



Ukraine Media Landscape Guide

MARCH 2022



NETWORK

communicating with disaster-affected communities



Preface

This guide is one of a series of Media Landscape Guides which map the media landscape in different countries. The guides have been produced by the CDAC Network in cooperation with DW Akademie and supported by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. This project is part of the global initiative “Transparency and media freedom - Crisis resilience in the pandemic”.

The Media Landscape Guide for Ukraine was researched and written just before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This text is a snapshot of the media landscape in Ukraine as it was up to January 2022. While, of course, the media environment is changing rapidly, the information contained herein may still be useful as a snapshot of the landscape as it was, and for background and contact information.

Take a look at all of CDAC’s Media Landscape Guides, available in multiple languages, here: <https://www.cdacnetwork.org/media-landscape-guides>

This Media Landscape Guide was written and edited between April and October 2021.

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Section 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 About the guide

This Media Landscape Guide provides a snapshot of the current media in Ukraine, including the historical background to the media, media trends and freedoms, languages in the different media, media access and barriers for different groups in the community, audiences and their preferences. It considers why people use the different types of media and what content they consume. The guide looks at the impact of fake news and misinformation and the role of the media in addressing these. It also considers the role the media is playing in facilitating two-way communication in Ukraine. Finally, it gives an overview of each media sector, including digital and social media, radio, television, print and other traditional forms of mass communication.

The guide provides an insight into the role of media in crisis preparedness and in recent crises and how the media has been impacted by these crises. It considers the role the Ukrainian media is playing in the COVID-19 response and in the ongoing conflict areas in the east and in Russian-occupied Crimea. Since the start of 2022, there have been increased tensions in Ukraine, with Russia moving a reported 150,000 troops to the border¹, which has been fuelling fears of a wider conflict at the time of writing. It also looks at how Ukrainian media has changed with an increase in Russian and pro-Russian narratives and propaganda coming from Russia. The nature of the media landscape across the whole of Ukraine has changed over the last few years and the media is adapting to the unfolding crisis at a fast pace.

1.2 What does the guide cover and why it is needed?

The media situation in the east and south, particularly in occupied Crimea and the Donbas conflict zone, is very different to that of the rest of the country. There is a wealth of research, detailed studies and analysis available on various media-related topics in Ukraine. Consequently, this guide does not aim to offer a comprehensive overview of all media outlets and platforms. Instead, it provides a snapshot of the most relevant media at the time of writing, along with background information to support understanding. It provides details of key media organisations, and notable media-related data² to give a useful snapshot of the media landscape in Ukraine.

The guide aims to assist those planning and implementing development work with the media. It is also intended to help improve communications and contribute to an effective relief response and project outcome, particularly during humanitarian responses, whether working in the media or reaching disaster-affected communities. The guide can also help organisations and individuals working both within and outside of Ukraine to engage with Ukrainian media. It can be useful to:

- Community, development, and humanitarian organisations; Government and local authorities; Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and UN relief agencies: to work with the media on community engagement, communication, outreach, and messaging and mobilisation.
- Development workers building societal resilience to disasters by working with media on disaster preparedness; relief workers who can use media to engage communities to work together in early recovery from crisis.

¹ How the Ukraine-Russia crisis reached a tipping point: <https://www.dw.com/en/how-the-ukraine-russia-crisis-reached-a-tipping-point/a-60802626>

² There are some differences between data sources; those included are based on expert advice and triangulation where possible.

- Media outlets (including news outlets): to improve their communication and engagement with different groups, particularly during disasters.
- Media Development Organisations: to inform advocacy and capacity-building work to improve people's access to quality information and further development goals through better outreach.

An understanding of the role of the media and how people like to communicate is important, without this any communication strategy may struggle, potentially missing large numbers of those it is intended to engage with. This can cause difficulties both when attempting to work with the community in a development project, and during an emergency. In these situations, there may not be time or access to carry out audience research before communicating vital information, and without contextualised understanding the wrong channels may be used and miss those who need to be reached. However, by engaging existing media that have the skills, connections and knowledge needed for effective community engagement and communication, the media can be crucial partners in aid and development.

This guide will support communicators, indicating the most effective media to use to communicate with different demographics. It will help to facilitate reliable, trusted, and timely communication of information, helping to make the media part of the solution in a humanitarian response.

1.3 Methodology

Research for the guide was carried out and supported by a team of international media experts and Ukraine specialists. Information and data were collected through a detailed literature review and interviews. Interviews were carried out with media organisations, media experts and academic researchers, government officials, media workers (including producers and journalists), humanitarian agencies, UN agencies, donors and NGOs.

1.4 Potential role of the guide in disaster preparedness and crisis response

Effective, consistent, and timely communication is vital in humanitarian response and in building sustainable early recovery from crises. Communities, authorities, and responders must be kept informed of the situation during a disaster and planned response, and of any actions they need to take. Proactive communication to dispel rumours or misinformation is vital, as is the building of trust with audiences, which can be facilitated through developing mechanisms for two-way communication. The media can also play a proactive role in early warning, which can influence population and response behaviour and potentially mitigate the effects of a disaster.

In aid responses and disaster preparedness it is important to know what media is best placed to reach marginalised groups, while considering literacy levels and language preferences. It is also important to be aware of, and to address, any enhanced needs, risks, and information gaps. Good communication requires creative thinking- adapting communication tools, message formats, and working with existing media professionals can be useful tools for this. The goal is that this guide may be used to improve communications and messaging and information dissemination and contribute to an effective response.

SECTION 2: OVERVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS CULTURE

This section provides a snapshot of the media landscape in Ukraine and how it caters to different groups in the community. It includes the background to the media, media trends, media freedom and languages used in different media. The section looks at media access and barriers, audiences, their preferences and why people use different types of media and what content they consume. It examines the impact of fake news and misinformation and the role of the media in addressing them. It also considers the role the media are playing in facilitating two-way communication in Ukraine.

2.1 Media background

Ukraine was part of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union, prior to gaining independence in 1991. In the three decades that have followed, Ukraine's communications culture has been impacted both by domestic political struggles and a volatile relationship with neighbouring Russia. At home, the country's political system has fluctuated between autocratic and pro-democratic leaders and governments. Ukraine's relatively pluralistic media has since 1991 played an important role in the country's political travails.

Nationwide protests took place in Ukraine from November 2004 to January 2005, in what became known as the "Orange Revolution". Ukrainians supporting political and economic reform took to the streets in the aftermath of a presidential election claimed to be marred by fraud and voter intimidation that gave victory to the pro-Russian candidate. The election results were annulled, and a second run-off was declared to be "free and fair" under the intense scrutiny of domestic and international observers. Viktor Yushchenko was officially declared the winner and inaugurated on 23 January 2005. While the "Orange Revolution" led to a more democratic government, it worsened relations with Russia.

[The "Orange Revolution" is considered by some experts to be the first revolution organised via the internet³](#). Internet and mobile phones allowed an alternative media to flourish without being subject to the control of special interests and self-censorship. Independent websites and one TV station provided news about and also played a partisan role in the 2004 presidential election – supporting the eventual winner, Yushchenko. State and most oligarch-controlled media sided with the government-backed pro-Russian candidate. Internet sites "[levelled the playing field" with mass media by "successfully disseminating information through non-traditional" media channels⁴](#)". Independent online media reports of exit poll results and election irregularities sparked the protests that led to Yushchenko's victory.

The 2013-2014 "[Revolution of Dignity](#)" (or "Maidan Revolution") was [launched by a Facebook post⁵](#). The post triggered large-scale protests in response to President Viktor Yanukovich's refusal to sign a free trade agreement with the European Union (EU). Lasting three months, the protests were largely peaceful until February 2014 when police violence resulted in the deaths of around 100 protesters and government forces. President Yanukovich was ousted and fled the country and his government was ousted. Russia considered the overthrow of Yanukovich to be a coup and refused to recognise the interim government. The "Revolution of Dignity" led to an EU integration process and domestic reforms including of the media. Further protests broke out in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, where Yanukovich had received strong support. In response, Russia intervened militarily, occupying the southern Crimean Peninsula. In violation of international law, Russia annexed Crimea on 18 March 2014. Protests in the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions (the Donbas) escalated into an armed pro-Russian separatist insurgency, and a military

³ PIECHOTA.G and RAJCZYK. R, The role of social media during protests on Maidan, 2015

⁴ https://alumni.reed.edu/images/AC_2010/pdfs/Internet%20Use%20in%20Orange%20Revolution.pdf

⁵ <https://www.businessinsider.com/heres-how-facebook-kicked-off-the-euromaidan-revolution-2015-7?r=US&iR=T>

campaign against Ukraine by Russia,⁶ to support the separatists. To maintain control, the Ukrainian government sent in armed forces and fighting ensued. The separatist territories held referenda which overwhelmingly favoured independence; this process was rejected by Kyiv and widely criticised by the West, amid widespread reports of irregularities.⁷ The self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics declared independence in May 2014. More recently at the end of 2021, Russia moved up to 150,000 troops to the border with Ukraine⁸ with increased fighting in the separate regions. The Russian president [has repeatedly described Russians and Ukrainians as “one people”⁹](#) and stated that Ukraine can only exist in partnership with Russia with Ukrainians using media to counter this narrative. Media is used to drive narratives in conflict, especially in the ongoing tensions between Ukraine and Russia.

Since 2014, Ukrainian politics and the media have remained intertwined. In the 2019 presidential election, Volodymyr Zelensky, a TV star, defeated the incumbent, Petro Poroshenko, an oligarch who owned one of Ukraine's most powerful media conglomerates. Zelensky promised to stamp out corruption, including the political influence of oligarchs who are media moguls. However, Freedom House reports that under President Zelensky [censorship is actually increasing¹⁰](#) in the media environment. Zelensky signed a decree to take three oligarch-owned TV channels off air, provoking a national debate about acceptable limits to free expression. For some, the president was acting decisively to stop Russian disinformation. For others, the decision was not subject to enough scrutiny, and other means should have been used [“that were less of a threat to media pluralism.”¹¹](#)

2.2 Media landscape at a glance

During the “Revolution of Dignity,” [independent journalists and bloggers used social media to mobilise protesters](#). Prior to this dramatic moment, most critical coverage of the Yanukovich government had been confined to less popular print newspapers and internet outlets. Facebook, as well as the social networks VKontakte (VK) and Odnoklassniki (OK), played a leading role in rallying those who sought a European trajectory and less corruption for the country.

Mass media were largely in the hands of an authoritarian government and politically-connected oligarchs, during the “Orange Revolution” and “Revolution of Dignity”. However, prior to both revolutions, non-state media played a crucial part in highlighting the alleged anti-democratic practices of government leaders. In the “Revolution of Dignity,” established independent online publications like Ukrainska Pravda – the country's most popular web news source at the time – and newer digital outlets like Hromadske.tv aired live footage which amplified the impact of protests. Activism and dissent within the journalist community, independent online sources, and media-owning oligarchs were all instrumental in bringing about political change. There was a deluge of reporting by independent online outlets and social media pushed national TV channels, including those owned by oligarchs who were pro-Yanukovich, to cover the protests and brutal police crackdowns.

Ukraine's media landscape has undergone a dramatic transformation over the last decade. Some of these changes mirror those occurring across the globe while others are country-specific. The “Revolution of

⁶ https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1400/RR1498/RAND_RR1498.pdf

⁷ Britannica.com

⁸ [How the Ukraine-Russia crisis reached a tipping point | Europe | News and current affairs from around the continent | DW | 22.02.2022](#)

⁹ <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>

¹⁰ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ukraine/freedom-net/2021>

¹¹ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/ukraine-taking-three-pro-russia-channels-air-raises-complex-issues/>

Dignity” sparked a number of important changes in Ukraine’s media. The March 2014 adoption of the Law “On Public Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine,” initiated the transformation of the country’s Soviet-style state television and radio into a public broadcasting system. The Association Agreement that Ukraine signed with the EU commits the country to bringing its media legislation in line with EU standards and best practices. This process was supposed to be completed by 2019 but has been delayed. Ukraine’s parliament has revised the 2019 draft media law several times; however, [experts note](#) that the current version still contains a number of problematic provisions¹².

Ukraine has a relatively young media market that is [dominated by oligarchs](#). Oligarch-owned media monopolise the country’s advertising share; [in 2020, the top four media groups in Ukraine made up over 95% of the TV advertising market](#)¹³. This situation adversely affects smaller media companies, which struggle to expand or remain financially viable. Consequently, smaller independent media outlets are often dependent on foreign grants.

In general, online outlets enjoy greater economic freedom and are less dependent on owner’s interests than TV, radio and print media. However, unlike for broadcast media, there is no legislation regarding the transparency of owners and editorial boards. This means that news websites are able to push specific narratives in the interests of those who control them behind the scenes. All major Ukrainian mass media have websites. The news on the sites of television channels, radio stations and print newspapers are influenced by their [oligarch owners](#). Most media surveys note that hidden paid commercial and political advertising (known as “jeansa”) continues to be a significant problem in Ukraine.

