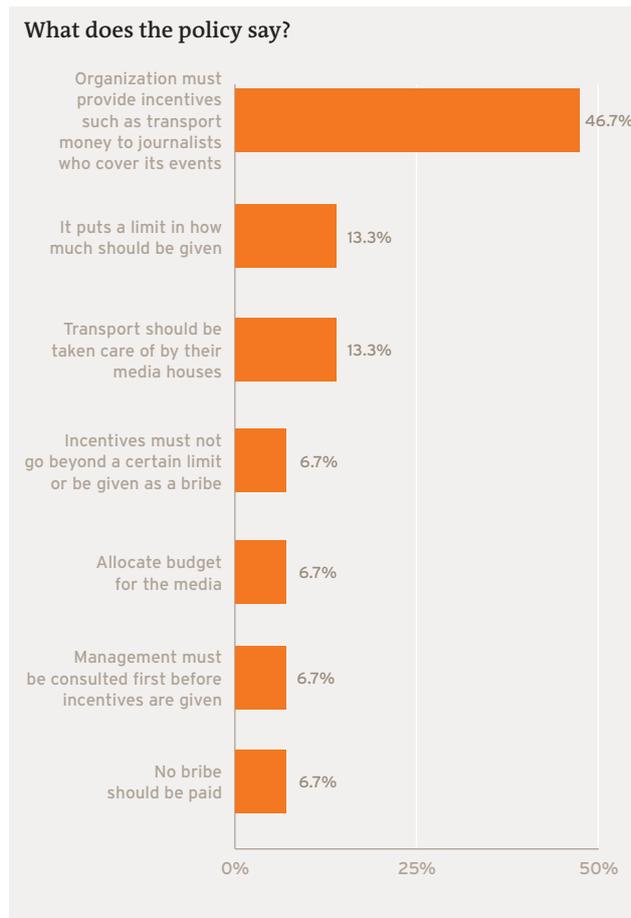


Fig. 85 Media interest organizations, n = 15

For most organizations, the policies governing incentives for journalists stated that some provision, such as money for transportation, should be made for journalists who attended their events.

It therefore seems as if policies of some media interest organizations promote rather than limit *solli*.

Other policies included paying the required amount allocated for *solli* in the company's budget and not paying *solli* intended as a bribe for journalists.

On the average, how much do you budget as *solli* for the media for each program?

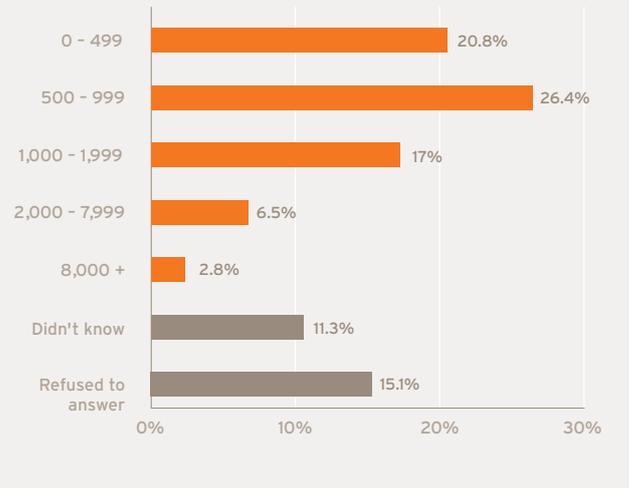


Fig. 86 Media interest organizations, n = 106

The greatest number of budgets for *solli* fell between GHC500 and GHC1,000 (26,4%) followed by smaller budgets up to GHC500 (20,8%). Nevertheless, 17% of the budgets provided between GHC1,000 and GHC2,000 per event.

6.8 Trust and integrity

6.8.1 General public and trust in media

When asked about their trust in their country’s media in the context of payment of incentives to journalists, the general feeling expressed by the Ghanaian public was mostly negative.

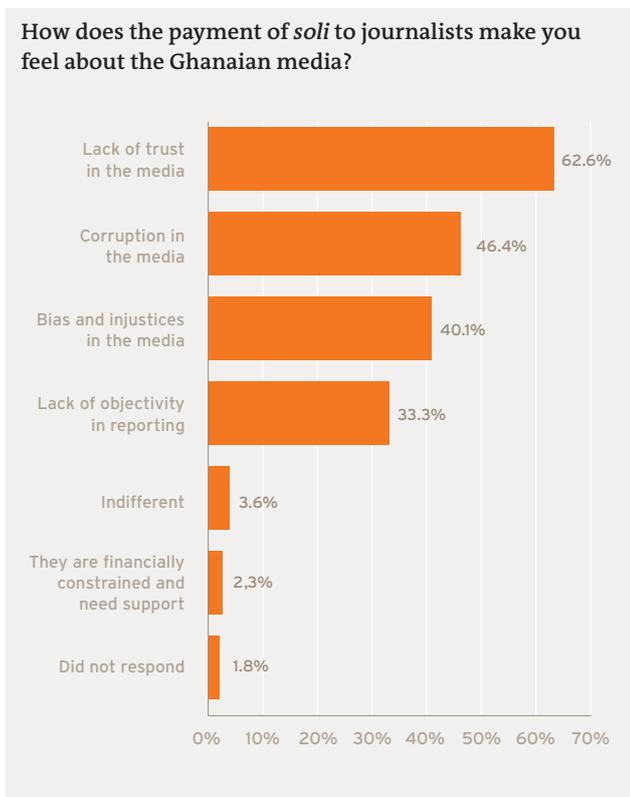


Fig. 87 General public, n = 222 (Multiple answers were possible.)

Over 60% of the general public expressed distrust in the Ghanaian media because of incentives given to journalists. 46.4% felt *soli* was tantamount to corruption in the media, which resulted in biases and subjectivity in news reports. Only 2.3% felt it was justified.

6.8.2 General public's trust in media types

When asked about their level of trust in different media types, the general public seemed to have a more positive view of the Ghanaian media.

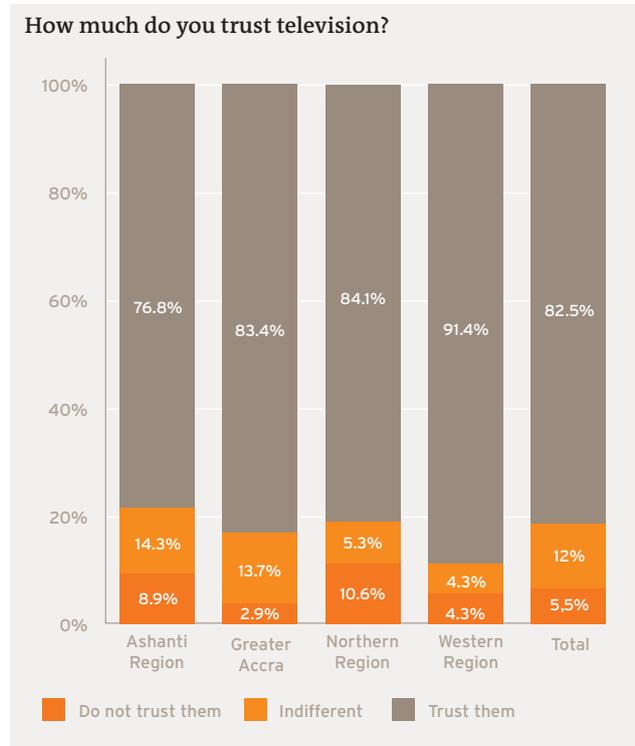


Fig. 88 General public, n = 230

Television appeared to be the most trusted media among the public with about 82% of interviewees affirming their trust in this media. Roughly 12% were uncertain about their trust in TV and about 5.5% did not trust this media.

