

# World Press Trends 2019

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**Marking three decades as the definitive guide to the global news media industry in numbers, trends and changes**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY + Extract: PRESS FREEDOM: A free press contributes to the wealth of nations and the well-being of societies**

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# The World Press Trends database

The World Press Trends database contains individual country reports and aggregated data and trends on circulation and readership, advertising revenues, digital publishing and much more.

The database allows users to generate custom reports, choosing from a large number of criteria to produce reports that meet their own specific needs. These can be downloaded in Excel to enable in-depth analysis, benchmarks and historic trends.

Members of WAN-IFRA continue to receive a World Press Trends report without charge, which contains the data that is most often consulted. For those who need access to additional data, WAN-IFRA is offering the database to both members and non-members by individual access, on an annual subscription basis, and IP access that allows companies, universities or libraries to provide access to any number of users. Full details can be found at <http://www.wan-ifra.org/wpt>

World Press Trends can tell you how many newspaper titles are published world-wide. Which daily newspaper has the largest circulation in the world? Which country has the biggest number of top 100 dailies by circulation?

It can tell you the number of titles and circulation by countries, or aggregated world-wide; newspaper reach, readership and media consumption trends: online editions and online readership; top newspaper advertisers and advertising categories; cover prices; advertising expenditures and revenues; market share of newspapers and other media; and much more.

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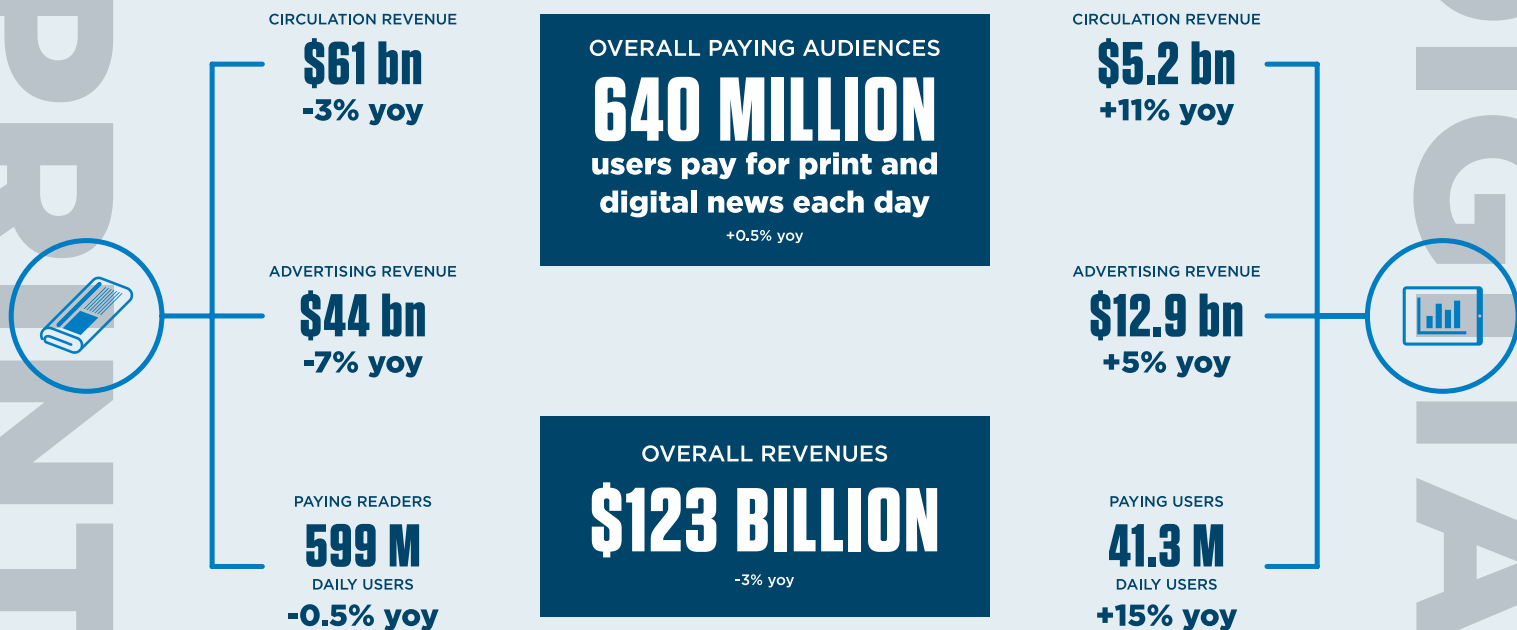
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# SNAPSHOT: World Press Trends 2019