Ukraine’s media advertising market has grown steadily over the last decade. Since 2018, [digital advertising has overtaken spending on TV](#) and now comprises the largest share of the media advertising market. However, [most of this advertising goes to foreign platforms](#), since Facebook, Instagram, Google and YouTube dominate the market. To decrease dependency on advertising and foreign funding, a number of online news outlets have introduced new forms of reader-generated revenue streams, such as memberships or donations.

Since 2019 the rebranded National Public TV and Radio Broadcasting Company has been operating as Suspilne (Public). The public broadcaster is well regarded for its [independent and unbiased reporting](#)¹⁴ and is at the forefront of reporting on Crimea, covering the conflict in the east and countering Russian influence. Suspilne includes two national TV channels as well as three radio stations and 24 regional outlets. [Suspilne Radio](#) is considered to play an important role in delivering news and information at the national, regional and local level. The modernisation of Suspilne has been supported by the DW Akademie and BBC Media Action with funding from the European Union and the German Federal Foreign Office. As part of its public mission to produce credible news and information it has a focus on training in media management and leadership.

Some important trends identified by the USAID-Internews 2021 Media Consumption Survey¹⁵ include:

- Social networks and news websites have supplanted television as Ukrainians’ primary source of news, this is particularly true of those under 35. Ukrainians older than 46 prefer television.

¹² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ukraine/freedom-net/2021>

¹³ <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/04/strengthening-public-interest-ukraines-media-sector/02-ukraines-media-landscape>

¹⁴ <https://www.dw.com/en/public-broadcaster-20-ukrainessuspilnegets-a-facelift/a-58250115>

¹⁵ The 2021 Media Consumption Survey was conducted by InMind at the request of Internews, an international media development organisation that is implementing the Media Program in Ukraine with financial support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

- The audiences of national TV and radio channels are declining.
- While small, the audiences of national print media, international websites and regional radio channels are growing.
- Online news websites and internet messengers are becoming more important at the local level in all the country's regions.
- Facebook, YouTube and Instagram are the primary social media platforms and Telegram and Viber are the leading messaging services used to consume news.
- Ukrainians' trust in online news media is declining and their trust in commercial television news remains low. There has been a slight increase in trust in national and regional radio and newspapers.
- The use of Ukrainian in media and content in Ukrainian is increasing.
- [Trust in the public broadcaster Suspilne](#) is increasing and [its audience is growing](#),¹⁶ this contrasts with commercial stations.
- Ukrainians' [media literacy and ability to identify disinformation](#) is increasing and their trust in Russian media is low.

Russia's influence

[From the early days of Ukrainian independence in 1991, Moscow has sought to maintain a strong media presence in Ukraine that promotes Russia-friendly narratives.](#) Pro-Russian and Kremlin-supported TV channels, newspapers, radio stations and websites propagate anti-Ukrainian messages, though they abide by the media freedoms in Ukraine's Constitution. Ever since Russian troops first began the invasion of Crimea in February 2014, the Kremlin's conflict with Ukraine has relied heavily on information warfare and weaponised social media. Ukrainian audiences have been grappling with the challenges of balancing media freedoms with national security. In response to the 'Revolution of Dignity' and Ukraine's turn to the West, the Kremlin is reported to have ratcheted up its disinformation and influence operations targeting Ukraine. These campaigns are reported to be less effective in the western part of the country, which is less connected to Russia, heavily Ukrainian-speaking and pro-European. In contrast, the southern and eastern regions bordering occupied Crimea and the Donbas are considered to be more affected by [Russian and domestic pro-Russian narratives](#). This is due to Ukraine's linked history with Russia and the Soviet Union, the high percentage of Ukrainians who understand Russian, and a shared cultural heritage.

A large-scale study and [analysis](#) by Detektor Media¹⁷ offers a generalised portrait of the segment of Ukraine's population whose views and opinions may be more affected by Russian and pro-Russian narratives: a Russian-speaking citizen, 45 years old or older (who remembers Soviet times), who is from the Donbas, Kharkiv or Zaporizhzhia regions (areas close to Russia), who is experiencing unfavourable socio-economic conditions and who feels nostalgic for Soviet times and/or thinks life is better in Russia. As a result, this segment often chooses to consume Ukrainian media that is pro-Russian or media from Russia.

Press Freedom

Freedom House's [2021 Freedom in the World](#) report rated the country as "Partly Free" in terms of political rights and civil liberties and noted that Ukraine has an average level of press freedom. Reporters Without Borders' [2021 World Press Freedom Index](#) ranked Ukraine 97th out of 180 countries but stressed its

¹⁶ <https://www.dw.com/en/evolution-of-russias-informational-warfare-in-ukraine-interview-with-olga-yurkova-of-stopfake/a-49443961>

¹⁷Detektor Media conducted a large-scale study using classical media monitoring, expert interviews, big data analysis and sociological research in order to answers to several key questions including 'who and what influenced the perception of information and the effectiveness of disinformation in Ukraine in 2020' and 'what kind of actors were trying to manipulate Ukrainian society at the national level, and in the South and East of Ukraine in particular.'

“diversified media landscape.” Freedom House’s [2021 Freedom on the Net](#) report characterised the country’s internet media as “Partly Free” but with dynamic online outlets. [IREX’s 2021 Vibrant Information Barometer](#), which assesses the quality, flow, consumption and engagement, and transformative action of information, found Ukraine to be “somewhat vibrant” and ranked it second out of the post-Soviet countries rated, just behind Moldova. The Reporters without Borders (RSF) World Press Freedom Index 2021 ranks Ukraine 97th.¹⁸ All media freedom reports on Ukraine stress the detrimental role being played by the country’s oligarch media moguls.

To counter Russia’s information influence campaigns, the [Ukrainian government blocked some 14 Russian TV stations](#) linked to the Kremlin in 2014 for “broadcasting propaganda of war and violence.” In 2015, Ukraine’s Parliament banned the screening of Russian propaganda content on Ukrainian television. In 2017, the [Ukrainian government outlawed some of Russia’s largest social media networks and internet services](#), including the social networks VK and OK, the search engine Yandex and the Mail.ru email service, as well as the Russian media companies RBC, Ren-TV, TNT, NTV Plus, Zvezda, Moscow 24, and Russia Today.

In March 2021, [President Zelensky banned eight pro-Russian TV and media companies](#), including the channels ZIK, NewsOne and 112 Ukraine, to “protect national security.” [Government officials and domestic and international experts](#) contend that the channels are anti-Ukrainian influencers targeting the country’s south and east. The companies are owned by and linked to Ukrainian oligarchs who are considered to be pro-Russian. [While foreign and Ukrainian analysts have supported Zelensky’s action, domestic and international free speech advocates have criticised the ban](#). Ukrainians’ consumption of Russian media is decreasing. [A 2021 study](#) found that 82% of respondents did not use any type of Russian media; in addition, Ukrainians’ trust in Russian media is very low.

Media Access

Ukraine has a dynamic and growing Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) sector. All types of media are largely available to the majority of Ukrainians, although regional and local media are not distributed evenly throughout the country. According to dataportel.com as of January 2021:¹⁹

- Ukraine has a population of 43.60 million²⁰ (a decrease of 264,000 between January 2020 and 2021), with 53.7% being female and 46.3% male.
- 69.7% of the population lives in urban centres and 30.3% in rural areas.
- There are 29.47 million internet users, with Internet penetration at 67.6%.
- There are 25.70 million social media users, which is equivalent to 58.9% of the total population.
- The literacy rate (15+) is 99.8%.

According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the UN agency for ICT and the official source for global ICT statistics,²¹ in 2020 mobile cellular coverage of the population was 100% and the percentage covered by at least a 3G or 4G mobile network was 89%. In 2019, 66% of residents had access

¹⁸ The index is published annually, with 1 being the freest ranking. It measures the level of freedom available to the media. It provides information about advances and declines in respect to media freedom in 180 countries, and is used by the World Bank to evaluate a country’s respect for the rule of law.

¹⁹ <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-ukraine>

²⁰ Estimates of Ukraine’s population vary widely, since an official census hasn’t been carried out since 2001. Some experts estimate Ukraine’s population to be around 37-38 million. Hence any estimates based on population, such as use of smartphones, are likely to be inaccurate.

²¹ <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Dashboards/Pages/Digital-Development.aspx>

to the internet at home; in 2020, 66% had a computer at home. In 2018, 41% of Ukrainians in rural areas had access to the internet at home, compared to 72% in urban areas.

Figure 1: Communication Infrastructure at a glance from 2020 ITU data

| Service | Fixed-line telephone | Mobile cellular | Mobile broadband | Fixed-line Broadband |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Number of connections | 3,314,263 | 53,977,690 | 35,596,384 | 7,769,401 |
| Per 100 inhabitants | 8 | 129 | 85 | 19 |

A [2020 nationwide study on fixed broadband internet penetration](#) revealed that 5.7 million citizens have no access to the internet; of those, 4.2 million live in settlements with no fibre-optic IP and 1.5 million in villages where access costs are too expensive. However, monthly internet subscription rates are fairly affordable for most of the population, due to healthy competition. In 2021, Internews [reported](#) that 82% of Ukrainians go online every day.²² In October 2021, [the median download fixed broadband speed was 50.57 Mbps](#), below the international average, ranking Ukraine 57th of 181 countries. The number of Ukrainians using smartphones has grown rapidly since 2015; in 2021, about [61% of the population used one](#).

In September 2020, the government approved [an action plan to improve the quality of mobile services](#). Two months later, the Ministry of Digital Transformation announced [a step-by-step 5G technology implementation plan](#) with the objective of providing 95% of Ukrainians with access to high-speed mobile internet in the next three years.

Russian-occupied Crimea and the separatist territories in the east

Media access is very different in the Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia and/or its proxy separatists. In Crimea, Russia is reported to have [forced out](#) and [repressed Crimean journalists](#) while closing down local media sites and replacing them with their own. Russia’s occupying forces cancelled all Ukrainian licences and closed down or took over all local broadcasters. [Russia operates more than two dozen TV and radio stations in Crimea](#). [The Kremlin jams](#) Ukrainian and other independent media to prevent it from being broadcast to the occupied peninsula. [Russia is also blocking more than two dozen Ukrainian websites in occupied Crimea](#). As a result, those in Crimea [“are increasingly prevented from hearing anything but the official version of events promoted by Russian state-controlled media.”](#)

According to the USAID-Internews 2021 Media Consumption Survey;²³ due to the conflict with Russia, the media situation in Ukraine’s east and south, particularly in occupied Crimea and the Donbas conflict zone, is very different to that of the rest of the country. The audiences of regional and local media in the country’s east and south, the regions most affected by the conflict, are growing and the influence of this media is increasing.

An independent radio programme, [Crimea.Realities](#), produced by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, is broadcast from the neighbouring Kherson region. The programme’s editors are located in Kyiv and employ freelancers working in Crimea who report the news anonymously or under pseudonyms. [Monitoring by the](#)

²² One expert suggests the Internews figures based on population are close to being correct, whilst the datareportal user and penetration numbers maybe low.

²³The 2021 Media Consumption Survey was conducted by InMind at the request of Internews, an international media development organisation that is implementing the Media Program in Ukraine with financial support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

[Crimean Human Rights Group](#) found that occupation forces had intensified the jamming of Ukrainian FM stations in the north of Crimea in 2021.

The situation in the Donbas is similar to Crimea, where the separatists and Russia broadcast on frequencies they took over when occupying the territories. The broadcasts include anti-Ukrainian, pro-Russian and pro-separatist materials. A detailed report based on monitoring of the content can be found [here](#).²⁴ Until recently, Ukrainian TV channels were unavailable in the separatist-controlled territories of the Donbas. Radio coverage often doesn't extend to the separatist-controlled territories in the east as Ukrainian stations targeting the Donbas have been jammed since 2014. However, in 2017 Suspilne was able to overcome Russian jamming, meaning some residents there have access to it.

In March 2020, the Ukrainian government launched the information and entertainment TV channel [Dom/Dim](#) (Home). The channel's editorial office and broadcast station are located in the eastern city of Kramatorsk and it produces bilingual broadcasting, primarily targeting the populations of the territories not controlled by Ukraine. The state channel's main purpose, according to its representatives, is to return the inhabitants of the territories to the cultural, political and public agenda of Ukraine. However, a Ukrainian media expert interviewed for this study noted that, to date, the channel's information policy has been dominated by the President's Office and lacks a focus on those in the occupied territories and their interests. As a result, residents there continue to look for information elsewhere. Some information is reported to be getting past Russia's blocking efforts; however RFE/RL reported that [54% of people in the occupied territories have no access to Ukrainian television channels and 43% cannot access Ukrainian websites](#).

