

Methodology

The 2012 index, which provides analytical reports and numerical ratings for 197 countries and territories, continues a process conducted since 1980 by Freedom House. The findings are widely used by governments, international organizations, academics, and the news media in many countries. Countries are given a total score from 0 (best) to 100 (worst) on the basis of a set of 23 methodology questions divided into three subcategories. Assigning numerical points allows for comparative analysis among the countries surveyed and facilitates an examination of trends over time. The degree to which each country permits the free flow of news and information determines the classification of its media as “Free,” “Partly Free,” or “Not Free.” Countries scoring 0 to 30 are regarded as having “Free” media; 31 to 60, “Partly Free” media; and 61 to 100, “Not Free” media. The criteria for such judgments and the arithmetic scheme for displaying the judgments are described in the following section. The ratings and reports included in *Freedom of the Press 2012* cover events that took place between January 1, 2011, and December 31, 2011.

Criteria

This study is based on universal criteria. The starting point is the smallest, most universal unit of concern: the individual. We recognize cultural differences, diverse national interests, and varying levels of economic development. Yet Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.

The operative word for this index is “everyone.” All states, from the most democratic to the most authoritarian, are committed to this doctrine through the UN system. To deny that doctrine is to deny the universality of information freedom—a basic human right. We recognize that cultural distinctions or economic underdevelopment may limit the volume of news flows within a country, but these and other arguments are not acceptable explanations for outright centralized control of the content of news and information. Some poor countries allow for the exchange of diverse views, while some economically developed countries restrict content diversity. We seek to recognize press freedom wherever it exists, in poor and rich countries as well as in countries of various ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.

Research and Ratings Review Process

The findings are reached after a multilayered process of analysis and evaluation by a team of regional experts and scholars. Although there is an element of subjectivity inherent in the index findings, the ratings process emphasizes intellectual rigor and balanced and unbiased judgments.

The research and ratings process involved several dozen analysts—including members of the core research team headquartered in New York, along with outside consultants—who prepared the draft ratings and country reports. Their conclusions are reached after gathering information from professional contacts in a variety of countries, staff and consultant travel, international visitors, the findings of human rights and press freedom organizations, specialists in geographic and geopolitical areas, the reports of governments and multilateral bodies, and a variety of domestic and international news media. We would particularly like to thank the other

members of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) network for providing detailed and timely analyses of press freedom violations in a variety of countries worldwide on which we rely to make our judgments.

The ratings were reviewed individually and on a comparative basis in a global meeting involving analysts and Freedom House staff. The ratings are compared with the previous year's findings, and any major proposed numerical shifts or category changes are subjected to more intensive scrutiny. These reviews are followed by cross-regional assessments in which efforts are made to ensure comparability and consistency in the findings.

Methodology

Through the years, we have refined and expanded our methodology. Recent changes are intended to simplify the presentation of information without altering the comparability of data for a given country over the 32-year span or the comparative ratings of all countries over that period.

Our examination of the level of press freedom in each country currently comprises 23 methodology questions and 109 indicators divided into three broad categories: the legal environment, the political environment, and the economic environment. For each methodology question, a lower number of points is allotted for a more free situation, while a higher number of points is allotted for a less free environment. Each country is rated in these three categories, with the higher numbers indicating less freedom. A country's final score is based on the total of the three categories: A score of 0 to 30 places the country in the Free press group; 31 to 60 in the Partly Free press group; and 61 to 100 in the Not Free press group.

The diverse nature of the methodology questions seeks to encompass the varied ways in which pressure can be placed upon the flow of information and the ability of print, broadcast, and internet-based media to operate freely and without fear of repercussions: In short, we seek to provide a picture of the entire "enabling environment" in which the media in each country operate. We also seek to assess the degree of news and information diversity available to the public in any given country, from either local or transnational sources.

The **legal environment** category encompasses an examination of both the laws and regulations that could influence media content and the government's inclination to use these laws and legal institutions to restrict the media's ability to operate. We assess the positive impact of legal and constitutional guarantees for freedom of expression; the potentially negative aspects of security legislation, the penal code, and other criminal statutes; penalties for libel and defamation; the existence of and ability to use freedom of information legislation; the independence of the judiciary and of official media regulatory bodies; registration requirements for both media outlets and journalists; and the ability of journalists' groups to operate freely.

Under the **political environment** category, we evaluate the degree of political control over the content of news media. Issues examined include the editorial independence of both state-owned and privately owned media; access to information and sources; official censorship and self-censorship; the vibrancy of the media and the diversity of news available within each country; the ability of both foreign and local reporters to cover the news freely and without harassment; and the intimidation of journalists by the state or other actors, including arbitrary detention and imprisonment, violent assaults, and other threats.