Regional analysis did not show significant differences.

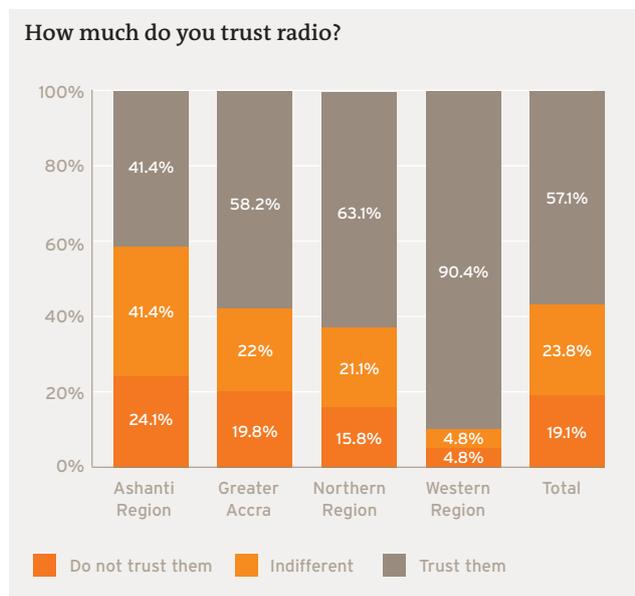


Fig. 89 General public, n = 230

Radio was the second most trusted media (57.1%). Almost 24% were indifferent about their trust for radio while about 19% claimed no trust in radio.

At the regional level, an overwhelming number of respondents in the Western Region (90.4%) trusted radio, far above the national average. The Northern Region (63.1%), Greater Accra Region (58.2%) and Ashanti Region (41.4%) followed with their trust levels for radio.

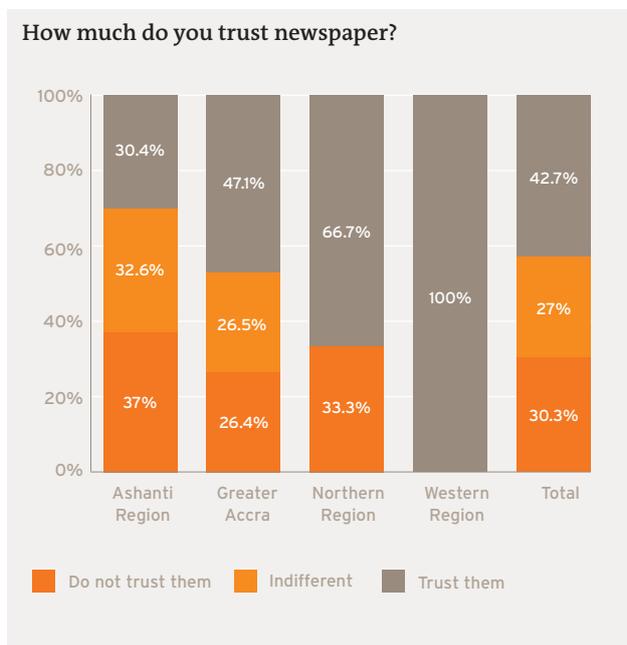


Fig. 90 General public, n = 230

Newspaper was the least trusted of the three media. About 42.7% of interviewees expressed trust in newspaper, 27% were neutral about their position on this subject, and slightly over 30% had no trust for newspaper media.

Media audiences interviewed in the Western Region seemed to have complete (100%) trust in newspaper media, while those in the Ashanti Region expressed the least trust, where about 37% claimed not to trust the newspaper media.

6.8.3 General public's trust in media types by gender

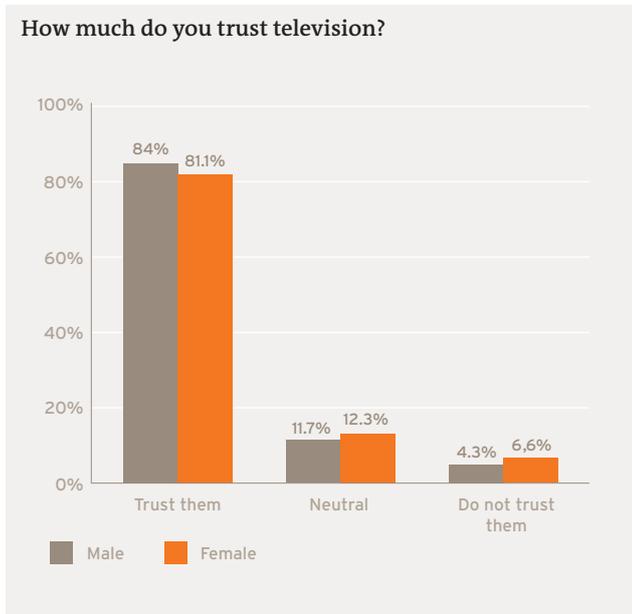


Fig. 91 General public, n=230

Marginally more males than females expressed trust in television, the most trusted media.

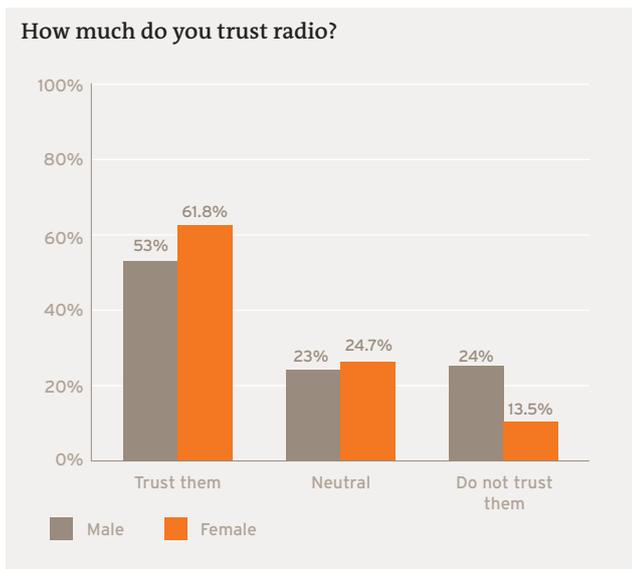


Fig. 92 General public, n=230

More females (61.8%) claimed to trust radio than male respondents (53%). About 10.5% more males expressed distrust in radio.

