



MEDIA LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS - BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



Media landscape analysis – Bosnia and Herzegovina

This fact sheet analyses the media landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). It complements ARTICLE 19's [Global Expression Report](#) (GxR), which examines trends in the right to freedom of expression and information globally, regionally, and nationally. The report is unique in that it provides a concrete measure of and quantifiable perspective on expression: from posting online to protesting, investigating, and accessing the information needed to keep leaders accountable. In this fact sheet, we examine seven indicators¹ informing the media landscape. All the indicators are used in the GxR and are developed based on the annual responses of experts on the topic who provide ratings for the country. The below information provides context on the BiH from 2023. Scores are ordered from highest to lowest to produce country rankings. Countries that do not have the minimum number of raters are excluded from the ranked list. The figures below (expressed as X/149) show BiH's ranking (X) out of 149 countries for each indicator.



1. The indicators in this briefing have been extracted from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) [2024 Codebook](#) to explore aspects of freedom and democracy worldwide. To address variation in coder ratings, V-Dem works closely with leading social science research methodologies and has developed a Bayesian measurement model that, to the extent possible, addresses coder error and issues of comparability across countries over time. V-Dem has advised against using point estimates for indicator years where a country has 3 or fewer raters. In those cases, countries are excluded from the analysis.

Importance of media landscape indicators

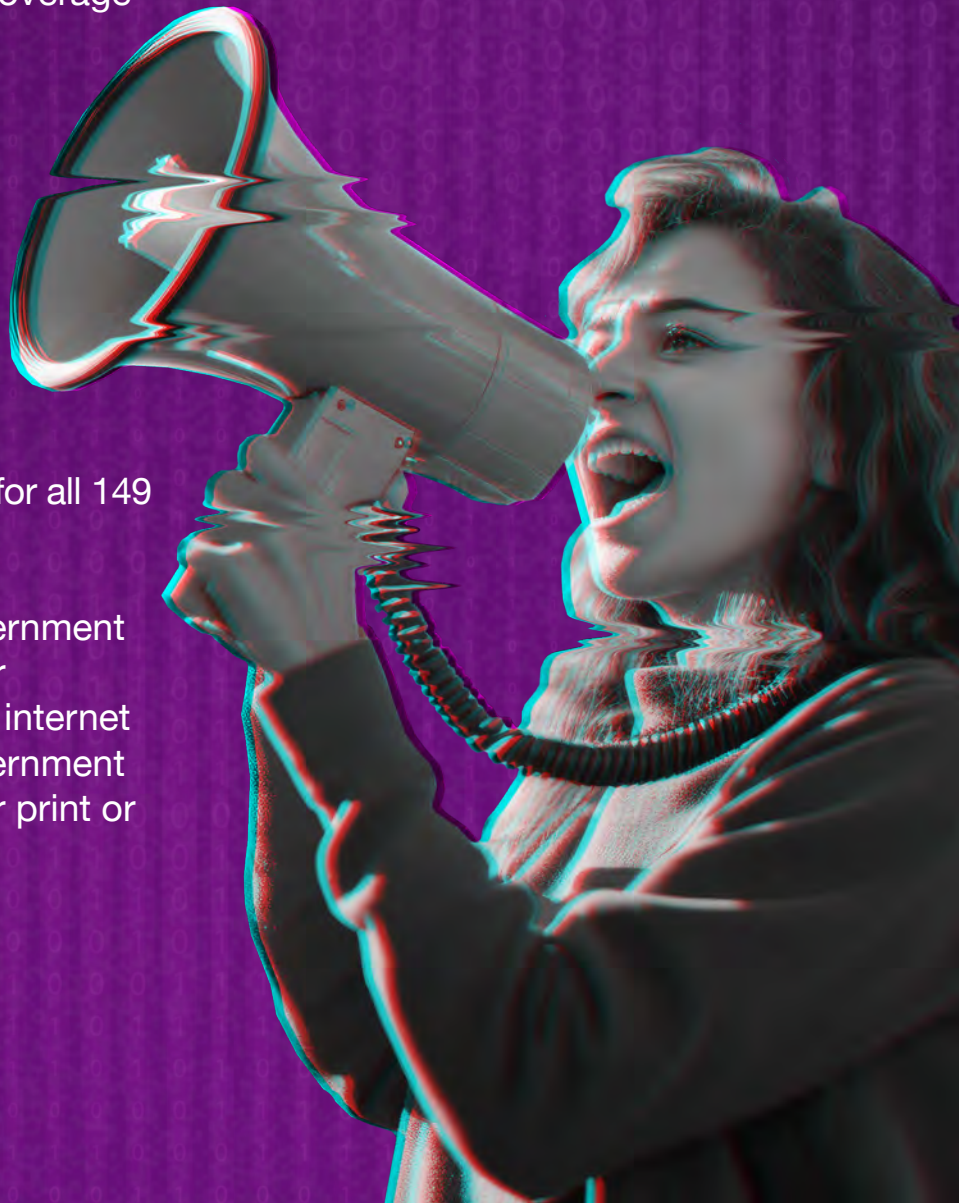
Media bias and corruption: These are critical as they directly affect the credibility and independence of the media. The three indicators in this section (each measured for all 149 countries) are:

