

Finland



Population: 5.6m

Country media capture risk overall (value - %): 28.1

Media capture risk average across countries (mean - %): 38.3



Country Overview

Finland shows amongst the lowest levels of media capture across all three dimensions, especially regarding the political one: since the 2023 parliamentary election, Finland has been governed by a right-wing coalition composed of the *National Coalition Party*, the *Finns Party*, the *Swedish People's Party*, and the *Christian Democrats*. The government has recently pursued right-wing economic policies, including the weakening of social security benefits and press subsidies, justified by concerns about public deficits that have triggered protests among the population.

The media system in Finland has long operated in a context of high press freedom and strong public trust, yet it is increasingly shaped by structural changes affecting pluralism and sustainability. Finland, such as the other Scandinavian countries, is featured by a traditional policy of press subsidies that nevertheless is progressively decreasing. However, in contrast to the other Nordic countries, Finland abolished its system of general direct media subsidies in the 1990s, instead adopting a more market-driven model; current support is limited to a reduced VAT rate and targeted subsidies for news in minority languages. Although our indicator of media pluralism appears relatively high compared to the average, this assessment requires careful contextualization. Data are based on analyses limited to the four leading national news outlets and therefore do not account for the extensive network of local newspapers that characterizes the Finnish media market and represents a key safeguard of pluralism.

The relatively small size of the national market is accompanied by a high and growing level of ownership concentration, particularly in radio, television, and regional press markets. As in the other Nordic countries, the Finnish media market is highly concentrated, dominated by a handful of major players, with consolidation particularly visible in print media; this concentration has been identified as the most significant structural risk. This trend has been facilitated by the long-standing absence of media-specific concentration limits and restrictions on foreign ownership. Alongside a strong public service broadcaster, *Yle*, the market is dominated by large media groups and an increasing presence of transnational owners, notably in Swedish-language press and commercial television. While *Yle* remains a central and comparatively strong public service broadcaster, it has experienced historically significant funding cuts in recent years. In this context, the nationalist right-wing *Finns Party* – part of the current coalition government – has long advocated more drastic reductions, making the weakening of *Yle*'s position a salient political objective.

Finland has traditionally relied on general competition law and self-regulation rather than media-specific ownership rules. However, several ongoing legislative processes are expected to influence future media pluralism, including the implementation of EU anti-SLAPP measures, reforms to access-to-information legislation, and especially the national integration of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA). While EMFA introduces new mechanisms for assessing media concentration and enhancing ownership transparency, significant challenges persist. Ownership disclosure remains uneven, particularly among non-listed companies, and transparency regarding cross-border ownership, market data, and key infrastructure providers remains limited. Recent mergers, closures, and job losses, intensified by funding cuts affecting *Yle* and broader austerity measures, further heighten concerns about structural pressures.

The media ecosystem scores are deeply rooted in the country's historical background. In fact, Finland's political system is characterized by high democratic quality, low levels of political conflict polarization, and strong institutional safeguards. International indicators consistently rank Finland among the top-performing democracies, reflecting robust political rights, free and fair elections, and an independent judiciary. These outcomes are closely linked to Finland's consensual political model, based on proportional representation and broad coalition governments, which encourages compromise and limits adversarial politics. Since the 2023 parliamentary election, the country has been governed by a right-wing coalition led by the *National Coalition Party*, advancing fiscal consolidation, labor market reforms, and stricter immigration and citizenship policies. While political independence remains assessed as low risk overall, recent welfare cuts and proposals to limit the right to strike have sparked large-scale protests and strikes in 2024 and 2025, signaling growing social tension and declining public trust.

At the same time, sociocultural and security-related issues – particularly immigration, minority rights, and national security following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Finland's accession to NATO – have gained prominence. Overall, Finland's political system remains resilient and inclusive, though recent policy choices and social mobilization point to emerging pressures. Nevertheless, it is important to note a recent landmark case concerning press freedom: in 2023, two Helsingin Sanomat journalists were convicted – a verdict upheld on appeal in July 2025 – for revealing “national security secrets” in a 2017 article on Finnish Defence Forces intelligence operations. The case has been strongly criticized by press freedom organizations and the Committee to Protect Journalists for potentially undermining press freedom in Finland.

Such features of the political system reflect also in the societal context: Finland's society is characterized by high levels of trust, social cohesion, and exceptionally low corruption, supported by a strong rule of law and transparent public institutions. Civic culture and effective accountability mechanisms make corrupt behavior both legally sanctioned and socially unacceptable, reinforcing public confidence in democratic governance. Despite recent economic challenges – including a slow recovery from recession, persistent public deficits, and weak consumer confidence – Finland continues to rank as the world's happiest country, reflecting high subjective well-being and strong social capital. At the same time, it is worth recalling that Finland experienced a series of campaign finance scandals beginning in 2007, involving incomplete or inaccurate reporting of business-sector donations; these events led to legal proceedings, convictions, and the resignation of Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen in 2010, ultimately prompting the introduction of new regulatory frameworks .

At the same time, important social vulnerabilities remain. While gender equality is generally high and women enjoy strong legal protections, harassment, hate speech, and discrimination against ethnic, religious, and racial minorities persist. Efforts to promote social inclusion have included recent government action plans against racism and constitutional reforms strengthening the linguistic and cultural rights of the Sámi population. However, cuts to funding for civil society organizations and reduced governmental engagement in addressing hate speech pose medium-level risks to social inclusiveness and the protection of vulnerable groups under the current political context.

Finally, Finland stands out as a case of high democratic quality, marked by low levels of media capture, strong institutional safeguards, and high social trust. Media independence and political pluralism remain broadly protected, supported by a consensual political culture, a resilient rule of law, and low corruption. At the same time, structural pressures – such as media ownership concentration, economic constraints on journalism, and recent policy choices affecting welfare and civil society – introduce emerging vulnerabilities as demonstrated by the recent accusation against two journalists for revealing “national security secrets”.