Our third category examines the **economic environment** for the media. This includes the structure of media ownership; transparency and concentration of ownership; the costs of establishing media as well as of production and distribution; the selective withholding of advertising or subsidies by the state or other actors; the impact of corruption and bribery on content; and the extent to which the economic situation in a country impacts the development and sustainability of the media.

CHECKLIST OF METHODOLOGY QUESTIONS 2012

- Each country is ranked on a scale of 0 to 100, with 0 being the best and 100 being the worst.
- A combined score of 0-30=Free, 31-60=Partly Free, 61-100=Not Free.
- Under each question, a lower number of points is allotted for a more free situation, while a higher number of points is allotted for a less free environment.
- The sub-questions listed are meant to provide guidance as to what issues are meant to be addressed under each methodology question; it is **not** intended that the author necessarily answer each one.
- As a general guideline, the index is focused on ability to access news and information (which predominantly means print and broadcast media but can also including blogs, social media, and other forms of digital news dissemination) and providers of news content, which predominantly means journalists but can also include citizen journalists and bloggers, where applicable.

A. LEGAL ENVIRONMENT (0-30 POINTS)

1. Do the constitution or other basic laws contain provisions designed to protect freedom of the press and of expression and are they enforced? (0-6 points)

- Does the constitution contain language that provides for freedom of speech and of the press?
- Do the Supreme Court, Attorney General, and other representatives of the higher judiciary support these rights?
- Does the judiciary obstruct the implementation of laws designed to uphold these freedoms?
- Do other high-ranking state or government representatives uphold protections for media freedom, or do they contribute to a hostile environment for the press?
- Are crimes that threaten press freedom prosecuted vigorously by authorities?
- Is there implicit impunity for those who commit crimes against journalists?

2. Do the penal code, security laws, or any other laws restrict reporting and are journalists or bloggers punished under these laws? (0-6 points)

- Are there restrictive press laws?
- Do laws restrict reporting on ethnic or religious issues, national security, or other sensitive topics?
- Are penalties for 'irresponsible journalism' applied widely?
- Are restrictions of media freedom closely defined, narrowly circumscribed, and proportional to the legitimate aim?
- Do the authorities restrict or otherwise impede legitimate press coverage in the name of national security interests?
- Are journalists regularly prosecuted or jailed as a result of what they write?
- Are writers, commentators, or bloggers subject to imprisonment or other legal sanction as a result of accessing or posting material on the internet?

- Is there excessive pressure on journalists to reveal sources, resulting in punishments such as jail sentences, fines, or contempt of court charges?

3. Are there penalties for libeling officials or the state and are they enforced? (0-3 points)

- Are public officials especially protected under insult or defamation laws?
- Are insult laws routinely used to shield officials' conduct from public scrutiny?
- Is truth a defense to libel?
- Is there a legally mandated 'right of reply' that overrides independent editorial control?
- Is libel made a criminal rather than a civil offense?
- Are journalists or bloggers regularly prosecuted and jailed for libel or defamation?
- Are fines routinely imposed on journalists or media outlets in civil libel cases in a partisan *or* prejudicial manner, with the intention of bankrupting the media outlet or deterring future criticism?

4. Is the judiciary independent and do courts judge cases concerning the media impartially? (0-3 points)

- Are members of the judiciary subject to excessive pressure from the executive branch?
- Are the rights to freedom of expression and information recognized as important among members of the judiciary?
- When judging cases concerning the media, do authorities act in a lawful and non-arbitrary manner on the basis of objective criteria?
- Is there improper use of legal action or summonses against journalists or media outlets (e.g. being subjected to false charges, arbitrary tax audits etc.)?

5. Is Freedom of Information legislation in place and are journalists able to make use of it? (0-2 points)

- Are there laws guaranteeing access to government records and information?
- Are restrictions to the right of access to information expressly and narrowly defined?
- Are journalists able to secure public records through clear administrative procedures in a timely manner and at a reasonable cost?
- Are public officials subject to prosecution if they illegally refuse to disclose state documents?

6. Can individuals or business entities legally establish and operate private media outlets without undue interference? (0-4 points)

- Are registration requirements to publish a newspaper or periodical unduly onerous or are they approved/rejected on partisan or prejudicial grounds?
- Is the process of licensing private broadcasters and assigning frequencies open, objective and fair?
- Is there an independent regulatory body responsible for awarding licenses and distributing frequencies or does the state control the allocations process?
- Does the state place extensive legal controls over the establishment of internet web sites and ISPs?
- Do state or publicly-funded media receive preferential legal treatment?
- Are non-profit community broadcasters given distinct legal status?
- Is there substantial media cross ownership and is cross-ownership of media encouraged by the absence of legal restrictions?
- Are laws regulating media ownership impartially implemented?

