
CHILLING EFFECT AND SOFT CENSORSHIP IN HUNGARIAN MEDIA

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CHILLING EFFECT AFTER MEDIA LAW?

MAIN POINTS

1. SELF-CENSORSHIP
DEFINITIONS, DIFFICULTIES
2. ATTEMPTS TO MEASURE
3. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS
4. OPINION POLLS
5. CONCLUSIONS
6. QUESTIONS



DIFFICULTIES OF DEFINITION



“Self-censorship is like melted snow. It will seep under your collar.”

Péter Esterházy, writer
in an interview for Der
Standard, April 9, 2011

DICTIONARY DEFINITION

“SELF-CENSORSHIP IS A KIND OF CONTROL OF WHAT SOMEONE SAYS OR DOES IN ORDER TO AVOID ANNOYING OR OFFENDING OTHERS, BUT WITHOUT BEING TOLD OFFICIALLY”



DIFFICULTIES OF DEFINITION



- difficult to detect in the newsroom
- difficult to be conscious about as a journalist
- difficult to differentiate between a normal kind of self control/editing
- conformity - journalists are members of a team, community, society
- conformity rewarded
- opinion climate defines the professional climate
- cultural traditions

QUOTES FROM 2011 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

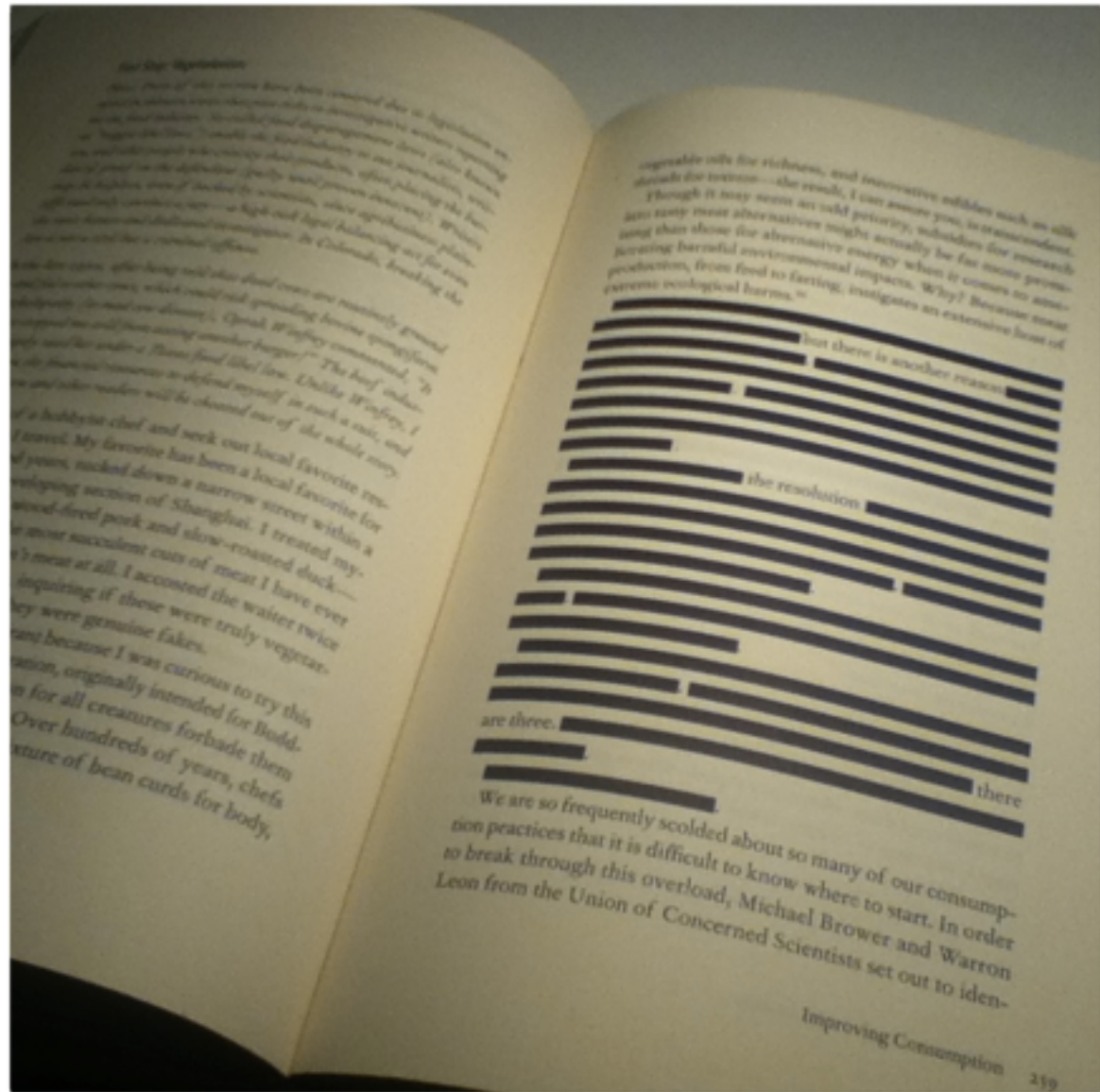
- When I know, what I should do as a journalist out of pure professionalism, but I do not do it, or I do something outright different.”
 - “When you feel your boundaries defined by your organization and you proactively respect those hidden boundaries”
 - You do not wait to be reminded of what you should do, you just follow these ‘rules’, you fulfill the expectations even if you do not agree with them”
 - „When I do not do something or do not do it in the way my journalistic convictions would dictate”
-

