

**France -- Media Guide 2008****Map of Metropolitan France****Overview**

France has a very wide and diverse range of publications, radio and television stations, blogs, and websites. For a population of 63 million, it has about 600 local and national mainstream publications, at least 1,100 radio stations and more than 100 TV channels (including satellite, cable, and digital). The French media are generally independent, but many of them are owned by groups which have interests in other industries. Libel laws are also particularly strict by Western standards.

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Radio is generally perceived as a more credible source of news. Television, however, and especially private station TF1 which is watched by more than a quarter of French viewers, is the most powerful media in terms of audience. Every day, most French spend three hours in front of a TV set, listen to the radio about two hours, and devote about 30 minutes to reading a newspaper (Lille's Advanced Journalism School website [www.esj-lille.fr](http://www.esj-lille.fr)). National daily and weekly newspapers are well considered nationwide among France's elites, in contrast to regional dailies, which they rarely read. France has one of the highest levels of periodical readership in the world.

### ***Political System***

The Republic of France is one of the most modern countries in the world in terms of its political stability, education system, technological development, and broadband Internet access. It has a mixed presidential-parliamentary system with a president elected every five years by popular vote. The president appoints the prime minister on the basis of the results of National Assembly elections, which are also held at about the same time every five years. The government is accountable to this chamber of deputies. The bicameral Parliament also includes the Senate, whose members are elected every six years. In the past, it was possible to have a president and a prime minister from different political parties, creating tensions between the two centers of political power. But this is unlikely to happen again due to a 2000 constitutional amendment stating that the executive is elected for the same duration as the National Assembly legislators.

### ***Demographics, Language***

Close to 61 million of France's 63 million people live in its metropolitan area known as the "Hexagon," which is smaller than Texas. Most of the remainder live in its four overseas departments of Guadeloupe, Guyane, Martinique, La Reunion, and in French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Mayotte, and Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon.

Most residents are urban (four fifths) and Roman Catholic (about 85 percent). It is widely accepted that Islam is the second religion before Protestantism, and taken for granted that about 5 million Muslims live in France. The National Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) cannot make surveys based on religions or races, however, and this figure is regularly questioned by sociologists and demographers.

Nearly 100 percent of the population speaks French, and the literacy rate is 99 percent, which is a key factor in the relatively high readership of magazines in France. Regional minority languages -- like Alsatian, Breton, Basque, Catalan, Corsican or Occitan/Provençal -- have been declining strongly in the past century and are now spoken or understood by less than one percent of the population. Creole languages are also spoken in France's overseas territories, and one adult in five sometimes uses a language other than French.

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France's ethnic diversity is not well reflected in the media published or broadcast in the country. Part of France's immigrant population, primarily from North Africa with Arab-Kabyle roots and Muslim culture, reads publications from their countries of origin in addition to the French press. Major papers from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, as well as the Anglo-Saxon and the neighboring countries' press, are available in large cities. These groups also watch satellite-cable-Internet TV stations from their "home" countries. The Qatar-based satellite channel in Arabic, Al-Jazirah, is seen by a minority of France's Arabs, primarily those who immigrated in the 1990s and later.

In France, mostly in the Paris region and in southern or central French cities, there are also radio stations, like Beur FM ([www.beurfm.net](http://www.beurfm.net)) or Radio Orient ([www.radioorient.com](http://www.radioorient.com)), targeted at the population of Northern-African descent. Other media also target other groups, such as the Jewish, Russian, and English-speaking communities, but their audience is even more limited than the Arab-Muslim culture related stations. Unfortunately, there are no reliable and thorough studies on this issue. An article in the culture and television magazine *Telerama* noted that the last survey of French Maghrebis' "catholic ghettos" dated from a decade ago (26 April 2006).

A few English language newspapers are published in France for the English-speaking expatriate community. They are mostly devoted to life style and real estate related news, and have a limited circulation. However, monthly *The Connexion*, launched in 2002, has been making efforts to cover France's economic and political life more deeply (see Appendix for an example).

### ***Journalists' Role***

Many of the estimated 37,000 French journalists see themselves more as intellectuals than as reporters. Instead of merely reporting events, they often try to analyze developments and influence readers with their own biases. At the same time, many political or economic journalists are educated at the same elite schools as the politicians they cover, including "Sciences Po" (Paris' Political Science Institute). They form a relatively small community with ties between government leaders and newsrooms, regularly denounced in essays and columns on French journalism. There are "strong interferences" between journalism and politics in France and "two thirds of the French" think that journalists are not independent; this is "a French more than Latin particularity," noted one of the best experts on the industry (France 24, 4 April 2008). As a consequence, many reporters do not necessarily regard their primary role as being that of a watchdog or a counterweight to the political and economic powers in place.



*This cartoon is representative of how French journalists see the ideological and economic autonomy of their trade: "Super independent... I'm unemployed" (rue89.com, 11 February 2008).*

especially the freelancers. About one fourth of the 37,000 press card holders are identified as freelancers or jobless, for instance. Regional dailies usually fill their local pages thanks to village correspondents who are very poorly paid. As a consequence, most of these contributors are amateur reporters whose main income comes from another profession or from a pension earned from a former, non-media-related activity.

### **Media Freedom**

The laws of France guarantee freedom of speech and of the press. In theory, reporters have free access to official documents -- with some exceptions -- and they have the right not to disclose sources. US independent watchdog and advocacy group for democracy Freedom House gave France a rating of "free" in terms of political rights, civil liberties, and free press for the year 2006, the latest available rating. However, this liberty is somewhat constrained, mainly by France's restrictions on freedom of expression related to private information on politicians or related to extremist ideas. There is no equivalent of the US First Amendment in the French Constitution, and because of state regulation of the press, some newsrooms are searched by judges on a regular basis.

President Jacques Chirac's government had even been planning a law obliging media outlets to keep records of all activities related to their website for a minimum of three years and make them accessible to the police upon demand (*Liberation*, 25 April 2007). His successor Nicolas Sarkozy's government introduced a bill recognizing the right of journalists to protect sources while stating they may have to disclose names in special cases. This text has been widely criticized for "undermining the right to confidentiality," as these special cases are not clearly defined (AFP, 16 May 2008; *Le Monde*, 17 May 2008).

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In this context, the laws of the European Union that also apply often represent a necessary complementary safeguard. French judicial decisions have on several occasions been criticized at the EU level, as when the Human Rights European Court criticized French judges for having convicted two *L'Express* magazine journalists who had released information on a phone tapping scandal.

The French press is also culturally affected by an exaggerated respect for politicians, who can easily use the media for their political agendas, especially in the provinces. Government subsidies to newspapers through state advertising campaigns, for instance, also explain why some editors may have second thoughts before agreeing to investigate a town hall or a local assembly. In addition, French journalists have traditionally been reluctant to report stories harmful to key politicians for fear of losing access to government sources.

The executive branch is able to influence the media by such means as direct and indirect subsidies, allocation of the advertising budgets of state-owned companies, and cronyism in the banking sector or in the conglomerates which have invested in the press. When President Nicolas Sarkozy did his first interview on 20 June 2007, aired by TF1, the private channel's top anchor presented the evening newscast from the Elysee Palace. Media observers saw this as an illustration of French journalism's submission to political power. But the same commentators were less negative when Sarkozy announced in a radio interview that his government would be directly involved in helping the printed press to recover from its structural crisis (RTL, 27 May 2008).

A particularity of France is that many important media are also controlled by groups which are prominent in businesses such as arms manufacturing, aerospace, luxury goods, construction, transport, and retail. This creates a self-censorship culture in newsrooms, as they cannot avoid covering these industries. As a consequence, some major issues are often hidden or postponed for publication until they appear on blogs and websites, or in arguably independent outlets like satirical weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné*.

This concentration of media ownership, which reduces editorial pluralism, has been increasingly threatening the independence of journalists. Construction and mobile phone conglomerate Bouygues controls TF1. Former defense group Lagardere, which still holds a strategic stake in the EADS [European Aeronautic Defense and Space Company] group, is now mostly present in the book publishing, distribution, press, and audiovisual sectors. It controls a third of the magazine market and mainstream radio Europe 1, and was until recently the owner of major regional dailies from Nice to Marseille. Military aircraft and software group Dassault and retail and luxury groups Pinault and LVMH, among others, also own influential media like daily *Le Figaro* or weekly *Le Point*. Much of the rest is controlled by large pan-European media companies like Italy's Mondadori (controlled by current Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi) and Germany's conglomerate Bertelsmann.

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Investigative journalism was still a relatively new phenomenon in the last decade in France. It continues to be portrayed negatively in many public debates, as it is often identified with gossip journalism because of a confusion created by so-called investigative journalists who work more as intermediaries for their sources than as initiators of their journalistic research. The political gossip and satirical weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné*, for instance, usually presented as an icon of French investigative journalism, is ideologically tied to the left, and has ignored major scandals involving some of its friends and sympathizers. In addition, though it is well written, "*Le Canard*" is far from being a model of rigor and long term, deep journalistic research.



*Newspapers' takeover: "The good news is that I'm not firing anybody... the bad is that you are becoming my mouthpieces" (rue89.com, 11 February 2008).*

Nevertheless, mainstream French papers like dailies *Le Monde*, *Liberation* and *Le Figaro* or weeklies *L'Express*, *Le Nouvel Observateur* or *Le Point*, have several times uncovered scandals in recent years, not only waiting for them to be broken in *Le Canard Enchaîné* or by news blogs and websites.

## Television

French viewers prefer to be informed by their evening television newscasts, which are described as a religious gathering with the nickname "the great mass" ("la grande messe"). The daily news broadcasts at 8 pm on TF1 and France 2, the two most popular channels, attract more than 40 percent of the viewers every evening.