The news publishing industry remains the leading investor in journalism worldwide. And the global appetite for quality news is undiminished. Paying news audiences – print and digital – rose 0.5% to 640 million per day in 2018. Overall revenues from print and digital sales and advertising decreased 3% year on year, but are forecast to rise slightly in 2019. 54% of newspapers’ overall revenue comes from circulation sales, up 1% year on year and forecast down 2% for 2019 as prices come under pressure. Print revenues still account for 85% of newspapers’ overall revenue globally – but its share declined from 89% in 2018 and is forecast to be 87% in 2019.

- Digital circulation revenues increased +11% year on year (yoy) – forecast to increase further in 2019
- Digital advertising revenues increased by +5% yoy – forecast to increase further in 2019
- Digital news subscribers increased 15% yoy – forecast to increase further in 2019
- Print circulation revenues decreased 3% yoy – and are forecast to drop further in 2019
- Print advertising revenues decreased 7% yoy – and further decline is expected in 2019
- Print paid audiences decreased slightly (less than 1%) yoy – and forecast to slip again in 2019



Source: WPT analysis of PwC (Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2019 - 2023)

1 The 2019 figures reflect changes made to prior period estimates that had been based on information that best reflected the conditions and circumstances that existed at the reporting date.

# 5 TAKEAWAYS

## from World Press Trends 2019

**NEWS MEDIA'S CONUNDRUM:** This year's research and data bear out the paradox within our industry. With global revenues (-3% YoY, print & digital) and (especially newsroom) resources continuing to shrink, the business challenges facing publishers are palpable. However, quality news has never been in more demand than today, reflected in the growth of paying audiences for news content (+0.5% YoY).

1

**THE SUBSCRIPTION ECONOMY:** Paying news audiences – print and digital – rose to 640 million per day in 2018, fuelled primarily by the continued strategy and growth in getting readers to convert to digital subscribers (up 11% YoY). Digital news subscriber numbers worldwide have increased 208% over five years to 2018 and are expected to grow by a further 13% in 2019. Nearly 54% of newspapers' overall revenue comes from circulation sales, up 1% YoY but forecast down 2% for 2019 as prices come under pressure.

2

**PRINT STILL PAYING THE BILLS:** Despite much of the focus on digital transformation, we estimate that print revenues still account for about 86 percent of news publishers' revenue. In 2018 print circulation declined only 1 percent globally. Naturally, that picture varies from region to region and from country to country. For the most part, however, print advertising continues its steep decline (-7% YoY).

3

**THAT OTHER CONUNDRUM – TECH GIANTS:** Google continues to be the most important traffic source for news media companies globally, accounting for two out of every three page views from the leading global technology companies, according to our analysis of data from Chartbeat. Worldwide, Google provides 25 times the traffic for publishers that Twitter does and almost two and a half times what Facebook does. Yet the relationship with tech platforms remains tenuous if at times hopeful.

4

**THE POWER OF A FREE AND INDEPENDENT PRESS:** This year's World Press Trends also offers robust statistical evidence that shows direct and strong relationships between a free and independent press and factors that indicate the strength of democracies, the health of societies, as well as both the wealth of nations and the fortunes of its people.

5

# 30 YEARS OF WORLD PRESS TRENDS

What has three decades of documenting the world's news media taught us?

**T**hirty years ago, when the first edition of World Press Trends was published, the world was a very different place. In 1989, Tim Berners-Lee invented the internet, the first GPS (Global Positioning System) went up, the Berlin Wall came down and South Africa's President FW de Klerk met with Nelson Mandela to discuss his release from prison after 27 years. What progress! On the darker side, we know of the tragic deaths that year of working journalists in Colombia, Turkey, Sudan and Romania, amongst others, though it would be another decade before Reporters Without Borders (RWB) started systematically keeping that gruesome score.

Still, in most markets across the world, newspaper publishers had a solid grip on the babble of public and commercial information and, in turn, cash from advertising, copy sales and subscriptions flowed like ink. **Our role as the Fourth Estate of Democracy was largely undisputed**, particularly as broadcasting in many countries remained firmly in state hands. It would be another five years before the first blog emerged on Links.net and seven years before the term “weblog” was coined.