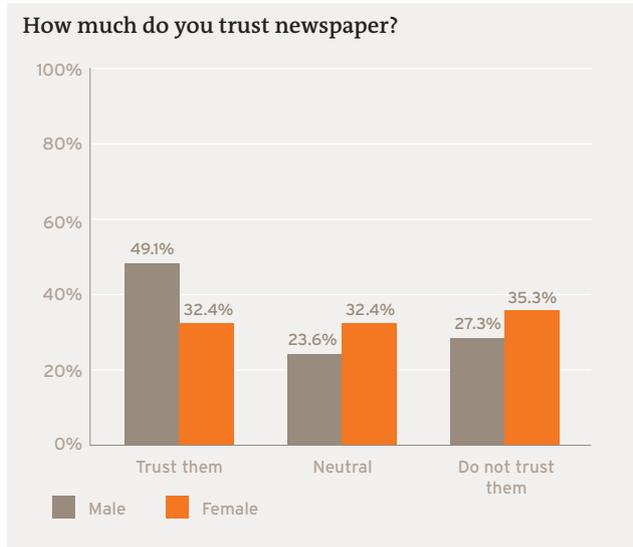


Fig. 93 General public, n=230

About 16.7% more males trusted newspaper media than females, with respondents from each group expressing trust at 49.10% and 32.4% respectively.

6.8.4 General public's trust levels for the different media by sector

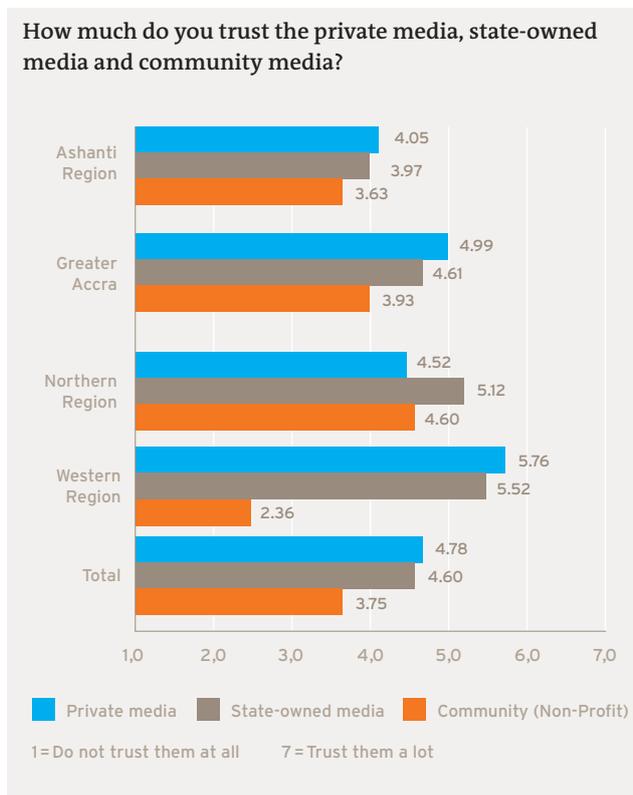


Fig. 94 General public, n=230

Generally, trust in private and state-owned media was slightly above average. Compared to private and public media, community media lagged behind with trust expressed below average.

Media audiences in the Western Region seemed to trust the private and state-owned media more overall with a mean average of 5.8 and 5.5 respectively. However, their trust level dropped considerably for community media with a mean of 2.3, which also turned out to be the lowest rating across all the four regions.

Community media seemed to appeal to audiences in the Northern Region more than in the other areas. With a mean average of 4.6, trust level for the community media in the North was above the total average and slightly above the private media in the same region.

Overall, media users in the Ashanti Region had the least trust in the different media sectors.

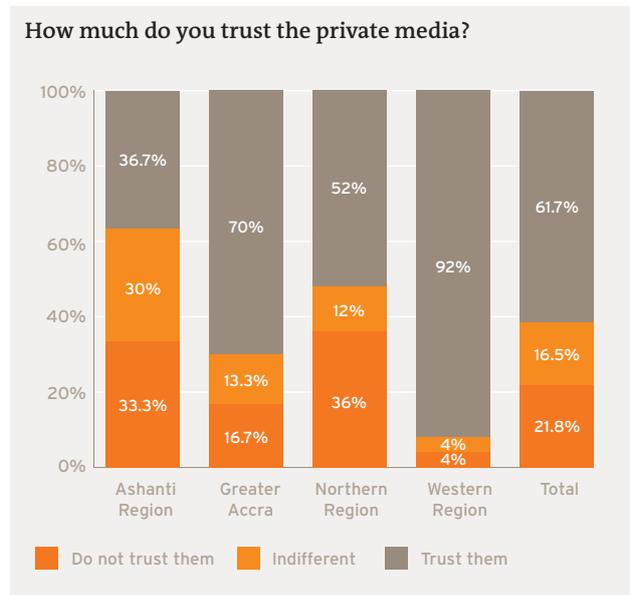


Fig. 95 General public, n = 230

Trust in the private media was higher than in the state-owned or community media. About 61% of the general public trusted the private media while 21.8% did not. In the Western Region, trust in the private media was highest with 92% of the general public trusting that media, as compared to the Ashanti Region with only 36.7%.

How much do you trust the state-owned media?

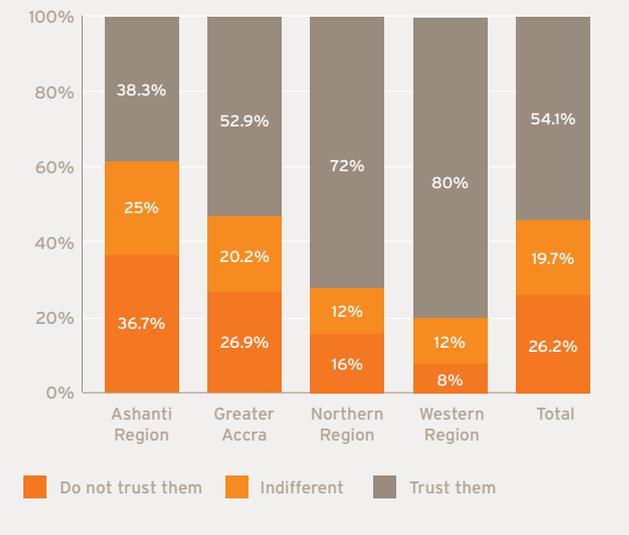


Fig. 96 General public, n = 230

More than half (54.1%) of the general public said they trusted the state-owned media. Audiences in the Western and Northern regions had the highest trust with 80% and 72% of interviewees respectively.

How much do you trust the community (non-profit) media?

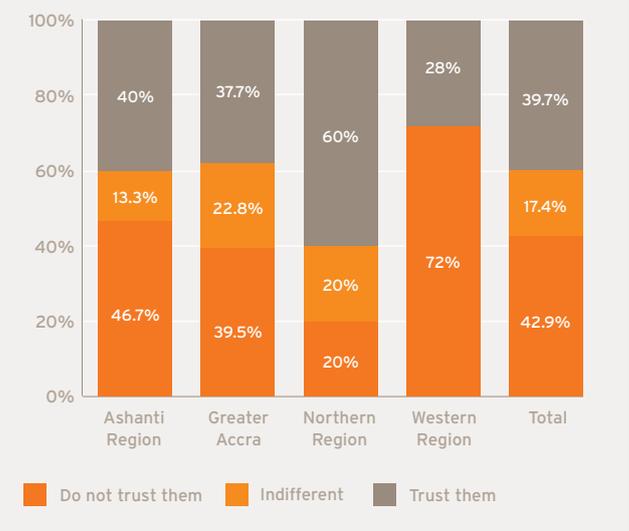


Fig. 97 General public, n = 230

Of all the media sectors, community media seemed to be the least trusted. Only 39.7% of the general public had trust in the sector. It was the least trusted sector in the Western Region with 72% not trusting their community media, whereas 60% of the general public in the Northern Region expressed trust

in their community media. This can be attributed to the fact that community media coverage in the Northern Region is relatively high compared to the large national media, which are primarily located in the South and concentrated in Accra.