2.3 Language and dialects in the media

While Ukrainian is the country's official state language, significant parts of the population use Russian daily. Ukraine is home to the world's largest Russian-speaking audience outside of Russia itself. In terms of geography, the country is predominantly Ukrainian-speaking in the west and centre but has a large Russian-speaking population in the east and south. [According to the last official census, conducted in 2001](#), Ukrainian was the native language to 67.5% and Russian was native to 29.6% of the population. The remainder (2.9%) spoke the Crimean Tatar, Moldovan, Hungarian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Belarusian, Gagauz, Greek, Yiddish, German, Polish and Slovak languages, which are all officially recognised as minority languages. Translators without Borders provide an interactive language map of Ukraine based on the 2001 census data, available on their website.²⁵

A [2021 survey](#) found that 31.9% of respondents speak only Ukrainian, while 27.1% speak both Russian and Ukrainian equally, 15.8% said they speak mostly Ukrainian, while 13.6% said they speak mostly Russian, 11.3% speak exclusively Russian and 0.3% said they speak another language. Media in Ukraine broadcasts and publishes in both Ukrainian and Russian.²⁶

Under Article 10 of Ukraine's Constitution, the state has an obligation to ensure the comprehensive development and functioning of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of social life while guaranteeing the free development, use and protection of the Russian language and other languages of the country's national minorities.

²⁴<https://imi.org.ua/monitorings/doslidzhennya-sytuatsiyi-v-media-pivdnya-ta-shodu-ukrayiny-za-sichen-serpen-2019-roku-analitychnyj-i29709>

²⁵ <https://translatorswithoutborders.org/languages-of-ukraine-interactive-en>

²⁶ <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/video/749948.html>

Broadcast languages

To overcome the geographical divide between Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking populations, as well as to reduce the perceived influence of Russian media and pro-Russian narratives, the [Ukrainian Parliament passed several laws](#) promoting and expanding the usage of the Ukrainian language in electronic media.

Radio and TV Languages

In 2016, Parliament introduced [mandatory language quotas for radio stations](#). 60% of programming must be broadcast in Ukrainian and Ukrainian-language songs must make up at least 35% of songs played. For radio stations broadcasting in minority languages, Ukrainian must comprise at least 30% of weekly airtime, including news, analytical and entertainment programmes.

A [2017 law](#) also introduced Ukrainian language quotas for TV broadcasters. The [law](#) requires that programmes in the state language make up 75% of national and regional TV programming and 60% of programming on local channels, as well as 75% of all news programmes. In 2019 (in effect from 2024), [the Law on Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language](#) increased the quotas to 90% of Ukrainian language for national and 80% for local broadcasters. There are no TV channels broadcasting exclusively in minority languages (besides Russian), but there are TV programmes in national minority languages. For TV channels targeting national minorities, the minority language and Ukrainian must comprise 75% of airtime, with the later making up at least 30%.

Despite the fact that the language quotas have generated strong public debate and some criticism, a [2020 study revealed](#) that 65% of Ukrainians favoured them. The initiative was overwhelmingly approved of in the country's west (95%) and supported by a majority in the centre (71%). Reflecting language preferences, the south was divided, with 46% for and 40% against; in the east, 56% were against. The study found that most Ukrainians consider the Ukrainian language an important attribute of state independence and 79% believe that all citizens should speak the state language.

The National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting regularly monitors national radio stations and TV channels for compliance with the law. [Radio](#) and [TV](#) have been mostly adhering to the quotas. Occasional violations have led to fines. [The state regulator and some Ukrainian media experts assess positively](#) the overall impact of the quotas on the country's media and communication environment. Not only have the quotas returned the Ukrainian language to radio and TV, but they have also fostered the development of Ukrainian music, film and video production. At the same time, organisations seeking to reach the greatest percentage of the population or target segments in specific regions of the country – such as the east – may wish to employ both Ukrainian and Russian.

Print and Online Languages

The [2019 Law on Language](#) requires that “all print media (with the exception of those of national minorities), as well as the websites, mobile apps and social media pages of state institutions and companies registered as mass media, must have a [Ukrainian version](#)”. [These provisions entered into force](#) in January 2022 for national print outlets and will do so in July 2024 for regional print media. As this guide went to press, there were no language requirements for online media.

[According to data from the Book Chamber of Ukraine](#), as of 2019, 57.8% of newspapers and 37.8% of the total circulation were published in Ukrainian, 20.3% of papers and 42.2% of the circulation were in Russian,

and almost 22% of papers and 20% of the circulation were in other languages, including four in Hungarian, two in Polish, two in Romanian, and one in Gagauz.

[An analysis of the Top 30 socio-political websites](#) in May 2019 indicated that only 12 had a Ukrainian version as their landing page or utilised an adaptive language interface (in which the language of the site adjusts to the user's system settings). [A 2020 study](#) found that the use of Ukrainian in social media remains very low – only every sixth post is in Ukrainian. This ratio applies to both personal accounts and organisational pages. Moreover, the reach of posts in Ukrainian is, on average, lower than those in Russian. The lower use of Ukrainian online is likely to be due to language preferences, bilingualism and the actual language skills and ability to use Ukrainian (especially in writing).

Minority Language Broadcasting

There are no broadcast stations devoted solely to national minority languages (besides Russian). However, there are radio and TV programmes in most national minority languages on [Suspilne](#), Ukraine's public broadcaster. Suspilne's branches in the Zakarpattia, Chernivtsi, and Odesa regions – which have the most national minority representation – feature radio and TV programmes in Romanian, Bulgarian, Moldovan, Gagauz, Slovak, and German. Suspilne plans to expand the number of its programmes for national minorities.

The Crimea-based [ATR](#) was Ukraine's first and only TV channel using the Crimean Tatar language. It lost its license after the peninsula's 2014 occupation by Russia. ATR resumed broadcasting in Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar via satellite throughout Ukraine, including Crimea, from Kyiv, in 2015.

2.4 Barriers to media access

In terms of internet availability, the country's ICT infrastructure is more developed in urban areas. However, [Freedom House's 2020 Freedom on the Net](#) report noted that the urban-rural divide is narrowing. Hearing-impaired Ukrainians have limited options in regard to media. There are [some programmes on the public broadcaster Suspilne](#) that are accompanied by sign-language interpretation and/or subtitles. Private channels rarely provide sign-language interpretation, but subtitles are more common.

Barriers to media access are very different in the Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia and/or the separatists. Some freelance journalists report the news anonymously or under pseudonyms. In both Crimea and the Donbas, state and independent media are blocked and jammed by Russia and anti-Ukrainian actors and pro-Russian and pro-separatist material is broadcast instead. Independent journalists have been forced out, media sites closed and licences cancelled. Ukrainian media is virtually unavailable in occupied Crimea and the separatist-controlled Donbas, where, since 2014, only Russian and separatist media operate. According to an independent Ukrainian journalist, who used to live and work in the Donbas, the information space in the occupied territories is completely unfree and is dominated by the Kremlin's "Russian World" narratives.

2.5 Media preferences and trusted media

The internet and television are the two main sources of information for Ukrainians. While the two media consumption studies cited below provide different results due to differences in samples and methodologies, they identify similar trends. The [2021 USAID-Internews Media Consumption Study](#), conducted annually since 2015, found that, for the third year in a row, audiences were moving away from television and radio in favour of social media and news websites. See figure below for data:

Figure 2: Use of media

| What media have you used within the past 30 days to get news? | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Social networks | 63% |
| News websites | 48% |
| TV | 46% |
| Radio | 13% |
| Press | 7% |

According to a [2020 Detektor Media survey](#), national Ukrainian TV channels remained the most popular source of information, cited by 75% of respondents, while social media was second with 44% (up from 24% in 2019). Online media occupied third place, with about 27%. See table below:

Figure 3: Main sources of information²⁷

| What sources of information do you use most often? | |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Ukrainian TV (national channels) | 75% |
| Social networks | 44.1% |
| Ukrainian internet media | 26.9% |
| Family, friends, neighbours, colleagues | 23.4% |
| Messengers (Viber, Telegram, WhatsApp, etc.) | 11.4% |
| Ukrainian radio (national stations) | 8.8% |
| Local TV | 8.8% |
| Ukrainian newspapers (national publications) | 7.7% |
| Local internet media | 5.9% |
| Russian TV | 5.6% |
| Local press | 4.3% |
| Local radio | 2.1% |
| Other | 1.7% |

Other key findings from the Detektor media survey include:

- The age of the respondents influenced their choice of information sources; the youngest age groups preferred social networks²⁸: 70% aged 18-29, 64% aged 30-39, and only 14% aged 60 and older. Ukrainian national TV channels were the primary source of information for older respondents: 90% aged 60 and older and 85% aged 50-59 watched them, while only 54% of 18-29-year-olds did.
- Sources of information varied between rural and urban areas; 11.4% of all respondents used internet messengers, 23.4% in large cities but less than 5% in rural areas. In large cities, 64% watched national TV, 54.6% used social media, 32.1% read national media websites and 24.2% received information from relatives and friends. In rural areas, 81% watched national TV, 44% used social media, 26.6% received information from relatives and friends and 24% read national internet media.
- Media consumption habits did not vary greatly between different parts of the country, with a few exceptions; 12% watched Russian TV channels in the east, 1.7% in the west, 3.5% in the centre and 5.5% in the south. In the east, people relied more on information from family and friends (almost 30%) and used messaging services more (15.4%) compared to 4.6% in the south, 6.7% in the west and 13.5% in the centre.

²⁷ The Detektor Media survey, conducted by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation together with the Razumkov Centre on August 14-19, 2020, in all regions of Ukraine, except Crimea and the separatist-controlled territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The survey included 2,022 respondents over the age of 18 in face-to-face interviews.

²⁸ Note some survey's questions allowed more than one choice, so percentages add up to more than 100%.

- The national press was most popular in the east (10.7%) as was local TV (11.5%). Interest in local internet media was highest in the south 9.2%, 6% in the east and west, and 4.4% in the centre. Local press had an almost equal share across the different regions, at around 3-4% of respondents. Local radio was listened to by 2.2-2.3% in the west, east and centre of the country, but only by 0.8% in the south.

[The 2021 Media Consumption Study](#) found that national internet media was the most trusted (47% of respondents), followed by national TV channels (40%), radio (24%) and press (22%). The biggest drop in trust in 2021 was in regional online media, although trust levels in national and regional radio and newspapers improved slightly. Key factors leading to the lack of trust in the media sources included a large amount of biased information, politicised reporting and dependency of the media on their owners (especially TV). Only a third of the audience thought it was necessary to know who owns the media. Half of the respondents said they knew the owners of at least some national TV channels but only 8% were aware of who owned regional media outlets. The study found that every year the share of the audience that is aware of hidden advertising and disinformation increases. In 2021, 83% were aware that disinformation exists (compared to 77% in 2020) and 69% believed they could distinguish questionable from true content.

Media Content

According to [the 2021 Media Consumption Study](#), the majority of Ukrainians use several types of media to get their news. For those that use only one source, it tends to be either social media or television. In 2021, consumers of news from only online media and social media who did not watch the news on TV accounted for 49%. Radio and the press were rarely a primary source of news. The study's focus group participants said that local online news sites and Telegram channels had become more important and were playing a larger role in all regions. For the last several years, Facebook has remained the number one social media news source. In general, the level of interest in political news remained the same. The study revealed an increased interest in news related to the economic situation and corruption-related issues in the country. The 2021 survey²⁹ also noted that respondents expressed decreased interest in news from the separatist in eastern Ukraine, and fatigue with the subject of war. They repeatedly mentioned overexposure to negative news in the information space (domestic violence, hostilities, economic downturn, coronavirus mortality rate, etc.).

[The 2020 Detektor Media survey](#) revealed that, when choosing sources of information across all types of media, Ukrainians were guided mainly by curiosity (two of every three respondents were interested in news about Ukraine and the world) and the desire to have fun and relax (52% were interested in movies and documentaries, 39% preferred comedy shows and 32% watched TV series). Only one in five respondents expressed interest in political shows. Women and men were almost equally interested in news about Ukraine and the world (66.8% and 68.6%, respectively). Women were slightly more interested than men in films (55% and 48%, respectively) and much more interested in TV series (43% and 18%, respectively), reality shows (25% and 12%, respectively), and talent and music shows (22% and 12%, respectively). Men were much more interested than women in sports (30% and 7%, respectively) and socio-political programmes (20% and 14%, respectively). With age, respondents' interest in news, TV series and political talk shows increased.

2.6 Two-way communication with communities

Two-way communication allows citizens to raise their concerns, ask questions and receive responses, clarifications and answers. This is important in building understanding and trust and influencing behaviour

²⁹ https://internews.in.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/USAID_Internews-Media-Consumption-Survey-2021_ENG.pdf

change. It can also reduce fear and panic in a crisis. There is regular two-way communication in Ukraine's media. Officials are generally open to communicating with the public, although politicians have their favoured media outlets. Talk shows are ubiquitous on television and radio and [political talk shows have flourished in recent years](#). Almost every TV channel produces its own political talk show, although their quality varies in terms of serving as a platform for the exchange of ideas and the depth of the discussions and not all are conducive to helping viewers to better understand developments in Ukraine. TV talk shows are often interactive and use telephones and the internet to generate feedback. In 2021, the most popular political talk shows were "Savak Schuster's Freedom of Speech" on the Ukraina channel, "The Right to Power" on 1+1, and "Freedom of Speech" on ICTV.

