

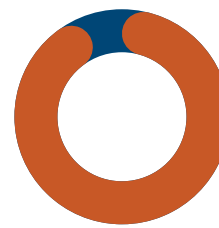


Context

Finland has **one of the EU's most robust media systems despite its relatively large size and small population**. While there is a rich offering of media content in Finland, in recent years there has been talk of news deserts from time to time, for instance by journalists, fearing the shutdown of newsrooms and the loss of workplaces. However, among policymakers, industry professionals and the public the threat has not been recognised as a problem or discussed regularly.

Most Finnish municipalities belong to an area covered by a local or city newspaper. Only 18 municipalities remain outside media coverage. According to an assessment by News Media Finland, some regional or provincial newspapers do cover these municipalities as well, albeit maybe not on a regular basis. So, according to this information there are no completely 'white spots' in journalism on the map.

However, looking at the home locations of the 14,000 journalists who are members of the Union of Journalists in Finland, there are 61 municipalities out of 309 where no journalist lives and another 57 municipalities with only one residing journalist.



94% municipalities belong to an area covered by a local or city newspaper.



18 municipalities do not have local media coverage



20% Approximately 20% of municipalities in Finland do not have resident journalists, while 18% have only one



Levels of trust in news in Finland

Finland continues to uphold its position as the country with the **highest levels of overall trust** in news (**69%**), as reported in the Digital News Report 2023 by the **Reuters Institute**. *Yle*, in particular, boasts a significant level of trust (85%). Moreover, over half of the population feels that *Yle* plays a crucial role in society, with a third considering it a significant part of their personal media consumption habits.



News consumers' attitudes in Finland

Finland is one of the few EU countries where interest in news increased between 2015 and 2023.

Local and regional newspapers are among the most trusted media outlets (81% and 79%) but their weekly reach is only 17% and 16% offline, and even less, 12% and 14% online.



95% of Finns over the age of 15 read newspapers. In numbers, this means more than 4.1 million people.



Finland and its 30 hyperlocal media

Hyperlocal media are **initiatives that offer online news**, communication or content service pertaining to a small community such as a village or neighbourhood.

This is a small feature of the Finnish media landscape and mainly consists of around 30 hyperlocal media outlets as well as a few small hobbyist television stations, mainly focused on the **Swedish speaking population in Ostrobothnia.**



Role of the Finnish journalists' union

Physical violence against journalists is rare in Finland. Instances are few and seem to be random, no trend can be identified. However, despite relative gender parity in society, **female journalists are most at risk of online harassment and intimidation.** There are also some examples of politicians using defamation appeals in courts to silence journalists.

The Finnish journalists' union has created a **support fund to cover loss of income, therapy and other expenses that can result from stress of this kind.**



Editorial independence under review

By analysing the extent of commercial and political influence over local editorial content, it can be stated that self-regulatory safeguards are generally in place and effective.

At the same time, it has to be highlighted that **local commercial media in Finland are still dependent on advertisement** -as digital subscriber revenues only grow slowly and mainly go to national media companies. Hence, **newsrooms need to balance the watchdog ideal to scrutinise local companies with the need to have a sustainable business model.**

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