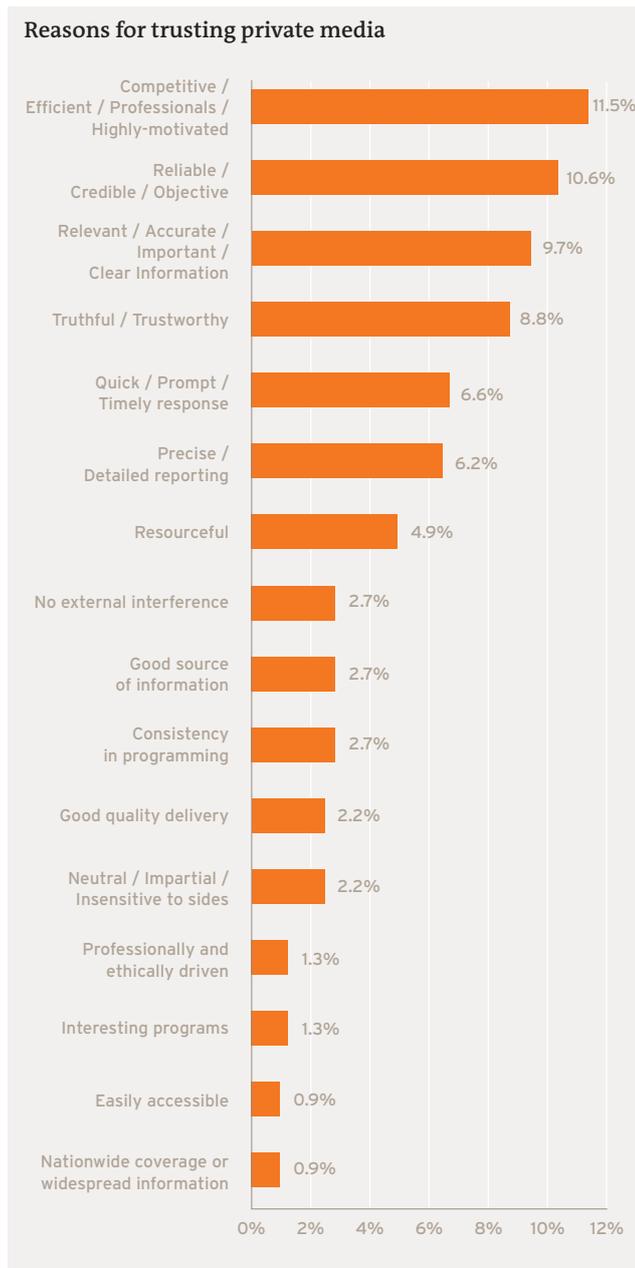


Fig. 98 General public, n=226

The key qualities named that inspired trust in the private media were competence, efficiency, reliability, objectivity, credibility and trustworthiness.

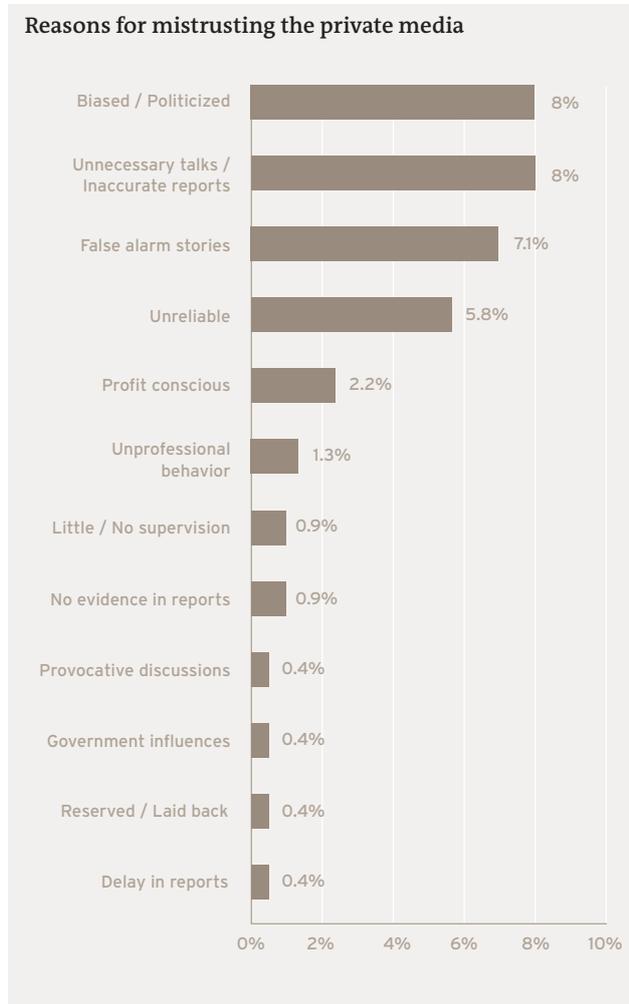


Fig. 99 General public, n=226

Interviewees from the public who expressed mistrust in the private media felt they were biased and were inaccuracies in their reports. They also criticized the private media for political bias.

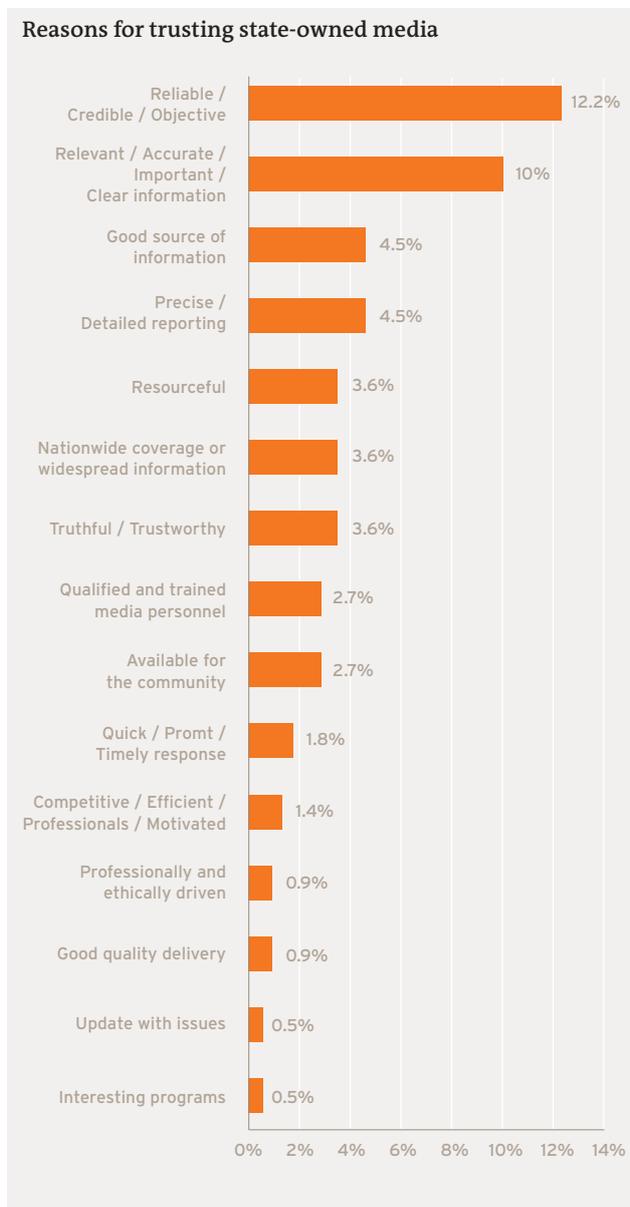


Fig. 100 General public, n = 221

State-owned media organizations were credited with reliability, credibility and objectivity in reporting. The state-owned media were also commended for providing accurate and relevant information to the public.