Until 1987, when the first channel TF1 was sold to a group of shareholders led by Bouygues, which was then mainly a construction group, television broadcasting was a state monopoly in France. In an effort to protect the independence of the media from political pressure, the government has also put virtually all the television networks under the supervision of an independent administrative body, currently called the Higher Council for Broadcast Media (Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel, or CSA). One of CSA's missions is to make sure that the main parties have equitable access to political programs. Other constraints imposed by this institution, whose president is appointed by the French executive, include the directive that at least 60 percent of programs broadcast by French terrestrial channels must be of EU origin, and over 16 percent of their revenues must come from French productions (*Le Monde*, 27 February 2007; See also OSC Analysis "France: Television Regulations, Quotas and Protectionism Shape Programming," AFF20060809334001).

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There are now three public traditional terrestrial television stations, France 2, France 3, and France 5 (which shares air time with the Franco-German cultural station Arte). There are also three commercial stations, TF1, Bertelsmann-controlled M6, and Vivendi-controlled pay-TV Canal Plus (with free access for all French TV viewers several hours a day). These six terrestrial channels attract 85 percent of the total television audience. The French television industry has been particularly affected by the exponential growth in its number of players, from only three public television stations in the mid-1980s to more than 100 public and private broadcast or rebroadcast outlets, most of them accessible through satellite and cable, and since March 2005, through Terrestrial Digital Television, called TNT (for Television Numérique Terrestre).

As to foreign coverage, the United States is by far the foreign country about which French viewers are most informed. French speaking areas like those in Africa or Haiti are relatively under-covered. This is illustrated by a chart based on the number of topics treated in TV newscasts during the year 2005.



*Each country's size is proportional to the number of related reports in 2005 TV newscasts (Telerama, 17 June 2006).*

### **Commercial Television Stations**

Overall, privately owned channels attract on average most of the viewers.

**TF1** Civil engineering group Bouygues is TF1's major shareholder, with 43 percent of the stakes. It also owns part of nuclear energy group Areva and controls one of France's three mobile phone networks. TF1 is the most popular French channel, watched on average by close to one third of the viewers. It is a general interest station that carries a high proportion of sports, games, variety shows, and films. Its 8 to 8:40 pm newscast attracts over 25 percent of French television viewers, but this share has been declining in recent years. This has induced TF1's chairman to replace the legendary anchor Patrick Poivre d'Avor with a younger generation journalist, Laurence Ferrari, starting in August 2008 (*Le Monde*, 10 June 2008). France's first channel also airs a Sunday program *7 a 8*, which is the equivalent of CBS' *60 Minutes*.

TF1 benefits from its number one position and attracts 55 percent of television advertising (*Le Monde*, 23 February 2008). This is considered to be a "cathodic abnormality," as in practically no other democratic country is a channel so powerful (*Liberation*, 11 April 2007). TF1 has

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relatively missed out on the Internet revolution, however, as it failed to turn into an Internet giant, its website *tfl.fr* being qualified as a "web dwarf" (*Le Figaro*, 16 April 2007).

**M6** TF1's main competitor in the private sector is M6, the other television network funded solely by advertising. M6 attracts between 10 and 15 percent of viewers on average and belongs to the Bertelsmann group. Unlike TF1, which was already dominant and state-owned before being acquired by Bouygues in the mid 1980s, M6 was launched two decades ago. The success of its "reality television" series has helped it to seriously challenge the supremacy of TF1 since the start of this century, in particular with *Loft Story*, the French version of *Big Brother*. M6 focuses on drama and music, too, and is therefore widely popular among viewers under 35. But it also airs an influential news magazine on France's political and economic affairs.

**Canal Plus** Launched a little before M6, in 1984, Canal Plus is the oldest of the independent channels, owned by Vivendi, and the initiator of pay TV in France. Then president Francois Mitterrand gave the impulse for the creation of France's fourth channel and appointed one of his closest friends at its head. It airs programs with free access during prime time, mostly newscasts and political or entertainment talk shows. Canal Plus has been for two decades one of the prides of the French audio-video sector, with over 5 million subscribers according to its website ([www.canalplusgroup.com](http://www.canalplusgroup.com), 19 June 2008). The Canal Plus subscription TV concept has exported its success to Africa and to other European countries, such as Spain, Poland, Belgium, and the Scandinavian countries.

In France, Canal Plus is renowned for its movies (many of which it produces) and for its coverage of sporting events. It also broadcasts one of France's most famous television programs, *Les Guignols de l'Info*, freely accessible to non subscribers and seen by 2.8 million viewers every week evening (*Liberation*, 5 July 2007). These puppets irreverently parody leading political and cultural figures, with dialogue as content-rich as printed media political columns. (See also OSC Analysis "Analysis: French TV Satire Offers Negative Portrayal of US Foreign Policy," FEA20060721025534.) During the last presidential race, Canal Plus launched *Dimanche Plus*, an investigative magazine on the campaign which has also been highly regarded for its journalistic depth.

Orange, France's telecommunication giant, is also planning to become a major player in television through Internet and satellite broadcasting, creating great concern among private television groups, especially Canal Plus (*Liberation*, 2 July 2008).

### **Public Television Stations**

There are four public TV networks financed through the license fees imposed on TV-set owners and through advertising. The France Televisions group is mainly composed of general interest stations France 2 and France 3. Their smaller budget affiliate France 5 has managed to create highly respected programs on French society and politics. France Televisions also includes France 4, an urban-cultural station accessible through satellite and TNT, and France O, the

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*Daily Liberation ran this cover page "Public TV: France Sarkovision," the day after President Sarkozy announced that he wanted to appoint the president of the group controlling public television channels (26 June 2008).*

French overseas territories television. They overall have a 2.7 billion euro budget, with 1.9 billion coming from mandatory taxes for TV-set owners and the rest, 800 million, from advertising revenues.

President Sarkozy proposed in January 2008 to abolish advertising on public television, like BBC in Britain, but this project is hard to implement and is "proving unpopular." His announcement, a few months later, that he would appoint France Televisions' president, was widely criticized. However, as pointed out by a *Liberation* columnist, he is not the first French president who wants to have a better control of public television, and they all failed in influencing public opinion to their advantage (*The Economist*, 23 February 2008; *Le Monde*, 27 June 2008; *Liberation*, 3 July 2008).

**France 2** After TF1 was privatized, France 2, which was France's historical "second channel," has become the most important national, general-interest public station. Its mission is to inform, entertain, and educate, in particular through its newscasts which have

unsuccessfully been challenging TF1's over the past two decades. France 2 attracts close to 20 percent of viewers on average and airs the highest rated political talk shows.

**France 3** Originally established as the channel of France's 22 metropolitan regions, France 3 broadcasts national news as well as local news bulletins and programs from its bases established in the major provincial cities. Thanks to a strengthening of its national identity and to the quality of its programs, France 3 has steadily been gaining larger audiences and currently attracts about 14 percent of viewers. Its evening news program, the so-called *19-20*, which is aired during the hour before TF1's and France 2's top newscasts, has the highest audience ratings for the early evening.

**France 5 and Arte** France 5 is a channel devoted to education and culture during the day on terrestrial TV and has about a 5 percent audience share. However, it airs influential political programs and documentaries on Sundays. Like the highly respected week-day afternoon magazine *C'est dans l'Air* (*It's in the Air*) on current affairs, these shows are freely accessible on [www.france5.fr](http://www.france5.fr) for at least one week after being broadcast.

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Franco-German channel Arte takes over its air time in the evening and during the night, while France 5 continues its own programming through satellite and cable. Arte -- which is also broadcast in Germany on cable and attracts around 3 percent of viewers in France -- specializes in thematic programs consisting of films, cultural debates, and documentaries, or historical magazines. Both have modest viewing figures (over 6 percent for France 5 and over 3 percent for Arte), but these are steadily increasing and attract the influential elite.

### ***Cable and Satellite Television***

More than 15 million French homes have a cable (13 percent), satellite dish (25 percent), broadband Internet (17 percent) or terrestrial digital (45 percent) television connection according to a study released by CSA ([www.csa.fr](http://www.csa.fr), March 2008). The number of homes not limited to traditional television connections has tripled since 2001 (then 5.1 million homes, 61 percent with satellite and 39 percent with cable). About 4 million subscribe to the basic service provided by Canal Sat, the multi-channel package managed by Canal Plus. This allows access to the terrestrial channels, news and thematic channels, and foreign stations including BBC World, CNN International, Spain's TVE International, Italy's RAI, and Germany's ZDF.

***Satellite Providers*** About 90 channels are available through the satellite "bouquet" Canal Sat, which is controlled by Canal Plus and which merged in 2006 with its TF1-controlled competitor TPS. This provides access not only to the six main terrestrial channels but also to scores of French and foreign special interest stations, including specialized subscription or pay-per-view TV channels featuring sports, music, films, and ethnic content. TF1's domestic news channel LCI, along with its competitors i-Tele and BFM TV, are also among the most known even though their audience is lower than 1 percent on average.

Canal Sat provides its subscribers, in addition to the news channels, thematic stations including sports broadcasting with very popular and costly soccer matches. Cable film channels are also available, as are a wide variety of Arabic television stations, including North African channels. Mediametrie, the organization which establishes a barometer for TV and Internet audiences, estimates that sports channel Eurosport (TF1 group) is the most viewed one with just 1.4 percent audience share ([www.mediametrie.fr](http://www.mediametrie.fr), 11 March 2008). But it is admitted that with access to shows through the Internet, cable, and satellite, it is impossible to assess clearly and accurately what the market shares are.

***Domestic News Channels*** Created in 1994, La Chaine Info (LCI), is France's first and leading 24-hour news channel, broadcasting a full-news program every half hour as well as continuous interviews and debates on political issues and cultural events. LCI is owned by TF1, and both newsrooms have recently started to merge (*Le Figaro*, 18 June 2008).

LCI and is available on cable, satellite, and partially on the Internet. Since the turn of the century, it has been joined by two challengers, i-Tele (Canal Plus group) and BFM TV. LCI has an annual budget of 52 million euros, and i-Tele 42 million. BFM TV is a "low cost" station launched on

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TNT, with only a 27-million-euro budget (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 2007; *Le Monde*, 4 June 2008). It was created by the ambitious and recently formed NextRadioTV group, which is keen to implement synergies between its TV station and its two radio stations, RMC (political and sport discussions) and BFM (business). Both i-Tele and BFM TV have been challenging LCI's supremacy since 2005, especially as they became freely accessible through TNT.