- 1. freedom from media bias against opposition parties
- 2. lack of self-censorship among journalists when reporting on issues that the government considers politically sensitive
- 3. freedom from media corruption, avoiding the change of payments for altering news coverage

Internet and government censorship:

Vital for ensuring a free and open information environment. The two indicators in this section (each measured for all 149 countries) are:

- 1. freedom from government attempts to censor information on the internet
- 2. freedom from government attempts to censor print or broadcast media



Media perspectives and criticism: Essential for a democratic society, allowing for diverse views and accountability. The two indicators in this section (each measured for all 149 countries) are:

1. print and broadcast media represent a wide range of political perspectives
2. print and broadcast outlets routinely criticise the government

Country profile: Bosnia and Herzegovina

BiH has a complex media landscape heavily influenced by its historical, political, and ethnic divisions. The country's media environment is characterised by significant challenges, including political influence, ethnic polarisation, economic pressures, and ongoing issues with media freedom.

Media bias and corruption



Media bias is a significant issue in BiH, as reflected in the country's low ranking of **91/149** for this indicator. Over the past decade, the country has consistently ranked in the bottom half globally on this subject, with its position in that ranking remaining relatively stable. The media outlets in BiH are often aligned with political parties or ethnic groups, leading to polarised reporting. This bias is exacerbated by the fragmented political structure of BiH, where different entities – Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska – have their own distinct media landscapes, often reflecting their unique political and ethnic narratives. In Republika Srpska for example, media like Radio-Television of Republika Srpska [frequently promote Serb nationalist perspectives and advocate for the entity's autonomy](#), aligning with the political agenda of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) led by Milorad Dodik. This political and ethnic alignment of media reinforces the division between different communities and erodes public trust in the impartiality of the press.

Self-censorship is also a serious issue in BiH — the country ranks **99/149** in this category. Journalists often refrain from reporting on sensitive topics due to fear of retaliation, which may include job loss, legal threats, or even physical harm. Reporters investigating corruption, crime, or political wrongdoing frequently face intimidation. Such threats force journalists to censor themselves, limiting the potential for independent investigative journalism and reducing the role of the media as a watchdog in society.

BiH ranks **86/149** on *freedom from media corruption*, indicating this is a pervasive a problem in the country. Journalists and media outlets often face economic pressures, leaving them susceptible to corruption. The lack of financial independence can lead to media accepting money to provide favourable coverage or suppress unfavourable stories, which undermines journalistic integrity and erodes public trust in the media. For instance, the financial independence of *Dnevni Avaz*, one of the country's most widely read newspapers, has frequently been called into question due to its consistently favourable coverage of certain politicians. Such financial dependencies compromise editorial independence and lead to biased reporting, diminishing public confidence in the media.