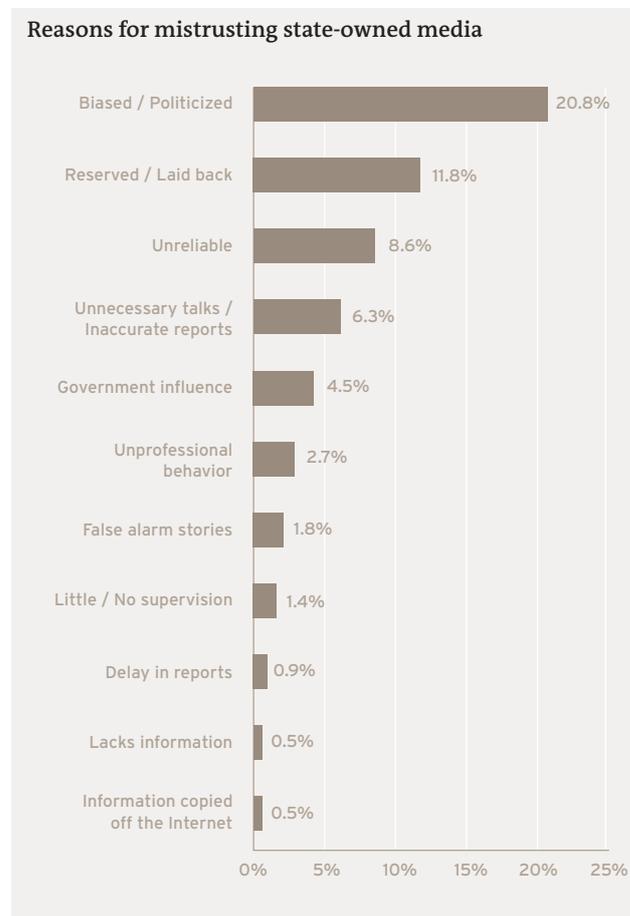


Fig. 101 General public, n = 221

Individuals from the public who did not trust the state-owned media cited biased reporting, a politicized stance, and journalists who were less active than those in the private media at sourcing information for consumers.

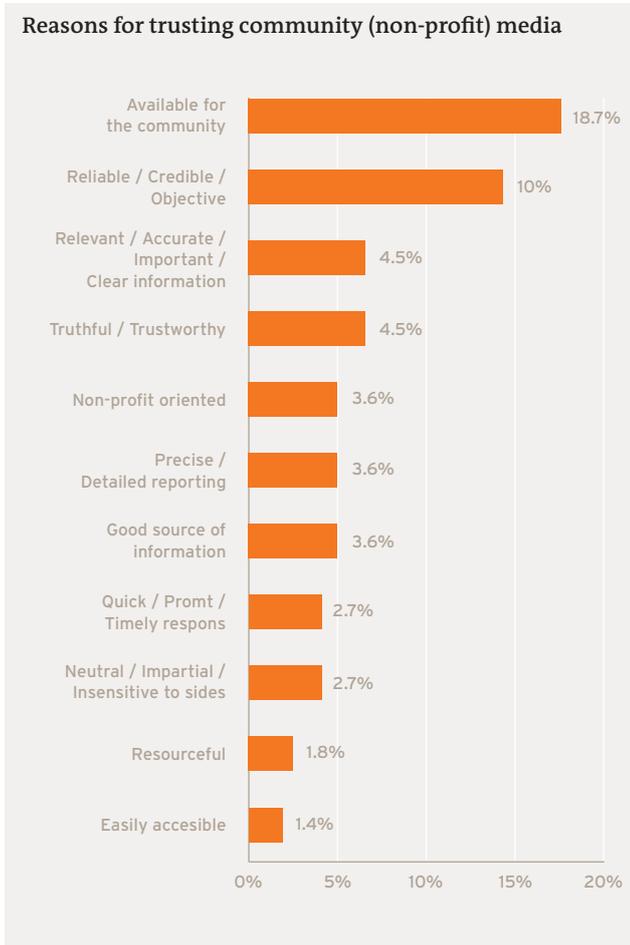


Fig. 102 General public, n=209

The main reason respondents cited for trust in community media was a belief that they were focused on community issues which helped promote community development.

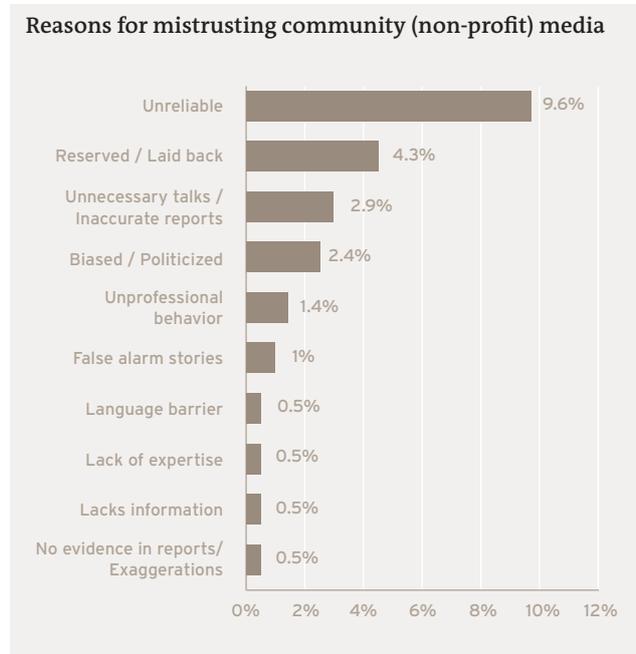


Fig. 103 General public, n=221

Mistrust in the community media was attributed to the belief that they were neither reliable nor active in gathering news for the public.