OUR DEFINITION



“Self-censorship is a phenomenon in which the journalist recognizes and draws the lines of his/her professional freedoms and proactively respects them against his/best professional conviction”

INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES



- Pew research 2000 - US context
- three kinds of self censorship
 - avoidance of stories audience might find too complex, too dull
 - avoidance of stories that might damage news orgs, advertisers, friends, or the boss
 - avoidance of stories that might hurt reporter-source relations, standing with other journalists, career



PAST DEFINES PRESENT

communist era journalism practices, cultural heritage, journalistic socialization

QUOTES FROM PRESENT....

“At our publication, plenty of slack is left in the reins.”

“We are constructively critical with those on our side. It may sound like a cliché, but we get mad for their own sake.”

"There are self-censorship reflexes kicking in which the agitprop division in the seventies would be jealous of"

"The market as such has almost completely disappeared [in the media], in practice the vast majority of funds is moved by politics. Not only direct state expenditures, but also the money spent by countless companies friendly with the government, and (...) companies that join the fray in the hopes of some minor material benefits, concessions, strategic partnerships or whatever else.”

FORM OF SELF CENSORSHIP IN THE 1980S



- Silence (not reporting on stories, issues, certain parts of issues etc.)
- Packaging
- Referring to other news outlets (blogs, internet)
- Writing between the lines, coded language
- Dry reporting, let the audience find out what happened

So how to measure?

in-depth interviews

- 1-1,5 hour
- guided interviews
- 2011-12, 2013, 2014

opinion polls

- anonymous
- web questionnaires
- not representative



QUESTIONS ABOUT PRESSURE

- Do you think there is any relation between politics/business and your employer's financial situation?
 - Evaluate the extent of pressure from politics/business on media! (1-4 where 4 very harmful to press freedom)
 - How these pressures are exercised (through advertisers, editors, managers, owners etc.)
 - Have you personally experienced such political/business pressures? Or do you have knowledge about colleagues being in such a situation?
 - What was the goal of these pressures:
 - keeping silent about issues, cases, people
 - false reporting
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QUESTIONS ABOUT SELF CENSORSHIP

