



WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL  
of Philadelphia

# Italy

*Italian Republic*



## Key Facts



**World Freedom Press Global Index Ranking (Overall):** Ranked 43 (24.98)

**Head of State / Head of Government:** President Sergio MATTARELLA (since 3 February 2015) & Prime Minister Giuseppe CONTE (since 1 June 2018)

**Capital city:** Rome

**Population:** 62,246,674 (July 2018 est.)

**Official Language(s):** Italian

**Ethnic Groups:** Italian (includes small clusters of German-, French-, and Slovene-Italians in the north and Albanian-Italians and Greek Italians in the south)

**Currency:** Euro

**Gross domestic product (PPP):** 1.935 trillion USD (2017)

**Internet penetration:** 86.7 %

**Most trusted medium of information:** Radio

**Legal System:** civil law system; judicial review of legislation under certain conditions in Constitutional Court

**Political system:** parliamentary republic

**Journalists Jailed/Killed 2019:** 0

**Media Environment:** two Italian media giants dominate - the publicly owned Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI) with 3 national terrestrial stations and privately owned Mediaset with 3 national terrestrial stations; a large number of private stations and Sky Italia - a satellite TV network; RAI operates 3 AM/FM nationwide radio stations; about 1,300 commercial radio stations. The Italian media landscape is characterised by the dominant role of television in comparison to other media platforms. In a 2011 article published in Political Communication, Shehata and Strömbäck define Italy as a good example of a “television centred” country, in which citizens spend a large amount of time watching television while press circulation remains low. Mass circulation has never been a feature of the Italian print press; instead, it appeals to an elite readership that is already familiar with politics and public affairs. television consumption is very high.

Television audiences are higher than those in many other countries and television is a major agenda setter within the Italian public sphere. Due to its large audience share, television boasts a substantially higher share of advertising spend than print and online media – a factor that further limits the profitability of print journalism. New media are also affected by television’s large consumption. Indeed, the number of Internet consumers is lower than in other countries and digital infrastructures are much less developed, with online advertising expenditures suffering as a result.

**Media Issues:** Around twenty Italian journalists are currently receiving around-the-clock police protection because of serious threats or murder attempts by the mafia or by extremists’ groups. The level of violence against reporters is alarming and keeps on growing, especially in Campania, Calabria, Puglia and Sicily, as well as in Rome and the surrounding region. Several journalists have had their homes burgled by criminal groups or searched by police, who confiscated important work documents. These courageous and determined journalists nonetheless continue their investigative reporting. Many journalists have been criticized and insulted in connection with their work by politicians, especially by members of the Five Star Movement (M5S), who have called them “useless jackals” and “whores.” Some journalists have yielded to the temptation to censor themselves to avoid political harassment. As a result of their reporting or the opinions they have expressed, some journalists have been threatened by politicians with withdrawal of the police protection they have been receiving for years.

## **Popular Forms of Media Consumption**

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**Radio:** over the course of 2014, radio and television increased their global revenues by 0.8%, reaching a total amount of €8.5 million. According to the latest report published by Autorità per le Garanzie nelle Comunicazioni (Authority for Communication Guarantees – AGCOM), radio is the second most frequently used media after television. AGCOM’s survey showed that about 68% of the Italian population listened to the radio for an average of 149 minutes per day (data based on the seven days preceding the survey). Global consumption trends, shifting away from television and towards the internet, have provoked the Italian radio sector to undergo a number of transformations, both in terms of distribution and content. There has been a significant shift towards web broadcasting in podcast and on-demand modes, simulcasting on televisual platforms, and broadcasting through specific apps and streaming services.

**Television:** the Italian television sector has been able to strengthen its leadership, both in economic terms and the volume of consumers. Confirming this Italian preference for television, a 2015 study by SWG for AGCOM found that 96% of the population accessed television in the week before the survey. Traditional television (with a digital decoder) was the most frequently used with 90% of viewers, followed by satellite television’s 32% share. A growing percentage of viewers also indicated that they enjoy digital delivery through personal computers, 29% of respondents; smartphones, 16% of respondents; and, tablets, 12% of respondents.

**Digital Media:** By the end of 2014, 85% of Italian newspapers had both a digital and a print version. These digital offerings typically consist of two different product types: a digital version of the printed newspaper in pdf format or in the form of app for mobile devices; or, a website, mostly free, where the newspaper contents are enriched with pieces specifically written for the web and embedded with videos and pictures. Articles for the web are organized to optimize their visibility on search engines, such as Google, Bing and Yahoo; and social networks, which are beginning to represent a significant channel for incoming traffic flows.

**Print:** Over the last decade, the Italian publishing industry has experienced a sharp slowdown in sales volume. Between 2007 and 2015, revenue dropped by more than 30%, from 41.4 to 30.6 billion euros.