By 1989, The New York Times had already earned a spot in the Guinness Book of World Records with a 1,612-page Sunday edition that tipped the scales at about 5.5kg (12 lbs). By comparison, the edition on Sunday, July 28th this year was 192 pages and weighed about a third of that – 1.8kg (4 lbs). While its print edition has shrunk in scale, the company's ambitions and fortunes haven't. At the end of the first quarter of 2019, the total number of print and digital paid subscriptions topped 4.5 million sending their shares soaring to a 13-year high. Chief Executive Mark Thompson remains optimistic there is more growth ahead. In a statement, he announced ambitious internal targets to earn \$800 million in digital revenues by 2020 – equal to almost half of their total revenues in 2018<sup>2</sup> – and to reach 10 million subscribers by 2025<sup>3</sup>.

While the story of The New York Times is not universal amongst traditional news publishers,

<sup>2</sup> As reported by Nasdaq: <https://www.nasdaq.com/symbol/nyt/financials?query=income-statement>

<sup>3</sup> As reported by Bloomberg: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-06/new-york-times-sets-goal-of-10-million-subscribers-by-2025>.



it's not unique. **On every continent and in every market context, innovating news publishers are finding ways to adapt and thrive in the face of changing consumer behaviour and competition** that is driven, in large measure, by the rapid changes and challenges of digital technology.

But there's no denying the facts. The decade since the Global Recession has been tough for everyone involved in the business of publishing independent, fact-based news – professionally and personally. Challenges to the traditional advertising model of publishers have seen profits fall, often taking jobs and even entire titles with them. In 1989, our records show that The New York Times was amongst 1,626 daily newspapers in the USA. By 2019, one out of every five (20%) had closed, leaving just 1,283 daily newspapers<sup>4</sup> serving a population that had grown more than 40% during the same period. But nowhere has the toll been felt more harshly than on the reporting frontline. The past decade has been the most deadly on record for journalists, according to RWB. Last year saw 84 journalists killed and 348 imprisoned. Halfway into 2019, the outlook remains grim. Already 26 people working in journalism are dead and 401 imprisoned.

**This marked rise in hostility towards the press is a stark reminder of the fragility of our freedom, even in mature democracies.** The pursuit of truth remains a threat to populist politicians, corrupt officials, criminal cabals and extremist groups worldwide. **That is why perhaps the metrics that matter most are those we quantify for the first time this year – the role a free press plays in democracy, society and the economy.**

The statistical evidence we present here is as plain as it is powerful. We drew on data from across a wide range of widely respected sources – from the World Bank, United Nations, OECD<sup>5</sup> and more – to show that, through correlational analysis, **there is no shadow of a doubt: when and where press freedom flourishes, so do indicators of different aspects of a functioning democracy** like the control of corruption, the rule of law, the electoral integrity. The higher the press freedom, the higher the social well-being indicators like gender equality, education levels, and overall human development. **The higher the press freedom, the higher economic indicators** like the Gross National Income per capita, direct foreign investment, and trade across borders. We offer further evidence that the light a free press shines counters some of societies' most pressing concerns. The higher the press freedom, the lower the percentage of

4 Data from the US News Deserts project at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill at: <https://www.usnews-deserts.com> Note that the News Media Alliance (NMA) in the USA, formerly known as the Newspaper Association of America (NAA), has not published detailed metrics since 2014. Since then, the World Press Trends team have drawn on insights provided by independent public and private researchers, including PwC, Zenith, the News Deserts project and the Pew Research Centre.

5 Sources include the World Bank, World Justice Project, Freedom House, the Organisation for Economic and Co-operative Development (OECD), the United Nations Development Programme and Harvard University Political Integrity Index.

spoiled votes in elections, the lower the social inequality and the lower the poverty levels. It's for those reasons, and many others we report on here, that the robustness of a free, independent news media industry matters to everyone, inside and outside of the industry<sup>6</sup>.

**Of course, it's not just vital for the press to be free, but also to be trustworthy. And for that, it's critical the press shoulders the responsibilities of freedom.** That we help build vigorous democracies by loudly encouraging opposition voices and being role models of tolerance ourselves. That we support economic growth by reporting accurately to inform sound business decisions and to keeping state and commercial actors to account. That we encourage vibrant communities to thrive by advocating for diversity, equality and cohesion.