Internet and government censorship

Internet freedom in BiH (**20/149**) is much better compared to traditional media, with fewer reports of widespread government censorship or restrictions on internet use. In traditional print and broadcast media, BiH ranks **80/149** on *freedom from government censorship efforts*, reflecting moderate government interference. While there is no overt censorship, media outlets that criticise political elites often face indirect pressures, including threats to cut state advertising or impose financial audits. These actions are used to discourage critical reporting and financially weaken outlets that refuse to align with government narratives, further limiting media independence.



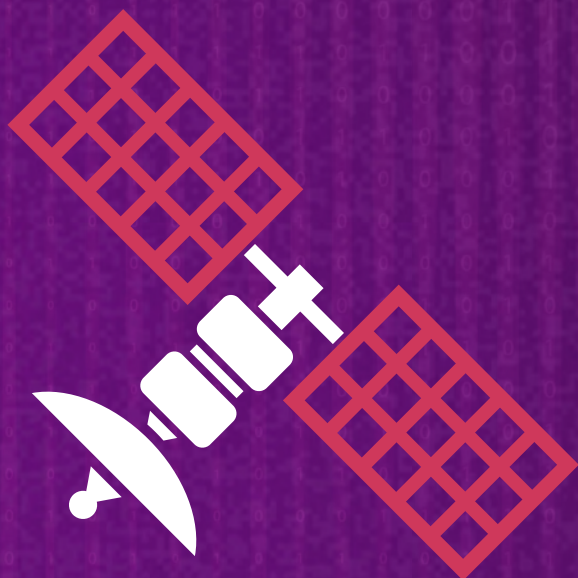
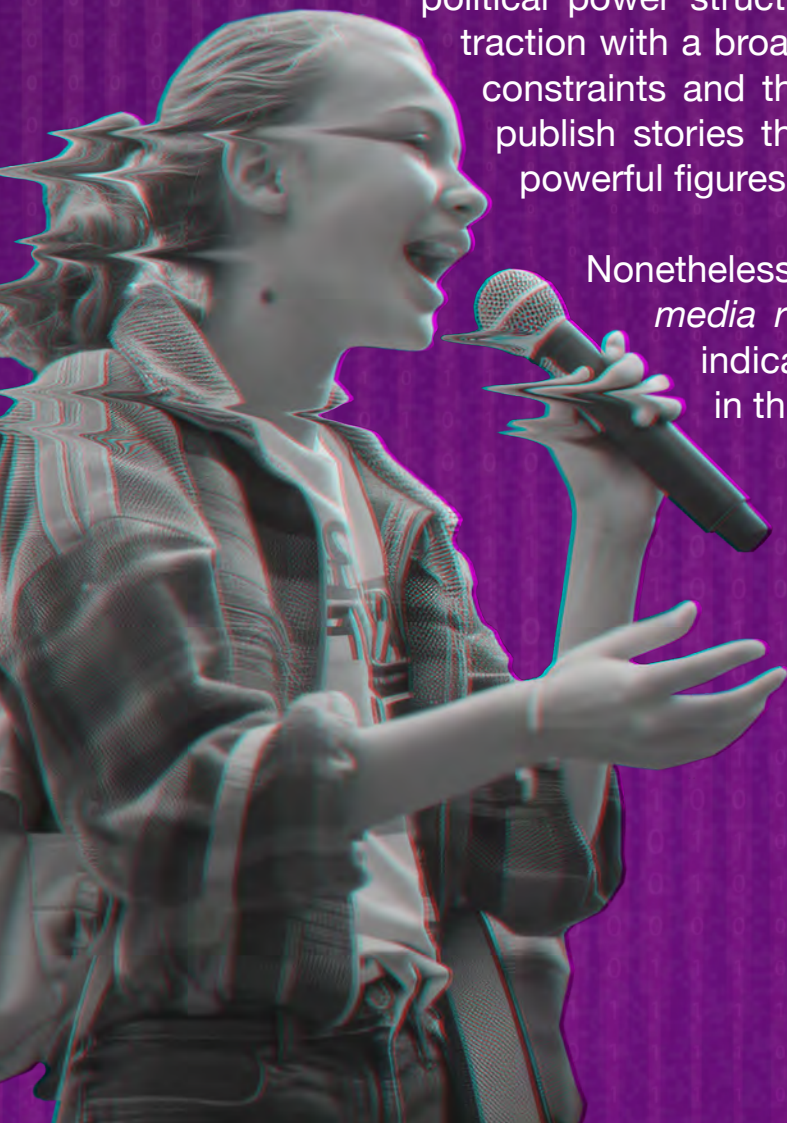
Media perspectives and criticism



