



Ukraine



Key Facts



World Freedom Press Global Index Ranking (Overall): 102 (32.46)

Head of State: President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (since 20 May 2019)

Head of Government: Prime Minister Oleksiy Honcharuk (since 29 August 2019); First Deputy Prime Minister Stepan Kubiv (since 14 April 2016)

Capital city: Kyiv (Kiev)

Population: 43,952,299 (July 2018 est.)

Official Language(s): Ukrainian (official) 67.5%, Russian (regional language) 29.6%, other (includes small Crimean Tatar-, Moldovan/Romanian-, and Hungarian-speaking minorities) 2.9% (2001 est.)

Ethnic Groups: Ukrainian 77.8%, Russian 17.3%, Belarusian 0.6%, Moldovan 0.5%, Crimean Tatar 0.5%, Bulgarian 0.4%, Hungarian 0.3%, Romanian 0.3%, Polish 0.3%, Jewish 0.2%, other 1.8% (2001 est.)

Currency: Ukrainian Hryvnia

Gross domestic product (PPP): \$369.6 billion (2017 est.)

Internet penetration: 66%

Most trusted medium of information: N/A

Legal System: civil law system; judicial review of legislative acts

Political system: semi-presidential republic

Journalists Jailed/Killed 2019: 1

Media Environment: The Ukrainian media market had to be developed from scratch after the country gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Most media of Soviet times were closed, and the market was opened to private entrepreneurs. State-owned media have been underfinanced and understaffed during all the post-Soviet years. This created a media market which is dominated by an *oligarchy* (group of wealthy individuals that outright influence the political landscape). This applies to all media: TV, radio, print and online. But while in the TV segment the presence of oligarchs is the most visible, in other segments there is much more room for independent journalism. The problem with oligarchic influence is that oligarchs can control the agenda and messages of the media they own. At the same time, the Ukrainian media and NGO community is quite strong, there are traditions of journalists'

fight against censorship, and there is significant room for independence of editorial boards even on oligarchs-controlled TV channels. After the Euromaidan events of 2013-2014, independent media had a new boost. Freedom of expression is distorted Ukraine, yet stronger than in many of its post-Soviet neighbors. Ukraine also has no influential broadcaster to counterweight the oligarch-owned media. *Suspilne* (Civic), the public broadcaster, has been launched on 19 January 2017. It still remains underfinanced, and its audience is less than one percent of the population.

Media Issues: Information warfare with Russia has had negative consequences that include bans on Russian media and social networks, the blacklisting of foreign journalists and treason trials. The elections being held in 2019 are fueling an increase in tension: more frequent threats and attacks, violations of the confidentiality of sources, surveillance of investigative reporters and news manipulation. The separatist-controlled areas in the east are still no-go areas without critical journalists or foreign observers. Attacks on media professionals and houses are occurring. On 20 July 2016, a prominent Belarusian-Ukrainian journalist, Pavel Sheremet, was killed in a car explosion but those responsible have not been found yet. Manipulations with media have also happened. On 29 May 2018, media reported that Arkady Babchenko, a Russian journalist who moved to Ukraine, was killed. The next day it turned out that Babchenko was indeed alive and his “murder” was a decoy for security services to catch a killer, allegedly linked to a broader plan by Russian security services to murder journalists and activists working in Ukraine. The country’s major media groups have very complex structures hidden offshore. Cyprus, British Virgin Islands, Hong Kong, Seychelles, Samoa, New Jersey, Belize are among the locations where some owners hide their assets from the Ukrainian public – regardless of a Ukrainian law explicitly prohibiting residents of offshore jurisdictions to own media companies. Shadow economy remains quite significant which contributes to an unhealthy state of the media market, where financial information is considered far too sensitive for the industry to disclose and thus remains opaque. Political influence on media is extremely high. Some individuals control vast sectors of the country’s economy (oligarchs), and the media industry is not an exception. Political influence over the media remains extremely high. Ten out of the twelve most important TV channels selected for the study are linked directly or indirectly to political personalities. The radio market is equally marked by ownership structures too close to the ruling classes.

Popular Forms of Media Consumption

Print: Print media, which must be purchased, are the least popular source of information. Due to the overall low level of welfare, people prefer to get their news from free sources, online or on TV. There are very few successful print projects, mostly based in Kyiv. The main newspapers are part of media houses which also include news websites, TV channels and radio stations. They are often not profitable, so media houses treat print outlets as a matter of status for niche audiences and cover expenses with profits from other sources.

Digital Media: Television is the most popular media among Ukrainians, more than 70 percent of the population still uses it as a main source of information. Online media are a runner up: their main benefit is that they are free. Paywall is not common for Ukrainian online media, who mainly earn money via ads and paid articles, often hidden. Such hidden ads are called *dzhynsa*. *Dzhynsa* were widespread in 1990s and 2000s, but today their presence is less visible than before.

Social Networks: Facebook is the leading social network. OLX, the Ukrainian mirror of Russia's Yandex search engine, is one of the top five most-visited websites.