The parliamentary news channels La Chaîne Parlementaire-Assemblée Nationale and Public Senat air political programs and interviews produced by two newsrooms controlled by the National Assembly and the Senate, respectively. They are free access with a non subscription satellite antenna and on the Internet (*lcpn.fr* and *publicsenat.fr*).

**International News Channels** The French state has been increasing the country's international television broadcasting presence since the end of 2006, with the creation of France 24 at then president Jacques Chirac's initiative. Competing with CNN International, Qatar's Al-Jazirah in English, BBC World, and about 85 news channels, it broadcasts news programs in English in addition to its French version and its newly launched Arabic Internet programs. It should be available in the whole US territory soon through satellite and cable, after having been accessible in Washington, DC and in limited areas of New York City (*Le Figaro*, 23 June 2008).

France 24 is jointly owned by France Televisions and by TF1, and has a budget of 90 million euros, much smaller than its Anglo-Saxon or Qatari competitors'. France 24 allows the French state to have its voice heard worldwide. An investigative article on France 24 and its peers noted, "what is presented as an 'information battle' is less a confrontation between different practices of journalism than an image issue" (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 2007). Much of France 24's programming is devoted to hard news and to debates on major international issues, with the contribution of numerous correspondents who work for other media, including state press agency Agence France Presse (AFP) and Radio France Internationale (RFI). Guests who appear on France 24's programs are generally French or foreign journalists and academics based in France.

TV5 broadcasts eight versions to 160 million homes in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, North and South America, Asia, and Oceania over satellite and cable networks. It provides a selection of French public television programs combined with programming from its peers from Belgium, Switzerland, and Canada. It has a budget of 70 million euros (2007), and its ownership -- divided between France with 66 percent, and Quebec/Canada, Switzerland, and Belgium for the rest -- is reflected in the aired newscasts. TV5 news programming broadcasts around the clock and to all five continents.

Sarkozy's government has announced its intention to put this channel under the same umbrella as RFI and France 24, in a holding company. RFI's and France 24's newsrooms may merge and work on common projects with their TV5 peer, according to an announcement made by the French Foreign Ministry. The idea is to have their newsrooms merge to reduce costs and avoid duplication, but it has sparked protest from Paris' French-language partners and the project is still under discussion ([www.diplomatie.gouv.fr](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr), 29 April 2008).

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Euronews, the multi-language news channel with no anchor appearing on screen, is based near Lyon in France, but its content is not specifically French. Its Arabic version is being launched in the summer of 2008, making it the eighth language of its 200 journalist newsroom.

***Terrestrial Digital Broadcasting (Television Numerique Terrestre, TNT)*** The traditional terrestrial channels have been more affected by competition from the 18 new free access TNT channels, joined in 2008 by four Paris-region local stations. The introduction of this digital television in 2005 turned out to be a real success as 7 million households were equipped, up from 1.5 million two years earlier, and all French terrestrial television will be digital by 2011 (www.csa.fr; *Liberation*, 31 May 2008).

TF1, France 2, France 3, and M6 are by far the most watched through this system, but most viewers go to entertainment stations broadcasting old films and television series. TNT also provides a group of pay-TV stations including Canal Plus, LCI, and Eurosport. One of the highest profile TNT-only stations is the Bollere-owned news and entertainment station Direct 8, whose audience share is 0.7 percent (www.mediametrie.fr, 2 June 2008).

## **Radio**

The French constantly perceive radio to be the most credible media news source, according to a yearly study published by Catholic daily *La Croix* and established by TNS-Sofres polling institute (*la-croix.com*, 21 January 2008). Talk radio has experienced a resurgence since the turn of the century, with the successful re-launching of the Monaco-based Radio Monte Carlo, now called RMC and controlled by NextRadioTV. French radios are under the supervision of the same independent administrative body as television, CSA, and operate under the same constraints. Thus, at least 60 percent of programs broadcast by French radio stations must be of EU origin, and two-thirds of these programs must derive from France. There is a quota for minimum French songs aired.

Despite such restrictions and because of the access given to FM channels in the early 1980s, a wealth of radio programs have appeared in France. The number of radio stations is difficult to estimate, but the most prominent are solid brand name national broadcasters. RTL, Europe 1, RMC, France Inter, and France Culture are the five well identified radio networks, mostly heard on FM. They provide influential news programs, mainly listened to in the morning. Other radio stations are mostly music stations, some affiliated with the national broadcasters, and about 600 non-profit radio channels with a very limited and local audience (AFP, 15 June 2008).

### ***Commercial Radio Stations***

The Bertelsmann controlled RTL, originally based in Luxembourg and called Radio Luxembourg, is the dominant radio in France with 13 percent audience share and close to 7

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million listeners every day. Like its challenger, the Lergardere group-owned Europe 1 (less than 8 percent share), it airs widely listened to news programs, political commentary, and interviews, which every weekday morning set France's national agendas. Europe 1's political interview at 8:20 am by Jean-Pierre Elkabbach, an omnipresent journalist over the past four decades, is often considered to be a major political event, like RTL's interview by Jean-Michel Apathie at 7:50 am. Both stations also air political talk shows in the evening, before the main TV newscasts take over most of the broadcast audience.

Long seen as the "average Joe radio" ("doorman radio" in French), RTL is proud of its popular roots. It benefits from a 20-25 percent advertising revenue premium for being the leader. When in 2007, stores and supermarket chains were authorized to advertise on television after four decades of prohibition, RTL's managers minimized the negative effects for radio with the slogan "no ad campaign can be conceived without RTL" (*Le Monde*, 31 August 2006; *Liberation*, 20 April 2007).

The more and more influential RMC (with 6 percent audience share) is also news focused, but in a more interactive, popular way. Sud Radio is another general news and entertainment station, broadcast from Toulouse, but it has a mere 1 percent audience share. Its influence is limited to the Southwest of France, like RMC's ancestor Radio Monte Carlo, which used to broadcast mostly from Monaco and listened to in the Southeast.

### ***Public Radio Stations***

France's public radio system is grouped under the umbrella of Radio France, which manages a network of five national radio stations and about 50 local ones. France Inter, whose format is similar to RTL's and Europe 1's, attracts 5 million listeners with its 10 percent audience share. This is slightly more than its news-only affiliate France Info, listened to by 4.5 million people. This station, launched in 1987, had lost much of its audience in recent years because of the Internet, the TV news channels, and the invasion of free news dailies in major cities. It seems to have recovered, however, and it is now counting on interactivity with listeners through its website, *france-info.com* (*Liberation*, 4 May 2007; *Le Monde*, 17 April 2008).

France Culture is a cultural radio, with most of its programs dedicated to a minority of French interested in non-mainstream literature, theater, and cinema. With slightly over 1 percent audience share, it is an elite station, not a real equivalent of US public radio station NPR, which could be positioned halfway between France Culture and France Inter. However, France Culture's morning news program, between 7 and 9 am, is of more general interest, with political commentaries by high profile commentators who often write in the three main national newspapers. Its Sunday program *L'Esprit Public*, which presents a debate between four high profile political observers on the two or three main national or international issues of the week, is influential, too. France's cultural radio station is also particularly appreciated for covering international affairs more deeply and widely than its peers.

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Radio France has created several local radio stations, based mostly in the main provincial towns, in response to competition from a host of new FM radio stations. Like France Televisions' channels, they are all financed by a licensing fee and sometimes by the state through advertising not aired on private radio stations. Radio France has also launched a project called "Diversity," aiming at promoting young journalists from "non favored socio-professional backgrounds," many of whom are of Maghrebi and African descent.

Radio France Internationale (RFI), which aims at an overseas audience in several languages including English and Spanish, is mostly heard in French-speaking African countries. It is also listened to in Paris, accessible in French on the FM dial. RFI is mainly funded separately from the Radio France stations, with a specific Ministry of Foreign Affairs budget due to its international broadcast mission. As already mentioned, its newsroom is due to merge with France 24's.

## **Print Media**

France has a sophisticated press and a wide range of publications, with about 65 mainstream dailies (including 12 nationals) and 600 mainstream periodicals (including 435 magazines). Their annual total print-run amounts to 4.7 billion copies. In total, including trade and specialized newspapers, it is estimated that there are about 3600 publications in France.

Unless otherwise noted, circulation figures are computed for 2006 by OJD, the organization in charge of controlling and disseminating circulation data ([www.ojd.com](http://www.ojd.com)). The statistics for 2007, the year of the last presidential elections, can be misleading due to the boost provided by the interest in the campaign. Readership figures for print media are provided by the TNS Sofres polling institute, which has yet to release 2007 figures ([www.tns-sofres.com](http://www.tns-sofres.com)).

The situation differs considerably from one type of publication to another. National general news dailies, for instance, generally compete in the same market while their regional peers most of the time have a monopoly or a duopoly in their areas. Most papers have been making significant efforts to modernize their lay-outs and compete with websites, free dailies (which have been handed out in France's main town centers since 2002), and broadcast news. Many papers have also tried to appeal to a broader readership through less ideological news coverage, and the fact that they have lost fewer readers, reflected in a lower decline of their sales figures, suggests they have been relatively successful.