BiH ranks **57/149** for its range of *print/broadcast media perspectives*, suggesting a relatively diverse media landscape. However, this diversity does not always translate into balanced reporting. Many outlets cater to specific ethnic or political audiences, and the fragmentation of the country's political landscape is mirrored in its media environment. While the country has a wide range of media outlets, the narratives are often heavily influenced by ethnic and political divisions, resulting in polarised coverage.

Investigative journalism, while present, remains underfunded and under pressure. Reporters who attempt to expose corruption or challenge political power structures often find it difficult to gain traction with a broad audience, due to both financial constraints and the reluctance of media owners to publish stories that could provoke retaliation from powerful figures.

Nonetheless, BiH ranks **65/149** for *print/media routinely criticise the government*, indicating a moderate level of freedom in this area.



Annex: Indicator rank comparison

Media bias and corruption

1) Freedom from media bias against opposition parties

91/149

Analysis: BiH is in the bottom third globally, indicating persistent issues with biased reporting. This impacts public trust in the media and the ability to receive unbiased information.

Regional comparisons:
Montenegro ranks **60**
Kosovo ranks **99**
Serbia ranks **122**

2) Lack of self-censorship among journalists when reporting on issues that the government considers politically sensitive

99/149

Analysis: BiH is in the lower third globally, with significant self-censorship among journalists due to political pressures.

Regional comparisons:
Kosovo ranks **38**
Montenegro ranks **66**
Serbia ranks **116**

3) Freedom from media corruption, avoiding the change of payments for altering news coverage

86/149

Analysis: BiH is in the bottom half globally, indicating ongoing media corruption that affects journalistic integrity.

Regional comparisons:
Kosovo ranks **30**
Montenegro ranks **90**
Serbia ranks **125**

Internet and government censorship

1) Freedom from government attempts to censor information on the internet

20/149

- **Analysis:** BiH ranks highest in the region, showing relatively little government effort to censor the internet. This allows for a free flow of information online.

Regional comparisons:

Kosovo ranks **38**

Serbia ranks **48**

Montenegro ranks **73**

2) Freedom from government attempts to censor print or broadcast media

80/149

- **Analysis:** Mid-ranked globally and closest to Poland within the EU, BiH has moderate government interference in print and broadcast media.

Regional comparisons:

Kosovo ranks **20**

Montenegro ranks **22**

Serbia ranks **135**



Media perspectives and criticism

1) Print and broadcast media represent a wide range of political perspectives

57/149

Analysis: BiH is closest to Croatia in the EU, suggesting a relatively diverse media landscape.

Regional comparisons:
Montenegro ranks **88**
Kosovo ranks **90**
Serbia ranks **114**

2) Print and broadcast outlets routinely criticise the government

65/149

Analysis: BiH sits in the middle range, between Greece and Cyprus in the EU, indicating some level of media freedom to criticise the government, which is essential for accountability.

Regional comparisons:
Kosovo ranks **33**
Montenegro ranks **94**
Serbia ranks **119**