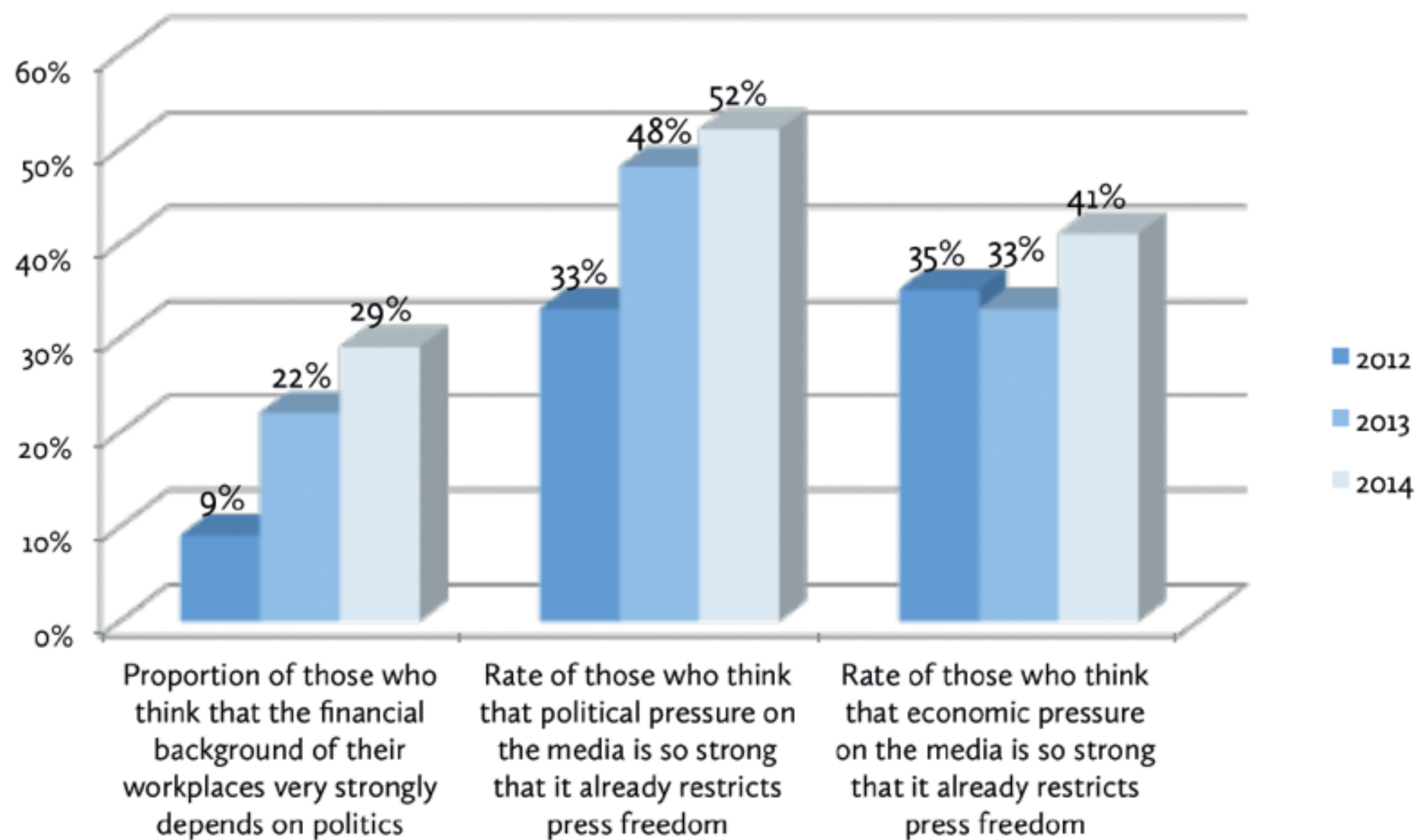
- Has it happened to you that you did not report/falsely reported on something in order to avoid disadvantageous consequences? Y/N
 - What form of self censorship have you applied? Silence (not reporting on stories, issues, certain parts of issues etc.), packaging, referring to other news outlets (blogs, internet, writing between the lines, coded language, dry reporting, let the audience find out what happened
 - Have you refused what your editor/owner asked you to do (for professional reasons)?
 - Do you think that media report on issues as and to the extent it should?
 - Would you like your child to become a journalist?
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DETERIORATING RATING

↓ *Press Freedom Index (range of 1-10)*

	2012	2013	2014	Change
General public	4.6	4.6	4.9	Improved
Journalists	4.8	4.3	4.1	Deteriorated
Media managers	5.4	6.2	5.9	Deteriorated