**There is certainly more to be done to earn the trust of our communities. As WAN-IFRA's outgoing president Michael Golden of The New York Times said, "Journalists and the press must work harder to reflect the experience, the fears and the hopes of society.** While economies are growing, the benefit is not evenly shared. Journalists must do a better job of reflecting the situation of all levels of society. Many are working to do that. We can all improve."

And, as this year's report clearly shows, there are also improvements needed to ensure our important industry remains sustainable. Whatever else may be true in the pursuit of economic resilience, the building blocks of successful news publishing endures across all contexts, according to Sonny Swe. In 2000 Swe co-founded The Myanmar Times, the country's first privately-owned, English-language paper with the strapline 'Heartbeat of the Nation.' He soon fell foul of the country's strict censorship laws and was imprisoned for eight years. Throughout, the digital and print newspaper continued publishing in English and Myanmar. Freed in 2013, Swe remains optimistic about the future of the company, which has diversified its revenue streams to include a marketing agency. When recently asked, 'What is your formula for creating a sustainable business model for news?', he answered without hesitation: Build a great team + create great content = make money. That other publishers worldwide have also mastered those fundamentals is underlined in **this 30th edition of the World Press Trends that shows our \$123 billion-industry served a growing number of least 640 million paying news users – and many, many millions more through free products. Those audience numbers are expected to grow in the years ahead as forward-thinking publishers continue to innovate, deliver value to communities – and thrive.**

- Dr François Nel, editor, World Press Trends 2019

<sup>6</sup> Whilst correlations don't necessarily imply causal relationships and the links between all these variables are complex, our multivariate analysis underlines the pivotal role of Press Freedom

# PART A: OVERVIEW OF WORLD PRESS TRENDS 2019

Of this there is no doubt: The global news publishing industry is resilient. Although it has not managed to keep pace with the wider economy in the decade since the global economic crisis, there are indications that the efforts of innovating publishers are paying dividends.

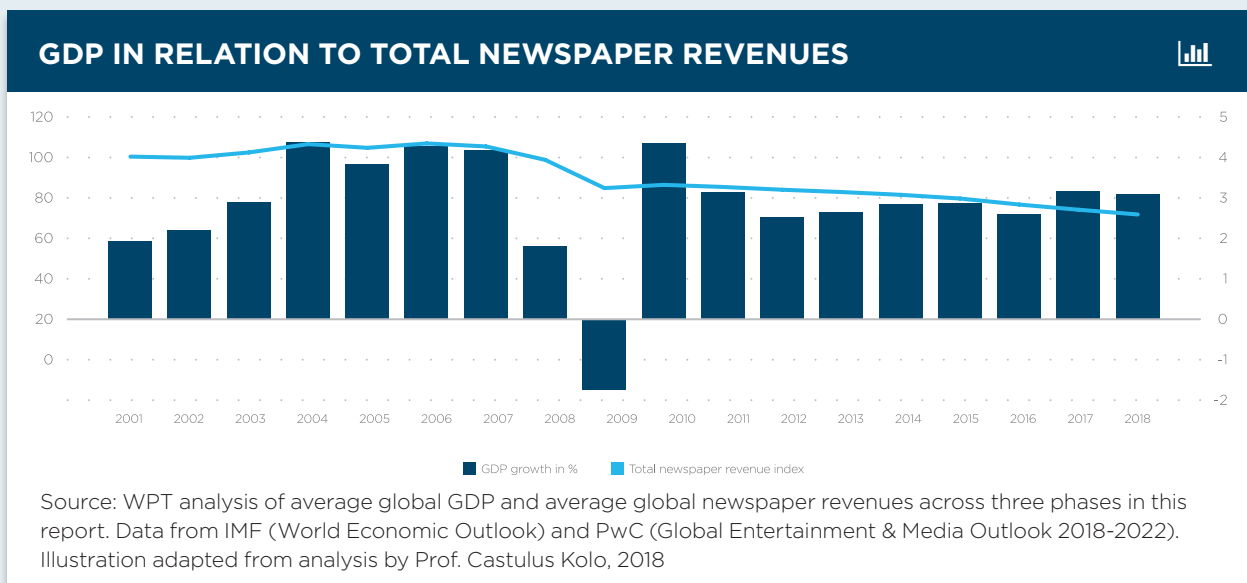
In recent years, the world economy has grown steadily at a pace of around 3% and, at this point, this phase is forecast to extend until at least 2021. Although performances vary greatly by country and company, overall newspaper revenues have slowly but steadily declined by an average of 3% year on year, as growth in digital revenues have not yet been able to fully compensate for print losses.