Talk and call-in shows are less common on commercial radio, where music dominates, but play an important role on news and talk radio, especially on Suspilne and on Hromadske (Civic) Radio. Regional and local broadcast media have more talk and call-in shows because they tend to focus more on specific local issues. For example, Suspilne's Kharkiv branch airs "[Open Access](#)," a social and political talk show with experts who explain changes in legislation and discuss the regional aspects of important topics such as education, medicine, agriculture and community life. Municipal TV and radio stations also serve as important communication platforms for their local communities by bringing together local officials, business leaders and citizens.

Online news and information outlets have also become important platforms for two-way communication. Their expert discussions use the internet to facilitate interaction with audiences and the programmes themselves are aired live on websites and Facebook and recorded and disseminated via YouTube and Instagram. As [the editor of an online outlet noted](#), "the live format gives us a great opportunity to work with new communities and other businesses... Viewers of live broadcasts and discussions have realised that here they can ask questions and get answers very quickly from a qualified person or even the source of such information."

Media's role as a platform for two-way communication has played a key role in the major crises faced by Ukraine in recent years. In terms of the COVID-19 pandemic, some examples include:

- In July 2020, a public-private initiative created the [Telegram channel "Coronavirus Info"](#) as part of a joint national information campaign that brought together dozens of public figures and socially responsible companies to interact with the government, business and society. In one year, the channel generated more than 500,000 subscribers (10% of the country's entire Telegram audience) and over 300 million views, becoming Ukraine's most popular Telegram channel and the world's fourth-largest Telegram channel with COVID-19 news. It also compiled and shared a global list of the most reliable channels about COVID-19.
- The ["Coronavirus Info" community in Viber](#) - another popular messenger - numbers more than 2.2 million subscribers. It [became Ukraine's largest Viber community](#) just three days after its launch. In total, this public-private information campaign against COVID-19 reached almost 30 million Ukrainians as of July 2021.
- Suspilne runs a live national radio show "Healthy Politics" during which the host discusses COVID-19 issues with politicians, state officials and experts. [Listeners can call in and pose their questions](#). Citizens can watch a video broadcast of the programme [on YouTube](#) and the broadcaster's [Facebook page](#). It can also be listened to via [Suspilne's mobile app](#). The public broadcaster has also targeted the country's crisis-plagued eastern region. In November 2021, its Kharkiv branch launched a special radio programme – ["Vaccination Hot Line"](#) – in which a host talks live with

doctors, infectious disease specialists and epidemiologists about vaccines and listeners can call in and ask questions while the talk show is on the air.

- Ukraine's non-state media informed the public about the government's COVID-19 hotline and vaccination registration [mobile app](#). Some media prepared explainers to help audiences navigate state regulations and requirements. Others enhanced two-way communication by publishing real people's stories, including their experience of using the hotline and app.

SECTION 3 THE MEDIA IN DISASTER RESPONSE AND CONFLICT

The media is playing a complex role in both mitigating and exacerbating crises in Ukraine. This section provides an insight into the role of the media in the ongoing COVID-19 response, the armed conflict in the east and Russian and separatist occupation of territories.

3.1 Disasters Overview

Ukraine is facing a complex humanitarian crisis brought on by eight years of conflict in its east and the Russian and separatist occupation of territories in the country's east and south. The fighting has sparked a refugee crisis, outward migration, social cleavages and an economic downturn while intensifying an environmental calamity. Many of these challenges have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Russian-occupied Crimea and the separatist territories in the east

The protracted conflict in Ukraine³⁰, Europe's bloodiest since the 1990s Balkan Wars, has lasted eight years and resulted in more than 100,000 casualties, including more than 14,000 deaths. These figures include almost 3,500 civilians killed and more than 7,000 injured. At its peak, the fighting displaced more than 1.7 million people. Almost 750,000 Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) remain dislocated. From the beginning, there were negative views regarding IDPs and the exodus from the south and east sparked growing social tension in Ukrainian society. By 2016, Ukraine had the largest number of IDPs in Europe and fifth largest in the world. The European Commission estimates that over 5 million people are affected by the crisis and 3.4 million in eastern Ukraine require humanitarian assistance.

The fighting has devastated the Donbas's – and the country's – economy. Before the war, the Donbas held nearly 15% of Ukraine's population (6.6 million) and generated 16% of its GDP. The occupied territories include significant parts of Ukraine's industrial heartland. The Donbas' regional economy contracted by two (government-controlled areas) to three (separatist-controlled areas) times between 2014-2015. Unemployment in government-controlled areas of the region is around 15%, the highest among Ukraine's regions (the national average is 8%).

The conflict is also contributing to what was already an environmental disaster caused by the Donbas's mining and metallurgical industries. The war and resulting social, political and economic problems have produced not only IDPs but also outward migration. Over the past decade, 3.8 million Ukrainians have left the country. Since 2014 the turmoil has aggravated a demographic catastrophe, with Ukraine's population having declined by nearly a quarter since 2001.

While a peace agreement brought an end to major battles in 2015, efforts to reach a political settlement have failed, leading to regular clashes along the "Line of Contact," the 450km border separating the Ukrainian-controlled and the separatist-controlled areas of the Donbas. Despite evidence to the contrary, President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly denied that Russia has played any role in the conflict. The southern and eastern Ukrainian regions bordering occupied Crimea and the Donbas are not only adversely impacted by the war but are also more influenced by Russian and pro-Russian narratives for historical, cultural and geographic reasons.

COVID-19

As of mid-January 2022, Ukraine's Ministry of Health had reported over 3.78 million cases of COVID-19 and over 98,000 deaths (some international sources have cited slightly higher figures). These statistics do not

³⁰ The separatist conflict in Eastern Ukraine 2014 – 2021, before the Russian offensive into Ukraine in 2022

include Ukraine's occupied territories, which have also been hit hard by the pandemic but for which statistics are unavailable. The fall 2021 wave proved particularly pernicious, with Ukraine experiencing some of the world's highest infection and death rates. Johns Hopkins University considers Ukraine to be one of the countries "most affected" by COVID-19 and ranked it eighth worldwide in terms of the number of deaths per 100,000 of population. The pandemic has contributed to the country's economic struggles, including causing a recession in 2020.

With the pandemic's onset, the Cabinet of Ministers introduced a state of emergency with a strict lockdown lasting from March until May 2020. On January 8, 2021, a "winter break lockdown" was introduced in schools and universities alongside the closure of all non-essential shops, restaurants, cafes, theatres, and entertainment centres. All public events were cancelled. Measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 along the "Line of Contact" in the country's east, including the closing of all but two crossing points, "negatively impacted the needs and wellbeing of people" by hampering the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The vaccination process in Ukraine started in February 2021, later than in most European countries. The government's campaign has made limited progress due to an initial lack of vaccines and a persistently high level of vaccine hesitancy. According to a survey conducted in May 2021 by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 53% of respondents declared they were not ready to be vaccinated. While Ukraine now has ample vaccine supplies, it still has one of the lowest vaccination rates in Europe. By mid-January 2022, only 15 million Ukrainians had received one dose and 14.3 million (33%) had been fully vaccinated.

Four vaccines - AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Moderna and Sinovac - are available in Ukraine. In February 2021, the Ukrainian government banned Russia's Sputnik V vaccine. However, there are reports that Sputnik is being administered to the residents of the occupied territories of Crimea and the Donbas. Ukrainians in the occupied territories have no access to Western vaccines.³¹

3.2 The role of the media in emergencies and conflict

Ukraine's media is playing a multi-faceted role in countering disinformation and covering the conflict in the east, the occupation of Crimea, and in reporting the COVID-19 pandemic.

The media and Russian-occupied Crimea and the separatist territories in the east

From the onset of the 2014 fighting in the country's east, Ukrainian media and civil society organisations have not only covered the conflict but have also played a role in rallying public support, raising funds and collecting supplies for the soldiers fighting to maintain the country's territorial integrity. The Lviv-based "Help the Front" NGO, for example, used Facebook to solicit money and supplies for the war effort from Ukrainian citizens and the diaspora; the iPress website publicised the initiative.

To improve the public's understanding of the Russian occupation of Crimea and the separatist control of parts of eastern Ukraine, the Institute of Mass Information (IMI)³² produced recommendations for journalists on 'how to cover military aggression'. IMI stresses the importance of accuracy and fact-checking, avoiding manipulation and emotional rhetoric, finding the right experts for comments, and striving for gender balance. The recommendations advise on reporting the statements and positions of military forces and on using correct and up-to-date vocabulary.

³¹ Russia does not permit the use of the Western vaccines.

³² The Institute of Mass Information (IMI) is an independent, nonprofit, nongovernmental organisation that was founded by a group of Ukrainian and foreign journalists in 1995; it implements projects aiming to boost the positive impact of media on the establishment of civil society in Ukraine. IMI is funded by nongovernmental foundations and contributions from citizens and acts exclusively in the interests of the civil society, in particular, responsible journalists in Ukraine.

Some independent media are playing a role in addressing stereotypes, overcoming political polarisation, and facilitating social cohesion in the context of the conflict and in relation to veterans and IDPs. A number of media projects have attempted to ameliorate the social, political and economic impact of IDPs in Ukraine. For example, one IDP worked with the NGO “Group of Influence” [to conduct Facebook campaigns to inform the IDP community](#) about their eligibility to vote and how to go about it. Internews launched a project on [Strengthening Conflict-affected Community Communication](#) to improve the quality and quantity of “news you can use” for IDPs from aid organisations and the Ukrainian government. The project assists Ukrainian media in creating content that boosts communication between local and international humanitarian aid agencies and IDP communities. As a result, IDPs can more easily access help, host communities benefit from balanced coverage on IDP challenges, and host communities and IDPs are able to co-exist in a more cooperative and understanding atmosphere. In September 2021, eight regional radio stations of the public broadcaster Suspilne launched a programme [“After the Front”](#) which chronicles the return and reintegration of war veterans in their communities.

Ukrainian media organisations are attempting to build bridges and encourage dialogue between both sides of the “Line of Contact” in the Donbas. Hromadske Radio has launched [“There is a Solution,”](#) a programme that addresses challenges faced by residents of the government-controlled and non-government-controlled areas of Donbas, so that local and national authorities hear about these issues and establish a dialogue with locals on both sides to resolve them.

Operating during a period of extended conflict, Ukraine’s media and civil society organisations have stepped up their responses to the crises. Examples of their media-related work include:

- The [Anti-crisis Media Centre](#) supports Ukrainian regional media with a focus on the southern and eastern regions.
- The [Donetsk Institute of Information](#) provides non-biased information on developments in and debunks Russian narratives about the Donbas.
- The Kharkiv Crisis Infocenter’s [Nakipelo](#) website offers daily news reporting on developments in the eastern Kharkiv region.
- The “Expert-KR” Information Agency’s [portal](#) supplies news, interviews, analysis and historical reports about the eastern city of Kryvyi Rih.
- The Center for Research on Social Perspectives in the Donbas runs the popular news website [OstriV](#), which covers the Donbas, including the conflict zone and occupied territories.
- The [Center for Investigative Reporting](#) produces news about and promotes the accountability of local governments in the southern regions of Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Odesa.
- [Hromadske Radio](#) offers news on developments in southern and eastern Ukraine.
- Crimean Community Radio produces independent news and information that is broadcast into the Russian-controlled peninsula.
- [Truth Hounds](#) documents human rights abuses, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Crimea and eastern Ukraine.
- The [Regional Centre of Human Rights](#) documents and publicises human rights violations in Crimea.
- [CrimeaSOS](#) monitors and reports on Russian human rights abuses in Crimea.
- The [Institute for Mass Information](#)’s branches work in the country’s southern and eastern regions.

Ukrainian media groups have [advocated for more balanced reporting](#) and for increasing the level of media literacy. Experts from Detektor Media suggest that media should focus more on topics that unite rather

than divide Ukrainians and avoid hate speech which propagates stereotypes and fosters political polarisation. A [2015 monitoring programme](#) found that Ukrainian media did not understand how to cover the issue of IDPs resulting from the war effectively. The media coverage suffered from a lack of balance, poor use of sources, and a lack of diversity of views. While Ukraine’s media has done a laudable job in covering the conflict in the east and its impact, a [recent survey’s focus group](#) found a decreased interest in news from the front and a growing fatigue with the subject of war.

Media and civil society organisations doing key work in covering the occupied territories also suffer from underfunding. Hromadske Radio, for example, [was forced to switch off seven of its ten transmitters in the Donbas](#) in August 2021 due to a dire financial situation. ATR, Ukraine’s first and only TV channel using the Crimean Tatar language, temporarily [stopped broadcasting to Crimea in 2021](#) due to a lack of funding from the Ukrainian government.

While the Ukrainian government has worked to increase broadcasting in the country’s south and east, a 2020 report found that [Russian broadcasting from Crimea is overwhelming local TV and radio signals in Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia, Kherson and Odessa regions, leaving their populations more exposed to Russian and pro-Russian narratives](#). USAID is helping the Ukrainian government to upgrade emergency communication systems and prepare localised info guides to facilitate information sharing by local authorities in emergency situations.

