



WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL  
of Philadelphia

# France

*French Republic*



## Key Facts



**World Freedom Press Global Index Ranking (Overall):** Ranked 32 (22.21)

**Head of State / Head of Government:** President Emmanuel Macron

**Capital city:** Paris

**Population:** 67,364,357 (July 2018 est.)

**Official Language(s):** French

**Ethnic Groups:** Celtic and Latin with Teutonic, Slavic, North African, Indo-Chinese, Basque minorities

**Currency:** Euro

**Gross domestic product (PPP):** 2.583 trillion USD (2017)

**Internet penetration:** 86.8 %

**Most trusted medium of information:** Radio

**Legal System:** civil law; review of administrative but not legislative acts

**Political system:** semi-presidential republic

**Journalists jailed/Killed 2019:**

**Media Environment:** A mix of both publicly operated and privately owned TV stations; state-owned France television stations operate 4 networks, one of which is a network of regional stations, and has part-interest in several thematic cable/satellite channels and international channels; a large number of privately owned regional and local TV stations; multi-channel satellite and cable services provide a large number of channels; public broadcaster Radio France operates 7 national networks, a series of regional networks, and operates services for overseas territories and foreign audiences; Radio France Internationale, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is a leading international broadcaster; a large number of commercial FM stations, with many of them consolidating into commercial networks. The media landscape is characterized by two dominant trends that have been increasingly hardening: the central and key role of the state and a high concentration of ownership in print press, TV, and radio markets. However French news media outlets and industries are intellectually vibrant, in particular the print magazine and

online press, and contribute to the political and intellectual life. The consumption of non-print media is gradually rising in France (around 66 million of inhabitants). In 2014, 86.6 percent of French individuals watched TV programs daily (compared to 85.7 percent in 2004 and 89.3 percent in 2009) through all different devices (TV set, computer, tablet, mobile phones) during 3 hours and 41 minutes. On average each household is equipped with 6.5 screens (TV set, computer, mobile phone, and tablet), and 30 percent of households (6.4 million) are equipped with TV set + tablet + laptop. Every day 43.3 million people in France listen to at least one radio channel during 3h, while 80 percent of inhabitants (43.5 million) are Internet users, and 23 million spend 1h16 each day on Internet. On the contrary, the circulation of print newspapers is declining while the audience of their digital outlets raises. In 1945, the market numbered 179 outlets with an average circulation of 12.1m issues a day; in 2014, only 76 outlets were left with an overall circulation of 8.8m dailies (including national, regional and local ones).

**Media Issues:** Attacks and harassment targeting news media and journalists increased dangerously in 2018. What with insults, threats, physical attacks and injuries at the hands of protesters or from rounds fired by riot police, journalists encountered an unprecedented level of violence during the “Gilets Jaunes” (Yellow Vest) protests which began in November 2018. Dissatisfied with the media’s coverage of their protest movement, some Gilets Jaunes groups tried to blockade printing presses in order to prevent the distribution of newspapers. The law on business secrets adopted in June 2018 has exemptions for journalists, but reporters were denied access to the documents they needed during the “Implant Files” investigation. The Bolloré business group continued to bring abusive lawsuits in a systematic manner against investigative journalists who tried to cover certain aspects of its activities. Also known as SLAPPs, such lawsuits serve to harass and intimidate, even if later abandoned. Criticism of the media is always legitimate but has sometimes been supplanted by “media-bashing” and hate-filled attacks by politicians. They included the leader of La France Insoumise (France Unbowed), who repeatedly made irresponsible comments about journalists. France’s journalists are also increasingly exposed to online harassment and are being targeted by all kinds of trolls hidden behind screens and pseudonyms. To combat deliberate mass disinformation during elections, the government passed a law on “manipulation of information”. Some of its mechanisms, such as summary judicial proceedings, were widely criticized on the grounds that they are hard to implement, and perhaps even counterproductive.

## **Popular Forms of Media Consumption**

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**Radio:** The consumption of radio stations remains high. According to Médiamétrie, between November and December 2017, 79.4 percent of teenagers and adults in France have been listening to at least one radio station each week-day: 68.9 percent of this audience goes to commercial stations, 26.3 percent goes to state-owned stations, 1.5 percent goes to community stations and 3.3 percent goes to others (foreigner and other type of radio stations). Regarding the nature of programs during the week-day, 41.9 percent of the audience goes to general programs (news and entertainment), 31.5 percent to music radios, 14 percent to local programs, and 9.3 percent to thematic programs (cultural programs, breaking news, classical music). On average French teenagers and adults listen to radio 2h52 a week-day and most of them listen more than one radio station a day according to the daytime.

**Digital Media:** In recent years the French media landscape is witnessing a growing movement that contributes to create alternative news media. Most call themselves “media de réinformation” (re-information media) as they offer an alternative view of news opposite to mainstream media. Most of them belong to the far sides of political game. They mainly operate through websites; however, some launch online radio stations or TV channels through crowdsourcing calls.