**“News publishers are holding their position”**  
– Norway

**“Hardly surviving”**  
– Estonia

However, there is reason for optimism. During the past year, the overall decline in revenues from both subscribers and digital advertising revenues slowed – with even a marginal growth forecast for this year predominantly driven by digital subscriptions and to some degree digital advertising. This picture will be further shaped by regulation on digital platforms, such as the European Union Directive on Copyright, as well as economic turbulence by, amongst others, fallout from US-China trade disputes, tension over Kashmir in South Asia, and Brexit.

**“It has not been a blockbuster year. However many media houses have been seeing good growth in the digital segment”**  
– India



# PRESS FREEDOM:

## A free press contributes to the wealth of nations and the well-being of societies

### KEY TRENDS 4: PRESS FREEDOM

**SUMMARY:** There is robust statistical evidence that shows direct and strong relationships between a free and independent press and factors that indicate the strength of democracies (e.g., electoral integrity and rule of law), the health of societies (e.g., inclusiveness, gender equality, educational achievement), as well as both the wealth of nations (e.g. Direct Foreign Investment, trade across borders, GDP) – and the fortunes of its people (e.g. poverty levels, social equality).

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLISHERS:** There is an important leadership role for a free and independent press that seeks to report truth, bring the facts to light and champion inclusive and fair communities.

**RISKS:** There is a clear danger to the health and wealth of societies from those who suppress or censor, or fuel intolerance.

**OVERVIEW:** When World Press Trends was first published three decades ago, liberal democracy was on the march and press freedom was on the rise. The Berlin Wall was down, the Cold War between Russia and the USA was ending, the apartheid regime in South Africa was teetering and even though the Chinese government had brutally put down a demo-

cratic movement, it was possible to imagine that an increasingly educated and prosperous middle class would eventually (and successfully) demand democratic reforms.

The world is very different today, notes William Galston<sup>11</sup>, a former foreign policy advisor to US President Bill Clinton and now at the Brookings Institution, a public policy think-tank in Washington, DC. Not only does liberal democracy face multiple external challenges from a variety of autocratic regimes but also significant internal challenges from populists who seek to drive a wedge between democracy and liberalism. “Liberal norms and policies, they claim, weaken democracy and harm people,” Galston notes. “Thus, liberal institutions that prevent people from acting democratically in their own interest should be set aside.”

In 2019 the control of the press is, once again, a key battleground in every corner of the globe, from the Americas to Asia Pacific. The struggle takes many forms and is fought on many fronts. Some tactics are covert, such as smear campaigns and trolling bent at undermining the credibility of journalists and critical news organisations. Others are overt, such as restrictive laws, ownership by government puppets, intimidation and, increasingly, violence. How this worldwide battle for press freedom turns out is important, if uncertain.

So it is that in 2019 we quantify for the first time the role a free press plays not only for the health of liberal democracies but also for the wealth of nations and the well-being of societies. Press Freedom in this study draws on the definition of Freedom House, which takes it to comprise a variety of factors, including: freedom of speech; effective press laws; freedom of information legislation; and editorial autonomy.

Democracy has been described by the United Nations as “a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives.” The health of a democracy is measured by a variety of indicators including access to information, freedom of association and of peaceful assembly, and electoral integrity.

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11 Galston, W. A. (2018). The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, (2), 5-19.



The statistical evidence we present here relies on more than 200,000 data points drawn from across a range of widely respected sources – including the World Bank, United Nations, OECD<sup>12</sup> and more. Whilst correlations don't necessarily imply causal relationships and the links between all these variables are complex, our multivariate analysis shows there is no doubt that the robustness of a free, independent news media industry is strongly linked to the wealth of nations and the health of its people – and that matters to everyone, inside and outside of the news media industry.

[The study findings are summarised in the graphics and detailed in Appendix A, which also includes a complete definition for each indicator and source of each indicator.]