6.8.5 Media interest organizations and trust in media

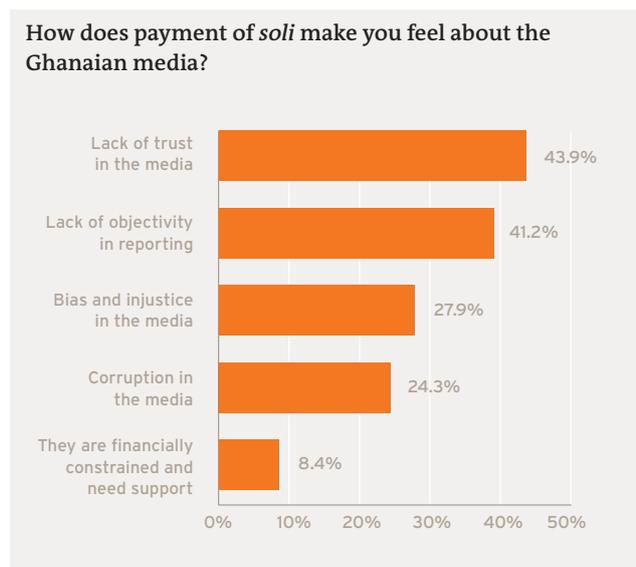


Fig. 104 Media interest organizations, n=221

A great number (43.9%) of media interest organizations expressed distrust in the Ghanaian media because of the *solli* system. Another 39.4% thought journalists were not objective, and almost 28% felt the Ghanaian media was biased in its reporting.

6.9 Way forward – suggestions for possible changes

6.9.1 Expectations of the general public

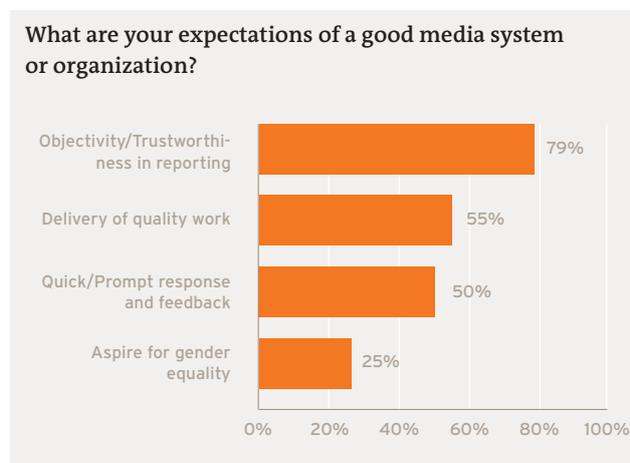


Fig. 105 General public, n=230 (Multiple answers were possible.)

Objectivity in news reports seemed a topmost concern for most media users, and was mentioned by around 79 percent of the public as an attribute of a good media system. Delivery of quality work (54.5%), promptness of reports (49.5%) and gender equality (24.8%) were also concerns cited by the public.

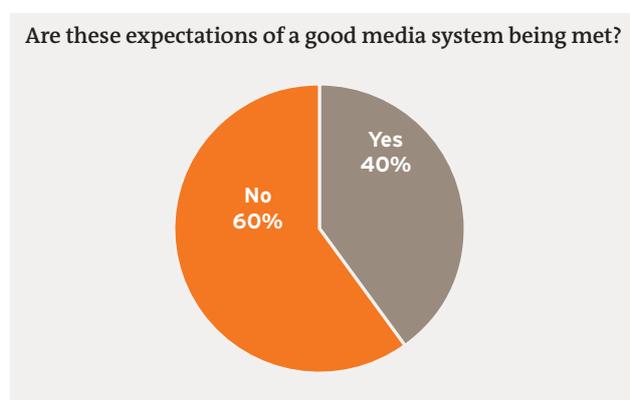


Fig. 106 General public, n=230

Responses from the survey indicated that about 60% of the public felt that their expectations of a good media system were not being met, while the remaining 40% felt their expectations were being met.

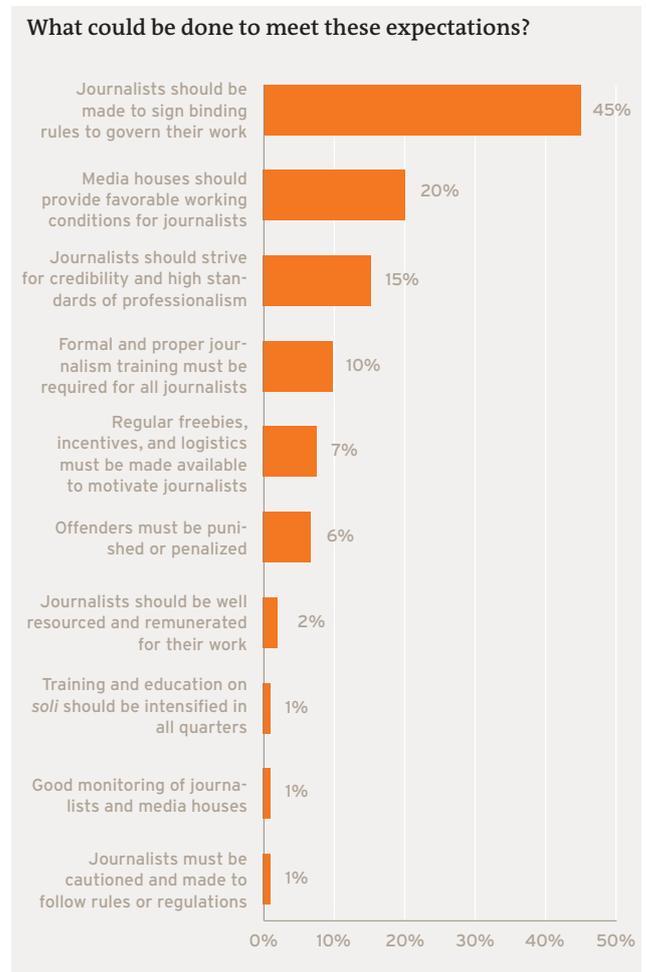


Fig. 107 General public, n=136 (Multiple answers were possible.)

The public pointed to some steps they felt the Ghanaian media needed to take in order to satisfy their expectations. Key amongst these was having journalists officially acknowledge the rules governing their work by signing written policy documents. Almost 20% expected a good media organization to provide favorable working conditions for its journalists, and about 15% wanted journalists to pursue credibility and a high standard of professionalism. These express some of the views of the about 60% of the public who felt their expectations of a good media system were not being met.

6.9.2 How to end the practice of *solì*

6.9.2.1 Media interest organizations

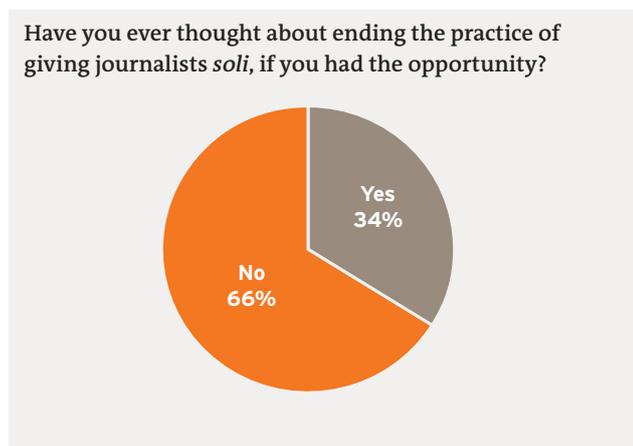


Fig. 108 Media interest organizations, n = 262

At the time of the study, the majority (66%) of media interest organizations said that they had never thought of ending the practice of giving incentives to journalists for covering their events. The reason given was that *solì* was just a show of appreciation for work done. But about 1 in 3 media interest organizations were uneasy about *solì* and would consider ending the practice if they had the opportunity. They explained that it was costly, especially when uninvited journalists appeared at their events, a practice common among Ghanaian journalists.