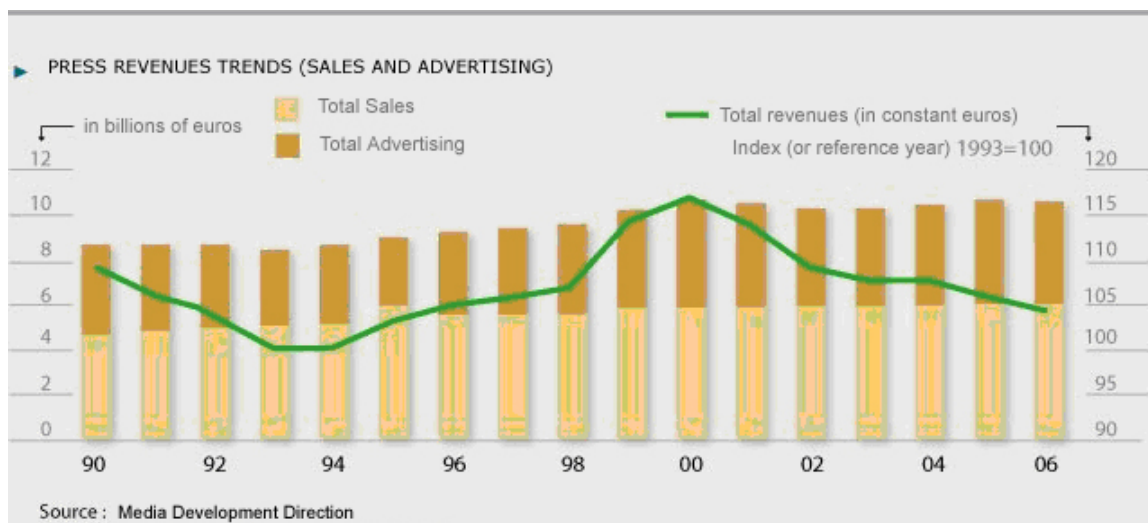
Magazines are relatively highly performing in France, including economic-financial and general news periodicals. They make up 45 percent of the total mainstream press circulation (versus only 12 percent for the national dailies and 37 percent for the regionals). Press observers often see this as a sign of dynamism, though it is also due to the poor level of readership of dailies. There are large numbers of mainstream special interest publications such as those that focus on women, home, entertainment, and leisure issues. They provide coverage which in other democracies can

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be found in special sections of general news dailies. Even so, according to France's National Institute of Statistics and Studies (INSEE), 65 percent of French persons never or rarely ever read a magazine. The statistics are much worse for the dailies, taking into account the fact that they are supposed to be closer to the average citizen: 80 percent of French never or seldom read a national paper, and 47 percent never or seldom read a regional (according to an INSEE estimation for the year 2005, at [www.insee.fr](http://www.insee.fr)).

### ***Print Media's Declining Revenues***

The print media's total revenue, when controlled for inflation, has decreased by 11 percent from 2000 to 2006 to 10.6 billions euros, according to an annual study released by the Media Development Direction (DDM), a Prime Ministerial office devoted to the state subsidies allocated to the press ([www.ddm.gouv.fr](http://www.ddm.gouv.fr)). This is despite efforts to gather income from other sources like publishing and the Internet, which now represent 13 percent of their sales. The increase in subscriptions, which provide 39 percent of their income, versus 30 percent in 1990, did not help much, given that subscription fees are often at prices that are highly discounted or include costly new subscriber incentives. For the national general newspapers, from 1990 to 2006, both circulation and income have decreased by about 15 percent. Their revenue is about half of the 3 billion earned by the regional press, which has increased by 13 percent from its lowest point in 1993. The free news dailies, which have been affecting paid papers' sales in big cities, increased their revenue from 10 million euros when they started in Paris to over 136 million in 2006.



*This chart shows -- in billions of euros (left) -- print media's total income from advertising (dark) and from sales (light). The line -- from the years 1990 to 2006 -- shows the evolution of the combined income in constant euros, with 1993 being the reference, at 100, for the scale on the right ([www.ddm.gouv.fr](http://www.ddm.gouv.fr)).*

The French press also suffers from a severe shortage of equity capital, though it has had to invest massively to modernize and survive. Rises in the price of paper and distribution costs have increased the cost to the consumer. French dailies are relatively more expensive than their

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counterparts in neighboring countries, despite state assistance. *Le Monde* costs 1.30 euros as compared to about 1 euro for *The Times* of London and Italy's *Corriere della Sera* on weekdays. In Germany, however, quality dailies are much more content-rich and sell at a higher price, at 1.40 euros for *Die Welt* or even 1.60 euros for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. The costs to the reader cannot explain why French dailies' circulation is relatively very low.

French general newspapers are in crisis, confronted with structural problems, from high production costs to weak distribution networks (*Liberation*, 29 April 2008). Paris has been suffering a "kiosk hemorrhage" in the past decade, their number decreasing from 400 to under 270. In the 60 million strong metropolitan France, there are only 30,000 newspaper stands -- including convenience stores -- down from 36,000 in the then less populated country of 1980.

This is four times fewer than in Germany, which has a population of 80 million (*Le Figaro*, 3 and 19 March 2007; *Le Monde*, 1 November 2006, 8 February 2007 and 14 June 2008). Anachronistic close-shop unions also represent constant threats to publishers who want to escape from post-World War II practices. Like *Liberation's* Laurent Joffrin in a 2007 radio interview, they are frightened of discussing this question publicly (France Culture, 2 July 2007). Other anachronistic practices have been lifted recently, however, like the four-decade-long ban on retail company advertising on television. It had allowed this source of revenue to flow into print media outlets.

Germany's Axel Springer group was planning to launch a major, never before achieved, 120 million euro project for a French version of its flagship paper *Bild*, as it did in Poland with its successful *Fakt*. Behind *Bild France*, there was a belief that there is an investigative news gap in the French provinces in particular, which would have allowed Axel Springer to reach a circulation target of one million. These areas are usually covered by regional dailies whose articles on local power players are very poor and complicit. Axel Springer finally gave up, however, officially because of France's lack of newspaper stands. But some have commented that the reason for this withdrawal was mainly political, local politicians not wanting to be investigated by a powerful paper. Unions and French privacy laws may have been additional reasons (*Le Monde*, 7 July 2007; *lepoint.fr*, 5 July 2007).

The lack of introspection into what readers need to know and how to enhance the content's added value may also explain the French printed media's weakness. Very often, self-criticisms of the printed press published by French newspapers turn out to be more informative on American press scandals, from Iraq war coverage to "censorship" cases, than on issues with the French press (*Telerama*, 5 July 2006; *Liberation*, 29 May 2007). Daily *Liberation's* website made a notable exception when it published the comments of a media analyst saying that newspaper sales are low in France because there are "not enough original reports, not enough in depth investigative journalism, not enough impertinence" (*liberation.fr*, 27 May 2008).



### ***Leading Influential Dailies***

There are about 60 general news daily titles in France, with a total circulation of about 2 billion copies per year, the most popular national paper being *L'Equipe*, which has a monopoly on sport. Most come out in the morning, though prominent daily *Le Monde* is an afternoon paper. On the whole, the leading papers no longer espouse as strong a political view in their reporting as they did in the past. *L'Humanite*, for instance, historically linked to and financed by the Communist Party, started to appoint non-Communist reporters at the turn of the century, and in non-election years, it has been seen as having a soft left-leaning approach. The formerly revolutionary or extreme left *Liberation* is now just a moderate progressive paper. However, on some highly controversial issues like the beginning of the Iraq war, the rise of the far right National Front party, or the 2005 referendum on the EU constitution, mainstream papers have been accused of being too one-sided.

The leading high-quality daily newspapers are *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, and *Liberation*, whose editorials and reports can have global impact. They have an important influence not only on public opinion but also on the other media. However, they are read by fewer than 5 million persons, hardly more than 10 percent of the reading population. Their number of copies sold is also lower than one million in total, which represents less than half of what their counterparts sell in the United Kingdom, a country with as many inhabitants as France.

***Le Monde*** Though traditionally considered the French newspaper of record, *Le Monde* is no longer the most widely read national daily, with a paid circulation of 312,000 in France. Its sales exceed 355,000 copies in total, with the inclusion of 5,000 free copies and 39,000 sold abroad. *Le Monde's* position as the preferred paper of France's elite is now being closely challenged by the more right-leaning *Le Figaro*, which sells 10,000 more copies nationally. *Le Monde's* paid circulation in its home market has decreased from 361,000 in 2002 to 312,000 in 2006. However, it is still by far the most read of the three influential dailies, with an estimated readership of 1.9 million in 2006.

*Le Monde* has a solid place in French history, founded after the Second World War at the initiative of General Charles de Gaulle to replace a daily which had been collaborating with the occupying Nazis. It is often the center of public debate and sets the agenda for TV news programs. Traditionally close to the Socialist Party, *Le Monde* has a moderate left orientation, but like many mainstream liberal-left newspapers worldwide, it has tried to appear less ideological in order to appeal to a wider readership. *Le Monde's* op-ed section expresses diverse points of view, though rarely from the far left and never from the far right.

*Le Monde* is the flagship of the group of the same name, which has been in financial trouble in recent years. Its general manager, ousted in mid 2007, was trapped in a costly acquisition spree purchasing magazines and regionals, which did not provide the expected synergies and were recently sold. Groupe Le Monde's main shareholders are an association representing its journalists (33 percent of the shares), Lagardere (17 percent), and Spanish media conglomerate

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Prisa (15 percent). Both Lagardere and Prisa have plans to increase their stake in Groupe Le Monde (*Liberation*, 10 January 2008).

Website *lemonde.fr* is one of the most visited in France, and it offers most of its articles from its last two or three editions. According to Mediametrie, the reference institute measuring the audience of electronic media, it is the most frequently accessed news site in France with more than three million visitors per month ([www.mediametrie.fr](http://www.mediametrie.fr), 30 June 2008).

**Le Figaro** With a total circulation of 338,000 and 1.2 million readers, *Le Figaro* is the other reference daily in France. It has managed to attract op-ed and in-house columnists who in past decades would have been willing to publish their ideas only in *Le Monde*. *Le Figaro* was founded in 1826 as a satirical weekly and several years later became a general news daily with a moderate orientation, and has been one of France's leading dailies since the end of the 1940s. Traditionally close to conservative parties like those of Presidents Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy, it has a right-of-center orientation which has softened compared to the years of Francois Mitterrand's Socialist-Communist governments.