GROWING PRESSURE

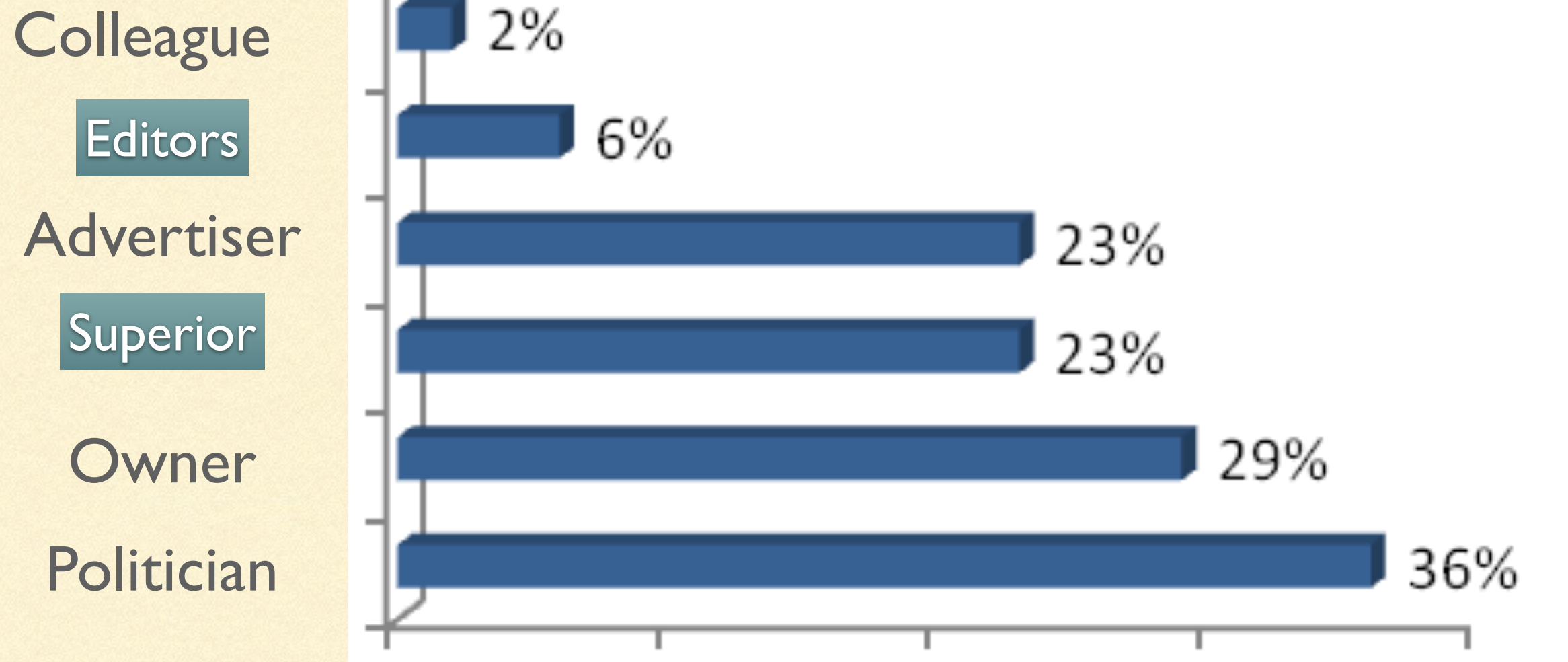


NEGATIVE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

	2012	2013
Among editors	63%	67%
Among journalists	51%	60%

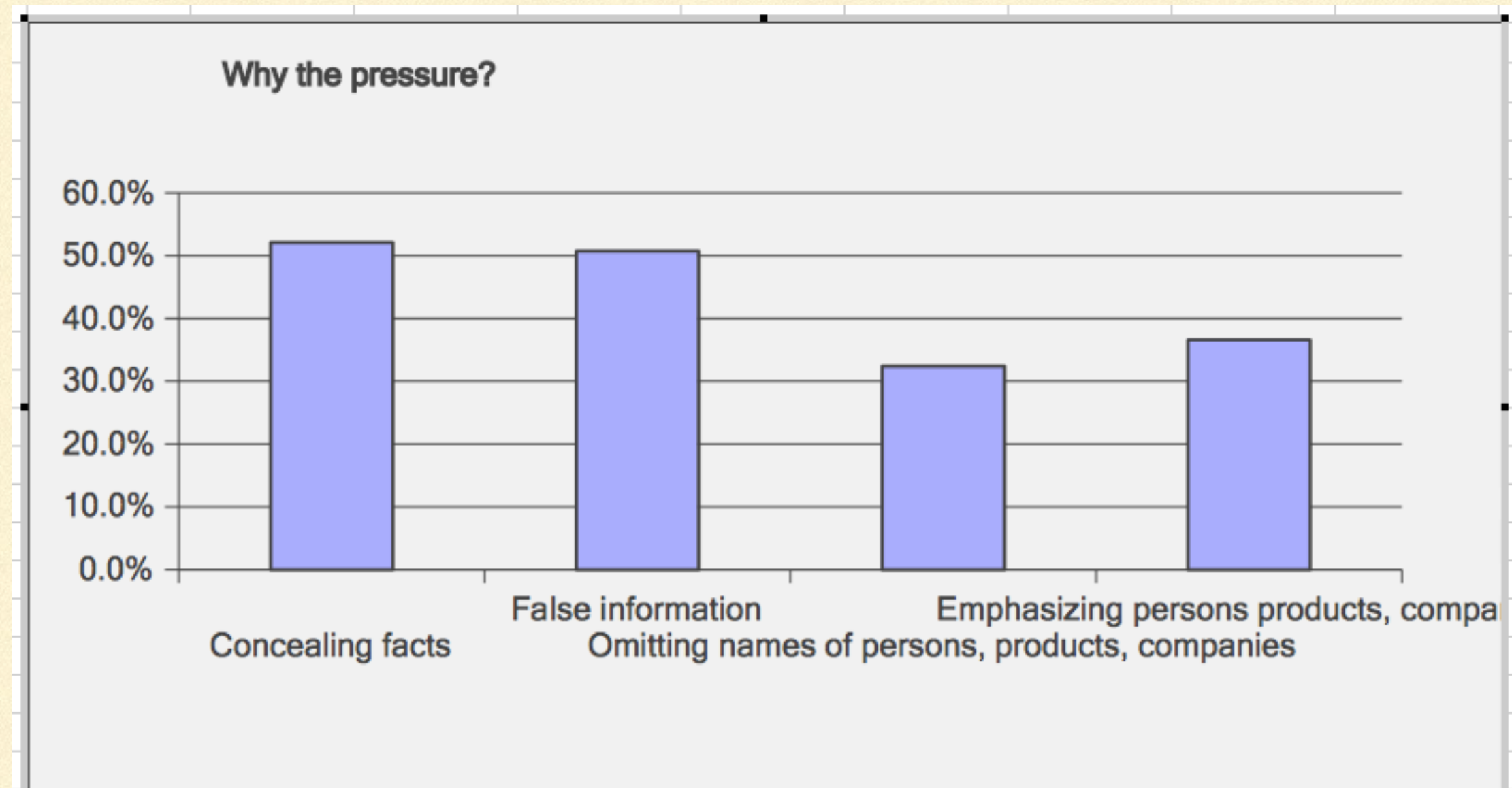
During the past year, have you personally been subject to pressure in the course of your journalistic work? (2013)

PRESSURE COMING FROM INSIDE



Please rate the following indicating who has been a source of pressure and what level of pressure they exercised (2013)

WHY THE PRESSURE?