In the face-to-face interviews most interviewees (media interest organizations, journalists, media managers) answered “yes” to the question of whether they had considered ending the practice of *solì*. They added that *solì* could end if working conditions for journalists improved, such as attractive salaries and adequate resources for transportation to cover events.

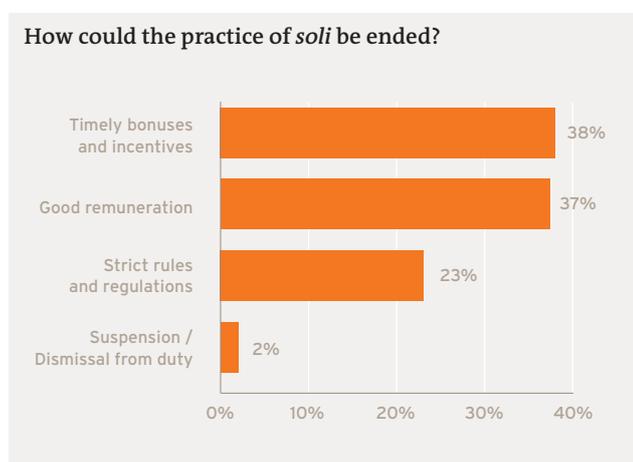


Fig. 109 Media interest organizations, n = 250

Timely bonuses, good remuneration for journalists, strict rules and regulations for the media and sanctions were measures proposed by media interest organizations.

6.9.2.2 Journalists and ending the *solì* practice

In general, journalists regarded the issue of eliminating *solì* from the Ghanaian media system as far-fetched and ambitious. Some even went as far as to remark that journalism in Ghana would die with the elimination of *solì*.

“As I said, if it is eliminated, then journalism is also eliminated because if you eliminate the small incentives that we take and you don’t add something small to our pay, then I think journalism is not a good course to practice.”

(Stringer, TV and radio, private sector, Kumasi)

“No, it is not possible. It is even going to increase; I don’t think for that one you can do anything about it.”

(Media manager, TV and radio, state owned, Tamale)

“I don’t think so, because it has become a part and parcel of the system.”

(Media manager, radio, private sector, Kumasi)

However, some interviewees believed that attempts to minimize the practice in the Ghanaian media system would be more practical if some measures were put in place.

*“I believe *solì* can be reduced, but can never be eradicated.”*

(Journalist, radio, private sector, Kumasi)

“I think it can, if and only if employers are willing to increase the salaries of their employees because most of the time the reason why people accept it is because the salaries that they receive are not enough.”

(Journalist, radio, private sector, Kumasi)

Please suggest ways the practice of offering and/or receiving incentives (*sol*i) could be reduced or eliminated in the Ghanaian media.

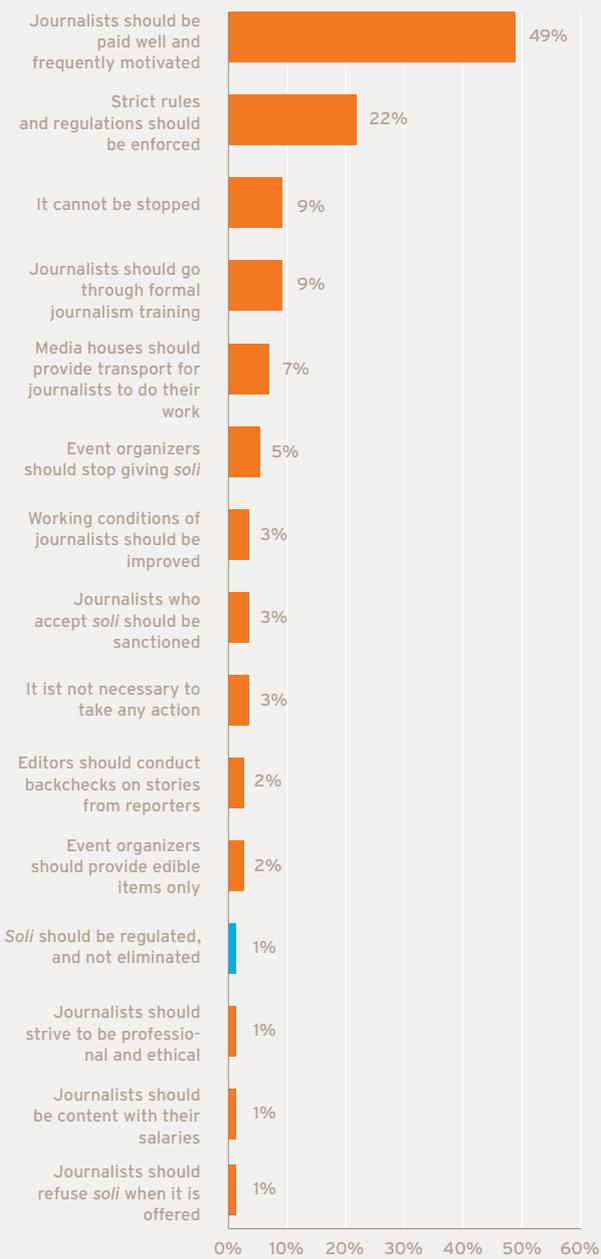


Fig. 110 Journalists, n = 265 (Multiple answers were possible.)

Evidently, a majority (49.1%) of journalists felt that they were not paid well by their employers and argued that good remuneration would help journalists reject *sol*i. About 22% of them suggested enforcing strict rules and regulations in the media. While 9.1% thought there was no solution for the *sol*i problem, another 9.1% felt formal journalism training for journalists would help curb *sol*i practices.

6.9.2.3 General public and ending the *sol*i practice

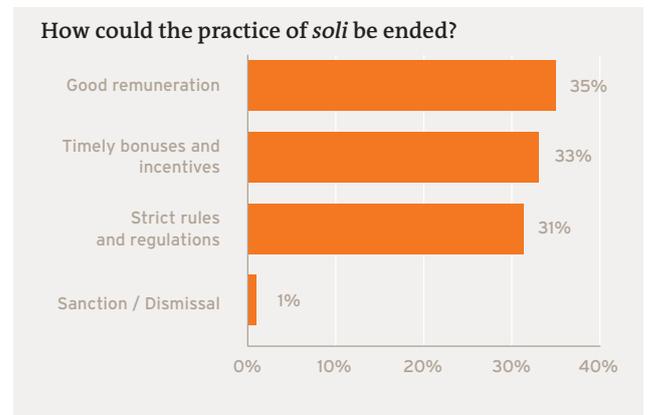


Fig. 111 General public, n = 217

Some suggestions from the general public included remuneration (34.9%), regular bonuses for journalists (33.1%), and strict regulations regarding *sol*i (31%). An insignificant number (1%) felt sanctions such as dismissal should be meted out to journalists who took *sol*i to serve as a deterrent to others.

07

Conclusions

As practiced in the Ghanaian media, *solì* involves monetary or non-monetary incentives offered to journalists by event organizers or individuals interested in publicity.

At the time of the study, about 61% of Ghanaian journalists admitted to having accepted incentives from event organizers for covering events.

