



Contemporary Media Use in Ukraine

As the crisis in Ukraine escalates, the media environment in the country is becoming increasingly fragmented and dangerous.

In 2013, Freedom House ranked Ukraine's press "Not Free," writing that "the Ukrainian government has failed to fulfill its pledge to protect the freedom of expression."

Reporters Without Borders notes that there are "increasingly systematic attacks on media personnel covering the tension in eastern Ukraine" and that the frequency of journalist abductions in the region is rising.

Media Environment and Newsgathering

Television is the dominant news medium in Ukraine. Almost all Ukrainians (96.8%) watch TV for news at least weekly, including 95.7% of Crimeans.

The Internet has overtaken radio and print media as the second most dominant news source in the country, with about half (48.3%) going online for news at least weekly. Radio and newspapers are each used weekly for news by close to one-third of the population (36.5% and 33.8%, respectively).

In Crimea and Ukraine's southern and eastern regions, pro-Russian sentiment is strongest and some Ukrainian analogue broadcasts have been blocked and replaced by Russian broadcasts. In these regions, most residents use either a satellite dish for TV reception (19.8%), or an Internet connection directly to the TV or through another device (38.5%).

Only about one in five Crimeans (18.7%) say the cessation of some Ukrainian TV channels in Crimea has changed their news-gathering habits. Most of those whose habits have changed (71.1%) say they are using Russian sources more often; just 5.8% are using other foreign sources more.

Just one-tenth of Ukrainians outside Crimea (10.7%) say their media habits have changed as a result of the shutting down of some Russian TV channels; two-thirds (67.7%) of those whose habits have changed are using Ukrainian sources more, while 6.2% are using foreign sources more.

Overall, eight of the ten most-named top news sources are Ukrainian TV channels, in particular 1+1 channel, followed by Inter, 5 Kanal, ICTV and STB, the only sources named as most important by more than 10% of adults. One in ten adults named the Russia-based social networking site VKontakte as a top news source (up from less than 1% in 2012), and the portal site Ukr.net also broke into the ten most-named top news sources.

Asked to name their three most important sources of news and information, Crimeans' five most commonly named media outlets include four TV channels owned by the Russian state: Russia 24, NTV, ORT (Channel One), and RTR (Russia-1). Their fifth most commonly named source is the Russian social media giant VKontakte. This represents an important change since the 2012 survey, when Crimeans' top five news sources were all Ukrainian TV stations.

New Media

About half of Ukrainians overall (50.9%) have Internet access in their households, including 56.0% of Crimeans. Among those who do have household access, 51.8% have a high-speed connection, while 42.6% have wireless access at home. Only 18.5% use a dial-up connection – and this figure is higher among Crimeans (38.7%) than other Ukrainians (17.3%).

As in many countries, young people have been the first to embrace the Internet as a source of news and information. About nine in 10 Ukrainians age 15 to 24 (89.0%) say they go online for news at least weekly, similar to the proportion of young people who watch TV news that often. Weekly use of the Internet for news declines to 73.1% about Ukrainians age 25 to 34, 47.7%

among those 35 to 54, and just 12.1% among those 55 and older.

Ukrainians consume online content in a variety of languages. Virtually all past-week Internet users in Crimea (99.6%) use online content in the Russian language – but so do the vast majority of Ukraine's weekly Internet users outside Crimea (93.9%). While three-fourths of non-Crimean weekly web users (75.3%) use online content in Ukrainian, just 32.3% of Crimean users do so. English-language content is less commonly used, though about one in five weekly web users in Crimea (22.2%) and the rest of Ukraine (19.4%) use the Internet in English.

Among various online news sources asked about in the survey, the news portal/email service Ukr.net is the most popular, accessed by 38.1% of Ukraine's weekly web users within the past seven days, followed by Pravda.com.ua (17.2%) and Podrobnosti.ua (15.9%). These sites are far less commonly used in Crimea than in the rest of Ukraine.

As with weekly Internet use overall, close of half of Ukrainians overall (46.0%) say they've used social networking services in the past seven days, with that figure rising to nine in 10 (89.9%) among those age 15 to 24. The rate of weekly social media use is similar among Crimeans (50.1%) and other Ukrainians (45.8%).

The two Russian social media giants Vkontakte.ru and Odnoklassniki.ru are the popular social networking sites among Ukrainians who use social media at least weekly, both inside and outside Crimea. Three-fourths (74.5%) say they have used Vkontakte.ru in the past seven days, while two-thirds (66.0%) say the same about Odnoklassniki.ru.

Leading Western social media sites also have a notable presence in Ukraine: Facebook is used weekly by 42.9% of past-week social networkers, while Twitter is used weekly by 21.6%.

Political Attitudes in Ukraine and Crimea

Only a slim majority of Ukrainians overall (51.2%) agree that the interim government in Kiev is the legitimate government of Ukraine. That figure rises only slightly to 53.5% when Crimeans are excluded from the results. Among Crimeans, just 8.1% agree while 68.6% disagree.

Just three in 10 Ukrainians outside Crimea (29.5%) believe the results of the March 6, 2014 referendum on Crimea's status, in which an overwhelming majority of Crimeans voted to join Russia, reflect the views of most people there. Within Crimea, however, more than eight in 10 (82.8%) say the referendum reflects most Crimeans' views.

About three-fourths of Crimeans (73.9%) say Crimea's becoming part of Russia will make life better for themselves and their families, just 5.5% disagree.

Crimeans are overwhelmingly likely to view Russia's role in the crisis as positive (71.3%) rather than negative (8.8%). Outside of Crimea, responses are practically reversed (66.4% see Russia's role as negative, 15.6% positive).

Though Ukrainians outside of Crimea are somewhat ambivalent about the United States' role in the crisis (39.0% say it has been positive, 27.7% negative, and 21.6% neutral), Crimeans are far more unified in their view that the U.S. has played a negative (76.2%) rather than a positive (2.8%) role.

Methodology

This brief contains results from a nationally representative, face-to-face survey of 1,400 Ukrainians aged 15 and older, living outside the Crimea autonomous region, plus a separate sample of 500 adults living in Crimea. The survey is representative of the views and opinions of 40,271,379 Ukrainian adults. Researchers conducted face-to-face interviews from April 21-29, 2014, in Russian and Ukrainian.

Results from all interviews were weighted to adjust for the relative adult populations of the regional/urbanization strata sampled. Outside Crimea, data are weighted by age, gender, and educational attainment to reflect the characteristics of the national population; however, lacking reliable education targets for the Crimean population, Gallup weighted results from Crimea by age and gender alone.

Contact

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