*Le Figaro's* paid circulation in France has decreased less than *Le Monde's*, from 345,000 in 2002 to 322,000 in 2006. Its financial situation is also sounder, as it attracts more advertisers and announcers than more left leaning papers. Its economic, literary, and other supplements like *Le Figaro Magazine* in the weekend edition (1.9 million estimated readership) are widely read.

The paper was taken over by military aircraft manufacturer Dassault in 2004, as its chairman Serge Dassault wanted to use "*Le Fig*" as a tool to defend his pro-free-market ideas. The chief editor he tapped from economic daily *Les Echos*, Nicolas Beytout, had managed to keep Dassault's interference into the content of the paper more discrete. But since the end of 2007, *Le Figaro's* newsroom has been presided over by Etienne Mougeotte, a long time general manager of TF1 who has proven to be a strong Sarkozy government ally. *Le Figaro* is not a reliable source on Dassault group's activities, as shown by a full page article on the delivery of the Rafale aircraft to the French military, which looked like paid advertising (26 June 2006).

Website *lefigaro.fr* offers a wide selection of its articles for several weeks after publication; its audience is close to that of *lemonde.fr*.

**Liberation** With a combined paid and unpaid circulation of 135,000 in 2006 and 800,000 readers, *Liberation* is France's other leading center-left national daily. Created three decades ago with the endorsement of philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, this is the last French national daily successfully launched. After its initial extreme left image, *Liberation* became a moderate left daily in the 1980s, opening its pages to stock market performance, and it is still now a left leaning publication appreciated for its social-cultural pages.

*Liberation* was recently taken over by Edouard de Rothschild, a member of the family with a brand name for capitalism. In spite of this, in the past presidential election, Rothschild's paper

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openly supported the Socialist Party candidate Segolene Royal, and he resisted Sarkozy's pressure to be more sympathetic to him. In fact, the paper's chief editor Laurent Joffrin is arguably the most outspoken opponent of President Sarkozy in the media. At the beginning of 2007, the founder and president of *Liberation's* Italian equivalent, *La Repubblica*, joined Rothschild and became a major *Liberation* shareholder.

*Liberation's* paid circulation in France has decreased by 18 percent, from 156,000 in 2002 to 128,000 in 2006. Its readership has also declined steadily in recent years, but it has been consistently influential during the three decades of its existence. The daily's website *liberation.fr*, which is one of the most popular in France, provides its articles for several weeks after publication.

### ***Popular Dailies***

These newspapers characterized as popular dailies are not generally influential among France's political elites but have a wide readership and thus can influence public opinion.

***Le Parisien*** The star of the popular press is *Le Parisien* in the Paris region, created just after World War II by Emilien Amaury, who fought the occupying Nazis. With its national edition launched in the early 1990s and entitled *Aujourd'hui en France*, in addition to its ten Paris region versions, the daily has a combined total circulation of 518,000 (343,000 and 175,000 respectively) in France and abroad. Originally Gaullist and therefore conservative, it successfully shifted at the end of the century into a more nonpolitical, marketing driven approach. The paper developed a more local, close-to-the-reader strategy, for instance, with short articles on daily life and current affairs. However, this Amaury family group daily is far from being as aggressive, provocative, and intrusive as the Anglo-Saxon tabloids.

*Le Parisien* and *Aujourd'hui en France* have a total national paid circulation of 508,000 and 2.1 million readers. With more readers than *Le Monde*, it has become the second most popular national daily after the sport paper *L'Equipe*, also owned by Amaury. Its website *leparisien.fr* offers limited access to its articles.

***France-Soir*** In contrast, circulation of the news daily *France-Soir* has fallen from 1.5 million in 1955 to 35,000 in 2006. Its adoption of a tabloid format in the late 1990s did not give it a new chance to regain a more loyal readership. After decades of instability with successive owners, it was taken over by a lawyer and developer who also wants to invest in digital TV. The website *francesoir.fr* offers a wide selection of its articles.

### ***Opinion Dailies***

Newspapers aligned with a religion or a party, very much in evidence before World War II, have now virtually disappeared. Only the Communist Party affiliated daily *L'Humanite* and the leading Catholic daily *La Croix* have a significant readership, and their ideological leanings are

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now far from reflected in all the content they publish. Still, this helps them to differentiate themselves from other general news dailies and to qualify for specific state subsidies to defend their freedom of opinion (2 million euros received in 2004).

***L'Humanite*** Founded in 1904 by Jean Jaures, the historical father of French socialism, *L'Humanite* has been an organ of the French Communist Party (PCF) since the 1920s. The electoral setbacks the PCF have experienced since the 1980s and the fall of communism, coupled with the general decline in the print press, led to a reduced readership (330,000 in 2006) and circulation (55,000, which is three times less than in the 1970s). Its Sunday supplement *L'Humanite Dimanche* sells 80,000 copies, in great part thanks to the help of PCF sympathizers and volunteer vendors. Since *Liberation* turned pro-free market two decades ago, *L'Humanite* has had a niche for itself among all the national dailies.

Due to financial difficulties, the paper underwent a radical transformation of its structure and ownership at the beginning of this century. Though mostly owned by PCF members and readers associations, in 2001 it started accepting private investors' money, including capitalist groups who now have a minority stake. Investors include TF1 television (Bouygues group), L'Argardere, and the Caisse d'Epargne [Savings Bank]. The PCF retained some of the paper's shares, and anti-globalization leader Jose Bove is among its official endorsers and board members. *L'Humanite's* website *humanite.presse.fr* is very user-friendly since it offers free access to its archives since 1990.

***La Croix*** The Catholic daily *La Croix* is the loss-making flagship of the largest religious press group in France, Bayard Presse, which also publishes successful periodicals aimed at children, teenagers, and seniors. Founded in 1880 and ultimately owned by an Assumptionist congregation, *La Croix* has a total circulation of 107,000 and 381,000 estimated readers. It is appreciated for its coverage of international and social issues, and its op-ed columns are open to views that are not only Catholic. The daily has a progressive leaning, following Vatican II and favoring ecumenical dialogue. *La Croix* is in reality more of a general daily newspaper than a religious paper, sold principally by subscription. Its website *la-croix.com* offers limited access to its articles.

***Present*** Among the opinion dailies, there is also one associated with the extreme right, *Present*. Founded in 1982, it is mostly composed of editorials or editorialized reports and has no recorded circulation. It is also not available in many outlets, but it provides a platform for people with traditional Catholic ideas, for the France which collaborated with the Nazis, and for those with openly anti-Islamic ideas. Its association with the extreme right and the National Front limited its ability to get state subsidies.

### ***Economic Dailies***

These newspapers, devoted to economic and financial issues, like *L'Equipe* in sports, are more flourishing than their general news peers.

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***Les Echos*** The most prominent daily economic paper, center-right and free market advocate *Les Echos*, has the largest circulation in its niche, with 137,000 copies in total and 685,000 estimated readers. Created at the beginning of the last century, it has been affiliated with its British equivalent *The Financial Times* for the past two decades, as both were part of the media conglomerate Pearson. *Les Echos* covers domestic and international financial, corporate, and macro-economic news, and it has a daily section of editorials open to a wide diversity of contributors, including politicians and intellectuals who comment on international events.

The Pearson Group decided to sell *Les Echos* in 2007, and it has been taken over by the LVMH luxury group, swapping it with the other economic daily, *La Tribune*, after a long and controversial battle. Bernard Arnault, the chairman of this conglomerate of brand names including Christian Dior and Louis Vuitton, also controls a business and classical music radio, Radio Classique, and financial weekly *Investir*. He is making his second attempt in this area with the acquisition of a profit making daily like *Les Echos*, and he appointed Nicolas Beytout -- who used to be the daily's editor-in-chief before joining *Le Figaro* -- to manage his media assets. The website *lesechos.fr* offers limited access to its articles.

***La Tribune*** The other major economic paper -- also with a center-right editorial bent -- is *La Tribune*. Launched in 1985 and owned by LVMH between 1993 and 2007, its total circulation is 91,000 and its estimated readership 411,000. Since it is a loss maker, the luxury group opted to swap it for *Les Echos* and sell it to the ambitious, recently created media group NextRadioTV. *La Tribune* carries less visible editorials than its leading competitor, but on several occasions it has been able to make a difference with the disclosure of sensitive news on France's corporations and economic policies. Its website *latribune.fr* offers limited access to its articles.

### ***Periodicals***

Weekly newspapers and magazines are flourishing in France, making up for the relative weakness of the dailies devoted to the same news fields. With 460 copies sold for every 1,000 inhabitants, France has the highest level of magazine readership in the world. One third of the French regularly or occasionally read this kind of publication, according to INSEE. News periodicals can be divided into three main categories: news magazines, satirical magazines, and economic magazines, in addition to the very successful television guides and women's, home, and leisure magazines. About two thirds of executives read a periodical according to Ipsos polling institute, cultural magazine *Telerama* leading among the weeklies with 12 percent of this niche, and economic *Capital* among the monthlies with 20 percent (*Le Figaro*, 10 July 2007).

France has five major news and general interest weeklies, *Le Point*, *L'Express*, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, *Marianne*, and *Valeurs Actuelles*. Entertainment weeklies *Paris Match* and *VSD*, satirical weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné*, and cultural magazine *Telerama* also provide news which can have a major impact on France's political life. They are generally in much better economic health than the general news dailies, and sell about 240 million copies in total. The most important weeklies are described below.

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## *News Magazines*

***L'Express*** With a 2006 total circulation of 547,000, including 434,000 paid in France, *L'Express* is the prominent center-right glossy magazine, featuring political, business, society, and cultural articles and commentary, with a 2 million estimated readership. *L'Express* was launched in the 1950s as a French version of *Time* magazine, expressing its opposition to French colonial policy in Algeria, and is now owned by Belgian media group Roularta. It features weekly columns by well-known commentators like President Mitterrand's former aide Jacques Attali, on domestic and international affairs. In the past, renowned contributors included Nobel Prize writer Francois Mauriac and philosopher Raymond Aron. Christophe Barbier, its editor-in-chief since 2006, is a brilliant and young (born in 1967) commentator who has two daily political programs on news television channel LCI. He may be the leading political columnist in upcoming decades. Its website *lexpress.fr* offers limited access to its articles.

