

Country fact sheet

The Netherlands



Context

In the Netherlands there is a concern about news deserts, relating to the number of outlets and even more so, to the **quality of local news and the professionalisation of newsrooms**.

The main challenge is that the available budget for local journalism is not sufficient to fulfil journalistic functions and to produce professional productions.

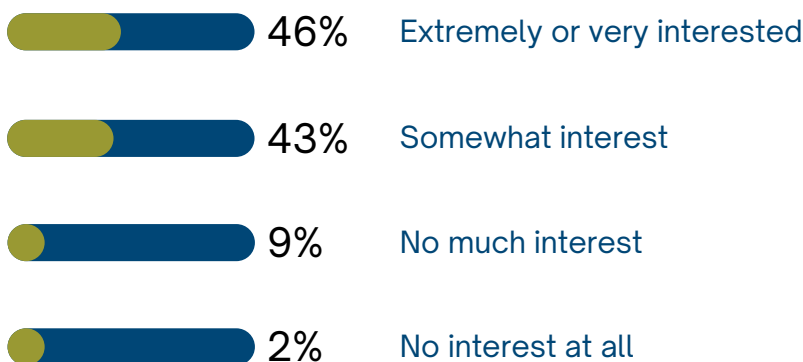
While the funding for local public broadcasting is increasing, local private media feel deprived as the funding is now mainly directed to public broadcasters, **failing to stimulate a balanced local media landscape**.

In regions such as **Flevoland** province, parts of **Zeeland** and parts of **Limburg** the number of outlets is scarce.

While there are differences between provinces, studies do show that **citizens residing in a place with fewer than 50,000 residents are exposed to significantly less local news** compared to residents of places with more than 50,000 people.



Interest of Dutch citizens in local news



Free printed local weeklies still have the largest reach in local journalism

However, these weeklies are facing severe problems due to decreasing advertising revenues since many local entrepreneurs have their own websites and use their own social media to advertise.

The willingness to pay for local news is low



Only 10% percent of all citizens state are willing to pay for online news about their municipality. Therefore, even if people show high interest in local news, they are unwilling to pay for them, aggravating the financial struggles faced by the local media scene. Instead, they prefer to look for free outlets, such as regional and public broadcasters, or online channels.

Working conditions of local journalists under review

The issue of **underpayment** is a significant problem for local journalists. While regional journalists often receive at least the minimum wage, that cannot be said for their local counterparts.

The **Journalist Union** has proposed a minimum wage of **30 euros per hour** for freelancers starting their careers. However, even experienced freelance local journalists often earn significantly less.

Freelancers lack social security coverage, leaving them without pay when they fall ill, whether for short or long periods.

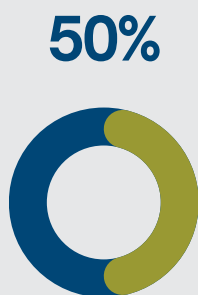


151 more harassment cases in a year

According to the **Dutch Foundation for Press Safety** in 2021, 272 alerts were documented, compared to 121 in 2020. Local journalists face an even greater risk of being targeted with attacks since they are especially susceptible to being identified.

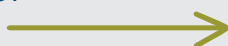
Urgent need for a coordinated mechanism to monitor SLAPPs

Journalists in the Netherlands are becoming more cautious about publishing to avoid the risk of legal action. A survey conducted by the *PersVeilig Foundation* to 858 journalists shows:



50%

Half of all the journalists have experienced at least one instance of legal threats following a publication



20%

In 20 percent of the cases, this escalated to a legal complaint or prosecution

Detected concerns regarding editorial independence

- Due to financial pressures, many local media are dealing with **budget cuts**, and have difficulties in providing only independent journalism.
- Political influence over local editorials can happen indirectly, since **each local government can decide to provide the financial budget for the local Public Service Broadcasting**, above the basic norm budget per household, and the fact that local media in general are not bound by editorial statutes.
- Moreover, the increasing influence of communication departments at local governments, which often use **journalistic newsroom conventions**, makes the **distinction between journalism and communication unclear**.

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