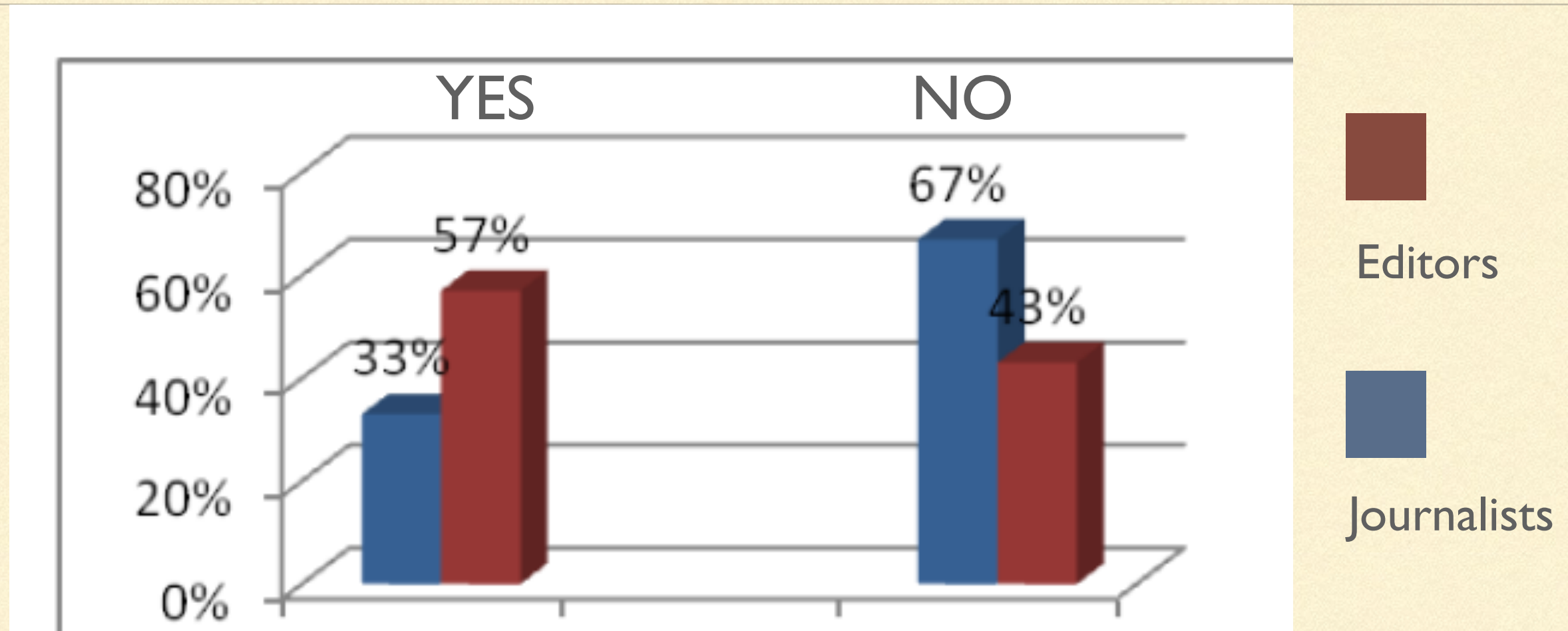
(2014)

HIGH LEVEL OF CONCEALED ISSUES

Do you think that all topics in Hungarian media are represented properly?

	Journalists			General public		
	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014
No, there are some concealed issues.	77%	75%	72%	80%	75%	71%
Yes, this is so in the case of most of the media.	6%	5%	4%	13%	17%	21%
No responses	17%	20%	24%	7%	8%	8%

EDITORS TWICE AS LIKELY



Has it ever happened in your journalistic practice that you concealed/distorted some political/economic facts to avoid unfavourable consequences? (2013)

LOW APPRECIATION OF JOURNALISM AMONG JOURNALISTS

Would you be glad if your child chose to become a journalist?

		What is your assessment of the state of press freedom?
Yes	43%	4.6
No	57%	4.1

(2013)

CONCLUSIONS

- Soft censorship is worryingly high for a democracy
 - Trend is deteriorating, as Hungary backslides further into illiberal state
 - Phenomenon needs more research putting into the context of the transformation of media as a business
 - Comparative research in new democracies of CEE - Hungary is an “example” for political forces all around Europe
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OPEN POLITICAL PRESSURE



Thank you

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