***Le Nouvel Observateur*** *Le Nouvel Observateur* was created as a more progressive version of *L'Express* in the early 1960s, to serve as a platform for the French left. It has been a cultural and social reference point since then, its leading editor Jean Daniel still having a well read column with his peer Jacques Julliard. Both have also had a strong presence in broadcast media and on bookshelves in the past decades. When the Socialists took power in 1981, the so called "*Nouvel Obs*" had to relinquish its role as an opposition paper and thus lost readership.

More recently, however, the magazine has adapted to successfully attract young readers and has a total circulation of 544,000, comparable to that of *L'Express* but higher in France (513,000 sold copies). Its print version is estimated to be read by 2.6 million, a higher readership than *L'Express*'. The spring 2008 appointment to the head of the "*Obs*" of Denis Olivennes, a high-profile opinion leader and corporate manager, has been seen as a strong signal that the weekly will remain a prominent player in French politics (*Le Monde*, 6 June 2008). Its website *nouvelobs.com* carries limited selections of the magazine's articles.

***Le Point*** *Le Point* is also a spin-off of *L'Express*, created in the early 1970s by some of its journalists. With a 2006 total circulation of 409,000 and a 1.7 million estimated readership, *Le Point* is owned by French billionaire Francois Pinault, a friend of former French President Jacques Chirac and the owner of major retail store chains and luxury goods companies including Gucci. *Le Point*'s newsroom is led by the former leader of *Le Figaro*'s newsroom, Franz-Olivier Giesbert, a political writer whose father was American and who has columns and programs in all traditional media (print and broadcast). Giesbert had been criticized for betraying his "leftist values" when he moved from *Le Nouvel Observateur* to the conservative daily two decades ago. But his career change was above all an illustration that the political divide of France's mainstream political press has now become more rhetorical than a reality.

One of *Le Point*'s main columnists is high-profile intellectual Bernard-Henri Levy, who is close to Pinault. In the spring of 2007, political columnist Catherine Pegard left the weekly to join Nicolas Sarkozy's presidential cabinet. The website *lepoint.fr* offers limited access to its articles.

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**Marianne** *Marianne* was created in 1997 by Jean-Francois Kahn, a former reporter at weekly *L'Express* and another omnipresent political commentator over the past three decades. *Marianne* is an intellectual, left-leaning tabloid, with poor quality standards in reporting. But its columns on French politics and society are sometimes brilliant, reflecting views from the left but not exclusively so, with perspectives ranging from anti-globalization and anti-Americanism to French nationalism. *Marianne* has a 1.3 million estimated readership and does not disclose audited figures on circulation, which are said to be around 220,000 (*Le Monde*, 13 September 2005). Its website *marianne2.fr* offers limited access to its articles.

**Valeurs Actuelles** *Valeurs Actuelles* is a [French Republique] "republican values" newsmagazine taken over in 2006 by pharmacy mogul Pierre Fabre, after having been owned by military aircraft and software group Dassault for nearly a decade. Its reporting is poor and shallow, like *Marianne's*. It also publishes columns expressing a non-prevailing voice in French newsrooms, which are generally crowded with journalists who vote left. Its total circulation is 82,000, and there is no officially estimated number of readers available. Its website *valeursactuelles.com* offers limited access to its articles.

### **Political Satiricals**

**Le Canard Enchaîné** A satirical weekly founded in 1916, *Le Canard Enchaîné* maintains its independence by refusing to accept any advertising. As a political scandal and gossip discloser, it is often seen as a barometer of press freedom in France. But its independence is financial, not ideological, and the "*Canard*" -- as it is called -- suffers from poor investigative professional standards and has often been biased, taking sides with the left. Its long time editor-in-chief Claude Angeli is known as a political gossip who used to belong to the French Communist Party.

*Le Canard Enchaîné* is eight broadsheet pages long, with no color pictures but illustrated with many cartoons. It epitomizes an irreverent spirit towards the political class, through information provided by a network of informants who often have an agenda or by reporters who may work for other newspapers with no room for their denouncements. It criticizes abuses of power and denounces scandals, misappropriations of funds, and irregularities of all kinds, often more with irony than with substance and with a limited -- and therefore largely harmless -- scope. It makes wide use of puns and caricature but is written in very elegant French. The weekly sold 406,000 copies in 2006, according to unaudited, self-published figures, and its circulation has been constantly dropping in the past years (29 August 2007). Its website *canardenchaine.com* is very poor in content.

**Charlie Hebdo** *Charlie Hebdo* is the other satirical weekly, with a circulation of 70,000. It was founded and is still led by Philippe Val, a multi-talented writer and performer. Originally positioned on the extreme left, he has adopted a more balanced approach in recent years through his well read comments, sparking criticism from his past allies in the anti-globalization movement. In 2006, Val and *Charlie Hebdo* have also taken the lead, with wide-spread attention

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in Europe, supporting the Danish cartoonists threatened by Muslim fundamentalists. Website [unecharlie.canalblog.com](http://unecharlie.canalblog.com) publishes Charlie Hebdo's front pages.

### ***Entertainment and News Magazines***

***Paris Match*** Geared more to popular tastes than the already mentioned weeklies, *Paris Match* has a total circulation of 684,000, including 604,000 sold copies in France, and 4.3 million estimated readers (audience figures provided by the Association of French Magazines at [www.pressemagazine.com](http://www.pressemagazine.com)). Founded in 1949, *Paris Match* blends current affairs, culture, and features on world celebrities (artists, politicians, royal families) and devotes a great deal of space to illustrated reports and photojournalism. It also does some investigative reporting, though its belonging to the Lagardere group is an obstacle. Its high profile editor-in-chief was dismissed in 2006 after publishing a report on then Minister of Interior Nicolas Sarkozy's private life. Its website [parismatch.com](http://parismatch.com) offers limited access to its articles.

***VSD*** *VSD* was created in the 1970s and is now owned by Prisma Presse, the French print media subsidiary of Germany's Bertelsmann group. This weekly -- christened with the French initials of Friday-Saturday-Sunday -- is *Paris Match*'s long time challenger. Though it sells well, it still lags behind with a total circulation of 211,000, including 197,000 sold copies in France, and 1.4 million estimated readers. Its website [vsd.fr](http://vsd.fr) offers limited access to its articles.

### ***Other Periodicals***

***Le Journal du Dimanche*** *Le Journal du Dimanche*, also owned by Lagardere, is a weekly broadsheet filling the gap left by the three influential dailies which have no Sunday edition. Also called "JDD," it has a total circulation of 265,000 and about one million estimated readers (estimated by OSC based on its circulation, as TNS Sofres did not provide readership figures). Its independence was questioned at the start of Sarkozy's presidency because its editor-in-chief vetoed publication of a story about the First Lady not voting on Election Day. Its website [lejdd.fr](http://lejdd.fr) offers limited access to its articles.

***Le Monde Diplomatique*** *Le Monde Diplomatique* is a monthly 51 percent owned by Groupe Le Monde and 49 percent by its readers and editors, with a total circulation of 183,000; it only sells 132,000 copies in France since it is a periodical only devoted to world interest political and social issues. "*Le Diplo*" is editorially independent from *Le Monde* as it is ideologically linked to the anti-globalization and radical left movements. Serge Halimi, the new publisher appointed in 2008, and his long time predecessor Ignacio Ramonet, have a clear anti-American and anti-capitalistic agenda, though Halimi may be less dogmatic. Ramonet is a friend and an unofficial spokesperson of Cuba's Fidel Castro and Venezuela's Hugo Chavez (as shown by his August 2007 editorial, for instance, and pointed out in a *Le Monde* commentary a few months later, 22 February 2008). He is probably the best known French columnist in Latin America and in most developing countries.

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*Le Monde Diplomatique* has been losing ground over the past five years, its circulation having decreased 20 percent from 230,000. However, the monthly managed to build a franchise with the "Monde Diplomatique" brand name. As of April 2008, it had 70 international editions in 25 languages from German to English and from Spanish to Arabic; 42 are printed (with a total print-run of 2.4 million copies) and 28 are published via the Internet (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 2006; *monde-diplomatique.fr*, 20 June 2008). *Le Monde Diplomatique's* website *monde-diplomatique.fr* offers access to its articles once the printed edition is no longer available in kiosks.

***Telerama*** *Telerama* is a television program magazine, but it is above all the most prominent cultural weekly in a country proud of its productions and influence in this field. It has 2.7 million estimated readers and its circulation of 653,000 has been relatively stable over the past five years. Originally launched by a Catholic media company, *Telerama* has been owned by Groupe Le Monde since the beginning of this century. Left leaning and politically correct in its approach to social themes -- like immigration-related issues in France or the growth of the National Front -- the weekly has been one of the most instrumental media in preventing the French from publicly discussing Islamism-related issues and risks in France. Its website *telerama.fr* offers limited access to its articles.

***Courrier International*** Weekly *Courrier International* is a particularity of the French press. It has a relatively high national paid circulation of 186,000 and 1.2 million estimated readers, though its content is made up of articles translated from foreign publications around the world. It was founded in 1990 and its success is an illustration of the French public's lack of trust in its printed media, as well as its curiosity for views and reports published in other countries, including those covering France. The website *courrierinternational.com* offers limited access to its translated articles.

### ***Economic Periodicals***

Concerns about the economy and the evolution of the stock markets, a growing interest in savings and investment, and, since the 1980s, a fascination with corporate models and executives have stimulated this sector.

***Capital*** Monthly magazine *Capital*, launched in 1991 and owned by Bertelsmann's Prisma Presse, is France's success story in this niche. The German group showed that with a more attractive layout and more intensive reporting there was room for a new magazine in an already crowded industry. *Capital* has a total circulation of 383,000 and 2.6 million estimated readers, more than double its direct competitor's, *L'Expansion*. Like its affiliate *Management*, launched in 1995 and selling 116,000 copies, it contains short, practical articles addressing business concerns, but its scope can include political topics with investigations into economic mismanagement. Its website *capital.fr* offers limited access to its articles.