7. Are media regulatory bodies, such as a broadcasting authority or national press or communications council, able to operate freely and independently? (0-2 points)

- Are there explicit legal guarantees protecting the independence and autonomy of any regulatory body from either political or commercial interference?
- Does the state or any other interest exercise undue influence over regulatory bodies through appointments or financial pressure?
- Is the appointments process to such bodies transparent and representative of different interests, and do representatives from the media have an adequate presence on such bodies?
- Are decisions taken by the regulatory body seen to be fair and apolitical?
- Are efforts by journalists and media outlets to establish self-regulatory mechanisms permitted and encouraged, and viewed as a preferable alternative to state-imposed regulation?

8. Is there freedom to become a journalist and to practice journalism, and can professional groups freely support journalists' rights and interests? (0-4 points)

- Are journalists required by law to be licensed and if so, is the licensing process conducted fairly and at reasonable cost?
- Must a journalist become a member of a particular union or professional organization in order to work legally?
- Must journalists have attended a particular school or have certain qualifications in order to practice journalism?
- Are visas for journalists to travel abroad delayed or denied based on the individual's reporting or professional affiliation?
- May journalists and editors freely join associations to protect their interests and express their professional views?
- Are independent journalists' organizations able to operate freely and comment on threats to or violations of press freedom?

B. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT (0-40 POINTS)

1. To what extent are media outlets' news and information content determined by the government or a particular partisan interest? (0-10 points)

- To what degree are print and broadcast journalists subject to editorial direction or pressure from the authorities or from private owners?
- Do media outlets—either print, broadcast, or internet-based—that express independent, balanced views exist?
- Is media coverage excessively partisan, with the majority of outlets consistently taking either a pro- or anti-government line?
- Is there government editorial control of state-run media outlets?
- Does the government attempt to influence or manipulate online content?
- Is there opposition access to state-owned media, particularly during elections campaigns? Do outlets reflect the views of the entire political spectrum or do they provide only an official point of view?
- Is hiring, promotion, and firing of journalists in the state-owned media done in a non-partisan and impartial manner?
- Is there provision for public-service broadcasting that enjoys editorial independence?

2. Is access to official or unofficial sources generally controlled? (0-2 points)

- Are the activities of government—courts, legislature, officials, records—open to the press?
- Is there a ‘culture of secrecy’ among public officials that limits their willingness to provide information to media?
- Do media outlets have a sufficient level of access to information and is this right equally enforced for all journalists regardless of their media outlet’s editorial line?
- Does the regime influence access to unofficial sources (parties, unions, religious groups, etc.), particularly those that provide opposition viewpoints?

3. Is there official or unofficial censorship? (0-4 points)

- Is there an official censorship body?
- Are print publications or broadcast programs subject to pre-or post-publication censorship?
- Are local print and broadcast outlets forcibly closed or taken off the air as a result of what they publish or broadcast?
- Are there shutdowns or blocking of internet sites or blogs?
- Is access to foreign newspapers, TV or radio broadcasts, websites, or blogs censored or otherwise restricted?
- Are certain contentious issues, such as official corruption, the role of the armed forces or the political opposition, human rights, religion, officially off-limits to the media?
- Do authorities issue official guidelines or directives on coverage to media outlets?

4. Do journalists practice self-censorship? (0-4 points)

- Is there widespread self-censorship in the state-owned media? In the privately owned media?
- Are there unspoken ‘rules’ that prevent a journalist from pursuing certain stories?
- Is there avoidance of subjects that can clearly lead to censorship or harm to the journalist or the institution?
- Is there censorship or excessive interference of journalists’ stories by editors or managers?
- Are there restrictions on coverage by ‘gentlemen’s agreement,’ club-like associations between journalists and officials, or traditions in the culture that restrict certain kinds of reporting?

5. Do people have access to media coverage and a range of news and information that is robust and reflects a diversity of viewpoints? (0-4 points)

- Does the public have access to a diverse selection of print, broadcast, and internet-based sources of information that represent a range of political and social viewpoints?
- Are people able to access a range of local and international news sources despite efforts to restrict the flow of information?
- Do media outlets represent diverse interests within society, for example through community radio or other locally-focused news content?
- Do providers of news content cover political developments and provide scrutiny of government policies or actions by other powerful societal actors?
- Is there a tradition of vibrant coverage of potentially sensitive issues?
- Do journalists or bloggers pursue investigative news stories on issues such as corruption by the government or other powerful societal actors?
- NOTE: When scoring this question, please take into account the level of penetration of different types of media, e.g. print, broadcast, internet, foreign.

6. Are both local and foreign journalists able to cover the news freely in terms of harassment and physical access? (0-6 points)

- Are journalists harassed while covering the news?