### THE IMPACT OF PRESS FREEDOM ON DEMOCRACY



SOURCES: \*Freedom House 2017. Press Freedom includes freedom of speech; effective press laws; freedom of information; editorial autonomy; Civil liberties (r = .96; p < .001)  
 \*\*World Bank 2018 ..Political stability (r = .69; p < .001); Control of corruption (r = .65; p < .001); Voice & Accountability (r = .69; p < .001); Strength of governance (r = .25, p < .05); Rule of law (r = .75; p < .001)  
 \*\*\*Harvard University: Political Integrity Index 2018 (r = .79; p < .001)  
 \*\*\*\*Idea.int: Voter turnout (r = -.37, p < .01)

There are statistically significant links between press freedom and range of civil liberty indicators. Our analysis shows there is also hard evidence to back up former British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt’s recent claim that, “the strongest safeguard against the dark side of power is accountability and scrutiny – and few institutions fulfil that role more effectively than a free media.<sup>13</sup>” A robust, independent press challenges both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as “capture” of the state by elites and private interests.

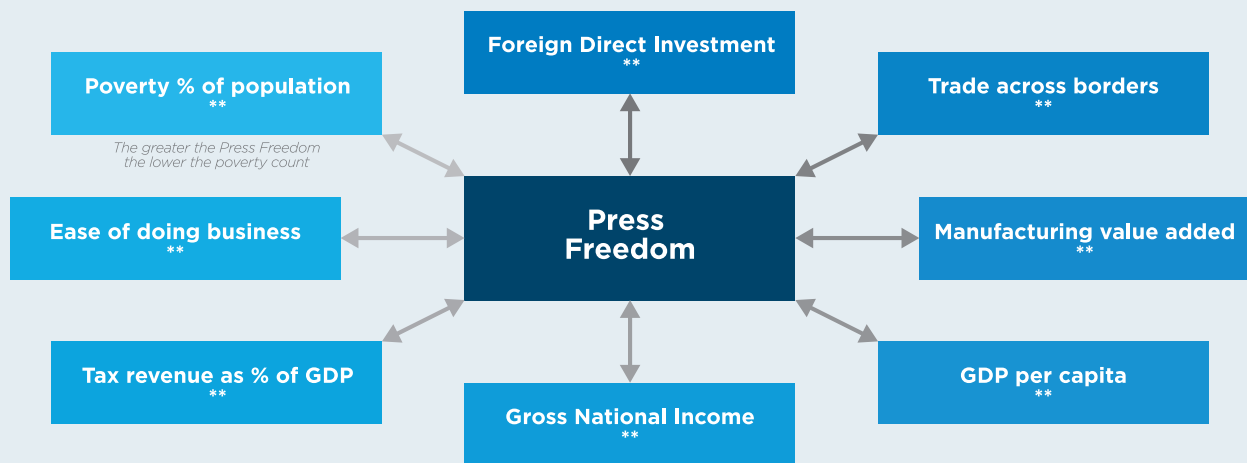
12 Sources include the World Bank, World Justice Project, Freedom House, the Organisation for Economic and Co-Operative Development (OECD), the United Nations Development Programme and Harvard University Political Integrity Index.  
 13 Hunt, Jeremy, (2019) Speech at the opening of the Defend Media Conference, London, 10 July 2019: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/media-freedom-and-journalists-under-threat-foreign-secretarys-speech>

The light that an independent, free press shines is also directly linked to an issue of concern to governments as diverse as those in Belfast and Beijing: politically-motivated violence.

The likelihood that the government won't be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means – including politically-motivated violence and terrorism – also increases with the levels of press freedom ( $r = .69$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

## THE IMPACT OF PRESS FREEDOM ON THE ECONOMY

The freer the press, the higher the...



SOURCES: \*Freedom House 2017. Press Freedom includes freedom of speech; effective press laws; freedom of information; editorial autonomy  
 \*\*World Bank 2018 .. GDP ( $r = .48$ ,  $p < .001$ ); Foreign Direct Investment: ( $r = .58$ ,  $p < .001$ ); Gross National Income: ( $r = .47$ ,  $p < .001$ ); Ease of doing business: ( $r = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ ); Tax revenue as % of GDP: ( $r = .44$ ,  $p < .001$ ); Manufacturing value added: ( $r = .50$ ,  $p < .001$ ); Trade across borders: ( $r = .54$ ,  $p < .001$ ); Poverty % of population: ( $r = -.21$ ,  $p < .001$ )