***L'Expansion*** *L'Expansion* was launched in the 1960s by the same French press group family that created daily *Les Echos*. Like *Capital*, *L'Expansion* is comparable to *Fortune* magazine in the United States and focuses mainly on domestic and foreign economic issues, as opposed to personal investment. *L'Expansion*'s total circulation is 168,000, and its estimated readership amounts to 839,000. After changing ownership and periodicity several times in the past two decades, it is now a monthly which has been acquired together with *L'Express* by Belgium's Roularta group. Its website *lexpansion.fr* offers limited access to its articles.

***Challenges*** Weekly *Challenges* is affiliated with *Le Nouvel Observateur*, with the same wide economic scope as *Capital* and *L'Expansion*. It has a total, unaudited circulation of 262,000 and 627,000 estimated readers. Its website *challenges.fr* offers limited access to its articles.

There are also about a dozen publications that focus more narrowly on personal finance, career management, and business culture, which demonstrate the dynamism of the economic and financial press in France. This group includes *Enjeux-les Echos* (136,000 total circulation), *Mieux Vivre Votre Argent* (254,000), and *Investir* (98,000).

### ***Regional Press***

Local dailies are statistically one of the most popular print media in France, but their influence and their presence in public debates are very limited. While over 90 percent of French executives read a paper, only one third get informed through a regional daily, according to a study released by the Ipsos polling institute (*Le Figaro*, 10 July 2007). The same survey stated that 40 percent of decision makers read a national daily -- 10 percent just for *Le Monde* -- which is comparatively high given that their combined circulation represents not much more than a third of the regionals' (2.1 million per day versus 5.5). Many executives and high ranking public officers who live in the major provincial towns never read their local newspaper, opting to be informed by one of the three prominent national dailies (*Le Figaro* typically, if they are conservative, and *Le Monde* or *Liberation* if left-leaning). Regional dailies are often mostly dedicated to non-important social and sporting events, with little impact in economic or political spheres, and they have bigger readerships in rural areas.

In addition to about 55 dailies (selling a total of 1.7 billion copies), the regional press includes 180 general news weeklies (90 million copies). They have weathered economic crises better than the national press, often having the advantage of monopoly in their respective areas. The local news and services they offer -- like providing obituaries and television listings -- protect them from competition from broadcast media.

Marseille and Lyon, France's major cities after Paris, are respectively served by *La Provence* and *Le Progres*, which have a total circulation of 158,000 and 244,000, and a readership of 605,000 and 792,000. Other high-circulation regional papers include *Sud Ouest* (Bordeaux, 319,000 copies), *La Voix du Nord* (Lille, 296,000), *Le Dauphine Libere* (Grenoble, 261,000), and *La Depeche du Midi* (Toulouse, 196,000 on weekdays). *Ouest France* is France's best selling

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general news daily (782,000 in total, for 2.3 million readers) because it encompasses a large area with its 42 editions in the West, from Brittany to Normandy and the Loire river region.

Overall, the regionals have been modernizing their production over the past two decades with new printing facilities and telecommunication tools. These required sizeable financial resources, which could be found only by merging titles and companies. Today, the regional press is dominated by a few players, among which the one recently growing the most is Groupe Hersant Media (GHM), which now controls regionals in the Northwest (Normandy region), the Northeast (Champagne region), the French West Indies and, since 2007, the Mediterranean coast (after taking over several papers including *La Provence* and *Nice Matin* from Lagardere group). At the same time, in the Southwest, from Montpellier's *Midi Libre* to Bordeaux's *Sud Ouest*, a new regional group is being built, in part with papers previously controlled by Groupe Le Monde.

Another major player in the regional press is a bank, Credit Mutuel, which has large stakes in numerous papers in the East of France, from the Alps to the Alsace regions, including Lyon's *Le Progres* and Strasbourg's *Les Dernieres Nouvelles d'Alsace*. There are also foreign investors, like Belgium's Rossel group, which controls *La Voix du Nord*, the paper dominating in the neighboring Lille region in the north of France.

Family groups in control of regional dailies are becoming rare and are mostly in the West, with *Ouest France* and another Brittany-based paper, *Le Telegrame*, which is one of the most successful and quality-conscious. It is expected that within ten years, there will only be a maximum of five players in that niche of the printed media (*Le Figaro*, 14 August 2007).

### **Free Dailies**

Free news dailies appeared in France in 2002, first in Paris, arousing protest and violence by unions against the two newcomers, *Metro*, published by the Swedish group of the same name, and *20 Minutes*, a joint venture by Norwegian group Schibsted and *Ouest France*. Both are now handed out on weekdays in several provincial cities too, including Bordeaux, Lyon, Marseille, Strasbourg, and Toulouse. *Metro's* average cumulative circulation is 636,000 copies for 2006, and *20 Minutes'* is 739,000. The latter is richer in newsworthy items and has even been disclosing a few scandals under the direction of its seasoned editor-in-chief, who used to run *Liberation's* newsroom.

Website *20minutes.fr* is one of the most accessed, with more than 2 million visitors a month, and it offers free PDF copies of its eight cities' editions.

Another network of free newspapers appeared after 2003, with the town network "*Plus*" promoted by Lagardere. It publishes *Lyon Plus*, *Marseille Plus*, *Lille Plus*, and *Montpellier Plus*, with the assistance of local paid dailies. *Midi Libre* (Montpellier) and *La Provence* (Marseille) have this way partially prevented the *Metro* and *20 Minutes* networks from tapping their local advertising markets. Le Monde and Bollre groups have also entered the free daily market

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recently, with the Paris launching of *Direct Soir* (an evening paper) in 2006, and *Matin Plus* (morning) in 2007. With the exception of *20 Minutes*, all these workday dailies are basically short dispatch news providers, with no significant impact on France's political life and society.

## News Agencies

Newspapers and television and radio stations could not operate without news agencies. These news wholesalers supply the media and institutions with information of every sort -- written copy, photos, graphics, etc. -- with subscribers paying for their services on a sliding scale based on their print-run or on audience figures. In some newspapers, more than 80 percent of the information published is provided by these article and photo providers which gather hard news reports.

### *Agence France-Presse*

Agence France-Press (AFP) is one of the world's three leading press services with the US Associated Press and British Reuters. France's regional dailies rely heavily on AFP's dispatches to fill their national and international sections, usually without sourcing them.

Founded in 1835, AFP is the only French-language international news service. It provides products and services which are also available in five other languages, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Arabic ([www.afp.com](http://www.afp.com)). With 2,900 staff and stringers, AFP covers 165 countries from five regional headquarters. On average, they produce every day 400,000 to 600,000 words, 2,000 to 3,000 photos, 80 news graphics, and 30 video clips. The agency has seven bureaus in France, in addition to its Paris headquarters: in Marseille and Toulouse (South), in Bordeaux and Rennes (West), in Lyon and Strasbourg (East), and in Lille (North).

Being a world producer of "raw material" news, AFP plans to become a provider of multimedia and "finished products" following AP's and Reuters' paths. France 24, for instance, is using AFP's "news corners" around the globe, having its correspondents in remote areas appear on the screen. AFP also has plans to turn mainstream as a direct supplier to individual end-consumers through the Internet, with the risk of entering into competition with its own customers (*Le Monde*, 19 December 2006).

France is also the birthplace of world renowned photo agencies Gamma, Sipa, Magnum, Vu, and the now Microsoft-affiliated Sygma.

## Internet Sources

### *Internet News Sites*

Most newspapers make their hard copies' contents freely accessible to the public in whole or in part. Like other media groups, Lagardere is keen on beefing up the Internet share of its revenues, with a 10 to 12 percent target for 2012, up from 3 percent in 2007 through the development of its magazines and radios and through external acquisitions (*Le Monde*, 15 June 2008). *Le Monde* has been experimenting with new ways of increasing its presence in new media, as it launched in 2007 *lepost.fr*, a website tackling new trends and aiming at young readers.

Some information websites and blogs have built a credibility of their own and are now seen as an alternative source like *Le Canard Enchaîné* on national issues that are covered weakly by other traditional media. However, they do not always provide the article richness and deepness often offered by US webzines like *slate.com* or *salon.com*.

***rue89.com*** Launched in May 2007, on the day of the last presidential election, this website is the project of four former *Liberation* journalists. It quickly drew considerable attention from the start, because it disclosed that the First Lady had not voted that day. *Rue89.com*, whose name refers to debates in the street and to the 1789 French Revolution, claims to have more than 500,000 different visitors each month, the website being a leader in terms of reading time. It has rapidly managed to attract investor and announcer money to finance the hiring of about 20 staff members and the opening of a new antenna in Marseille to cover local news (*Le Monde*, 19 June 2008 and 9 August 2007). *Rue89.com* is content rich by French standards for an Internet only information website. But its contributions are uneven and very often one-sided or not well sourced. (See *Le Monde's* 2007 article, "New French Current Affairs Website Draws 'Widespread Attention'," EUP20070810155001.)

***mediapart.fr*** Most of this information website is accessible through paid subscription. It was launched at the beginning of 2008 with much visibility thanks to its main founder, Edwy Plenel, *Le Monde's* former editor-in-chief. It has a 30 journalist newsroom and needs to get 65,000 subscribers in three years, up from its current 8,000, to break even (*Le Monde*, 19 June 2008). Plenel is also one of the toughest anti-Sarkozy critics, and his approach is very biased, but he is surrounded by journalists with high professional standards whose articles may have the same impact as the ones published by *Le Monde* and its peers.

***bakchich.info*** Backed by former high profile *Le Monde* and *Le Canard Enchaîné* journalists and mostly owned by private investors, *bakchich.info* was created before *rue89.com* and *mediapart.fr*, in May 2006. It is smaller than these websites and it publishes articles with a more satirical tone, but its contributions are often appreciated on intelligence and France/Africa related topics in particular. (See "Profile of Paris-Based News Website Bakchich," FEA20080416635507, for more details.)