- Are certain geographical areas of the country off-limits to journalists?
- Does a war, insurgency, or similar situation in a country inhibit the operation of media?
- Is there surveillance of foreign journalists working in the country?
- Are foreign journalists inhibited or barred by the need to secure visas or permits to report or to travel within the country?
- Are foreign journalists deported for reporting that challenges the regime or other powerful interests?

7. Are journalists, bloggers, or media outlets subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor? (0-10 points)

- Are journalists or bloggers subject to murder, injury, harassment, threats, abduction, expulsion, arbitrary arrest and illegal detention, or torture?
- Do armed militias, organized crime, insurgent groups, political or religious extremists, or other organizations regularly target journalists?
- Have journalists fled the country or gone into hiding to avoid such action?
- Have media companies been targeted for physical attack or for the confiscation or destruction of property?
- Are there technical attacks on news and information websites or key online outlets for information exchange?

C. ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT (0-30 POINTS)

1. To what extent are media owned or controlled by the government and does this influence their diversity of views? (0-6 points)

- Does the state dominate the country's information system?
- Are there independent or opposition print media outlets?
- Does a state monopoly of TV or radio exist?
- Are there privately owned news radio stations that broadcast substantial, serious news reports?
- Do independent news agencies provide news for print and broadcast media?
- In the case of state-run or funded outlets, are they run with editorial independence and do they provide a range a diverse, non-partisan viewpoints?
- NOTE: This question is usually scored to provide 0-2 points each for print, radio and TV forms of news media.

2. Is media ownership transparent, thus allowing consumers to judge the impartiality of the news? (0-3 points)

- Is it possible to ascertain the ownership structure of private media outlets?
- Do media owners hold official positions in the government or in political parties, and are these links intentionally concealed from the public?
- Are privately owned media seen to promote principles of public interest, diversity and plurality?

3. Is media ownership highly concentrated and does it influence diversity of content? (0-3 points)

- Are publications or broadcast systems owned or controlled by industrial or commercial enterprises, or other powerful societal actors, whose influence and financial power lead to concentration of ownership of the media and/or narrow control of the content of the media?
- Is there an excessive concentration of media ownership in the hands of private interests who are linked to state patronage or that of other powerful societal actors?

- Are there media monopolies, significant vertical integration (control over all aspects of news production and distribution), or substantial cross-ownership?
- Does the state actively implement laws concerning concentration, monopolies, and cross-ownership?

4. Are there restrictions on the means of news production and distribution? (0-4 points)

- Is there a monopoly on the means of production, such as newsprint supplies, allocations of paper, film, or Internet service providers?
- Are there private and non-state printing presses?
- Are channels of news and information distribution (kiosks, transmitters, cable operators, Internet, mobile phones) able to operate freely?
- Does the government exert pressure on independent media through the control of distribution facilities?
- Is there seizure or destruction of copies of newspapers, film, or production equipment?
- Does geography or poor infrastructure (roads, electricity etc) limit dissemination of print, broadcast, or internet-based news sources throughout the country?

5. Are there high costs associated with the establishment and operation of media outlets? (0-4 points)

- Are there excessive fees associated with obtaining a radio frequency, registering a newspaper, or establishing an ISP?
- Are the costs of purchasing paper, newsprint, or broadcasting equipment subject to high additional duties?
- Are media outlets subject to excessive taxation or other levies compared to other industries?
- Are there restrictions on foreign investment or non-investment foreign support/funding in the media?

6. Do the state or other actors try to control the media through allocation of advertising or subsidies? (0-3 points)

- Are subsidies for privately run newspapers or broadcasters allocated fairly?
- Is government advertising allocated fairly and in an apolitical manner?
- Is there use of withdrawal of advertising (i.e. government stops buying ad space in some papers or pressures private firms to boycott media outlets) as a way of influencing editorial decisions?

7. Do journalists, bloggers, or media outlets receive payment from private or public sources whose design is to influence their journalistic content? (0-3 points)

- Do government officials or other actors pay journalists in order to cover or to avoid certain stories?
- Are journalists often bribed?
- Are pay levels for journalists and other media professionals sufficiently high to discourage bribery?
- Do journalists or media outlets request bribes or other incentives in order to cover or hold certain stories?

8. Does the overall economic situation negatively impact media outlets' financial sustainability? (0-4 points)

- Are media overly dependent on the state, political parties, big business, or other influential political actors for funding?
- Is the economy so depressed or so dominated by the state that a private entrepreneur would find it difficult to create a financially sustainable publication or broadcast outlet?

- Is it possible for independent publications or broadcast outlets to remain financially viable primarily by generating revenue from advertising or subscriptions?
- Do foreign investors or donors play a large role in helping to sustain media outlets?
- Are private owners subject to intense commercial pressures and competition, thus causing them to tailor or cut news coverage in order for them to compete in the market or remain financially viable?