The strategy of blocking and banning Russian media, websites and social media has reduced local consumption of Russian content but it has not been as successful as the Ukrainian government had hoped. [Chatham House](#) noted growing Ukrainian audiences accessing both Russian television and online sources via satellite, internet and pirate channels. In 2020, 5.6% of Ukrainians obtained their information from Russian TV channels, up from 4.7% in 2018 and 4.3% in 2019. Although the government has banned the allegedly anti-Ukrainian Russian social media networks VK and OK, [they are available via VPN](#). VK remains popular in the country’s east and south; [33% of the residents still regularly use it](#) to obtain information about events in Ukraine and the world.

[Television channels dominated by pro-Russian narratives and controlled by pro-Russian oligarchs enjoy the highest level of trust in Ukraine’s vulnerable southern and eastern regions](#). Telegram and YouTube channels in these regions also disseminate anti-Ukrainian rhetoric and hate speech. Common anti-Ukrainian narratives include a plethora of plays on “Ukraine is a failed state” as well as “Ukraine has no history” and “Ukraine is Little Russia.”

Countering Russian and pro-Russian narratives

Russian influence has always been strong in Ukraine. Since its 2014 annexation of Crimea, Russia has reportedly carried out [a sustained information campaign targeting Ukraine](#), disseminating anti-Ukrainian and anti-western messages via diverse platforms ranging from television to social networks. While only confined to a limited number of outlets, Ukrainians’ trust in these outlets is growing. [According to one monitoring initiative](#), outlets linked to “Opposition Platform – For Life” (OPFL), the most popular pro-Russian political party in Ukraine, accounted for 70% of recorded examples of alleged pro-Russian disinformation narratives being spread in the national media space. In March-April 2021, the Ukrainian government established two special bodies to counter disinformation and propaganda.³³ However,

³³ The International Centre for Countering Disinformation, which is part of the National Security and Defence Council. The second, the Centre for Strategic Communications and Information Security (“Stratkom Ukraine”), is within the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy.

[Ukrainska Pravda reported](#) that the government has been slow to provide either centre with adequate funding or staff.

Ukraine’s media and civil society organisations are also on the frontline in tracking, analysing and countering Russian and pro-Russian disinformation targeting the country. Examples of this work include:

- [StopFake](#)’s fact-checking work.
- [Detector Media](#)’s monitoring of disinformation in the Ukrainian media.
- [Internews Ukraine](#)’s research on Russian social media and explainers on Ukrainian history.
- [VoxCheck](#)’s fact-checking and analysis of the veracity of statements made by Ukrainian politicians.
- [Euromaidan Press](#)’s reporting on the Kremlin’s meddling in Ukrainian affairs.
- Data Journalism Agency’s [Texty](#) website, which utilises big data to explain how Russian disinformation works.
- [TrollyBust](#)’s tracking and blocking of internet trolls and other sources of anti-Ukrainian messaging.
- [Ukraine Crisis Media Center](#)’s research on Russian narratives and monitoring of disinformation.
- [InfoNapalm](#)’s debunking of Russian narratives and spotlighting of Russian military operations in Ukraine.
- [ЛІКБЕ3: The Historical Front](#)’s debunking of historical falsehoods spread by Russian propaganda.

Media literacy programmes are also helping citizens to recognise and resist disinformation, propaganda, and hate speech. One example is IREX’s [“Learn to Discern”](#) which builds practical skills for citizens of all ages through interactive training, videos, games, and other learning experiences. The government and civil society’s work on disinformation appears to be bearing fruit. A [2021 survey’s focus group](#) found that the number of participants who are able to recognise disinformation is high and has been growing since 2015.

The media and the COVID-19 response

In January 2020, the largest Ukrainian TV companies decided to encode their satellite signals in order to develop the paid TV market. As a result, [Ukraine started the COVID-19 crisis with more than 2 million households lacking access to popular Ukrainian TV channels but still able to access TV news channels led by pro-Russian and Russian broadcasters, which sought to exploit the pandemic.](#)

Ukraine’s state institutions and independent media produce informational materials, news reports and public opinion surveys, and monitor studies on the epidemic. The Ministry of Health set up a dedicated [COVID-19 website](#) in Ukrainian and English with up-to-date statistics, regulations, recommendations and links to reliable sources of information. The site includes a [section](#) with dashboards on the number of available beds in hospitals, also broken down by region, as well as an interactive map displaying testing centres. Another [subpage is dedicated to the vaccination process](#) and contains news, statistics, information about available vaccines, more in-depth information for medics, and a hotline telephone contact. The latter was created by state institutions and domestic NGOs in partnership with UNICEF, the WHO and USAID.

In March 2020, Ukraine’s public broadcaster Suspilne launched “In Quarantine,” a live, daily news programme on multiple platforms providing unbiased and useful information about the pandemic. [The show proved popular with audiences, generating over five million views in the first five days.](#) As deaths and new cases peaked in November 2021, the government launched a new advertising [campaign designed to scare young people into getting vaccinated.](#) The campaign aired on nearly 30 local television channels.

According to [a 2020 study](#) on the attitudes of Ukrainians to COVID-19, television and the internet have been citizens' primary sources of information about the virus. Audiences were especially interested in statistics on the epidemic and concerned about lockdown restrictions disrupting their lives. At the same time, some respondents declared that there was too much coronavirus-related news and that they had difficulty digesting it all. On one hand, information about negative pandemic scenarios and messaging that COVID-19 was uncontrollable made people worry. On the other, fact-based and professional explanations of developments along with recommendations for safety measures and efforts to overcome the crisis helped respondents remain calm.

According to [a monitoring of 20 nationwide online media](#) in 2020, most pandemic-related media content focused on coronavirus statistics, lockdown restrictions, division of the country into quarantine zones, and international news about the fight against the virus. Media often relied on the statements of opinion leaders which were not corroborated with other sources, in some cases this resulted in the spreading of false information. The monitoring found that two-thirds of all information about the coronavirus came from official data and reports and 13% was sourced from foreign media; only 3% came from doctors and experts. Yet the aforementioned [sociological study](#) on attitudes indicated that, in regard to the coronavirus and quarantine measures, respondents trust doctors, virologists and experts most of all.

Some of these trends were also evident in Ukraine's regional media. [A monitoring of 50 regional online publications](#), conducted in 10 of the country's 16 regions in 2020, revealed that regional or local state officials and Ukrainian politicians were the most frequent speakers in news segments on the coronavirus, appearing in 39% of all COVID-related content. In contrast, the publications cited doctors in only 7% of their content.

In addition to traditional news formats, national, regional and niche online media employed other formats to report on and educate the public about COVID-19. For example:

- Nakipelo—an independent internet outlet in Kharkiv—published a series of coronavirus [explainers](#) and [interviews with doctors](#). With other regional and local media outlets, it prepared a joint long-form piece with [uplifting human stories](#) on how people living in different parts of the country coped with the pandemic.
- [Liga.net](#)—a leading national business news website—produced [an investigative report on “black vaccinators”](#) who market fake vaccination certificates.
- [Platfor.ma](#)—a popular niche web magazine and creative agency promoting positive social change—worked with experienced doctors and in partnership with state and non-governmental organisations to prepare info cards on [“Arguments in favour of vaccination.”](#)
- IMI developed a comprehensive [“Anticovid Guide for Media”](#) with recommendations for journalists on how to write about the epidemic and protect themselves from infection; it also provided legal advice on reporting during the state of emergency.
- The [Public Interest Journalism Lab](#), after undertaking a study on the attitudes of Ukrainian citizens to COVID-19, created five original videos based on the “constructive journalism” approach and disseminated them on multiple platforms via Suspilne. Audiences' reaction to them was analysed, and recommendations proposed for the media and other organisations whose work included discussions about the pandemic.
- Detektor Media publishes [weekly reports on fake news and manipulations about the coronavirus](#) in Ukraine's media and social networks.

The impact of COVID-19 on the media

The pandemic led to Ukrainian media initially experiencing an unprecedented increase in audience numbers. When Ukraine locked down, some independent outlets, as well as the country's public broadcaster, saw their audiences grow by up to 100%. However, advertising revenues plummeted. In response, a number of independent outlets – from [Ukrainska Pravda](#) to [Liga.net](#) and [Novoye Vremia](#) – [launched membership, donation or subscription systems](#). While these innovations are bearing some fruit, the jury is out on whether the outlets will weather the economic crisis brought on by the pandemic.

Regional and local media also experienced these trends, but in a more pronounced way. In 2020, regional media established themselves as [go-to sources](#) by providing local citizens with key information about the pandemic. Regional media became one of the main intermediaries in communication between public and local officials. The crises also pushed regional media to become [more creative and innovative](#). However, regional media also became more politicised. Consequently, local media not only became a greater source of information but also contributed to the increased misinformation, disinformation and fake news that has characterised the pandemic. Since they are less financially stable than national outlets, regional media have had a tougher time economically. The pandemic has forced outlets to lose advertising, suspend work, interrupt production, close down and resort to furloughs.

A [2020 monitoring](#) by IMI found that several important COVID-19 related topics were absent in the Ukrainian media, including how the pandemic affected the treatment of other diseases as hospitals and doctors shifted their focus to treating COVID-19 cases. It also observed that there was little investigative reporting on how to counter the virus. Most reports merely propounded the position of the government and provided official statistics, which were sometimes hard to verify. At the same time, important stories about doctors, vaccines and variants of the virus were lost in the stream of official statements.

The 2021 Internews Survey found that [Ukraine's information space was oversaturated with information about vaccination and vaccines](#), with opinions very polarised. The [Public Interest Journalism Lab](#) concluded that there was a need to separate useful information from “information noise”. Audiences tended to trust neutral materials devoid of political or financial influence and stories about real people. In early 2021, the vaccination process became a leading topic in Ukraine's media; however, outlets have struggled to have a positive impact on the country's rampant vaccination hesitancy.

According to an [IMI monitoring](#) in February 2021, media produced 63% of vaccination-related news in a neutral tone but 22% of the coverage included a biased or overly negative dimension, such as allergies, complications, death and ineffectiveness, or used a manipulative headline. Only 19% of coverage was devoted to insightful and constructive content on vaccination. IMI's [June 2021 monitoring](#) revealed that only 3.5% of all regional media coverage was dedicated to the vaccination process. Of that, 96.3% was simply news, announcements and official reports; analysis and expert opinions accounted for only 2.4% of the coverage.

The media suffered a loss of advertising and other revenue due to the pandemic but also discovered that [Ukrainians were willing to pay for quality content](#). Several leading national periodicals stopped publishing print versions and continued only with online editions. Many media organisations were pushed towards [more diversified models that rely on both advertising and direct revenues from the audience](#), such as paywalls and asking for donations or offering membership options. A consequence of the pandemic may be that it has boosted the public's awareness of the cost and the role of independent journalism.

Fake news and misinformation

Ukraine's vaccine debate is fuelled by a domestic "infodemic"³⁴ of false or misleading information, political rivalries, lack of trust in government institutions, and Russian disinformation. Different interest groups used the media to criticise the state's vaccination policy, spread fake news, and promote Russia's Sputnik vaccine.

Social networks have driven vaccine scepticism in Ukraine. This has been, in part, due to the almost two-fold growth in the use of social media as a major source of news from before the pandemic to August 2020. According to an analysis of vaccine-related posts on Facebook conducted by Ukraine World, the most popular posts were jokes, fake news or conspiracy theories about vaccines.

Misinformation has contributed to vaccine hesitancy. A 2021 survey found that the most discussed piece of misinformation in the country was about alleged vaccine side effects. 68% of respondents had heard that the vaccine is more dangerous than the coronavirus itself; 49% declared they believed this to be true. A study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) identified over 250,000 messages with misinformation narratives related to COVID-19 in Ukrainian online media, forums, blogs, messenger and social networks between March and November 2020. Dmitry Stuzhuk, a popular social media fitness influencer who told his followers that COVID-19 didn't exist, died of the virus in October 2020. Social media has been so harmful in the fight against the virus that President Zelensky asked Ukrainians to "switch off your social networks and turn on your brains."

In Ukraine's crisis-ridden southern and eastern regions, pandemic deniers and spreaders of conspiracy theories are rife. Most residents there (54%) believe that the coronavirus is of artificial origin, whereas only 25% believe that the virus is naturally occurring. Over one quarter believe that the danger of the coronavirus is exaggerated and that quarantine and restrictive measures are not needed. Thanks to the region's proximity to Russia, there has been significant misinformation regarding Russia's Sputnik vaccine.

³⁴ According to the WHO, an infodemic is too much information including false or misleading information in digital and physical environments during a disease outbreak. It causes confusion and risk-taking behaviours that can harm health. https://www.who.int/health-topics/infodemic#tab=tab_1

SECTION 4 MEDIA OVERVIEW

This section provides an overview of the different types of media and information sources available in Ukraine: digital media platforms, social media, television, radio, print and traditional forms of communication. It does not attempt to give a detailed breakdown of media consumption by different demographics as this information is available in existing guides and surveys which are referred to throughout this guide.