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**agoravox.fr** This website has been promoted by new technology guru Joel de Rosnay. It publishes articles submitted by hundreds of contributors who are not journalists for the most part. Unlike *rue89.com*, *bakchich.info* and *mediapart.fr*, however, *agoravox.fr* is not quoted frequently as a source by traditional media.

### ***Political Blogs***

Most other websites of interest on French politics are limited to individual blogs written by journalists. One of the most interesting ones, because it deals with strategic issues and is updated daily, is *Liberation's* defense correspondent Jean-Dominique Merchet's blog, *secretdefense.blogs.liberation.fr*.

Jean-Michel Apathie, RTL radio's political interviewer and commentator, writes a very reactive column in his blog every morning, mostly on domestic issues: *blogs.rtl.fr/aphatie*.

Eric Dupin, a former star columnist of *Liberation* and *Le Figaro* and one of the best experts on the French left, also publishes newsworthy commentaries on French politics in his blog *ericdupin.blogs.com*.

Gerard Ponthieu, a newspaper consultant, often provides newsworthy comments on French journalism in his blog, *gponthieu.blog.lemonde.fr*.

**See also: "Media Aid 20 May: France Media Guide, 2003," EUF20030522000559.**

## Appendix

### "Why Do So Few French People Want To Read Newspapers?" -- published by France based monthly *The Connexion*, December 2005

*NEWSPAPER readership in France is considerably lower than in the UK or U.S. The most common explanations for this are competition from electronic media and higher production costs. However, media expert JEAN-PIERRE TAILLEUR is not convinced, arguing that unclear editing standards, limited self-criticism and journalistic shyness, as illustrated by some regional dailies during the Paris riots, play a part.*

ON an average weekday in France, just one in six people buy a newspaper compared to one in four in the U.S. and one in three in the UK and Germany.

The three main news dailies -- *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro* and *Liberation* -- sell a combined total of 900,000 newspapers on weekdays while in Britain, papers of comparable quality -- like *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent* -- sell over 2.2 million copies between them.

The gap between the two countries, with a comparable population of 60 million residents, becomes even wider when other papers like *Le Parisien*, *La Croix*, the regional dailies and the UK's tabloids are taken into consideration.

This is not offset by the relative prominence of France's general news weeklies (like the news magazine *L'Express* and broadsheet *Journal du Dimanche*), all of which have a lower circulation than both *The Sunday Times* and *Telegraph*.

French newspaper managers typically blame the internet, radio and television, or the free dailies now handed out in major cities. This explanation is somewhat weak, however, as their peers in Anglo-Saxon and other democracies often work under tougher competitive environments, with more profit and fewer complaints.

Cover prices are similar, too, and cannot account for this French information deficit: the dumping policy initiated by Rupert Murdoch in the early 90s has now ended, and dailies cost about one euro at news stands on both sides of the Channel.

It is true that production and distribution expenses are higher in France, in part because of anachronistic close-shop unions. But the same newspapers are highly subsidised too. "[They] have proved adept at pleading for greater financial support from successive French governments," notes Andrew Jack, a former *Financial Times* correspondent, in his essay *The French Exception*. "But few seem willing to question the economics of [the industry] and to draw some tough conclusions."

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This French exception has cultural grounds, some admitted and others not. "The Anglo middle and lower classes have been fed by tabloids and pot-boiler books for years. In New York or London buses and trains, you see many more people devouring magazines and newspapers than in Paris," says Tom Moore, editor in chief of Australia's *Reader's Digest*, who lived in France during the 70s.

However, this has not always been the case: in the last century, the daily *Le Petit Parisien* used to be able to boast that it was "the most printed newspaper in the world". And even today, the huge number of special interest magazines and the success of free newspapers *20 Minutes* and *Metro*, show that people in France are interested in the press.

Content quality is not a sufficient parameter to explain the shortage of French readers. Regional dailies, which target a non-elite niche, are much more sophisticated than Anglo-Saxon tabloids.

And they generally perform better than Paris-based national papers, whose quality is even higher.

More than a few Anglo- Saxon correspondents enjoy reading the latter for the frequent brightness of their articles, especially on geopolitical and societal issues. "They are madly intelligent, [even if excessively] at ease with rough facts," wrote John Vinocur, the former *International Herald Tribune* editor, a few years ago. He had been asked to "judge the French press as an American journalist" for economic magazine *L'Expansion*.

"*Liberation* has brought real innovations; *L'Express* has regularly put a light on France's diplomacy contradictions. *Le Monde* foresaw well before its American peers how rotten Iran's Shah regime was. And I have always believed French newspapers reported more sensitively and with more balance on the decline of communism in Europe," Vinocur said.

The information deficit may be less a question of demand, which exists, than the offer of hard news packaged to have an impact on society. "[French printed media] act far more as forums for discussion than as vehicles to bring about change," says Jack.

*Journalisme d'opinion* is excessively celebrated here as a matter of fact... at the expense of the Anglo-Saxon, factual way of reporting news (which from the traditional French viewpoint, is blamed for its "false objectivity" and its "lack of perspective on events").

The best illustration of this professional idiosyncrasy is how the communist newspaper *L'Humanite* is now surviving artificially. No one considers it controversial that it is funded by Lagardere, the media group which is also involved in military equipment, and Bouygues, the building contractor and mobile phone operator that controls commercial TV-network TF1. If a left-wing publication like *L'Humanite* were less rhetorical and more substantiated as a counterbalance to those wielding power, then highly capitalist companies would not even consider funding it.

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But this belief of what information has to be is widely shared among France's opinion leaders. And it tends to separate the editorial rooms from the social realities they are supposed to cover first-hand.

"French media spend too much time and space on the gossipy, political machinations," says Sarah Wachter, a journalist and television producer from Nebraska who lives in Paris and has been working for *The Wall Street Journal* Europe and CNBC. "The classic example now is the [prime minister Dominique] de Villepin versus [interior minister Nicolas] Sarkozy stories. It's simply not enough to keep harping on the stereotype that one is an awful pro-American and the other a statist."

Ted Stanger, an essayist and former *Newsweek* editor now based in the Picardie region, adds: "French journalists are very good as war correspondents, but they tend to bury newsworthy materials on major local issues".

This concerns regional papers in particular, which rarely publish investigative articles. A full page entitled "Islamism, a threat for tomorrow's France" was published last October by *Midi Libre*, the Montpellier daily affiliated to *Le Monde*. It was inspired from a *Le Point* weekly interview of a Paris prosecutor. The related article was well written, but it provided no investigation on local threats. There were just a few words on two mosques under construction in Perpignan, with no hard facts on possible dangers. A few days later, *Midi Libre*'s ombudsman even boasted about this desk coverage.

In early November, Mont-pellier was also affected by the wave of riots which exploded in a huge number of French suburban areas in France.

The *Midi Libre* had big headlines on this issue, principally based on news agencies articles, but it provided limited coverage locally. On November 7, for instance, after a night when about ten vehicles were burnt, there was nothing on this violence in its "Montpellier" pages. No picture and just a few lines, in an unsigned article published in the national section. It seems that no reporters were sent to the affected districts.

The same relative passivity could be observed in some other regional papers. The next day, for instance, in the central town of Clermont- Ferrand, daily *La Montagne* published a page and a half on the local riots in its regional section. On page 2, there were several pictures but the article directly covering the violence in the city was rather short (a quarter of the page).

The overall impression was of minimal journalism, mostly consisting in press release-like interviews with a social worker, a community leader, a local politician and an insurer (asked about compensations for the burnt cars). The central article, on page 3, was a series of vaguely

sourced quotes from Northern African-descent young men talking about discrimination. These cases of shy coverage are highly tolerated in France's journalistic culture.

French papers are not pushed enough, from within the industry, to improve their content and develop a better relationship with their readers. No equivalents of the UK's *Press Gazette* or the American *Columbia Journalism Review* inform on their profession, and the best media sections (like *Liberation's*) are rather superficial compared to those of *The Guardian* or *The Independent*.

*Arret sur Images*, the weekly programme aired by public channel France 5, is an exception, but it mainly covers television. In addition, its host, Daniel Schneidermann, France's highest-profile media columnist, does not always promote proactive reporting. He recently failed to contradict a journalist, for instance, who claimed that Muslim fundamentalism should only be investigated by the police and not by the press.

French media professionals in a position to edit or monitor newsrooms operations often miss the opportunity to stress the importance of deep reporting. Brilliant writing is not enough to keep old readers and attract new ones.

From a more institutional perspective, it is also worth noting how discrete the latter are in organisations like the World Editors Forum or the World Association of Newspapers.

Both provide useful benchmarking materials for quality improvement and circulation growth... and both are based in Paris. This more than illustrates an introspection deficit, parallel to the information one.

JEAN-PIERRE TAILLEUR

Author of *Bevues de presse*, a criticism of journalism in France.

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**Advertising feature**

## Do you need help with a property issue in France?

I AM the producer of a new channel 4 property programme and am writing because I was wondering if some of your readers might be interested in it? Our aim is to help British homeowners who are struggling with their properties in France by providing expert advice and solutions through our expert presenter Andrew Winter. We're already helping a family in Charente-Maritime who's problem property

forced them to live in two separate houses. With our help they will be able to live together again. We are also helping a lady in Spain whose whole life was on hold because of her property nightmares. We want to hear from more people, struggling to live the dream, battling with problem properties, who feel they could benefit from our expert's help. Perhaps a home is riddled with termites or damp or the owners are struggling with

planning permissions and land ownership? Maybe they've discovered serious structural issues or been duped by an agent who made wild promises? We want to hear from people who could benefit from the help and advice of our team. Our aim is to help resolve these problems. If you would like to nominate yourself or someone you may know to take part in the programme, please contact us +44 (0) 1273 224 925 or [housetrapped@nicochet.co.uk](mailto:housetrapped@nicochet.co.uk)



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