

because only a small minority of the respondents (14 percent of anglophones, 9 percent of francophones) had been sued or found in contempt of court in connection with their journalistic work. Alternatively, the journalists' concern about being sued may lead them to avoid the kinds of behaviors that might lead to a defamation action or contempt of court.

Anglophone journalists, as a group, agreed slightly that their ethical calculations include considering what competing news organizations would do. Francophone journalists disagreed slightly with the statement.

All provinces but Saskatchewan have press councils, which are essentially voluntary ethical courts established by the news industry to hear complaints about journalistic performance. The Quebec Press Council accepts complaints against any kind of news organization, while the press councils in English Canada accept complaints only against newspapers that are members of the press council. Anglophone journalists disagreed fairly strongly that the possibility of a complaint to their press council was a factor they considered; francophone journalists disagreed only slightly.

Discussion

This study of Canadian journalists uncovered two principal findings. The first is that formal sources of ethical norms -- written ethics codes or policy manuals, provincial press councils -- are relatively unimportant factors in Canadian journalists' ethical decision-making processes. The second is that Canadian journalists exhibit a fair amount of ethical boldness.