There is a wealth of informative research and surveys on Ukraine media, these include: the [USAID-Internews 2021 Media Consumption Survey](#), the [Chatham House media sector guide](#), the [European Journalism Centre's Media Landscapes Guide](#), the [IREX 2021 Vibrant Media Barometer](#) and Freedom House's 2021 [Freedom on the Net](#) report. Additionally, the 2021 edition of Internews Ukraine's Guide to Regional Media, which is [available upon request](#), provides information and data about media in all of Ukraine's regions (rather than at a country level). It identifies trends and key developments and describes key players and popular outlets. MediaLab's [Map of media ownership](#) includes details of important media listed by region and city and provides a good understanding of who owns and influences media in Ukraine. The map is constantly updated.

4.1 Digital Media Platforms

Digital media in Ukraine's is diverse and vibrant, and numerous platforms exist. Popular online outlets include national news portals as well as the websites of the country's public broadcaster and commercial TV channels, the web versions of national periodicals, and niche online media. As more Ukrainians go online, the percentage of those who get their news online is increasing. According to [the 2021 USAID-Internews Media Consumption Survey](#), almost half (48%) of all Ukrainians get their news online. Digital platforms, including search engines, news aggregators and news websites, are the country's second most popular source of information. Kantar monitors the most popular websites in Ukraine's digital space, details [here](#)³⁵ – their rankings reveal that news websites rarely make it into its monthly Top 25 of most popular sites. Due to the constantly changing nature of rankings, links have been provided to access the latest data. Methodologies for measuring website audiences vary, there is no single agreed-upon list of ratings. Several rankings of the most popular online news websites exist and are outlined below:

[Similarweb's November 2021 Top 5](#) was:

1. [Ukr.net](#) (a news aggregator)
2. [Censor.net](#)
3. [Ukrainska Pravda](#)
4. [Obozrevatel.com](#)
5. [News.Obozrevatel.com](#)

In June 2021, Gemius Audience, which measures real users,³⁶ identified the following five most popular online news sources (its Top 10 can be found [here](#)):³⁷

1. [TSN.ua](#) (8.5 million monthly users)
2. [24tv.ua](#) (6.7 million monthly users)

³⁵ <https://tns-ua.com/category/news>

³⁶ [Real users](#) is the number of Internet Users (visitors) in a given target group who visited (generated at least one page view) the selected node(s) in a specified time period. This indicator relates to the actual number of persons – not computers, cookies or IP addresses.

³⁷ <https://tsn.ua/ru/ukrayina/tsn-ua-sem-mesyacev-podryad-yavlyaetsya-liderom-sredi-novostnyh-saytov-reyting-gemius-audience-1816243.html>

3. [RBC Ukraine](#) (6.2 million monthly users)
4. [Obozrevatel.com](#) (6.1 million monthly users)
5. [Ukrainska Pravda](#) (4.9 million monthly users)

The 2021 Media Consumption Survey ranked the most popular online destinations for news consumption, including news aggregators, news websites and the websites of TV channels, information agencies, and print periodicals. The complete Top 12 can be found [here](#).³⁸ News aggregators and a news agency took the top three spots:

1. Google
2. [Ukr.net](#)
3. [UNIAN](#)

In the survey the highest ranked news websites were:

1. [1plus1.ua \(ranked 5th overall\)](#)
2. [Apostrophe.ua \(ranked 6th overall\)](#)
3. [Korrespondent.net \(ranked 7th overall\)](#)

A ranking of Ukraine's Top 30 online news sites can be found [here](#)³⁹ and the most popular blogs can be found [here](#).⁴⁰ The majority of Ukraine's TV and radio stations also broadcast online via YouTube and podcasting platforms. Despite not making it into the 12 most popular news websites, the public broadcaster Suspline's [popularity online](#) is growing; its website reaches 3.7 million users per month.

Some websites of foreign media intended for Ukraine are popular in the country. Almost [a quarter](#) of Internews respondents who used online news sources visited international news sites. This niche has more than doubled since 2019. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Ukrainian service is [among the most cited media outlets](#) in Ukraine and has earned a high level of trust from its audience. Its website and apps generated 112.5 million views in 2020. The BBC's [Ukrainian Service](#) has been broadcasting since 1992; its webpage has sometimes made it into the monthly [Top 25 most popular websites](#) in Ukraine. Deutsche Welle (DW) also has a [Ukrainian-language service with a digital presence](#).

There are two popular and influential English-language websites published in the capital. The [Kyiv Post](#) was Ukraine's leading English-language print newspaper; it went online in 1997. Following a dispute with the publication's owner over editorial independence, more than 30 employees broke away to establish [The Kyiv Independent](#) in November 2021. The EU Neighbours East website includes [links](#) to English-language news and information on Ukraine being produced by independent and state news outlets, as well as individual journalists.

While most Ukrainians (85%) get their news from national news sites, [27% do so from regional websites](#). Local news sites are popular with the residents of cities with 500,000+ inhabitants. The region of the country with the greatest focus on local online media is the south.

Since the country's decentralisation reforms that began in 2015, as well as the worldwide trend of information sources moving from print to digital, [regional and local online media outlets are playing a more important role](#) in Ukraine. They are not only informing but also interacting with their communities.

³⁸ https://internews.in.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/USAID_Internews-Media-Consumption-Survey-2021_ENG.pdf

³⁹ <https://www.allyoucanread.com/ukrainian-newspapers/>

⁴⁰ https://blog.feedspot.com/ukraine_blogs/

Examples include [Express](#) and [Vysokyi Zamok](#) in Lviv and [Dumskaya.net](#) in Odesa. Web-based community-focused media is a growing trend across Ukraine. [Nakipelo](#) in Kharkiv, [Zukr City](#) in Sumy, [Kust](#) in Dnepr, [Culturemeter](#) in Odessa, [Zmist](#) in Poltava, [Tvoe Misto](#) in Lviv, and [Varosh](#) in Uzhgorod are some examples.

[Networks of local online outlets](#) have become increasingly popular. Hyperlocal online media are also an emerging development, including in the territories adjacent to the conflict areas in the country's east. The Institute of Mass Media tracks developments in the country's regional and local media in its "[IMI in the Regions](#)" section and conducts occasional surveys and monitoring of [the media situation in the crisis areas of the south and east](#).

More information and data about key regional and local news websites can be found in Internews Ukraine's Guide to Regional Media. It lists the most popular websites in all of Ukraine's regions. MediaLab's [Map of media ownership](#) includes some important websites listed by region and city along with the owners and the ultimate beneficiaries of the stations.

Some national and international news sources also have specific regional programmes. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Ukrainian service launched the Crimea.Realities [website](#) in 2014. It is one of the only international media and news sources covering the peninsula, and reports in the Ukrainian, Russian, and Crimean Tatar languages. In 2020, it received on average 2.5 million monthly visits. RFE/RL's provides exclusive reporting from the frontlines of the territories held by Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

The Institute of Mass Information (IMI) conducts a [quarterly monitoring of Ukrainian online media outlets' compliance with professional standards](#). The monitoring assesses the balance of coverage and points of view, sources and their level of credibility, and the separation of facts from comments. The [most recent monitoring](#) found that the public broadcaster Suspilne, [Dzerkalo Tyzhnia](#), [Liga](#), Ukrainska Pravda, [Babel](#), [Hromadske](#), Bukvy, Espresso and [Novoye Vremia](#) were the most balanced and credible online media.

4.2 Social Media Platforms

Ukrainians' use of social media is growing, and the following surveys provide insights into its use.

According to [GlobalLogic](#) in 2020:

- Registered social media users increased from 2019 from 19 to 26 million people (60% of the population)
- YouTube was the most popular social platform (96%)
- Facebook users grew from 2019 by 7%, to 16 million users
- Instagram's users increased 22% from 2019 to 14 million users

A [2020 survey by Detektor Media](#) found:

- Facebook was the most popular social network (58% of respondents)
- 25% preferred Instagram, 9% Telegram, 8% Twitter, 6% Odnoklassniki and 5% V Kontakte
- 34% do not use social networks
- The public broadcaster Suspilne's Facebook page is the most-viewed among all news pages

According to respondents in a [2021 study by the Kyiv International Sociology Institute](#):

- 73% use internet messengers
- Viber is the most popular app for exchanging information (almost 66% use it)
- 35% use Facebook Messenger, 24.2% prefer Telegram, and 21% use WhatsApp

- 45% of the 18-29 age group use Telegram, while those 70 and older favour WhatsApp

Social media and messengers are increasingly being used to consume news: including Instagram (especially by young people) and Telegram – both its national and regional channels. YouTube has become an alternative to TV. [The 2021 Internews Media Consumption Survey](#) found that every fourth Ukrainian consumed news from YouTube. See table below for summary:

Figure 4: News from social media, Internews survey 2021

| Getting news from social networks | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Facebook | 43% |
| YouTube | 25% |
| Telegram | 20% (compared to 6% in 2019) |
| Instagram | 17% (compared to 10% in 2019) |
| Viber | 13% |
| TikTok | 2% |
| Twitter | 1% |
| VK | 1% |

[According to another study](#), which analysed 421 of the largest social and political YouTube channels targeting Ukraine, the Ukrainian YouTube segment has surpassed pro-Russian channels in popularity. In August-November 2021, viewership of the top Ukrainian YouTube channels was 30 % higher than the group of pro-Russian channels.

[A 2021 Detektor Media analysis of media consumption](#) found that local public pages and groups in social media as well as YouTube and Telegram channels are becoming more popular, and their reach at the local level is often greater than that of traditional local media. Local opinion leaders are also growing in popularity on social media. Telegram is a new phenomenon in the Ukrainian media space. The study notes that 49 of the 100 most popular Telegram channels in Ukraine classified themselves as "News and Media" and concluded that Telegram had become an extremely influential information source. However, many popular Telegram channels are anonymous, are interconnected with each other, and spread identical or similar, often unverified messages instead of quality news.

Almost all Ukrainian media outlets, in addition to their websites, have pages on Facebook and Instagram; many have YouTube channels and some experiment with podcasts and TikTok. Content analysis by [Vox Ukraine](#) concluded that popular media wrote about politics and the coronavirus on social media more often than on their websites but that the emotional colouring of content was almost the same across all platforms and was mostly negative.

Popular social media pages include:

[Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty’s Ukrainian Service](#) was [among the media outlets most cited by other media](#) in 2020. Its Facebook pages attracted:

- 304 million video views, 49.4 million users and 765,000 followers of its Ukraine coverage
- 76.1 million video views, 10.4 million engaged users and 124,000 followers of its Crimea coverage

Its YouTube pages attracted:

- 275 million views and 1.1 million subscribers to its Ukraine and Crimea coverage

The BBC's [Ukrainian Service](#) has been broadcasting since 1992. Its [Facebook page](#) includes 700,000 followers and it also delivers content via YouTube, Twitter, Google+ and Instagram.

[Hromadske TV](#) (Civic TV)⁴¹ [has a monthly audience of over 9 million](#), 5 million via its website and 4 million via social media, including [YouTube](#), Facebook, Instagram, Telegram and Twitter. Its core audience is young Ukrainians aged 16-24.

Ukraine's most popular bloggers on social media can be found [here](#)⁴². 2021's top Instagram influencers in Ukraine can be found [here](#)⁴³. Ukraine's most popular Telegram channels can be found [here](#)⁴⁴ and Telegram news and information channels can be found [here](#)⁴⁵.

4.3 Television stations

According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) almost 95 % of Ukrainian households had a TV by 2018. Based on different [estimates](#), Ukraine had at least 3 million paid cable TV subscribers and 1.4 million IPTV users as of 2020. Approximately 220,000 households have paid satellite TV subscriptions. Ukraine has [over 300 TV stations and almost 600 cable TV companies](#). As of the end of 2020, a [breakdown](#) included 28 national broadcasters, 74 regional broadcasters, and 124 satellite television channels. The three leading television stations in 2020 were [ICTV, Ukraina, 1+1](#). Each of these commercial stations lost audience share in 2020. For the most recent published ranking of the Top 10 TV channels and their rating and audience shares, as well as detailed information about the top performers split by age group and gender, see [here](#)⁴⁶. More recent ratings and audience share statistics can be found using this [tool](#)⁴⁷.

[In terms of Ukrainians' news consumption, television trails social media and online news sites](#). Less than half of citizens (46%) use TV as their primary source of news; however, for 12%, it is their only source. Television remains the dominant media forum for Ukraine's Russian-speaking audiences as well as those who are older and live in rural areas. Television as a source of news has been declining for the last six years— from 85% in 2015 to 46% in 2021. Despite this trend, Ukraine's national commercial TV channels remain an important source of news. Of those watching television, 94% get their news from national channels.