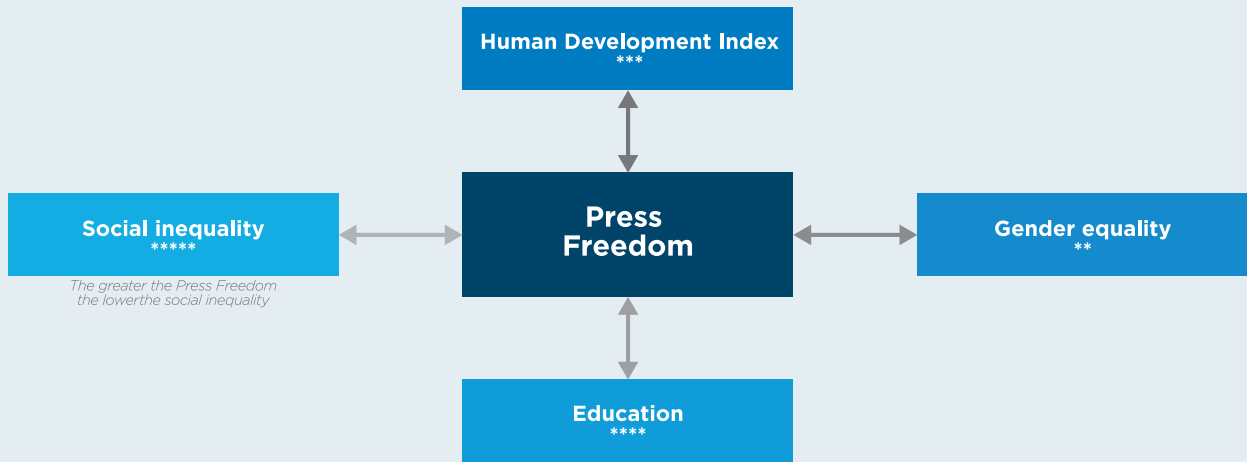
A free press does more than just oil the wheels of democracy and deter wrongdoing; it also fosters and feeds economic progress.

Our analysis shows that the open exchange of information through a free media allows economies to flourish across a wide range of World Bank indicators from internal measures, like manufacturing output and the ease of doing business, to external indicators like foreign direct investment and trade across borders. Not only does Gross Domestic Product and Gross National Income rise in line with press freedom, but so do the tax receipts necessary for government spending.

Wealth is not just more likely to be created but also more likely to be widely shared in countries where the press is free — as GDP per capita rises and poverty levels decline.

## THE IMPACT OF PRESS FREEDOM ON THE SOCIETY

The freer the press, the higher the...



SOURCES: \*Freedom House 2017. Press Freedom includes freedom of speech; effective press laws; freedom of information; editorial autonomy  
 \*\* UNDP 2018 (r = .44; p < .01)  
 \*\*\*HDI (World Justice Project) (r = .46; p < .01)  
 \*\*\*\* OECD 2018 & UNDP 2018 (r = .43; p < .01)  
 \*\*\*\*\* World bank GINI Index 2018 (r = -.21; p < .05).

Societies that support a free press are also societies that are more likely to be educated and egalitarian. Where press freedom thrives, so do women at home, at school, and in the workplace. Where there are higher levels of press freedom there are also lower levels of social inequality as indicated by household income and consumption.

IN SUM:

WHERE PRESS FREEDOM THRIVES,  
SO DOES EVERYONE ELSE.

AND THAT'S A FACT.

# BIOGRAPHIES

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# Why we sponsored this report

Past years haven't been easy for news companies. Just when newsrooms were adapting to new technologies and new beats of information, then came the fake news crisis, the loss of confidence and the doubts about the profitability of advertising spend.

Luckily, 2019 is dawning a rebirth for the sector and data shows an increasing trend: the establishment of a new relation based on trust between media houses and their audiences. An engaged audience is likely to be a loyal audience and one that is increasingly willing to pay for premium content. Customers look for creativity and new formats, new narratives starting with a simple mobile push notification to huge stories in print newspapers.

As a technological partner in this industry, Protecmedia offers software solutions and keys to success in the multichannel newsroom, automating processes, making integration of all platforms easier and simplifying the audience and advertising management.

In such a special moment as the 30th edition of World Press Trends, we are delighted to accept WAN-IFRA's offer to sponsor this Report, which we are sure will be used as a source of inspiration to encourage new business lines.

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