Despite this high level of acceptance, a considerable number of interviewees, including journalists, also characterized *solì* as media bribery with the potential to influence media coverage and reports. Of all the groups interviewed, 13.4% of journalists, 22.8% of media interest organizations and 52% of the public supported this characterization.

Taking *solì* was strongly attributed to poor salaries and the working conditions of journalists. Journalists in the Northern Region were the least satisfied with their incomes. By in large, *solì* was regarded as important to a journalist's standard of living and well over 60% of journalists across the region affirmed this. Journalists in the Ashanti (14.3%) and Northern (9.5%) regions were the least likely to report that *solì* was important to their standards of living. Findings from the in-depth interviews indicated that *solì* was very useful to journalists; some journalists affirmed that *solì* provided resources for travelling to cover events, supplemented their small salaries, and helped them achieve business and career goals and meet responsibilities in their families. According to some journalists, monthly earnings from *solì* ranged from less than GH¢500 to as high as GH¢5,000 for a few. About 25% either claimed not to recall or would not disclose their earnings in *solì*. However, the survey revealed that *solì* was not only accepted by junior reporters with few benefits, but also by senior journalists who earn quite satisfactory salaries and have access to adequate resources for discharging their duties. So the true motivation for accepting *solì* remains debatable.

The data showed that media organizations and regulators of the Ghanaian media have not done much to encourage journalists to refuse *solì*. There is little regulation of the Ghanaian media and the management of most media organizations have not been able to concretize and enforce the guidelines in their codes of conduct that govern their institutions and the work of their journalists.

The majority of interviewees felt *solì* raised no ethical issues, though roughly 37% of journalists asserted that *solì* was unethical, as did 37% of the media interest organizations polled.

The media interest organizations who characterized *solì* as unethical said that the practice went against the media code of ethics (49%) and that it influenced journalists to change the facts in news reports (29%).

The qualitative study revealed discrepancies between ideal ethical standards and actual practices by Ghanaian journalists. Most journalists reserved the right to decide when *solì* was ethical or unethical, and many different attitudes towards the practice were apparent. Most prominent of these was that if a news source willingly offered *solì*, it could not be regarded as unethical. As such, *solì* was only considered unethical if journalists demanded it. Many journalists based their assessment of whether *solì* was bribery and therefore unethical on its value. A small or token amount was often considered a show of appreciation or form of motivation, while larger amounts and valuable gifts were deemed bribery and as such unethical.

Undeniably, *solì* influences journalists' objectivity in news coverage and reporting to some extent, though some media interest stakeholders argued this was not the case. The effect of the practice included biased reporting, factual misrepresentation, and mistrust of the media by media audiences.

Over 60% of the general public did not trust the Ghanaian media as a result of incentives given to journalists and about 46% felt *solì* was an act of corruption in the media, resulting in biases and a lack of objectivity in news reports.

We believe *solì* in the media is an act of corruption, just like other forms of bribery in other professions. Given that most *solì* givers defended the practice, we feel that the elimination of *solì* from the Ghanaian media industry is an almost unachievable goal. Efforts can, however, be made to minimize the practice.

A fairly small percentage of interviewees professed awareness of institutional policies regarding *solì*. In the Ashanti Region, the number of journalists aware of a policy in their media houses was significantly higher (nearly 80%) and the North recorded the lowest numbers with 30% of its journalists claiming knowledge of policies in their media organizations. It appeared that in the Ashanti Region, where a majority of journalists affirmed their knowledge of policies, these were verbal agreements without documentation. When written policies were in place, most journalists required to sign these policies on *solì* in their media organizations reported not complying. According to our findings, awareness and signing of a policy document on *solì* did not seem to discourage journalists from taking incentives. About 66.7% of journalists who were aware of institutional policies on *solì* admitted to accepting incentives. Of those who reported not knowing about policies on *solì*, 59.3% admitted to accepting *solì*. The results seem to indicate that the presence of a policy on *solì* in a media organization has no effect on what its journalists ultimately do regarding *solì*. Of the journalists who agreed to or actually signed a policy document, about 60% reported accepting *solì*. Nearly the same number (59.6%) who did not sign a policy document accepted *solì*.

The execution of the project presented some major challenges, such as some eligible respondents' outright refusal to be interviewed and long bureaucratic processes to get approvals from the organizations and businesses involved in the survey.

The reliability of the findings from this research were limited by possibly biased responses, especially regarding sensitive topics and issues that touched on the integrity of journalists, such as taking *solì* and its effect on the objectivity of news coverage/reports.

In future research, it might be fruitful to consider exploring the following issues, as not enough information has been gathered to date to draw any conclusions about them:

1) Effects of incentives (*solì*) on the objectivity of news coverage

Some journalists said that *solì* did not influence their objectivity in news coverage, but claimed it did affect that of their colleagues. To determine whether or not journalists are influenced by *solì*, future research could analyze their journalistic output. It could be instructive to compare the work from journalists who took *solì* to those who did not in terms of objectivity and bias.

2) Correlation between professionalism and higher education and the acceptance of incentives/*solì*

In the literature, a number of researchers across several continents have argued that professional journalists were more concerned with ethical issues regarding incentives than their less well-educated colleagues, and were therefore less likely to accept *solì*.

While Kasoma's 2007 quantitative study in Ghana and Zambia showed that the more educated a journalist was, the less likely he or she was to accept *solì*, the in-depth interviews for the same survey found the opposite when a majority of journalists with MA degrees in Ghana reported taking more *solì*. Our survey did not find any significant correlation among the variables. This should be a subject of further investigation.

3) Ethics and incentive-driven journalism

During our research, most participants, and especially journalists and media seekers, did not provide a straightforward answer when asked if incentives/*solì* were unethical. These respondents described incentives as a show of appreciation to journalists for covering events.

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Recommendations

Analysis of the data collected portrayed *solli* as primarily attributed to behavioral and some external factors, such as socio-economic issues, a clear indication of the complexity of the situation. This makes it challenging to resolve. That notwithstanding, we believe the following measures could be a step forward to curbing the practice of *solli* in the Ghanaian media landscape:

Improve work conditions

- All media organizations should provide resources for their journalists to get to events just as is done in other industries where organizations reimburse travel expenses for their employees while they are performing their official duties.

Attractive remuneration

- Journalists should be paid well and on a regular basis, as set out in employment conditions.
- Media houses should offer timely bonuses and incentives to journalists to motivate them to ignore *solli*.

GJA, NMC and GIBA should formulate and enforce strict governing rules and regulations

- The Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), National Media Commission (NMC) and the Ghana Independent Broadcasters' Association (GIBA) should issue strict and more concrete policies to media houses and journalists that forbid them from demanding or accepting *solli* from event organizers or the public.
- These regulatory institutions should clearly communicate the sanctions involved for any infringement on the policies regarding *solli* and ensure their enforcement.

Media houses should formulate and implement strict governing rules and regulations

- The media houses should formulate policies that prohibit their journalists from demanding or accepting *solli* from event organizers or the public.
- Management of media houses should follow up to ensure the policies are adhered to and offenders sanctioned accordingly.

Professional/Formal training for journalists

- Journalists should be encouraged to remain professional and ethical in the performance of their duties
- Media training institutions/schools should teach students the importance on not participating in *solli* practices.
- Journalists should be encouraged to undergo formal journalism training.

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