The top [three television channels](#) from which Ukrainians consume news are 1+1, ICTV and Inter. A list of the Top 15 can be found [here](#)⁴⁸. In terms of geography, [citizens in Ukraine's central regions](#) give the greatest preference to national channels as sources for their news. These commercial channels focus on infotainment (information and entertainment). [Studies](#) have found that the most popular channels are owned by a small number of media conglomerates overseen by a handful of oligarchs with significant political and economic influence in the country. These oligarchs control roughly 70% of Ukraine's TV market see [here](#)⁴⁹ and [here](#)⁵⁰ for details.

⁴¹ Launched in 2013 by journalists who had resigned from a TV channel due to fears over its objectivity. The independent, nonprofit, nongovernmental organisation's 24/7 streaming played a key role in covering and influencing the "Revolution of Dignity." Originally a TV station, it became [the most popular internet television channel in Ukraine](#). It offers independent and nonbiased information and serves as a watchdog pushing for democratic reforms.

⁴² https://internews.in.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/USAID_Internews-Media-Consumption-Survey-2021_ENG.pdf

⁴³ <https://starngage.com/app/id/influencer/ranking/ukraine/lifestyle>

⁴⁴ <https://uk.tgstat.com/en>

⁴⁵ <https://uk.tgstat.com/en/news>

⁴⁶ <https://mbr.com.ua/uk/news/analytics/4354-igri-z-castkoyu-itogi-2020>

⁴⁷ <http://tampanel.com.ua/rubrics/canals/>

⁴⁸ https://internews.in.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/USAID_Internews-Media-Consumption-Survey-2021_ENG.pdf

⁴⁹ <https://cmds.ceu.edu/sites/cmcs.ceu.hu/files/attachment/basicpage/1988/mimukrainefunding.pdf>

⁵⁰ <https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/vibe-ukraine-2021.pdf>

A [2020 analysis](#) of the prime-time newscasts of six leading TV channels found that 43% failed to separate fact from opinion, 28% violated standards of completeness (intentionally or negligently leaving out relevant details), 11% failed to provide balanced coverage, 12% neglected to source their material, and 5.7% of news stories were commissioned. The stations tend to be less about business investments and serve more as [tools to influence public opinion and government policies](#). Perhaps as a result, [audience trust](#) in national television has declined from 61% in 2015 to 40% in 2021; this trend is also similar for regional television which has dropped from a high of 56% in 2018 to a low of 38% in 2020. [Internews focus groups](#) found that Ukrainians displayed increased attention to economic and corruption-related news and less interest in information about the war.

The public TV broadcaster Suspilne (Public), formerly the National Television Company of Ukraine, operates two national channels – [UA: Pershyi](#) (the First Channel) and [UA:Kultura](#) (Culture) – and [24 regional TV channels](#). It is well regarded for its [independent and unbiased reporting](#). A [2021 survey](#) found that respondents trust Suspilne TV more than commercial channels and that the public broadcaster develops Ukrainian culture and strengthens national identity and social unity. However, [Suspilne’s First Channel](#) ranks below commercial TV stations in terms of viewers and is chronically underfunded. Despite these challenges, its:

- [Audience increased by 33% in 2020.](#)
- [Audience share rose from 22nd to 20th in the ratings and its audience grew by 30% in 2020.](#)
- [Total audience \(including via the internet\) was 11.7 million, its exclusive TV audience was 7.7 million, and its weekly coverage was about 8.6 million viewers.](#)

There are over three dozen TV broadcasters at the regional level in Ukraine. Detailed information and data about the broadcasters and stations is hard to come by. The Internews Ukraine guide to regional media describes key players and lists the most popular television channels in all of Ukraine’s regions. MediaLab’s [Map of media ownership](#) includes some TV stations listed by region and city, their owners, and their beneficiaries. There has been intermittent audience research on regional viewing habits, including the popularity of regional television channels. In 2019, the Independent Association of Broadcasters carried out a [survey](#) covering 21 regional centres and three cities. Some results have been published, such as for the [Kherson region](#). Results of an earlier survey can be found [here](#).⁵¹ [Citizens in the country’s western and eastern regions most often watch regional TV channels](#) to get their news.

There are also private and state broadcasters at the municipal level. As part of the country’s decentralisation process, some 60 [municipal television stations were meant to transform into community media](#), but debate over their ownership, funding, structure, and editorial guidelines has stalled since 2015. Currently, Ukrainian legislation does not provide any definition of or mandate for community media.

In November 2021, Ukraine’s National Council announced the “last big [competition](#)” for digital TV channels, including 58 free-to-air regional channels covering 43 population centres and 27 local digital channels in 25 population centres.

Television in Russian-occupied Crimea and the separatist territories in the east

Due to the crises sparked by the armed and information conflict, the Ukrainian government has focused on boosting television broadcasting in the country’s eastern and southern regions. This is important due to TV channels in the east closing down due to the [poor advertising market](#). As of the end of 2020, the National

⁵¹ <https://nam.org.ua/news/nam-ta-faktum-grup-proveli-doslidzenna-dla-regionalnih-telekanaliv>

Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting had assigned [206 frequencies for digital and analogue television channels in the Donetsk, Luhansk and Kherson regions](#). The [largest budget for the public broadcaster Suspilne’s regional branches](#) goes to its Donbas section. Suspilne also includes a [Crimea TV channel](#) that broadcasts via satellite and is at the forefront of reporting on Crimea, covering conflict in the east, and countering Russian influence. Its network includes a [regional and satellite TV channel, radio programme and website targeting Crimea](#) and a [regional TV station targeting the Donbas](#), amongst others.

[Dim/Dom \(Home\) TV, the state Russian- and Ukrainian-language channel](#) launched in 2020 and overseen by the Ministry of Culture, focuses on reaching an audience of 4 million in Russian-occupied Crimea and separatist-occupied eastern Ukraine. It broadcasts in digital and analogue formats as well as via satellite; see [here](#)⁵² for coverage. The channel produces its own content and draws on the content of other Ukrainian TV channels. In August 2021, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky declared that he [wanted the channel to speak not only to the occupied districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions](#) and occupied Crimea but also for IDPs. The channel seeks to promote the [“de-occupation of consciousness”](#) of its target audience.

Since 2014, the state’s National Council on TV and Radio Broadcasting (NCTRB) has made an effort [to foster regional TV and radio broadcasting in some of the country’s regions and districts adjacent to the occupied territories](#). Instead of issuing tenders, the NCTRB simplified procedures and issued temporary permits for television and radio broadcasting. As of June 2019, the NCTRB had provided 95 such permits for frequencies in those territories.

4.4 Radio channels

Since Soviet times, radio has been an important part of mass media in Ukraine. [In some small isolated towns, radio is reportedly the only media available and, in a large country like Ukraine, radio serves as an important source of information to drivers of vehicles](#). As of the end of 2020, there were [15 national radio broadcasters, 38 regional and local radio stations and 9 satellite radio stations](#), a [decline](#) since 2018. Radio’s audience cannot compare to internet or television. In terms of news consumption, radio [ranks fourth](#) behind social media, online news sites, and television, with the percentage of Ukrainians using radio as a source of news declining from 35% in 2015 to 13% in 2021. 76% of radio audiences listen to national, 31% to regional, and 6% to international stations. While the audience of national stations has declined, listeners to regional and international stations have increased since 2015. In contrast to online media and television, audience trust in both national and regional radio has increased since 2020. [One study](#) indicated that the average Ukrainian who listens to radio spends 260 minutes per day with it. An approximate portrait of the typical radio listener is male (54%), an active Internet-user (84%), a car owner (59%), married (61%), with a university degree (53%) and with a higher-than-average level of income (57%). In accordance with [legislative requirements](#), radio broadcasting content should be at least 60% in Ukrainian and the amount of songs aired in the Ukrainian language should be no less than 35%.

The most popular national radio stations (in 2020) were Hit FM, Lux FM and Radio Rocks. The most recently published ranking of the Top 10 and their audience shares can be found [here](#).⁵³ The most popular radio stations have [amplified their audiences through digital platforms](#) and their owners are [fairly well diversified](#). Although these and other commercial music stations provide only limited news, they are a source of information for Ukrainian listeners. The [most popular radio sources of news consumption](#) are Autoradio Ukraine, Lux FM, Hit FM.

⁵² <https://kanaldom.tv/about/>

⁵³ <https://radioexpert.com.ua/news/dan%D1%96-rad%D1%96osluxannya-v-ukra%D1%97n%D1%96-chetverta-xvilya-dosl%D1%96dzhennya-2020-roku>

[Suspilne Radio](#), Ukraine's public broadcaster, plays an important role in delivering news and information. [A 2021 survey](#) found that respondents trust Suspilne Radio more than commercial stations and that it develops Ukrainian culture, strengthens national identity, promotes awareness in the affairs of the state, and helps to overcome the fragmentation of society. One [report](#) found that Suspilne Radio plays a larger media role at the regional and local level. The multiplatform media outlet:

- Oversees [the country's largest FM network, covering every region of the country](#), and also broadcasts on AM, via satellite and digitally. It includes four channels, [Ukrainian Radio](#) - also known as the First Channel and focusing on socio-political news, [Radio Pramian](#) (Radio Ray) – a youth-oriented music channel, [Radio Culture](#), and Radio Ukraine International.
- Attracted a [total audience \(including via the internet\) of 3.6 million, an exclusive radio audience of 810,000 listeners, and weekly coverage of about 1.39 million listeners](#) in 2020.
- [Ranked 6th among radio listeners as a source of news consumption](#), with 16% of Ukrainians tuning in during 2021, with the [audience of its news programming growing over 23%](#) in 2021.
- [Ranked 14th](#) in terms of total listeners at the end of 2020 but was the [country's most popular talk and news radio](#).

[Hromadske Radio](#) (Civic Radio) is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit multimedia platform that includes a talk radio station, a website and podcasts. It seeks to contribute to the development of Ukrainian communities and civil society. The outlet broadcasts on FM from 13 cities to four of Ukraine's regions - Kyiv, Odessa, Donetsk and Luhansk - as well as via satellite. In 2021, it launched a new [programme covering the problems of residents of the eastern conflict zone](#). Hromadske has:

- Attracted an audience [of 150,000 per week](#) and a website audience of [830,000 readers and listeners](#).
- Become [one of the country's most prolific producers of podcasts](#), which can be found on its [website](#), on [SoundCloud](#), in their apps for [Apple](#) or [Android](#), and via the [TuneIn Radio](#) application.

[Army FM](#) is the country's first military radio station, founded by Ukraine's Ministry of Defence in 2016. Initially broadcasting exclusively to the frontline Donbas region, it expanded to cover the Kherson region bordering occupied Crimea. Later, the decision was made to develop the station into a fully-fledged national network. Army FM's broadcasts cover 27 cities and towns in western, central, eastern, and southern Ukraine. Content includes Ukrainian-language news, information, and entertainment for soldiers but also news designed to counter Russian and pro-Russian narratives. Reportedly, [the station is picked up in the occupied territories in the east and volunteers then relay its broadcast](#).

Detailed information and data about regional and local broadcasters and stations is hard to come by. Internews Ukraine guide to regional media, describes key players and lists the most popular radio channels in all of Ukraine's regions. MediaLab's [Map of media ownership](#) includes radio stations listed by region and city.

Radio in Russian-occupied Crimea and the separatist territories in the east

Due to the armed and information conflict, the Ukrainian government has focused on boosting radio broadcasting in the country's eastern and southern regions. This is particularly important because radio stations there are more financially unstable due to the [poor advertising market](#). As of the end of 2020, the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting had assigned [184 frequencies for AM and FM channels in the Donetsk, Luhansk and Kherson region](#)s. [One media report](#) noted that public radio is particularly important in Ukraine's southern and eastern regions. The public broadcaster Suspilne broadcasts its [Ukrainian Radio First Channel](#) and its [Voice of the Donbass programme](#) on FM frequencies

on [over 20 FM stations](#) to the Ukrainian and to territories of the Donbas not controlled by the Ukrainian government.

The radio stations Own Radio, DNR 24, Novorossiya Rocks and Kombat FM are located in the [occupied Donbas territories](#); all are controlled by the separatist governments of the self-proclaimed republics. These channels mostly replicate the content of the TV channels in the region, which is positive when it comes to current affairs in the so-called republics and Russia, but negative about Ukraine.

The public broadcaster Suspilne [launched the radio programme “Ukrainian Radio: Crimea”](#) in 2021 that serves the residents of the occupied peninsula and the rest of Ukraine. The [programme](#) is in Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar.

In occupied Crimea, some 28 radio stations and 23 internet radio stations currently broadcast. For a list of stations operating there with Russian government approval and information about these, see [here](#).⁵⁴ [Meydan Radiosi](#) (Radio Meydan) was the first Crimean Tatar radio station. Founded in 2005 in Crimea, it was forced to relocate its office to Kyiv following the Russian occupation of Crimea. The station broadcasts on FM in Crimean Tatar, Ukrainian and Russian. Radio Meydan is part of the ATR Crimean Tatar media holding, which has recently suffered from financial pressure. After annexing Crimea, Russia launched the radio station Vatan Sedasi (Echo of the Motherland), which targets the peninsula’s remaining Crimean Tatars.

4.5 Print media

As of the end of 2019, there were [1,651 newspapers in Ukraine with a combined annual circulation of approximately 1.5 billion copies](#). But data from the [Book Chamber of Ukraine](#) covering nine months of 2020 indicate a significant decrease both in the number of titles and the circulation of the press. As a result of the pandemic, several leading national periodicals stopped publishing in print and continued only with online editions. Most of Ukraine’s print outlets also have news websites. There is no press from Ukraine available in Russian-occupied Crimea and the separatist-occupied Donbas; since 2014, the occupying forces there allow only Russian print and separatist materials to circulate in these areas.

Since 2015, [the regional press has become more popular than national periodicals as a news source](#) for Ukrainians. However, the popularity of regional newspapers themselves has also been declining over the last six years. According to respondents to the Internews survey, their popularity peaked at 70% in 2016 and decreased to the lowest ever level, 57%, in 2021. National print media, on the contrary, improved its position from a record low of 45% in 2020 to 54% in 2021.

[The 2021 Internews Media Consumption Survey](#) found that the following national periodicals were read most often for news by respondents:

Figure 5: The most often read national periodicals for news by respondents Internews survey 2021

| Title | Percentage of respondents | Type | Language ⁵⁵ | Circulation (copies) |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Arguments and Facts Fakty (Ukraine) | 32% | Weekly newspaper | Russian | 209,000 |
| News | 15% | Daily newspaper | Russian | 350,000 |
| Boulevard | 15% | Weekly tabloid | Russian | 570,000 |
| Express | 13% | Newspaper, three issues per week | Ukrainian (based in Lviv) | 500,000+ |

⁵⁴ <http://arab.com.ua/en/situation-with-radio-broadcasting-in-the-captured-crimea>

⁵⁵ After January 2022, Ukrainian law requires that all national print publications include a Ukrainian-language edition

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------------|---------|-----------|
| Komsomol Truth Pravda (Ukraine) | 10% | Daily newspaper | Russian | 1,000,000 |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------------|---------|-----------|

Some publications with smaller circulations also enjoy high brand recognition. For example:

[Facts and Commentary](#), a weekly socio-political Russian-language newspaper;

- Circulation of 180,000 copies and 5% of respondents named it as their favourite news source.

[Correspondent](#), a weekly magazine published in Russian and Ukrainian;

- Circulation of 48,000 copies and read by 5% of respondents.

[New Times](#), an influential weekly print magazine, in the Top 10 news websites ranking by [Gemius Audience](#);

- Circulation of only 19,000 copies but digitally reaches 4.5 million monthly users.

Ukraine's regional and local press has been undergoing a transformation since [the 2016 Law on the reform of state and municipal media](#) obliged all such media to be privatised. Former state newspapers, subsidised by the government, are to become independent and self-sustainable community media. Privatisation of municipal press is part of the ongoing broader post-2014 [decentralisation reform](#). The president of the [Ukrainian Association of Media Business said](#) "as the new post-reform local units (hromadas) of the country's administrative division are developing modern communal strategies and approaches to solving local problems, they also need new models of building and communicating with local communities. The reformed municipal press is also looking for new content and business models in order to be relevant for local readers and survive in the marketplace. Thus, there is a potential for mutually beneficial cooperation between local authorities and local media."

According to the UAMB, there are currently approximately 700 regional and local municipal and private newspapers in Ukraine; however, the number is decreasing by 10-15% a year. The average circulation of local newspapers is 3,000 copies. Most municipal media are also developing an online presence. In addition, some run communal FM radio stations while others act as discussion platforms, bringing together local officials, businesspersons and the public. [The most successful municipal media reach 50,000-60,000 people](#) through a multiplatform approach (the average population of one hromada⁵⁶ is around 50,000 inhabitants). Examples of local media success stories can be found [here](#).⁵⁷ Information about Ukraine's leading regional and local newspapers can be found in Internews Ukraine's guide to regional media. MediaLab's [Map of media ownership](#) includes some local newspapers listed by region and city.

4.6 Traditional forms of communication

The Orthodox Church exerts a powerful influence in Ukraine, which is the third-largest Eastern Orthodox country in the world. In a 2015 survey, [78% of Ukrainians identified as Orthodox](#). For historical reasons, Ukraine's Orthodox Church was under the control of the Russian Orthodox Church for more than 300 years. As in the czarist and communist periods, Russia uses religion as an instrument to expand and increase its influence in Ukraine. In January 2019, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, the foremost leader in the Eastern Christian church, recognised the newly founded Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC). The gaining of autocephaly, or independence, includes the goal of reducing Russian influence in Ukraine. The Russian Orthodox Church refuses to acknowledge the UOC. The divisive process has been a focus of Russian and pro-Russian disinformation campaigns.

The first Primate (head) of the [Ukrainian Orthodox Church](#) – Metropolitan Epiphanius – is a young contemporary leader who uses social media, including [Facebook](#) (150,000 followers), [Instagram](#) (39,500 followers) and [Twitter](#) (17,700 followers). The UOC uses [Facebook](#) (99,567 followers), [Instagram](#) (4,300

⁵⁶ A territorial community, unit of administrative division in Ukraine

⁵⁷ <https://redactor.in.ua/category/lokalni-media/>

followers), [YouTube](#) (17,000 subscribers) and [Twitter](#) (1,251 followers). It also publishes a national monthly print newspaper, [My Church](#).

The [Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate \(UOC-MP\)](#) is the part of the Orthodox Church in the country that remains under the control of the Russian Orthodox Church. As such, the UOC-MP, especially its parishes in the occupied territories, is influenced by the Kremlin and is [part of Russia’s anti-Ukrainian and “Russian World” narratives](#). Depending on the definition, the UOC-MP is still the largest church in Ukraine. While the UOC-MP controls more parishes and bishoprics in Ukraine, [the new UOC has more parishioners](#). The number of supporters and influence of the UOC-MP have been [declining due to its support for the Russian government’s aggression](#) against Ukraine.

Ukraine’s numerous and activist diaspora provides another important traditional form of communication. The United American Ukrainian Relief Committee, Ukrainian World Congress, European Congress of Ukrainians, Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, Ukrainian Canadian Congress, and Organisation of Ukrainians in Great Britain are just [some of the many organisations](#) supporting Ukraine’s democratic transition and assisting in the crises brought on by the country’s struggle against Russia and the COVID-19 pandemic. A case study of diaspora organisations and their humanitarian response in Ukraine can be found [here](#).⁵⁸

4.7 Media training opportunities

A broad range of journalism and media training programmes exist in Ukraine. More than 70 state and private universities across the country offer BA-level degrees in journalism; there are also MA and PhD programmes in media and journalism. In recent years, several leading media associations and NGOs have developed their own media management and journalism courses, targeting mid- and senior-level media professionals, which aim to assist independent outlets in their digital transformation and enhance their business viability. In addition, there exist many short-term thematic trainings to enhance modern journalism and media production skills. Experts note that, in the last 5-7 years, the dynamics regarding the development of journalism education in Ukraine have been very positive.

In the last decade, Ukraine’s system of higher education in general and academic journalism training in particular have been undergoing a significant but positive transformation. [The National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance](#) is responsible for formulating standards and accreditation criteria for all academic journalism programmes. According to a journalism education expert interviewed for this guide, the criteria and approaches for accreditation are modern and progressive and universities try to meet these standards, although this can be difficult.

In terms of journalism and media education, there are several key challenges facing Ukraine’s universities. These include:

- Achieving a balance between theory and practice. BA level programmes often fail to provide practical training in journalism skills due to a lack of qualified professors and instructors who have media experience. This is an acute problem at regional universities. Some universities seek to redress this by cooperating with local media, drawing on media practitioners as teaching assistants or adding practical trainings by media professionals.
- Academics struggle to meet the strict state requirements regarding university professors. More flexibility in counting professional awards, scientific publications and years of practical experience towards academic credentials would allow the diversification of curricula by attracting more cutting-edge media specialists.

⁵⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/diaspora-organizations-and-their-humanitarian-response-ukraine>

- BA cohorts, which can number up to 60 students, are too large.
- Universities lack the modern tools of the trade needed to train journalists. International organisations have improved the situation through the provision of professional equipment.
- University journalism programmes are often isolated from the real-life media sector and it's a challenge to adapt them to the rapidly developing media market.

In response to these challenges, a number of new academic education programmes have started up in recent years. Examples include:

[The School of Journalism at the Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University](#) (in Mykolaiv), launched in 2015, is an example of a modern, innovative and practice-oriented academic programme, which is deeply integrated into the local media sector. It prepares “universal journalists for the 21st century” with a specialisation of the student’s choice, based on interests and preferences. It develops partnerships with media companies and specialists and cooperates closely with the regional office of Ukraine’s public broadcaster, whose specialists serve as guest teachers. Foreign specialists from Europe and the USA also conduct master classes and co-produce content with students. A local TV channel often broadcasts content produced by the students. Unusually, the university has invested its own funds in creating a well-equipped, high-quality studio for training students which also serves as a media production centre for the entire university. Most graduates are employed by local and regional media and the press services of state institutions, with some relocating to Kyiv to work for national media companies and others abroad.

Both its BA and MA curricula are flexible and regularly updated to meet the demands of the media market:

- The 4-year BA programme has a flexible curriculum, combining compulsory classes and optional courses. Classes are relatively small (25-27 students) and practical lessons use professional equipment that involve filming in and reporting from Mykolaiv city.
- The 1.5-year MA programme aims to prepare specialised journalists and accepts applicants with BAs in different fields. Classes are small (maximum 15) and students have a greater choice of optional courses to form their individualised curriculum.

[The School of Journalism at the Kyiv Mohyla Academy](#) is a leader in innovative post-graduate journalism education in Ukraine:

- The MA programme averages 20 students a year and aims to prepare multimedia journalists, with a focus on visual production, including documentaries. Some of its courses are taught in English. It is practice-oriented and integrated into Ukraine’s media sector. The school has a fully equipped newsroom and video and audio production studios. 60% of the school’s professors are media practitioners and external media experts evaluate content produced by the students.
- The PhD programme is open to both its MA graduates and external applicants. The main focus is on data analysis and disinformation studies. Students are encouraged to publish the results of their research, including on [StopFake](#).⁵⁹

Additionally, media associations and civil society organisations offer a plethora of training and professional development programmes for media practitioners, often in partnership with international organisations. These include short-term trainings to upgrade journalism skills and media competencies, as well as longer-term courses for editors and media managers seeking a more strategic approach to developing the sector. Examples include:

⁵⁹ A leading independent fact-checking platform founded in 2014 by professors and students that strives to refute Russian propaganda and fake news.

The [Ukrainian Media E-School](#) (UMES) run by the National Association of Media (NAM). All UMES courses are paid but NAM's members receive a 40% discount. While the UMES still requires assistance from external donors, NAM is working to make it self-sufficient. The UMES offers:

- An in-person course on media management and an online school for programme directors for individuals.
- A blended learning course on digital transformation designed for the teams of managers, editors, and salespersons from media outlets.
- Short-term trainings and master classes, with regularly updated topics and speakers.

[The Media Development Foundation](#) (MDF) offers three journalism and media training programmes:

- The Journalism Exchange Program targets final-year journalism students, recent graduates and young media professionals and places them in 2-8-week paid internships at Ukraine's leading national and regional newsrooms with the objective of exposing young journalists to the ideas and best practices of quality journalism. Annually the programme hosts 60 participants and stimulates networking between professionals from different parts of the country.
- The School for Regional Journalists targets mid-career journalists with at least 5 years of experience. It aims to upgrade the skills and competencies of regional journalists for the digital media era. Participants attend a one-week training course in Kyiv on modern journalism skills, followed by a two-week internship at a leading national media outlet. After returning to their media groups, participants must conduct an in-house training for their colleagues.
- The Media Manager Academy is for CEOs and chief editors of regional media outlets. Its curriculum is based on the McKinsey methodology, adapted for the media, and consists of three modules on management, business planning and monetisation. Participants are paired with an experienced mentor and supported with funding to implement their newly developed growth strategies.

[The School of Universal Editors](#), run by Nakipelo, a leading independent website and press centre based in the eastern city of Kharkiv, is an example of a quality journalism education programme run by a regional media organisation:

- Its 4-month programme, launched in 2020, targets young editors and journalists from independent regional and local media from across the country. It consists of in-person and online modules on the basics of journalism, editing, media management, digital media, analytics and social networks taught by a diverse group of experienced Ukrainian and international trainers.

While these programmes were developed in partnership with and co-funded by European and American media development organisations and foundations, like all successful initiatives, they take into account the country's unique specifics and utilise the expertise of the domestic media sector, thus making them relevant and respected and in demand by Ukrainian outlets and media professionals.



This guide is one of a series of Media Landscape Guides which map the media landscape in different countries. The guides have been produced by the CDAC Network in cooperation with DW Akademie and supported by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. This project is part of the global initiative "Transparency and media freedom - Crisis resilience in the pandemic".



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